"WHO AM I?"-
SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN WOMEN MANAGERS'
STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY:
ESCAPING THE UBIQUITOUS CAGE

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY

in the

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

at the

University of Pretoria

APRIL 2012

Supervisor: Prof. Stella M. Nkomo

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents,

Mohamed Hoosen and Farida Abdul Carrim Cassim Moti,

who have supported, encouraged and challenged me

to gain knowledge throughout my life and

to dedicate my services to society.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

This study examines how some Indian women in South Africa who became managers negotiated their identities in their early lives and in their adult working lives on their journeys to becoming successful managers.

Prior studies on identity work and the experience of intersectionality by ethnic minority women have typically focused on professional identities in isolation, separate from early life influences. The current study uses a life story approach to provide a holistic understanding of the journeys of the first significant cohort of Indian women to ascend to management positions in South Africa. I explored the narratives of 13 Indian women managers in senior and top management positions in corporate South Africa using a grounded theory approach to make visible the identity work they have engaged in throughout their lives so far.

The life stories of the participants reveal that throughout their lives they have grappled with negotiating a gender identity shaped by Indian cultural assumptions about the roles of men and women in juxtaposition to or in combination with their personal aspirations for professional success. I used a bird cage metaphor to capture how these multiple factors shaped and constrained their lives and careers. The interplay between their racio-ethnic, gender and professional identities is unpacked, and their strategies for reconciling the tensions among their multiple identities are described. In negotiating their identities, these women have developed a particular type of hybrid identity that allows them to move between the compartments into which their professional identity demands and cultural

expectations have been divided. The women's cultural identities remain pivotal in their lives, and they have strong collectivist identities, as they still live within their communities even after the official end of apartheid.

My findings enrich and extend the identity literature relating to ethnic minority women by focusing on identity negotiation over time, rather than only on discrete moments in time. My findings also contribute to identity literature in general, as they illustrate that an individual's identity is formed not only by personal and social identities, but also by the historical and cultural context beyond the organisation within which the person operates. This context is often not considered in identity research in organisations – most studies relating to identity work focus on the tensions between personal identities and professional identities in the workplace. It also reinforces the idea that identity is never fixed but always in negotiation.

Key words: identity work; intersectionality; hybrid identity; gender identity; racio-ethnic identity; professional identity; Indian women managers; grounded theory; Atlas.ti; bird cage metaphor.

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CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

My PhD evolved from a question that had plagued me for some time. At that point in my life, I was in a managerial position, and I began to wonder whether other South African Indian women were facing challenges and barriers similar to the ones I had experienced on my journey toward a top management position. It was this topic that became the initial focus of my thesis. However, when I had interviewed the Indian women managers who participated in the pilot study and had analysed their interviews, I realised that the picture that emerged was much more complex than a mere chronicle of the challenges they encountered on their journeys. After hearing their life stories, I found myself asking a series of additional questions that were very different to those that were the focus of my initial inquiry. How do Indian women managers reconcile and negotiate their multifaceted personal and social identities in the workplace on their journey toward top management positions? How do they reconcile the demands for a professional identity as women in positions of power with those emanating from Indian culture's views on what it means to be a woman? What is the identity struggle associated with these two opposing elements in the lives of Indian women managers and how do they manage their hybrid identities? These became the additional questions that drove my interrogation and the writing of the thesis.

The study of identity has been researched widely since Erikson (1950) documented the subject in his book *Childhood and Society* (also cited by Schwartz & Pantin, 2006)*. Erikson's pioneering work was silent on gender and racio-ethnic identities. Since that time, the question of identity has become a significant topic in psychology and organisational behaviour, as well as organisation studies. Subsequently, conceptual formulation has also become increasingly complex. For example, Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas

(2008) argue that identity theorists need to recognise that individuals in organisations do not have only detached social identities, but personal identities as well. They also allude to the need to pay attention to racio-ethnic identity. The concept of identity becomes complicated when multiple identities such as gender, race, class and ethnicity intersect to form interdependent, dynamic and interlocking systems, resulting in a classification called intersectionality (Byrd, 2008). Thus, any study of Indian women managers in South Africa has to recognise that these women not only have professional identities within the organisational setting, but simultaneously have to negotiate the complex intersectionalities created by their gender identities and their racio-ethnic identities.

Alvesson et al. (2008) argue that individuals are also always in a state of tension within organisations as they attempt to reconcile their personal identities with those of the organisation. There is a risk however, that complete compliance with organisational social identity at the expense of personal identity can lead to a lack of creativity and innovation (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006). Research has also demonstrated that members of racio-ethnic minorities and women in particular, also experience an additional struggle to reconcile their cultural identities with the pressure they face to fit into a dominant organisational culture (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Slay & Smith, 2011). This sometimes leads them to employ strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1987), which results in the formation of hybrid identities, where racio-ethnic minorities use essentialized notions of the self and display their cultural identities, while at the same time adopting elements of prescribed professional identities (relating to what it means to be an effective leader in the workplace).

It is this kind of identity work, comprised of negotiating multiple identities embedded within historical and socio-cultural external pressures, as well as white male organisational cultures, that is at the centre of this study of Indian women managers in corporate South Africa. In this study, it is contended that race, ethnicity, class and gender cannot be analysed separately, but have to be studied in the context of their intersecting effects relating to power and

subjugation in the home and in the workplace (Yuval-Davis, 2006), as well as of how women negotiate their multiple identities.

It is against this background that the problem statement addressed in the current study is formulated.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Scholarship on women in management has proliferated globally (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Calás & Smircich, 2006; Davidson & Burke, 2004; Mathur-Helm, 2005; Wirth, 2001). However, the literature on women in management in South Africa is not yet comprehensive, and thus far, there has been little research on the status, corporate experiences or identity work of Indian women in management.

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) argue most of the research conducted on identity work takes a static approach toward the organisation and the individual manager. Their study on identity work by managers is one of the few that focuses on the dynamic aspects of identity work, which include various elements that have an impact on a manager's identity. The present study goes beyond Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003) approach by adopting a holistic framework that traces the participating women's identity work throughout their lives, from early childhood to their experiences as managers. This approach acknowledges that the answers to the questions "Who am I?" and "How should I act?" did not originate when the women entered the corporate world in South Africa, but from their early lives as young children and women. Furthermore, such an approach allows for an interrogation of the choices these women made in deciding what elements of a professional identity to accept and which ones to resist. It is for this reason that my study uses a historical, cultural and organisational lens to understand the identity work of the women who fall into the first cohort of Indian women managers to enter the corporate world in South Africa during the late apartheid period.

Most prior studies in organisations relating to minorities do not focus on hybrid identity work. For example, in psychology, Helms (1993) delineates processes of racial identity for racial minorities in such a way that his work suggests that all racial minorities have a singular identity. However, the notion of hybridity and the position that people have multiple identities raises questions as to how these different identities are negotiated and how people deal with them. Cieslik and Verkuyten (2006) posit that people tend to retain their cultural values and adopt new ones in their interactions with others. Multiple identities can be reconciled, but they can also cause conflict and tension which need to be reconciled and accommodated. Since there is a dearth of studies on identity negotiation relating to hybrid identity formation in minority women managers, this gap is filled by the current study. I also focus on the dynamic aspects of the identity work of minority women managers by underscoring the importance of their racio-ethnic, gender and professional identities in constituting their hybrid identities.

If research focuses only on managers' identity negotiations in organisations and does not take into account social influences and the external lives people lead outside the workplace, it results in a narrow view of the identity work engaged in by leaders (Watson, 2009). Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) provide a formal definition of the term "identity work", but Watson (2008) cautions that the term has been used in an informal manner in organisational and management studies, and points out that most of the studies on identity work among managers focuses on the internal elements of identity. In his opinion, when an individual engages in identity work, external and internal work is conducted simultaneously. The current study fills the gap in the literature by focusing on both internal and external elements of identity work.

1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the current study is threefold. First, it seeks to delineate the barriers and challenges that Indian women managers, face in their career advancement. Second, the study examines the forces that the participating Indian women managers' identified in their early lives and adulthood. Lastly, it

focuses on understanding how Indian women managers may negotiate and reconcile their gender, racio-ethnic and professional identities in the South African workplace.

1.4   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: What barriers and challenges do Indian women managers encounter in the workplace?

Research Question 2: How did the Indian women managers who participated in the study negotiate the intersection between their racio-ethnic and gender identities during the early years of their lives?

Research Question 3: How did these women negotiate the intersections between their racio-ethnic and gender identities in the Indian family and community?

Research Question 4: How did these women negotiate the intersections of their racio-ethnic, gender and professional identities in the workplace?

In the next section I provide some background to the research, including its historical context and the status of Indian women in management in South Africa. I also briefly discuss the literature on intersectionality, identity work and hybrid identities to clarify the significance of the study.

1.5   BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Historically, across most of the world, workplaces have been gendered, particularly in the sense that in higher managerial positions the concentration of white males was higher, while females tended to be restricted to the lower echelons in organisations. In recent years, women have begun making inroads into the managerial level, but, although class boundaries are

becoming more blurred, attitudes toward women remain largely gendered and stereotyped (Acker, 2006).

The phenomenon of women's entry into management positions has also been noted in post-apartheid South Africa. Historically disadvantaged groups in South Africa, including Indian women, are increasingly aspiring to higher managerial positions, which had previously been dominated by white males. In view of increasing diversity in the managerial ranks in post-apartheid South Africa, organisations now have to operate with a labour force with diverse values, needs and expectations. In the case of Indian women, for example, such employees enter the workforce with specific cultural and religious values and norms, but then have to function in workplaces with entrenched organisational cultures largely shaped by the white men who have hitherto dominated the South African management sphere.

Many Indian women managers who enter the South African corporate arena with multifaceted identities shaped by issues such as racio-ethnicity and gender must face pressure to adopt professional identities that are congruent with the expectations of a white male-dominated organisational culture that may be very different from these women's own racio-ethnic and gender identities. Research indicates that such an encounter requires a substantial amount of identity work to reconcile effectively the tensions arising from differences between an individual's gender and racio-ethnic identities on the one hand, and the dominant culture, for example, in an organisation, on the other (North-Samardzic & Taksa, 2011). Given that organisational cultures tend to be dominated by white males, all women in managerial positions engage in identity work as they strive to reconcile their gender identities with the demands of gendered formulations of the ideal manager (Schein, 2001). However, for women who belong to an ethnic minority, identity work is especially complex because of the intersection of gender and racio-ethnicity.

Minority groups such as Indian females face the challenge of reconciling multifaceted identities with the expectations of the organisational cultures that they find themselves in. Differences in historical, political and social contexts

across countries influence the nature of the identity work that women engage in as they enter male-dominated organisations. Below, I outline prior studies on identity work, the historical context of Indian women's lives, reforms in legislation and current statistics, indicating the low representation of Indian women at the management level in South African organisations as important elements in understanding the position and status these women currently occupy in corporate South Africa.

1.5.1 Prior research on Indian women in organisations

Most organisational studies relating to identity have focused on gender identity, ignoring the intersection between the many identities that women possess (Settles, 2006). This has often led to overly simplistic analyses of women managers' lives, ignoring the complex web of intersecting identities that form part of their self-concepts (Acker, 2006; Kenny & Briner, 2007). In the last decade, some attention has finally been paid to women's multiple identities in the workplace and to how these identities intersect to form unique experiences for women who are different from each other (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2000). Much of this research has been done on women managers and professionals in the United States (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Byrd, 2008; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Holvino, 2010; Settles, 2006). Some studies have also been conducted in the United Kingdom (Adib & Guerrier, 2003; Atewologun & Singh, 2010; Fearfull & Kamenou, 2006; Healy, Bradley, & Forson, 2011; Leathwood, 2005; Priola, 2004).

Most of the work in respect of Indian women as a minority group in organisations and focusing on the intersectionality of identities has been conducted on Asian Indian immigrant minority women in the United States, Europe, Australia and New Zealand (Mehrotra & Calasanti, 2010; Syed & Murray, 2009). For example, Mahalingham, Balan, and Haritatos (2008) have studied the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity in shaping the identities of Indian immigrant women in the United States of America. Pio (2005) focused on Indian immigrant women in New Zealand negotiating their identities in their workplaces. Mahalingham and Leu (2005) have examined gender and the

intersection of race, class and ethnicity and hybrid identities of immigrant Asian Indian and Filipino women. Healy et al. (2011) have looked at the intersectional inequalities experienced by Bangaldeshi, Caribbean and Pakistani women working in the public sector in the United Kingdom. Most of this prior research was thus interested mainly in the ethnic, cultural and gender identities of Asian Indian women immigrants and in how they adapted to their host countries as adults (Dion & Dion, 2004; Kallivayalil, 2004). By contrast, my study focuses on the intersectionality between the gender and racio-ethnic identities of women managers in their youth and in their professional lives.

Most studies in organisations conducted on managers' identity explore their identity negotiation relating to daily struggles in the workplace – most of which are associated with relational and situational challenges (Andersson, 2010; Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003; Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Watson, 2001). Very little research has focused on the identity work that minority women engage in as they strive to reach top management positions in organisations. Also, research on identity negotiation and hybrid identity work by minorities in organisations is also sparse. Studies by Luk-Fong (2010), Malhi, Boon, and Rogers (2009), McKinley (2008), and Van Laer and Janssens (2008) are a few of the exceptions. Most of the research related to this area has focused on minority youth (see, for example, the studies by Butcher, 2004; Mir, 2009; Mishra & Shirazi, 2010; Noble, Poynting, & Tabar, 1999). In general, there is a dearth of such studies relating to minority women managers on the African continent (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009).

1.5.2 Historical context

Most of the research on women in management in South Africa focuses on the barriers that white and black female managers experience in reaching top managerial positions, with Indian females included as a sub-category of black women (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Leonard & Grobler, 2006; Mathur-Helm, 2005). Very little research has hitherto been conducted specifically on Indian women managers in South Africa.

Apartheid was the dominant culture in South Africa until the first fully democratic elections in 1994. Apartheid was a system founded on racial classification, where people were separated by being divided into four different races, whites, black Africans, Asians and coloureds, where "whites" included Afrikaans- and English-speaking whites. This separation dominated all aspects of people's lives, from education to employment (Moosa, 1996) and the separation was enacted by political, economic and social boundaries enforced through legislation (Ramsay, 2007).

During the period of colonialism which preceded the apartheid era, and the apartheid era itself (from 1948), patriarchy and sexism reigned in the South African macro-environment and within homes and communities. Women of all races were relegated to secondary status, compared to men, and were regarded as legal minors. In the private domain, women had no power, as they were not allowed to make decisions and lead (National Gender Policy Framework, 2008). Such patriarchal relationships spilled over to the workplace, where women of all races faced inequity, but black women were even more discriminated against than white women. In the workplace, white males dominated, and organisational cultures were based on traditional, hierarchical structures that operated on bureaucratic principles, and a command and control style of management (Mathur-Helm, 2004). In addition, until the early 1980s, legislation in apartheid South Africa restricted women from participating on an equal footing in the workplace (Mathur-Helm, 2004). Historically, apartheid, combined with patriarchal customs and norms, resulted in the fact that few Indian women entered the workforce, which in turn meant that the number of economically active members in the Indian community was much lower than that in the white and coloured communities (Hiralal, 2010). The few Indian women who did manage to enter the labour market were concentrated at lower levels in organisations, often conducting menial tasks (Naidoo & Kongolo, 2004).

1.5.3   Reforms in legislation

Since 1994, when the new democratic government was elected, leading to the demise of apartheid, a major transformation began in the social, political and economic environment.

Section 1 (b) of the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, which is founded on the values of non-racism and non-sexism, paves the way for the formation of non-discriminatory legislation relating to women and other marginalised groups (South Africa, 1996b). The Bill of Rights (Chapter 2) section 9 of the Constitution deals with the principles of equality, and outlines the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination against women (South Africa, 1996b). The State has given high priority to and is committed to addressing the question of women's oppression and subjugation. This has led the South African government to take part in global events and support interventions and programmes enhancing women's equity and empowerment.

According to Ertürk (2004), some of the policies implemented and interventions supported by the South African government relating to gender equity include

*   the signing of a number of UN conventions on women,

*   the Women's Charter for Effective Equality (1993),

*   the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994),

*   South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment (1995),

*   the National Report of the Status of Women in South Africa prepared for the World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995,

*   the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1995)

*   the South African Women on the Road to Development, Equality and Peace – Beijing Conference Plan of Action of 1995 (see also Mathur-Helm, 2005), and

- the Commission on Gender Equality Act, No 39 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996a).

The Commission for Gender Equality has introduced a five-year strategic plan (2008-2013) to promote women's empowerment and gender equality and to ensure that the National Gender Policy is effectively implemented in South African society (Commission for Gender Equality, 2008).

Focusing specifically on corporate South Africa, legislation dealing with the implementation of equal opportunity and affirmative action to redress the imbalances of the past relating to previously disadvantaged and discriminated groups such as women has been enforced by the State (Mathur-Helm, 2004).

Two pivotal pieces of legislation namely, the Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998 (South Africa, 1998a), and the Skills Development Act, No 97 of 1998 (South Africa, 1998b) were introduced to redress previous disadvantages, disempowerment and employment imbalances through accelerated development, training and education programmes (Department of Labour, 2010). In accordance with the South African Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998, most South African organisations have set targets to increase the representation of individuals who are classified as being from the "designated groups", one of which is Indian women, across all occupational levels in their organisations (BHP Billiton, 2004; Department of Labour, 2010).

Given these changes in the political climate, a larger number of Indian women have entered the South African workforce in the post-apartheid era than in the past, when they were isolated and restricted by customs and taboos (Shepherd, 2008). With better educational facilities and easier access to tertiary institutions, more Indian females are becoming academically and technically qualified for responsible, interesting and rewarding work (Dias & Posel, 2007).

1.5.4   Statistics on Indian women in management

Before discussing the statistics on women in managerial positions, I present an outline of the South African population broken down by race and gender (see Table 1.1) to indicate the broader South African context.

Table 1.1: Profile of the national population and the national economically active population by race and gender

Population Group	National population distribution			Economically active		
	Male	Female	**Total**	Male	Female	**Total**
African	37.7%	41.3%	**79.0%**	39.2%	34.2%	**73.5%**
Coloured	4.3%	4.6%	**8.9%**	6.1%	5.2%	**11.3%**
Indian	1.2%	1.3%	**2.5%**	1.9%	1.1%	**3.0%**
White	4.6%	5.0%	**9.6%**	6.7%	5.5%	**12.2%**
Total	47.8%	52.2%	100.0%	54.0%	46.0%	100.0%

Source: Department of Labour (2010, p. 6)

According to the national demographics, men constitute 47.8 per cent of the population, while women comprise 52.2 per cent of the population in South Africa (Department of Labour, 2010). The Department of Labour's (2010) Commission for Employment Equity Report also indicates that men constituted 54 per cent of the economically active population for the period under review, while women comprised 46 per cent. Indian women constituted only 1.3 per cent of the population and 1.1 per cent of the economically active population. Although the majority of the economically active population (84.8 per cent) is black, the current occupational representation of race and gender groups in the labour force is still similar to that which existed under apartheid (Department of Labour, 2010).

Although women in South Africa have made some gains in entering managerial positions, research reveals that white men, who constitute 6.7 per

cent of the economically active population, still dominate senior and top managerial positions, followed by white females, who constitute 5.5 per cent of the economically active population (Department of Labour, 2010). Research indicates women are discriminated against on the basis of race and gender in South African organisations (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Littrell & Nkomo, 2005; Mathur-Helm, 2005; Zonde, 2007) and these discriminatory practices are experienced differently by women of different races (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010).

Statistics obtained from an annual report by the Business Women's Association of South Africa (BWASA) entitled *South African Women in Corporate Leadership* (BWASA, 2011) provides an excellent overview of the comparative status of South African women in corporate South Africa. However, data on women in management from different race groups in corporate South Africa is only available from 2005. Making it difficult to show how the composition of Indian women at managerial levels prior to 2005 has changed. BWASA's census collected data from companies listed on the Johannesburg Securities Exchange, as well as from State-owned enterprises (BWASA, 2011). These statistics are set out in Tables 1.2 to 1.4, below.

Table 1.2: Percentage of women directors

	2009	2010	2011
Black	54.4	46.9	46.7
Coloured	6.3	9.2	8.3
Indian	5.1	6.3	8.3
White	34.2	37.3	36.6

Source: BWASA (2011, p. 50)

Table 1.2 indicates that there has been a steady increase in the number of Indian women directors from 2009 to 2011, but the figures are still lower than those of white and African women.

Table 1.3: Women executive managers by race

	2009	2010	2011
Black	22.6	14.9	14.4
Coloured	4.9	9.7	7.4
Indian	5.9	7.0	6.9
White	66.2	67.6	70.6

Source: BWASA (2011, p. 32)

Table 1.3 indicates that there has been an increase in the number of women executive managers from 2009 to 2011 but the figures are still lower than those for women from other race groups.

Table 1.4: Women in top management by race

2011 percentages		
	Executive managers	**Directors**
Black	14.4	46.7
Coloured	7.4	8.3
Indian	6.9	8.3
White	70.6	36.6
Other*	0.7	0.1
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: BWASA (2011, p. 32)

*Foreign nationals

Table 1.4 indicates that compared to women from other race groups Indian women have the lowest representation at the level of director – only 8.3 percent, compared to 46.7 percent black African and 36.6 percent white women – although the percentage of Indian women in these positions have increased from the 2009 figures (BWASA, 2011). White women out number

all race groups at executive manager levels, although they constitute only 5.5 per cent of the economically active population, in comparison to women from other race groups.

The statistics for 2011 in Table 1.4 indicate that the representation of white women executive far outnumbers that of other race groups. The number of white female directors is also very high when one considers that they constitute only 5.5 per cent of the economically active population. The representation of Indian female executive managers (6.9 percent) is low compared to that of the other race groups – black African, white and coloured females account for 14.4, 70.6 and 7.4 percent respectively (BWASA, 2011). Table 1.4 also indicates that Indian women have the lowest representation (8.3 percent) at the level of director, compared to that of black African and white women. Table 1.4 thus indicates that Indian women have the lowest representation both at executive and director management levels. The above statistics make obvious the poor representation of Indian women in corporate South Africa in senior and top managerial positions.

1.6   METHODOLOGY

The type of research design and the methodology employed in a study influence the results that are obtained. Researchers therefore choose research designs and approaches according to the aims of the study and their epistemological assumptions (Creswell, 2003; Nelson, Treichler, & Grossberg, 1992). I decided on an interpretivist paradigm relating to the study. The basic premise of an interpretivist paradigm is that the researcher should gain an in-depth understanding of the whole phenomenon in question. Consequently, important aspects of a phenomenon are not overlooked in the process (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003). With quantitative research, generalisability to the general population is easier, but it is more difficult to generalise with qualitative research. However, a researcher is able to gain an in-depth understanding of research participants' feelings, perspectives and experiences of the subject matter in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Kvale, 1996). This study therefore used an interpretivist, qualitative approach

to gain an understanding of the life and career experiences of Indian women managers with a particular focus on how they negotiated identities that were acceptable both to their self-concepts and to others in their social environments.

Using an interpretivist, qualitative outlook allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the identity negotiation of the women who participated in the study. Specifically, I used the life story approach to understand how these women managers negotiated their gender and racio-ethnic identities in their youth and their gender, racio-ethnic and professional identities in adulthood. According to proponents of the life story approach, the answers to the question "Who am I?" are often organised in the form of life stories (Bruner, 1986). Shamir and Eilam (2005) argue that life stories express the storytellers' identities, which are the product of the relationship between the life experiences and the organised stories of these experiences. Scholars of life story methodology argue that it is the stories we tell of ourselves and others that reveal our identities (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 70).

A grounded theory approach was used in this study. Grounded theory uses a logical and consistent set of data collection and analytical methods to generate theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory also allows a researcher to construct knowledge grounded in the everyday experiences of participants (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory allowed me to focus on the identity negotiation of Indian women managers in an inductive manner: themes were generated from the data themselves. From the themes I had generated, I extracted the core theme, namely identity work, and all other themes centred round this theme. The grounded theory approach allowed me to go below the surface and reveal how the women reconcile and enact their multiple identities.

The study was divided into two parts. The first part focused on the pilot study, which informed the rest of the study. Researchers have long pointed out the usefulness of conducting a pilot study before commencing with the main study

– pilot studies are used to enhance and pre-test research instruments such as questionnaires and interviews (Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley, & Graham, 2001). Pilot studies are also used in generating research problems and questions and in underscoring gaps and wastefulness in data collection (Sampson, 2004). A pilot study also allows a researcher to understand the meaning of concepts held by the participants from their perspective (Maxwell, 2005). I interviewed seven Indian women in middle management positions for the pilot study. The pilot study was initially focused on Indian women's work experiences and their upward mobility in the workplace. The aim was to ascertain whether there were differences between the barriers faced by women in middle management and those faced by women in senior and top managerial positions in their upward mobility.

In the course of the pilot study, however, the women alluded extensively to their cultural backgrounds. This allowed me to generate questions relating to the cultural background of Indian women in senior and top managerial positions. The pilot study also allowed me to gain an understanding of the importance of Indian culture in the lives of Indian women managers and also suggested that the era in which women grew up might have had an important influence on their identities.

In the second part of the study, life story interviews were therefore conducted with 13 women managers. The interview approach allowed the women to tell their life stories, beginning with their childhoods and covering events until the present.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study represents one of the first studies to illuminate the life and career journeys and identity work of Indian women in management in South Africa. Much of the research on women in management has focused on the upward mobility of women managers in general, but my focus is how a group of racio-ethnic women, specifically Indian women managers in South Africa, engaged in identity work to form a coherent self-concept and how they adopted hybrid

identities in their desire to reach top managerial positions in South African corporations. This study therefore addresses the paucity of research focusing on the intersection between multiple social identities, identity work and the formation of the hybrid identities of racio-ethnic minority women managers.

There is a need to fill the gap in the identity work literature, because so much of this literature focuses on the construction of professional identities or on reconciling personal identities with organisational identities (see, for example, Alvesson & Robertson, 2006; Iedema, Degeling, Braithwaite, & White, 2004; Pratt, Rockman, & Kaufmann, 2006). Very little research has systematically examined the identity work that has to be done in terms of a person's racio-ethnicity, gender and professional identity. Indeed, one can argue that most of the prior research on identity work has been inwardly focused, with little attention being paid to the external contextual factors that influence the nature of identity work. This study illuminates the hybrid identities that ethnic minority women may adopt to reconcile the demands of a professional identity with other elements of their multiple identities. The study aims to sensitise human resources practitioners and managers to the unique identity challenges which Indian women managers in South Africa encounter in traditionally white male organisations.

1.8   LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE

One of the limitations of a study such as this is its limited generalisability (Cline, 2008) – the findings of the present study cannot be generalised to Indian females in other Western countries, as the experiences of these women is specific to the South African context. Nor can the findings be generalised to all women in management in general. Instead, the focus is on a specific group of women. The goal of the study was not generalisability, but providing a thick description of the life stories and journeys of the participating women into corporate management within a particular historical and social context.

Moreover, the findings cannot be generalised to Indian women who were raised in post-apartheid South Africa, because the context for such younger women's identity work would be different. The goal of this study was to examine a special population of women, namely, the first cohort of South African Indian women managers who grew up under apartheid and who subsequently had an opportunity to enter corporate South Africa after the demise of apartheid.

Financial constraints meant that only participants who lived and worked in the Gauteng region of South Africa were chosen, with one exception. This one participant came from the Cape Province, but visited Gauteng on business. It is possible that women in other regions of South Africa may have had different experiences from women in Gauteng and the participant from the Cape Province.

The life story approach used in the study risks being subjective where multiple interpretations of events are possible. Some elements may be chosen and told in a certain manner. It is also not possible to tell a life story in exactly the same way more than once. However, in expressing their subjectivities, the women also provided an answer to the question "Who am I?", as posited by Torres and Antikainen (2003). I directed the women's conversations through semi-structured interview questions as to which parts of their life stories they should elaborate upon. Most of the answers the women provided from their childhood and adult experiences in organisations overlapped, but there were also differences between their stories. The subjectivity within the women's stories gave them a sense of their own identity (their "I") relating to their unique experiences.

1.9   DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The key terms defined in this section are used throughout this study.

1.9.1   Life story

I used McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, and Bowman's (2001, p. 475) definition of a life story: "[A] life story exists as a psychosocial construction reflecting an individual's narrative understanding of self in culture, an understanding that itself is jointly authored by the individual himself or herself and by the wide variety of cultural influences providing the historical, religious, ethical, economic, and political contexts within which the individual's life is situated."

1.9.2   Identity

Alvesson et al.'s (2008, p. 5) definition of identity is adopted in this study. They state that "identity refers to subjective meanings and experience, to our ongoing efforts to address the twin questions, 'Who am I?' and – by implication – 'how should I act?'"

1.9.3   Identity work

According to Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p. 1165), identity work occurs when individuals are "engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising …constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness".

1.9.4   Hybrid identity

The term "hybrid identity" refers to ethnic minority employees' assimilation of two or more different and possibly conflicting elements into their self-concept (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

1.9.5   Racio-ethnic identity

Taylor Cox Jr (1990) claims that the term "race" has been used by organisational scholars to depict biological differences between groups, and the term "ethnicity" to indicate cultural differences. Cox further argues that

these terms were used in the past to refer to some groups such as whites and blacks in terms of race, while other groups, such as Asians and Hispanics, have been referred to in terms of ethnicity. Thus, these terms have been incorrectly used to imply that groups were distinct from each other in terms of biology or culture, while in reality they differed in both respects. Cox therefore coined the term "racio-ethnic" to indicate both a biologically and/or culturally distinct group. In the present study, both race and ethnicity are considered to be socially constructed. Because the South African apartheid system was based on a system of racial classification, Indians in South Africa are regarded as both a racial group and as an ethnic group with a distinct culture for the purposes of the study.

1.9.6   Intersectionality

The term "intersectionality" was coined by Crenshaw (1989, 1994) to illustrate how race and gender intersect and may result in the oppression of black women (and by implication women from other minorities, such as Indian women) in the workplace.

1.9.7   Resistance

In the current study, resistance refers to "intentional, and hence conscious, acts of defiance or opposition by a subordinate individual or group of individuals against a superior individual or set of individuals" (Seymour, 2006, p. 305).

1.9.8   Male archetype

Sinclair (1998, p. 31) argues that an "archetype of leadership is not a style, which is a reflection of an individual personality, but a social construction". The male archetype is posited as competent, ambitious and logical, compared to the female archetype, which is claimed to be dependent and sensitive (Varma, 2007).

1.9.9   Solo status

Individuals acquire solo status when they are the only ones who represent their group in a homogeneous setting (Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003), for example, an Indian woman manager who is both the only female and the only Indian among a group of white male managers.

1.9.10   The term "Indian"

The term "Indian" refers to South Africans who are descended from Indians (from the Asian subcontinent) who came to South Africa as indentured labourers to work in the sugarcane plantations in what was then Natal, or passenger Indians who came to South Africa to set up businesses or who were professionals (Bramdaw, 1994).

1.10 OVERVIEW OF THE REMAINDER OF THE STUDY

The structure of the rest of the study is set out below:

- *Chapter 2: The historical and legislative context*

  This chapter provides an overview of the historical and legislative context which shaped the lives of the Indian women who participated in the study.

- *Chapter 3: Gender and management in the workplace*

  This chapter reviews the prior literature on women in management, as well as on intersectionality and identity.

- *Chapter 4: Research methodology*

  This chapter describes the research methodology used in the study and the methodological choices made to pursue the research questions.

- *Chapter 5: Unpacking childhood identity themes*

  This chapter presents the results on the identity formation during their childhood of the Indian women managers who participated in the study.

- *Chapter 6: Struggling for identity in the corporate cage*

   This chapter presents the results on the identity struggle during the working lives of the Indian women managers who participated in the study.

- *Chapter 7: Discussion of identity work engaged in by Indian women managers*

   This chapter discusses the key results of the study in comparison with prior literature on women in management and identity work in organisations.

- *Chapter 8: Summary and conclusions*

   This chapter summarises the findings, and discusses the significance and contribution of the current study. It also suggests what the implications of the study may be for future research.

- *Chapter 9: Reflections on my personal journey*

   This chapter shares my personal experience of the journey toward compiling this thesis.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter outlined the background to the current study, its purpose, the research questions, the significance of the study, the methodology, as well as the limitations and scope of the study. I also provided definitions of key terms used in subsequent chapters. Finally, I provided an outline of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the historical and legislative context which influenced the lives of the Indian women managers who participated in the study.

CHAPTER 2:
THE HISTORICAL AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide a description of the historical and legislative context that informed the life journeys of the Indian women who participated in the study. Specifically, it covers the general history of South Africa, the history of Indians in South Africa, and the apartheid and post-apartheid eras.

I commence by discussing the history of South Africa by focusing on the colonial conquests of this country by two major European powers, namely the Dutch, followed by the British. Next, I look briefly at the period of the Union of South Africa and the apartheid era after 1948, and discuss the most relevant pieces of legislation that Indians had to contend with during the apartheid era. Finally, I discuss the post-apartheid era where I look at the position of Indians in the South African Constitution, the impact of the Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998 (South Africa, 1998a) on Indians and women, and various pieces of legislation relating to gender equality.

The general history which I discuss in the next section provides an outline of how the European colonists invaded South Africa and the force and brutality used to annex the land of the indigenous population. I also outline the inhumane treatment of South Africa's native inhabitants during this period and how this set the scene for the treatment meted out to all that were non-white in the years to come.

2.2 HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA

2.2.1 Arrival of the Dutch

Following on from Bartolomeu Dias's 1488 voyage of discovery to what he called the "Cape of Storms", after 1500, European explorers sailed around the tip of Cape of Good Hope in their search for a passage to the East. It was, however, only after 1600, when the Dutch East India Company was competing with other European colonialists to get a stronghold in Asia that the sea route along the Cape coast gained significance. The Dutch arrived in 1652 to establish a colony in the Cape under the lead of Jan van Riebeeck (Loomba, 2005).

In order to establish their settlement, the Dutch first engaged in mass genocide in order to usurp large tracts of land from the indigenous people. Those who survived were taken as slaves and forced to work for Dutch farmers, who treated them cruelly (Ross, 2008). Secondly, to establish their colony, the Dutch imported people from other European regions and from the East to settle in the Cape. This led to the influx of many French immigrants and to approximately 60 000 slaves from Madagascar and Indonesia being brought to the Cape. These events resulted in the establishment of a Dutch colony in South Africa before the eighteenth century (Ross, 2008).

The Dutch rule of the Cape lasted a little over 150 years, as the next section reveals.

2.2.2 The Cape under British rule

The Cape was briefly occupied by the French in 1795, during the Napoleonic war, but the British invaded and occupied the Cape that same year. They returned control of the territory to the Dutch in 1803, but reoccupied the Cape on 19 January 1806. In terms of an Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814, it became British territory and was called the Cape Colony (Ross, 2008). Under British rule, Africans had little power. They had to carry passes and could not cross

borders, thus forcing them to work for white farmers (Troup, 1972). The British did, however, introduce some laws which gave blacks some autonomy, for example, African slaves were able to lodge grievances against their masters; coloured people were allowed to trade and own land and, eventually, in line with the abolition movement throughout the Anglophone worldwide, slavery was abolished (Beinart, 2001).

The British nevertheless continued with their onslaught against the black Africans throughout the nineteenth century. The British continued with their wars against African people in order to claim large tracts of land. This led to the majority of Africans in the Eastern Cape and the rest of the Cape Colony in the 1800s living in poverty, without food, in overcrowded conditions, displaced and most of all, without land, as the land had been annexed by the British. Africans in the Eastern Cape were also not allowed to vote. Leaders of African groups who opposed the British government were imprisoned on Robben Island (Troup, 1972). The Afrikaners got the idea of imprisoning political prisoners from the British, and continued with this practice into the twentieth century, when even the later president of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela, was imprisoned on Robben Island with many other political activists.

The Trekboers, or Voortrekkers, as some people descended from the original Dutch and French settlers were called, especially those who moved from the Eastern Cape, in the meantime moved into the interior to evade British rule and oppression in the Cape Colony, and fought the African people they found so they could establish their own republics, as the next section reveals.

2.2.3   The Voortrekkers/Boers and British in Natal

The Voortrekkers, or Afrikaners, as they are known today, moved into the interior from 1828, as they were dissatisfied with British rule (Beinart, 2001). Their mission was to make southern Africa Boer in character, and they implemented race segregation in the areas into which they moved, causing difficulties in white and black relations (Ross, 2008).

On 16 December 1837, the Voortrekkers defeated Dingane in the Battle of Blood River and established the Republic of Natalia in sections of what is KwaZulu-Natal today. Non-whites were not allowed to settle in the new republic, and could only live there as labourers. The indigenous people had to carry passes and were not allowed to own land, guns or horses in the republic. However, the British wanted to colonise all the land the Voortrekkers lived on.

In 1843, the British annexed the Republic of Natalia, and slavery and further invasion of native land was stopped (Saunders, 1992). Under British rule, the Native policy of Natal (Natal Code) was implemented between 1845 and 1875 by Shepstone (who was in charge of Native Affairs) and it was aimed at controlling Africans. A single customary law for the various African tribes was introduced. Africans were placed in reserves which were not suitable for farming. They were not allowed to vote, and they had to pay taxes and tariffs on goods they consumed. Only Africans exempt from the Native Law were allowed to vote (McClendon, 1997).

Non-whites in the Voortrekker-controlled Transvaal suffered great difficulties, as the next section reveals.

2.2.4 The Voortrekkers/Boers in the Transvaal

In 1858, the Voortrekkers, later called Boers, who controlled Transvaal drafted a constitution called the *Rustenburg Grondwet* which contained a clause (Article 9) which stated that there would be no equality between non-white and white people, either in the Church or in the State. Black Africans in the Transvaal republic (the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek) had to enter labour contracts and had to carry passes; they also could not buy liquor without the permission of their employers (Etherington, Harries, & Mbenga, 2010).

Only whites were allowed to become citizens in the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek. Black Africans were not allowed to own guns, land, horses or

wagons, or to have inter-tribal alliances. Africans could only own land when grants were given to them. Grants to own land were only given to those Africans who assisted the Boers in driving out Africans tribes from an area. However, Africans never legally owned these lands, as they were forbidden to buy land and the land was "loaned" to them (Etherington et al., 2010).

There was a great demand for African labour, and African tribes that were conquered initially provided the labour required by the Boers. As the demand for labour grew, the Boers started subjugating more African tribes in the Transvaal (Etherington et al., 2010).

In 1867, diamonds were discovered in the north of the Cape Colony, at Kimberley, which led to segregation in the workplace, as discussed in the next section.

2.2.5   Diamond mines in South Africa

After the discovery of diamonds in the Cape, African labourers were not granted licenses to dig, they were not allowed to hold claims, or to retain or sell any diamonds in their possession and were not allowed to trade with diamonds except with the permission of their masters (Ross, 2008). They had to carry passes and had to pay for hospital accommodation, medication and sanitary services. All African mine workers were forced to strip off their clothes and undergo body searches before leaving work and they could not carry firearms (Ross, 2008).

The Mining Law of 1893 was the first mining law discriminating against Indians, coloureds and Africans. The Mining Code of 1896 gave only whites the right to work as banksmen, onsetters and engine drivers. The Mines, Works and Machinery Ordinance of 1903 allowed for skilled jobs to be reserved for whites, with Africans earning lower wages and performing unskilled work. The Mines and Works Act of 1911 led to segregation in the workplace (Ross, 2008).

Not only did segregation exist in the workplace, but separate African townships were also established, as discussed in the next section.

2.2.6   Establishment of separate townships

Due to a pandemic of the bubonic plague in the Cape Colony during the late nineteenth century, the Public Health Act No 4 of 1883 was implemented, allowing Cape Town's African community to be forcefully removed. Subsequently, an African township was established a few kilometres away from town on the Cape Flats (Ross, 2008).

By the end of the nineteenth century, African lands were under the control of the British. The Native Reserve Location Act, No 40 of 1902, gave the colonial government the power to set up and control African residential areas outside town. It was obvious that the British also subjugated the African people (Ross, 2008).

The conditions described above were those that the Indian indentured labourers found when they arrived in Natal to work in the sugarcane plantations in 1860.

2.3   ARRIVAL OF INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Two different groups of Indians arrived in southern Africa. The first group consisted of indentured labourers who were brought here to work in the sugarcane plantations in Natal. The second group, known as passenger Indians, arrived ten years later. They were merchants who were brought from India to meet the demands of the indentured labourers (Govender, 2006).

2.3.1   Indentured labourers

The British colonists in South Africa made concerted efforts to persuade the British government to replicate a system of indentured labour (which was cheap labour) that already existed in Mauritius, in order to boost the economy

in Natal. In 1860, the first wave of indentured labourers from India arrived in the Natal colony to work in the sugarcane and sisal plantations of the British colonists (Bhana, 2008; Freund, 1995; Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 2000; Vahed, 2008).

The indentured system of labour was financed from the taxes obtained from Africans. Since the British settlers found it difficult to keep local African labour for extended periods of time, imported labour solved their problems, as it was available all year round (Ferguson-Davie, 2000).

The majority of indentured labourers were Tamil Hindus who came from the south Indian city of Madras and belonged to the Sudra class. Later, more labourers were shipped in from the northern areas of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and they were Muslims who spoke Urdu (Duphelia-Meshtrie, 2000; Maharaj, 1995). The Tamils were of a lower class and most were semi-skilled or unskilled workers (Naidoo, 1993; Radhakrishnan, 2005).

2.3.2   Arrival of Indian women

Although the Indian government set a requirement that four women should be brought to Natal for every ten indentured men, few women were prepared to relocate to Natal (Freund, 1995). Eventually, some women who were young widows, who had been deserted by their husbands, disowned by their families, often poor and sickly, came to Natal to work as indentured labourers. These women were paid low wages and many were bought, sold and given away in return for rations, clothing, or other favours (Beall, 1990).

When the women did not work, they were not paid and were given no rations. This led women to force themselves to work even when they were sick, pregnant and in labour. Many women dropped dead at their work. Child marriages were practised among the Indians in Natal, and the patriarchal family structure resulted in the oppression of women. As Indian women moved out of the indentured system, they were repatriated or married, or were

subjugated in some other form of dependence on a male partner or relative (Beall, 1990).

2.3.3   Passenger Indians

The arrival of the Indian indentured labourers boosted the economy, and by the turn of the century approximately 80 000 Indians were living in Natal. There was a demand for goods and services to meet the everyday needs of the labourers which the British traders could not meet. An appeal was made to the Protector of Indian Immigrants (whose purpose was to safeguard the well-being of the indentured labourers) to allow traders from India to settle in South Africa. Permission was granted to passenger Indians who paid their own passage to trade in Natal (Bhana, 2008).

The passenger Indians who came from Bombay and Gujarat were financially better off, and were businesspeople and professionals. This group spoke Gujerati and Memon. They were mostly Muslims (Vahed, 2000) and some Gujerati Hindus (Maharaj, 1995). Although the white government attempted on several occasions to send the Indians back to India, the Indians were determined to stay in South Africa (Bhana, 2008). In 1961, they were recognised as permanent citizens of the Republic (Maharaj, 1995).

Although substantial changes have taken place in the occupational distribution of descendants of the passenger and indentured Indians in the South African economy, Tamil-speaking Hindus still remain in the lowest income bracket, while Muslims and Gujerati Hindus generally constitute the entrepreneurial and professional class (Maharaj, 1995).

2.3.4   Culture, caste, class and language

From the outset, the Indians who came to Natal were a diverse group differentiated along the lines of class, language and religion. Since indentured labourers did not come with their families and there was limited opportunity for occupational stratification and specialisation among them, caste differentiation

disappeared, but they maintained their Indian identity through their language and religious practices. The Gujerati Hindus, however, were more affluent and retained the caste system they brought with them from India (Diesel, 2003; Kuppusami, 1983; Mesthrie, 1991). The caste system in India relates to social and cultural distinctions. This implies that people of the same caste have the same profession, economic and social status and share the same values, which differentiates them from other groups. As a result, some groups enjoy more economic, political and social power than other groups. When a person is born into a particular caste, he or she acquires the class status associated with that caste (Diesel, 2003).

According to Ferrante (2008), the class system started playing an important role in the upward mobility of Indians in South Africa. Class refers to one's level of success in obtaining a particular quality of life, standard of living and lifestyle (Denmark & Paludi, 2008). It is defined by income, education and power. A class system is a more open system than a caste system, as the boundaries between classes are less easily distinguishable and individuals can improve their social status, whereas a caste system offers no mobility (Denmark & Paludi, 2008). In the current study, the Indian women managers I interviewed were all from middle-class families.

Although the Indians seemed like a homogeneous group and were classified as Indians in South Africa, they were an ethnically diverse group. The Indian settlers transmitted many of their cultural norms and values to the generations that followed. However, the Indian immigrants did not adhere to all the customs practised in India, for example, customs such as *sati* (widow immolation), child marriages and the burning of brides due to non-payment of dowry were against the law in the Natal colony (Nath, 2000). However, they retained their taste for traditional food, as well as their values relating to home, family, children, religion and marriage (Khandelwal, 2002). Within a period of 40 years, the immigrant Indian population consisted of no fewer than five linguistic groups, three religious groupings and the whole spectrum of socio-

cultural divisions. Each religious group pursued its own traditional customs and observances (Kuppusami, 1983).

The Hindus in South Africa belong to four language groups. They are Tamils, Telugus, Hindis and Gujeratis (Kumar, 2000). There are fewer Muslims in South Africa than Hindus. The two main groups of Muslims in the country today are the Indian and Malay Muslims. The Malay group is mainly concentrated in the Cape and originate from Malaysia and Indonesia, while the majority of Indian Muslims are found in Gauteng and Natal. Most Muslims follow the tenets of Islam quite strictly, but many have been influenced by Western ideas (Vahed, 2008).

2.3.5   Indians' position under colonialism

2.3.5.1   Indians under the Boer Republics

While the Cape Colony and Natal were British colonies, the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (in the former Transvaal area) and the Orange Free State were Boer Republics. The laws relating to the Indians in the Boer republics were draconian, and the Indians suffered great difficulties and hardships there (Adams, 2010). For example, on 11 September 1891, all Indians were deported from the Orange Free State.

The Transvaal Boers regarded everyone with a darker skin as inferior and therefore the Indians faced the same discrimination as Africans. Indians were placed in "Coolie Compounds" where conditions were unhygienic. They had to walk on the opposite side of the pavement if a white person approached them on a given side of the road. Indians were kept separate from whites; they could not travel first or second class on trains; they could not be out on the streets after 21:00, and they had to carry passes (Bhana, 2008).

2.3.5.2   Indians under British rule

Indians faced different political challenges in the British colonies (in the Cape of Good Hope and Natal) and the Boer Republics (the Transvaal and the Orange Free State). The British colony valued the contribution of Indians, so discrimination was due mainly to attempts to protect white traders' economic interests. The Boers, on the other hand, viewed Indians as racially inferior and felt that discrimination was justified to preserve Afrikaner religious and cultural values (Bhana, 2008).

Like the Africans and coloureds, Indians were not allowed to own land and vote under British rule. In 1885, the Asiatic Bazaar law was passed according to which minority groups such as Indians had to live in demarcated residential areas (Fiske & Ladd, 2004).

After 1880 many Indians settled in the Cape Colony and could vote and did not have to pay a tax. In 1897, Act No 1 stated that free immigration to the Cape Colony was not allowed, except under exceptional conditions. Act No 18 allowed local authorities the power to refuse licenses to Indians who wanted to trade as wholesalers or retailers. This was one way of restricting Indian trade. In April 1899, a proclamation in the name of the British government set apart streets, wards and locations for the use of Indian trade and residence in the Cape Colony and Transvaal (Fiske & Ladd, 2004).

The Immigration Act of 1906 prohibited Asian men over the age of 16 from entering the Cape and other parts of the country. The Asiatic Law Amendment Act (also known as the Transvaal Law Amendment Ordinance of 1906) was a British pass law aimed at Indian males. Every Indian male had to register himself, and failure to do so would lead to deportation. The law was repealed by the British government in the same year, after Indians lobbied against it, but it was re-enacted in 1908 (Adams, 2010)

After the unification of South Africa in 1910, in 1911, the importation of indentured labourers to Natal from India was stopped, due to the inhumane treatment of Indians. By 1920, the Indian population in Natal Province exceeded the white population and whites started feeling threatened by the ever-increasing Indian population (Bhana, 2008).

2.5.3.3   Ghandi and the passive resistance movement

Indians resorted to passive resistance to stand up against the British government under the leadership of Mahatma (Mohandas) Gandhi, who lived in southern Africa from 1893 to 1914 (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Mahatma Gandhi was a barrister who arrived in South Africa from India in 1893 to deal with a case on a year's agreement. On his arrival, he found three types of Indians living in South Africa. The first were indentured labourers, the second were ex-indentured labourers and the third were passenger Indians (Du Toit, 1996). He did not return to India, as the plight of the Indians in South Africa caught his attention. He was especially upset with segregation in the Transvaal and Orange Free State, where Indians were barred from voting (Guest, 1996).

In 1893 Natal had its own government and the main anxiety was to rid the colony of free Indians. In order to do so, a tax of £25-00 was levied on every "free" Indian annually, but the sum was reduced to £3-00 by the British government. These laws were designed to disfranchise Indians who qualified to vote, to stop non-indentured Indian immigration to Natal and to restrict Indian trade (Guest, 1996). In 1885, the Transvaal Law No 3, which aimed at restricting where Indians could trade and reside, was enacted. Gandhi obtained 1 000 signatures in a petition against this piece of legislation, but it was not repealed (Du Toit, 1996).

During the Anglo-Boer war, Indians treated the wounded British soldiers. The war ended in 1902 and the Transvaal became a British colony. However, the British decided to maintain the ill-treatment meted out to Indians before the war, although Indians had provided their services to injured British soldiers.

Although Gandhi tried to meet with the British government to discuss the unfair treatment of Indians, he was rebuffed (Adams, 2010).

The British in the Transvaal also wanted Indians to register and their finger-prints to be used for identification purposes. Indians who were not in possession of registration certificates were not allowed trading licenses. In protest, 9 000 Indians refused to register, to carry registration certificates and produce them for inspection by the police. The Immigration Act of 1906 also restricted the immigration of Indians who could not read or write in a European language to Natal. Eventually, 2 200 Indians marched from Transvaal to cross the border into Natal (Adams, 2010).

The Asiatic Law Amendment Act of 1906 stated that Indians could reside in South Africa for a prescribed period only, and Indians had to register themselves and their children over the age of eight. Failure to do so would result in a £100-00 fine or three months' imprisonment (Harris, 1996). Indians under the leadership of Gandhi embarked on passive resistance to protest against the requirement to carry permits (Schwartz, 2009). In addition to these restrictions, Indians had to obtain the permission of the Colonial Minister to purchase a license to carry arms which was enforced by the Transvaal Arms and Ammunition Act, No 10 of 1907. Separate schools for whites and non-whites were established. Free and compulsory education applied only to white children, and not to Indians (Adams, 2010).

2.3.5.4   Indians in the Union of South Africa

In 1910 Britain ceded power to the Afrikaners, which resulted in the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910. Indians living in the Union of South Africa did not have the franchise, although 13 per cent of coloured males and 2.25 per cent of African males were allowed to vote in the Cape Province. Although Indians did not have the franchise like the coloureds in the Cape, they did enjoy preferential treatment compared to Africans (Henrard, 2002). Africans did not have a franchise in any of the other provinces. Non-whites (including

Indians) were excluded from becoming Members of Parliament, although a few senators were appointed to deal with African views, thus leading to their subordination (Ross, 2008). The colour-bar and anti-Asiatic laws remained. Traditional marriages were not legalised (Adams, 2010).

In 1914, negotiations between Gandhi and Smuts (also known as the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914) resulted in the Indian Relief Act of 1914. Some of the concessions by General Smuts were, for example, the abolition of the £3-00 tax and the recognition of Indian marriages. Indians were given temporary permits to travel freely between the four provinces. However, Indians settling in the Cape Province had to take a dictation test and Indians were still not allowed to settle in the Orange Free State. Indentured labourers were freed after they had completed their period of service. The Immigration of married women and children was allowed (Du Toit, 1996).

The era between 1910 and 1948 was a time when segregation was deeply entrenched and practised by the South African government. Afrikaners were deeply concerned that the State should maintain white purity and supremacy. They wanted the races to be completely separate and even the Afrikaner churches promulgated the idea of racial separation (Thompson, 1990).

This brief overview of the history reveals that non-whites faced racism and discrimination throughout South Africa's history, from colonialism to the present, and this policy was even more firmly entrenched during apartheid through legislation (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Indians had limited political rights during colonialism. The apartheid era, which I discuss next, rendered them completely powerless (Dolby, 2001; Hammond, Clayton, & Arnold, 2009).

2.4   STATUS OF INDIANS UNDER APARTHEID

In 1948, the Nationalist Party won the elections under the slogan of apartheid (meaning "separateness"), which gave birth to a system which was to cause countless tragedies in South Africa for the next 46 years. According to Fiske

and Ladd (2004), apartheid was a social and political philosophy that was built on four principles. Firstly, the four races of South Africa, each with its own culture, language, history and social traditions, should live and develop separately. Secondly, since white people were regarded as the custodians of civilization, it was their duty to lead other races to civilization. Thirdly, in order to perform this role, whites needed to have their privileges protected.

Apartheid was an official policy of racial segregation and control over land. People were classified according to one of four different race groups (namely, white, African, coloured or Indian). People were sometimes classified after being physically examined. Parents and children would be classified differently and were even forced to live separately (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). This separation became a decisive part of every aspect of their lives (Moosa, 1996) and was entrenched by political, economic and social boundaries which were enforced through legislation (Ramsay, 2007).

A true understanding of the subordination faced by the Indian society at large cannot be fully comprehended without examining the legislation that marginalized a proud group and held it in captivity. During the apartheid period, Indians were subjugated in various ways through legislation. However, since the apartheid government regarded Indians as a buffer against Africans, they were given certain privileges (Radhakrishnan, 2005). According to Davis (2001), during times of struggle, whites, who were the dominant group, used Indians as a buffer group to protect themselves from the hostility of African lower-status groups.

Colonialism relegated Indian women to subordinate positions and their minority status was exacerbated during apartheid. Indian women faced double discrimination due to the apartheid system, namely gender and race discrimination. Thus, they were given low status because they belonged to an "inferior" race, and this was compounded by the second class status ascribed to women in apartheid South Africa (Baden, Hasim, & Meintjes, 1998; Andrews, 2001).

While the aim of the current study is not to expound on all forms of subjugation, the discussion that follows elaborates on the status of Indians during the apartheid era, focusing on the main pieces of legislation which I believe are pivotal to the current study.

2.4.1   Population Registration Act of 1950

The manner in which privileges for whites and subordination of Indians in South African society was maintained is clear when one analyses the various pieces of legislation imposed on non-whites. A demeaning piece of legislation, namely the Race Classification Act, also known as the Population Registration Act of 1950, divided the South African population into four racial groups (that is, white, Indian, coloured and African) in the country, whereafter race stratification occurred in terms of economic, political and social privilege, with whites at the top of the hierarchy and Africans at the bottom and Indians between these two races (Duncan, 2003).

2.4.2   Mixed Marriages Act of 1949

The Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act ensured that people of different races did not unite. This led to great suffering as family members could be classified into different race groups and some families were separated for generations (Ross, 2008).

2.4.3   Group Areas Act

One of the main reasons for urban segregation related to the "sanitation syndrome", where whites associated black presence with filth, illness and crime (Maylam, 1995). Africans, Indians and coloureds were therefore moved into their own areas so that whites did not have to live near the slums of non-white people and poor white people could be kept away from poor black people. Residential segregation was legislated with the introduction of the Group Areas Act of 1950, which stipulated that Indians should reside in racially demarcated areas (Hart, 2002) and in this way ensured that people

mainly formed relationships with members of their own racial groups (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). So, for example, the Indian women managers in my study all grew up in segregated townships.

Apartheid had such a profound effect on the psyche of the various races relating to developing a sense of apartness that democracy and freedom are unable to eradicate these effects even today. Racial distance is captured by Posel's (2001, pp. 59-60) study, which reflects the sense of apartness experienced amongst the various race groups in South Africa, where even in 2001,

> …56 percent of Africans, 33.4 percent of whites, 26.6 percent of Coloureds and 41.6 percent of Indians perceived people of other races to be 'untrustworthy'. 52.7 percent of Africans found it 'hard to imagine ever being friends' with people of other races, along with 18.5 percent of whites, 12.8 percent of coloureds and 19.2 percent of Indians. 46.8 percent of Africans said that they felt 'uncomfortable around people of other races', as did 34.7 percent of whites, 24.3 percent of coloureds and 36.7 percent of Indians.

2.4.4 Aliens Control Act

There were limitations on the movements of Indians within South Africa as well. The Aliens Control Act, No 40 of 1973, allowed Indians to travel between provinces without a permit (Kok, O' Donovan, Bouare, & Van Zyl, 2003). However, in terms of provincial legislation, they were not allowed to stay in the Orange Free State and parts of Northern Natal, and could only stop for a brief period after obtaining permission from the provincial authorities (Kok et al., 2003).

2.4.5 The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act

The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, No 49 of 1953, ensured that public amenities such as public transport, beaches, parks, public toilets and

public buildings were separate for the different races (Dolby, 2001). Restricting Indians and denying them the use of shared public amenities reduced the chances of building a common national culture, identity and value system (Lalloo, 1998) and legalized discrimination by advancing a white hegemony (Maile, 2004).

2.4.6   The Indian Education Act

Education was one way in which the government ensured that disparities and division between the races were maintained (Dolby, 2001), as schools were administered by different education departments (Cushner, 1998). The Indian Education Act, No 47 of 1963, resulted in the education of Indian pupils being placed under the Department of Indian Affairs (Keim, 2003).

Classroom education was inferior and so were extracurricular activities, such as sport and cultural activities (Kallaway, 2002; Keim, 2003). Funding and resources were inadequate (Cushner, 1998; McKay & Chick, 2001). Indian girls and boys were steered into different curricula, where males were instructed in trade and females in domestic duties (Jain, Sloane, & Horwitz, 2003; Martineau, 1997). These trends began to change in the 1980s when more black women started pursuing non-traditional careers (Msimang, 2001).

The different departments were provided with separate school curricula for the four different races, which resulted in Indian pupils' internalizing the inferiority of their race (Keim, 2003). One method the apartheid government used to impose fixed ideas and thoughts was the notion of "education as banking", where teachers provided information that was from an oppressive historical ideology on passive, oppressed recipients (Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). The idea was to indoctrinate Indian pupils with notions of white superiority and their own inferiority. In order to achieve this, the apartheid State ensured that teachers complied with the prescribed syllabus through regular individual teacher inspections, a rigid syllabus outlining content, objectives and methods of teaching, internal and external forms of control

(Jansen, 2001). This was one of the reasons for the majority of Indians internalising racism and coming to believe that whites were intellectually "superior" (Duncan, 2003).

Indentured Indians regarded education as an opportunity for their economic betterment and occupational mobility, and the trading class Indians were forced to seek education because apartheid laws placed restrictions on acquiring trading licenses. Indians acquired education through self-help and community initiatives (Jain, 1999). However, Indians placed more emphasis on educating sons than daughters as sons were expected to take care of parents in their old age. Martineau (1997) contends that by 1960 the total number of illiterate Indian females was 61.5 per cent of Indian women. This number had dropped to 10.4 per cent in 1985 as more Indian parents were sending their daughters to school during the apartheid era although they received an inferior level of education and had to contend with inferior resources. Disparities in the education system however had a negative impact on Indian females' level of schooling even after the demise of apartheid. Perry and Arends (2003) posit that in 2001, seven per cent of Indian females had no education at all, due to the past inequities relating to access to education for Indians during apartheid. Contemporary data in the post-apartheid era reveals that the number of Indian girls completing schooling has equalled that of boys and in some cases the female component was even higher (Singh, 2005). This is in contrast to the 1928 figures, when very few Indian girls were attending school (Singh, 2005).

2.4.7 The Extension of University Education Act

Apartheid led to the formation of racially separate and unequal universities. In 1959, the Extension of University Education Act, No 45 of 1959, required Indian students to obtain a permit from the Minister of Education when they wanted to attend tertiary institutions with tuition in English such as the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand

(Mamphiswana & Noyoo, 2000). This Act was repealed in 1988 in the Tertiary Education Act, No 66 (Mamphiswana & Noyoo, 2000).

In 1986, the number of black (African, coloured and Indian) students in universities was 84 136, compared to white university students who numbered 149 449, although the total white population was five million and the black population was 32 million. In 1986, the total number of Indian women enrolled at universities in South Africa totalled 7 997 compared to 60 879 white females, 88 570 white males and 10 353 Indian males (Harker et al., 1991).

2.4.8   Job Reservation Act

White economic interests were safeguarded through the Job Reservation Act. The Job Reservation Act was initiated before 1948 and protected higher paid white wage earners from being replaced by lower paid black workers (Nkomo, Mkwanazi-Twala, & Carrim, 1995).

Mathur-Helm (2005) mentions that during the apartheid era, not only racial but also gender discrimination were enforced through discriminatory legislation which resulted in job reservation and preferential treatment, thus leading to triple discrimination of Indian women in terms of race, class and gender (Maharaj & Maharaj, 2004). Women also entered the workplace under different conditions, with different levels of education and job training, and were integrated into the labour market at different levels (Naidoo & Kongolo, 2004). White women still had access to better paid, higher status jobs (Ginwala, 1977), such as administrative positions, teaching and nursing, and had other advantages (Vahed, 2008). Indian, coloured and African women tended to be concentrated more in lower-paid, menial jobs, such as unskilled factory positions (Mathur-Helm, 2005) and they were denied the same educational opportunities as white women (Nattrass & Seekings, 1997).

Women were not considered for managerial positions in the past, because they were regarded as being too emotional and as not fit to handle

responsibilities. There was no legislation to protect women from discriminatory practices such as unequal salaries for equal work, and black South African women's aspirations and opportunities were limited because employers could dismiss pregnant women (Msimang, 2001). However, due to skills shortages experienced during the 1960s, South Africa embarked on a number of disorganised reforms regarding job segregation during the 1970s and 1980s (Giliomee, 1995).

2.4.9   The demise of apartheid

The cracks in the apartheid system had already started appearing by the end of the 1970s. Maintaining a state of apartheid was economically, politically and socially unsustainable. Opposition to apartheid was greatly felt through international sanctions and black resistance. By the mid-1980s, many Indians could use white amenities such as public libraries, swimming pools and bus services (Simon, 1989) – the tight laws of apartheid had weakened a little in some respects.

Nevertheless, the apartheid regime continued to be brutally imposed on all who rebelled against its enactment. Young activists, especially those who were part of the ANC and who opposed the apartheid government, were subjected to severe torture during the 1980s (Wilson, 2000). Apartheid was a system which reduced freedom of expression and movement, and it led to feelings of powerlessness, discouragement and despair among Indians, like other disadvantaged groups, who were not in control of their social, political and economic situation (Kagee & Price, 1995).

The first democratic elections in 1994 brought an end to one of the most oppressive systems in modern history, namely, the apartheid era, but vestiges of its legacy for Indians are still visible today, for example, in that the majority of Indians still live in Indian townships. There is still minimal social interaction between races, as was apparent from the interviews I conducted with the Indian women managers who participated in the study.

While blacks have gained political power, economic power still belongs to whites (Booysen, 2007). Race and gender hierarchy still exists in the workplace, where white males tend to continue to dominate top and senior managerial positions, particularly in the private sector. The hierarchy of races established under apartheid that resulted in a relatively "higher" status being granted to Indians compared to Africans in a discriminatory system also continues to create tension about how redress should be achieved in the new South Africa.

The end of apartheid has ushered in the post-apartheid era, which I discuss in the next section.

2.5   THE POST-APARTHEID STATUS OF INDIANS

2.5.1   Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

South Africa has undergone a major political change, in that the apartheid regime was replaced by a new democratic order (Özler, 2007). In order to develop an interim constitution, many negotiation rounds took place, starting with the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) I and II and thereafter the Multi-Party Negotiation Process (MPNP). An interim constitution was drafted and used for the period after the 1994 elections (Henrard, 2002) until the final constitution (South Africa, 1996b) was promulgated in 1996.

In the post-apartheid era, many pieces of legislation have been promulgated to redress the unfair treatment meted out to blacks (including Indians), but I only elaborate on legislation relevant to the current study to describe how new legislation has led to more equitable treatment of blacks (one group being Indians).

The central piece of legislation promulgated by the democratic government is the *Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996*, which redresses the imbalances of the past and has ended labour market discrimination relating to Indians, as well as to other previously disadvantaged groups. The new

government is focusing its attention on changing the laws of the country so that they are in line with the new Constitution of 1996 (Msimang, 2001).

2.5.1.1   The equality principle

The equality principle used in the Constitution deals with substantive equality and focuses on differences in circumstances. It therefore allows for the use of remedial measures to redress individual and group disadvantages created by apartheid (Henrard, 2002). Hence, legislation such as the Employment Equity Act of 1998 (South Africa, 1998a), which has an impact on redressing imbalances in employment, was readily agreed to. Numerous pieces of legislation have been promulgated in advancing the careers of blacks (including Indians) and women in South Africa and I address these as well.

2.5.1.2   Bill of Rights

The Constitution of South Africa of 1996 contains a Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of the Constitution) which entrenches for basic human rights. The Constitution provides social equality for Indians (like black Africans and coloureds), which includes the right to vote, freedom of speech, property rights and access to education and health care. Unlike in the apartheid era, Indians under the new democratic government may not be discriminated against on the grounds of their race, religion, class, ethnicity or language (South Africa, 1996b).

2.5.1.3   Unfair discrimination

Section 9 of the Constitution states that the government may not discriminate unfairly against anyone:

> Section 9(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No 108 of 1996) states that all are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Section 9(2) provides steps that may be taken to protect or advance persons or categories of persons disadvantaged by unfair

discrimination. Sections 9(3) and 9(4) put forth that neither the state nor any other person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on various stipulated grounds such as race, gender, sex, age, disability, culture and so forth.

Section 9(5) of the Constitution states that differential treatment on one or more of the listed grounds mentioned above is unfair unless it is established that such discrimination is fair (Desai & Vahed, 2010, p. 5).

However, the government is allowed to discriminate fairly in enacting the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) programme, the aim of which is to redress past inequalities of the apartheid government and to provide opportunities to Indian, African and coloured citizens of South Africa who were previously economically disadvantaged. Some of the measures used by Black Economic Empowerment in organisations are, for example, Employment Equity and skills development (South Africa, 1996b).

Section 16(2)(c) of the Constitution also prohibits hate speech relating to religion, race, gender or ethnicity. In this way, Indians are safeguarded from being at the receiving end of racial insults (South Africa, 1996b).

2.5.1.4   Freedom to choose a profession

Section 22 of the Constitution allows for people to choose their trade, profession and occupation (South Africa, 1996b). These days, Indians are free to choose their careers, unlike in the apartheid days, when Indians could only work in certain professions. For example, professions such as human resources management were reserved for whites only.

2.5.1.5   Religious and cultural freedom

Because the new democratic government wants a non-racial society and does not want to infringe on the rights of minority groups such as the Indians, section 30 of the Constitution states that everyone is allowed to speak his or

her own language and to practise his or her own cultural rites. Section 31 also allows for people from a particular cultural and religious group, such as Indians, to practise their culture, religion, language and to join and maintain cultural and religious associations (South Africa, 1996b).

Although South Africa has been lauded for having the best constitution in the world, the previously disadvantaged groups are all not satisfied with democracy. Hamel, Brodie and Morin (2006) conducted a national survey in 2003 and discovered that, compared to coloured and Africans, Indians and whites felt that the situation in the country was better during apartheid. The South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2003 also indicates that only 34 per cent of South African Indians were satisfied with democracy, while 45 per cent were dissatisfied. This gloomy picture could be due to the fact that Indians might feel that, while their rights have improved, their material circumstances have not (Daniel, Southall, & Dippenaar, 2006). In addition, although 30 per cent of Indians felt that South Africa was making progress, 67 per cent felt that it has not (Daniel et al., 2006). The survey also indicated that 28 per cent of Indians believed life for them had improved since the 1994 elections, while 48 per cent felt it had deteriorated. However, the survey revealed that 44 per cent of Indians felt that for them life would improve in the next five years, while 32 per cent felt that it would not (Daniel et al., 2006). These statistics reveal the lack of confidence Indians have regarding their overall position in post-apartheid South Africa.

The above-mentioned points from the Constitution have a direct impact on Indians as a minority group, and on women. The Employment Equity legislation which I discuss next also affects Indians as a previously disadvantaged group. Since the focus of the current study is on the career advancements of Indian women managers, this piece of legislation has a direct impact on them as well. Therefore, after discussing the impact of the Employment Equity legislation, I focus on the extent to which it has made a difference in the upward mobility of Indian women.

2.5.2 The Employment Equity Act and its implications for Indians

2.5.2.1 Background to the Employment Equity Act

Prior to 1994, racial and gender discrimination in South Africa caused resentment and major inequalities affecting the previously disadvantaged individuals in the labour market (Greeff & Nel, 2003). The Employment Equity Act (EEA) was therefore passed by Parliament in 1998 to address the imbalances of work opportunities for blacks (which included coloureds, black Africans and Indians), women and persons with disabilities in the workplace (Jain, 2002; Jain et al., 2003; Naidoo & Kongolo, 2004; Thomas, 2002; Valodia, 2000).

Chapter 2(6) (1) of the Employment Equity Act declares that

> …no person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee, in any employment policy or practice on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth.

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, No 4 of 2000 (South Africa, 2000) goes hand in hand with the Employment Equity Act. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act prevents unfair discrimination and harassment and promotes equality (Ocholla, 2002). The aim of the Act is to ensure that people from designated groups, such as Indians and women, are represented at all occupational levels. The Department of Labour has therefore ensured that it collects data on the economically active population in terms of race, gender and disability. The enthusiasm with which Employment Equity has been implemented in organisations has diminished and many organisations have not reached their targets in placing suitably qualified blacks such as Indians in managerial positions, as white males still dominate these posts. Also, of all previously

disadvantaged groups such as Indians and women, white women are making the most strides in being appointed into professional and managerial positions (Moleke, 2003).

2.5.2.2   Indian community fears

While the post-apartheid South African government has promulgated legislation to redress the imbalances of the past, the stories that emerge from Indian South Africans paint another picture. While many Indian South Africans were involved in the political struggle against apartheid, many Indians also feared the changes a black government would bring in their lives. In the first elections of 1994, ironically, the majority of Indians voted against President Mandela and instead voted for the National Party, which had been responsible for the ills of apartheid (Desai, 1996).

Radhakrishnan (2005) found in a study of Indians in post-apartheid South Africa that most believed that, while the democratic government did not isolate whites as a minority group, such efforts were not taken with Indians. According to Desai (2002), the poorest of Indians these days have to struggle for basic amenities such as water, electricity and housing, which was not the case under the previous regime. Radhakrishnan (2005) points out that, Indian political activists ascribe the deterioration in basic services due to the State's experiencing a constriction on its resources. Her study also reveals that professional Indians are unable to find jobs due to employment equity targets that need to be met, and that many are emigrating to Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

The Employment Equity Act has also opened up debates around claims that Indians had been privileged during the apartheid era and should therefore not be regarded as previously disadvantaged (Leonard & Grobler, 2006). In the apartheid era, more jobs were available for Indians in South Africa than to black Africans. With the introduction of the Employment Equity policy, many jobs in areas such as Kwazulu-Natal, in clothing factories, banks and

municipalities, have been taken by black Africans in order for employers to achieve employment equity quotas. This has led to many of the Indian poorer class feeling that employment equity is not working for them (Desai & Vahed, 2010).

Van Zyl and Roodt (2003) suggest that employment equity is a long-term programme to ensure that all employees have a fair chance in the workplace. However, the Indian community is not satisfied with the manner in which employment equity measures are being implemented in organisations. Indians were in-betweeners during apartheid. They were not "white" enough to enjoy the privileges, but were in a better position than most black Africans. In the post-apartheid period, they feel they are not "black" enough, as employment equity legislation is not used in the correct manner in organisations and they are therefore marginalised and sidelined when applying for jobs. While Indians are not against the principles of the Employment Equity Act, they protest against how the Act is implemented and feel left out although they are meant to be targeted as a group that should benefit from this policy (Henrard, 2002).

Indians also fear becoming victims of white manipulation, being victimised, being regarded as tokens and being marginalised when they are appointed on the basis of their employment equity status. The majority of Indian professionals do not want to be viewed as being appointed due to their employment equity status, but believe they should be promoted on merit (De Beer & Radley, 2000).

2.5.2.3   Indian representation in professions

The discussion above paints a bleak picture for Indian South Africans, but many Indian professionals are making considerable strides in South African organisations. For example, when the ANC took the reigns of power in 1994, there were only 10 black directors and fewer than 90 black chartered accountants compared to 16 000 white chartered accountants. Statistics indicate there has been a steady increase in black accountants from 2002 to 2010:

- African chartered accountants have increased from 301 in 2002 to 1 738 in 2010,

- coloured chartered accountants have increased from 208 in 2002 to 764 in 2010,

- Indian chartered accountants have increased from 986 to 2 701, and

- white charted accountants have increased from 18 998 in 2002 to 25 957 in 2010 (South African Transformation Monitor, 2010).

The Department of Labour's Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) statistics for 2010/2011 indicate that Indian males are found in all 11 private industry sectors in South Africa. However, the highest concentration of professional Indian males is found in manufacturing (8.5 per cent of the workforce), followed by wholesale trade, commercial agents and allied services (7.2 per cent of the workforce) and thereafter in finance/business services (6.6 per cent). The highest concentration of skilled Indian males is found in manufacturing (8.2 per cent of the workforce), followed by wholesale trade, commercial agents and allied services (5.3 per cent of the workforce) and thereafter electricity, gas and water (2.7 per cent of the workforce). These figures are however lower than for males from all other race groups, although at the professional level they are higher than the figures for coloured males (Department of Labour, 2011).

The Department of Labour's Commission for Employment Equity statistics for 2010/2011 reveal that 5.4 per cent of all professional males recruited in corporate South Africa were Indians, compared to 5.0 per cent coloureds, 16.8 per cent Africans and 30.9 per cent whites. The Department of Labour's Commission for Employment Equity statistics for 2010/2011 also reveal that 5.0 per cent of professional males promoted in corporate South Africa were Indians, compared to 9.6 per cent coloureds, 19.2 per cent Africans and 20.9 per cent whites (Department of Labour, 2011). The Department of Labour's Commission for Employment Equity statistics for 2010/2011 reveal that 3.4 per cent skilled males recruited in corporate South Africa were Indians, compared to 7.9 per cent coloureds, 25.7 per cent Africans and 19.0 per cent whites.

The Commission for Employment Equity statistics for 2011 also revealed that of the skilled males promoted in corporate South Africa, 3.1 per cent were skilled Indians, compared to 9.7 per cent coloureds, 30.6 per cent Africans and 9.8 per cent white males (Department of Labour, 2011). The Department of Labour Commission for Employment Equity statistics for 2010/2011 therefore reveals that Indian males are the least recruited and promoted in corporate South Africa, compared to members of the other race groups.

While Indians may not be satisfied with the manner in which employment equity legislation is applied in organisations, another marginalised group, namely women, also experience difficulties in moving up the corporate ladder. Below, I discuss employment equity policy redressing women's advancement in organisations, as well as other pieces of legislation implemented in advancing women's careers in South African organisations.

2.5.3   Gender equality in post-apartheid South Africa

One of the aims of the Employment Equity Act is that it provides opportunities to women because they were previously disadvantaged. Naidoo and Kongolo (2004) assert that one of the main objectives of the Employment Equity Act

(South Africa, 1998a) was to empower, uplift and break the glass ceiling that has prevented black women from advancing to managerial positions which had previously always been reserved for white males. Organisations in South Africa are legally bound to employ, train and promote women. There are some organisations that give preferential treatment to women in terms of promotion when they are equally qualified to their male counterparts. Leck (2002) asserts, firstly, that employment equity increases the presence of women in non-traditional posts. Secondly, employment equity tends to favour women when organisations downsize, as the Act requires a certain percentage of women to be part of an organisation.

In order to enforce the Employment Equity Act, the Department of Labour expects organisations to report on progress made in achieving their equity targets. The first reports were submitted in October 2000. The Department of Labour announced there had been no significant improvement in the representation of designated employees since the baseline figures of 1998 (Walbrugh & Roodt, 2003). This implied that organisations did not adhere to the Employment Equity Act.

Mathur-Helm (2005) argues that there are a number of serious barriers to the implementation of the Employment Equity Act. One of the main reasons is that South African organisations are not women-friendly, as discrimination on the basis of race and gender still exists as a result of past history. Many South African organisations are still grappling with whether they should promote according to race or gender. It seems greater attention has been paid to racial than gender equity (Nkomo, forthcoming). Moreover, affirmative action and employment equity cannot guarantee women a place in management in South Africa.

2.5.3.1   Statistics of Indian women in industry

South African Indians constitute 2.6 percent of the total South African population with Indian women constituting 1.3 percent of Indians (Diesel,

2003). According to the Business Women's Association of South Africa's Women in Leadership Census for 2011, government departments have more women than men, except with regard to Indian women, where the percentage is lower than Indian males (BWASA, 2011). The statistics in government departments relating to the female:male ratios in the four race groups revealed ratios of 58.6 per cent white females to 41.4 per cent white males, 56.3 per cent coloured females to 43.7 per cent coloured males, 56.3 per cent African females to 43.7 per cent African males and 49.4 per cent Indian females to 50.6 per cent Indian males.

The Business Women's Association of South African Women in Leadership Census for 2011 revealed that there had been little change in the representation of women from the different race groups in government departments. The figures for Indian women in government departments in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 were 1.6, 1.5, 1.5 and 1.5 per cent of the total number of female employees respectively. These figures are even lower than those of coloured women, which remained steady at 5.1 per cent from 2008 to 2011. At managerial levels, Indian women have the lowest representation compared to the representation of the other race groups in terms of salary levels. However, statistics reveal that the number of Indian women in managerial levels in government departments has dropped from 8.6 percent to 7.5 per cent. Overall, government has not been able to increase the representation of women from all race groups in managerial positions (BWASA, 2011).

The Commission for Employment Equity statistics for the 11 private industry sectors for 2011 reveal that skilled Indian women are represented in all sectors. The highest concentration of professional Indian women is in finance/business services (5.7 per cent of the workforce), followed by wholesale trade/commercial agents/allied services (3.5 per cent of the workforce) and thereafter catering, accommodation and other trade (3.5 per cent of the workforce) (Department of Labour, 2011). Besides the finance/business services, where coloured women are the least represented,

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Indian women have the lowest percentages in the other two sectors, namely wholesale trade/commercial agents/allied services and catering, accommodation and other trade.

The highest concentration of skilled Indian women is in the wholesale trade/commercial agents/allied services (4.2 per cent of the workforce), followed by catering, accommodation and other trade (2.9 per cent of the workforce), and thereafter manufacturing (2.5 per cent) (Department of Labour, 2011). In terms of these sectors where skilled Indian women have the highest representation, they still have the lowest percentage representation compared to women from other race groups. Moreover, their advancement into managerial levels is very slow in these sectors (Department of Labour, 2011).

The Commission for Employment Equity statistics for 2011 for all organisations reveal that of the professional women recruited, 3.9 per cent were professional Indian women compared to 3.7 per cent coloured, 18.9 per cent white and 12.2 per cent African women. The Commission for Employment Equity statistics for 2011 for all organisations reveal that of the women promoted, 4.1 per cent were professional Indian women compared to 7.3 per cent coloured, 15.3 per cent African and 16.9 per cent white women. These statistics show that the percentage of professional Indian women promoted is the lowest for women from all race groups in South African organisations (Department of Labour, 2011).

The Commission for Employment Equity statistics for 2011 for all organisations reveal that of the skilled women recuited, 2.8 per cent were skilled Indian women, as compared to 7.1 per cent coloured, 13.8 per cent white and 18.1 per cent African women. The Commission for Employment Equity statistics for 2011 for all organisations reveal that of the skilled women promoted, 2.6 per cent were skilled Indian women, compared to 11.6 per cent coloured, 21.8 per cent African and 10.1 per cent white women. These statistics reveal that the percentage of skilled Indian women recruited and

promoted was the lowest for women from all race groups in South African organisations (Department of Labour, 2011).

The above-mentioned statistics reveal that legislation in South Africa favours minority groups such as Indians and women, but when organisations do not implement the legislation correctly, these groups remain poorly represented.

Aside from general employment equity legislation, the South African government has taken strides to try to achieve gender equity through the legislation which I discuss below.

2.5.3.2   *Gender equality and legislation*

With the release of political prisoners in 1992, a Women's National Coalition was formed to ensure women's equality in the new democracy (Meintjies, 1996). It is only recently that attention has been paid to the challenges women in management positions face in the South African workplace. A variety of documents illustrate this point, such as South Africa's focus on how gender equality will be achieved in South Africa and the signing of a number of UN conventions on women.

Since 1994, the Women's National Coalition and the government worked hand-in-hand to abolish all forms of discrimination against women, to promote equality and to prevent domestic violence through the passing of the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (1995), Domestic Violence and the Maintenance Act No. 116 of 1998 (South Africa, 1998c) and Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act No. 136 of 2000 (South Africa, 2000). To set an example to organisations, the South African government has ensured that women are represented in Parliament. At the Sixth African Development Forum held in Addis Ababa in November 2008, South Africa had the third highest representation (32.8 per cent) of women in Parliament on the African continent after Rwanda and

Mozambique. This stems from the government's commitment to include women as members of a previously disadvantaged group (Msimang, 2001).

Other forums and legislation to promote the interest of women is the Women's Charter for Effective Equality (1994), the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996b), the Reconstruction and Development Programme (South Africa, 1994), the National Report of the Status of Women in South Africa prepared for the World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 (Ertürk, 2004) and South African Women on the Road to Development, Equality and Peace – Beijing Conference Plan of Action of 1995 (Mathur-Helm, 2005).

The concept "gender mainstreaming" was extensively used during the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995. In the last few years, it has been embraced in many policy documents, including national strategy plans on the Beijing Platform for Action. Gender mainstreaming deals with both the incorporation of women into existing systems as active participants and changes to existing systems to decrease gender inequalities stemming from women's disadvantaged positions in societies (Tiessen, 2004).

Figure 2.1 is the preamble to *The Women's Charter for Effective Equality* (1994) in South Africa. The Charter outlines the vision and desires relating to human rights, dignity and the desire for better material conditions for South African women.

Figure 2.1: Preamble to The Women's Charter for Effective Equality

We, women of South Africa, claim our rights. We claim full and equal participation in the creation of a non-sexist, non-racist, democratic society.

As women we have come together in a coalition of organisations to engage in a campaign that enabled women to draw on their diverse experiences and define what changes are required within the new political, legal, social and economic system.

South Africa is the poorer politically, economically and socially for having prevented half of its people from fully contributing to its development.

Women's subordination and oppression has taken many forms under patriarchy, custom and tradition, colonialism, racism and apartheid.

We recognize the diversity of our experiences and recognize also the commonalities of our subordination as women.

We are committed to seizing this historic moment to achieve effective equality in South Africa. The development of the potential of all our people, women and men, will enrich and benefit the whole of society.

Women have achieved success and made invaluable contributions to society despite widespread discrimination.

We claim recognition and respect for the work that we do in the home, in the workplace and the community. We claim shared responsibilities and decision-making in all areas of public and private life.

Democracy and human rights, if they are to be meaningful to women, must address our historic subordination and oppression. For women to participate in, and shape the nature and form of our democracy, the concepts of both human rights and democracy must be redefined and interpreted in ways which encompass women's diverse experiences.

We require society to be reorganized and its institutions to be restructured to take cognizance of all women. In particular women should have full opportunity and access to leadership positions and decision-making at all levels and in all sectors of society. Affirmative action could be one means of achieving this.

We hereby set out a programme for equality in all spheres of public and private life, including the law and administration of justice; the economy; education and training; development infrastructure and the environment; social services; political and civic life; family life and partnerships; custom, culture and religion; violence against women; health; and the media.

Source: *The Women's Charter for Effective Equality* (1994, p. 1)

Following the Fourth World Conference in Beijing, South Africa has embarked on a programme of a "National Machinery for Women" to evaluate and monitor gender equality. In addition, a network of structures aimed at taking forward women's emancipation and empowerment both within and external to government has emerged.

The Women's Budget Initiative (WBI) focuses on how national and provincial budgets can advantage or empower women and gender equality (Flood, Hoosain, & Primo, 1997). At the Sixth African Development Forum held in Addis Ababa in November 2008, South Africa was one of the countries that had narrowed its gender gap relating to women's access to economic structures and policies through its Women's Budget Initiative. The national, provincial and local budgets are assessed from a gender perspective.

While all these policies and reforms are designed for the benefit of all South African women, white females benefit most from these policies as they are still in the majority in management positions compared to black women. The New Constitution has established a Commission for Gender Equality whose purpose is to promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality (Msimang, 2001). The Commission on Gender Equality Act, No 39 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996a) focuses on the principles that organisations should include relating to achieving gender equality. The Commission for Gender Equality has compiled a strategic five-year plan (2008-2013) for achieving gender equality and enhancing the economic, social and political status of all South African women (Commission for Gender Equality, 2008). In 1996, the South African government consented to the international Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1995) by passing the Gender Policy Framework (GPF) (Mathur-Helm, 2005). The GPF's main aim, according to Mathur-Helm (2005), was to integrate gender policies by ensuring that

- women's rights are perceived as human rights,

- they have equality as active citizens,

- their economic empowerment is promoted,

- their social upliftment is given priority,

- they are included in decision-making,

- they are beneficiaries in political, economic, social and cultural areas, and

- Affirmative Action programmes targeting women are implemented.

The GPF guides the process of developing laws, policies, procedures and practices that will function to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women in South Africa in all spheres of government, and in private and public sector jobs (Mathur-Helm, 2005).

Not only are the rights of minority communities such as Indians protected by the Constitution, but the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the new Constitution, which states South Africa is founded on the principles of "non-racialism and non-sexism", and the Bill of Rights guarantees freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sex and gender. Fester (2004) mentions that the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of the Constitution) addresses the position of women in the following manner:

- Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

- Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote achievement and equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.

Mathur-Helm (2005) states that, according to the Commission on Gender Equality (South Africa, 1996a), women comprise the largest segment of the South African population. Yet they account only for a third of the labour force and occupy only a few senior and top management positions.   The

Commission for Employment Equity has also had discussions with representatives from the Commission of Gender Equality and Labour to discuss the general improvements of women's life condition and to increase their representation at all levels in organisations, especially from middle to top managerial positions (Department of Labour, 2010).

2.6 CONCLUSION

This study employed a life story approach. Scholars have noted that it is not possible to use such an approach fully without the incorporation of historical events and the socio-cultural context shaping the life stories of women's lives and careers. My inclusion of this rather detailed history is in keeping with Erikson's observation that "human life is inextricably interwoven with history" (Erikson, 1975, p. 20).

The point of sharing this history is to illuminate the context in which the women who participated in this study grew up and the challenges they faced as members of the first cohort of Indian women to enter a white male domain. The study also aimed to underscore the importance of growing up in a context where Indian women were made to feel inferior due to their gender and race and were segregated into closed Indian communities, and the effects this would have on their socialisation and ultimately their progress in corporate South Africa. Although caste was minimized, the Indian culture still remained a strong anchor in the lives of these women. The history also highlights the relatively better socioeconomic position of Indians compared to that of black Africans during the apartheid era, but shows that Indians were still disadvantaged in the workplace. The history also highlights post-apartheid government's commitment to advance previously disadvantaged groups and especially women in the workplace.

The next chapter reviews gender and management literature and focuses on the various women-in-management theories, intersectionality, identity work and hybrid identities.

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 10th 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, Aldefer (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 posses 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

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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

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- 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 women'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

Figure showing nested contexts: Historical context – apartheid; Indian culture & Religion; Family & Community; Gender, racio-ethnic and professional identities
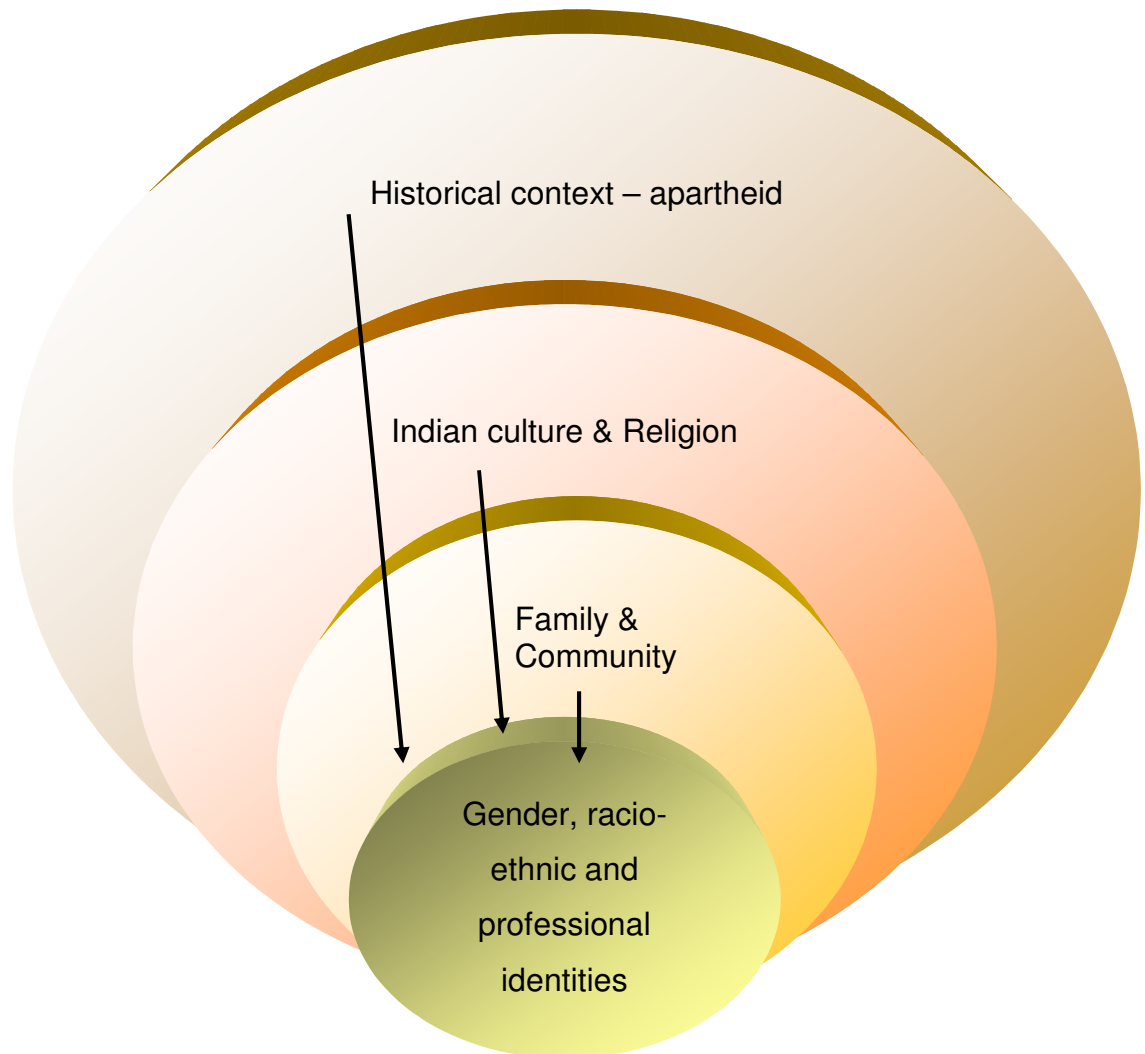
3.3   INTERSECTIONALITY

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 "Nigrescene" 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 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 (Booysen, 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 (Booysen, 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 (Booysen, 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 (Booysen, 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.

Booysen 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.

CHAPTER 4:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 WHAT IS A RESEARCH DESIGN?

According to Babbie and Mouton (2006), a research design addresses the planning of a scientific enquiry, that is, it refers to an overall strategy for finding out something. Three aspects are usually included in a research design, namely, the research approach, the research strategy and the research methodology.

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research problem, the research aim and the research questions in this study all suggested that a qualitative approach should be used to study the phenomenon of the identity work engaged in by Indian women managers in South Africa. Since I wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of the identity work the Indian women who participated in my study engaged in, I realized that a survey would not capture the nuances and subtleties of the experiences of these women relating to their gender, racio-ethnic and professional identities. Also, I wished to gain an understanding of the subjective experiences of the women's childhood and workplace experiences and to obtain an insider's view, which is best captured by means of a qualitative research design and methodology.

The diagram in Figure 4.1 outlines the steps that were followed in the research process used in the study on the identity work of Indian women managers.

Figure 4.1: Research process used in the study

Step 1: I identified an existing problem in the workplace	Talking to Indian women in workplace and own experiences as manager
Step 2: The problem resulted in:	**Outlining** → Research → Research questions
Step 3: I chose a paradigm suited to this research	Interpretivist
Step 4: I decided on the most appropriate strategy for this research	Qualitative method
Step 5: I examined the type of data to be collected	Qualitative data
Step 6: I chose a data collection method	Tape recorder and transcribing
Phase 1 — Pilot study	In-depth interviews and thematic analysis
Phase 2 — Main study	Life story interviews
Step 7: I analysed the data	Grounded theory
Step 8: I discussed the findings and conclusions, and made recommendations	Review and enfold literature

Source: Adapted from Mackenzie and Knipe (2006, p. 203)

4.2.1 Metatheory

According to Babbie and Mouton (2006), there are three main research approaches:

- the qualitative approach, which is related to phenomenology or interpretivism,

- the quantitative approach, which is related to positivism, and

- the participatory research, which is related to the critical paradigm in metatheory.

In this section, I defend my choice of the particular research approach selected to study the phenomenon in question. In order to defend the use of my particular research approach, the positivist, interpretivist and critical traditions are discussed.

Before I focus on the three research approaches I would like to define what I mean by metatheory. McGregor (2009, p. 146) postulates that "metatheory refers to members of a discipline systematically constructing and evaluating the theories, models, and conceptual frameworks of their field, not the empirical data". Depending on the aims and questions of their studies, the theories, models, hypotheses and frameworks of enquiry differ for different researchers. It is for this reason that I feel that I should explain why I have chosen a particular research approach to my study and how this approach informed my results. I start by outlining the critical and positivist traditions and provide reasons as to why these approaches were not suitable for my study, and thereafter demonstrate the appropriateness of the interpretivist approach for the present study.

4.2.2.1 The critical tradition

The main focus of critical theory is to discover and resolve problems in society (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). The main aim of critical researchers is action research, where the results of studies address injustices (Clark, 2007), for example, by redressing past oppression, highlighting problems and providing assistance to minorities, AIDS patients, the terminally ill, the poor, the sidelined and the silenced in order to give them a voice (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In this model, knowledge is regarded as subjective; what one sees depends on whose perspective it comes from. This aspect of subjectivity is also referred to as the standpoint theory (Rubin &

Rubin, 2005). Critical research also focuses on enabling individuals to understand what caused the injustice, oppression and poverty in their lives and how these problems can be decreased (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

Critical realism and critical interpretivism are important elements of critical theory. Critical realism originated as a result of the criticism against positivism. The main question in critical realism is what properties do societies and people have that make them possible objects of knowledge? (Danermark et al., 2006, p. 5) The central idea around which critical realism is based on is that the world is structured, differentiated, stratified and changing. Critical interpretivism on the other hand is based on local and detailed empirical interpretation of problems within organizations, a reflective approach that disrupts assumptions that reinforce the status quo within organizations and where interpretations are based on considering power and control (Doolin and McLeod, 2005).

In the current study, I focus on the life story of Indian women managers in the corporate environment and how they negotiated their identities on their journey toward top managerial positions. It was not my aim to become part of the participants' lives or to act as a change agent. Therefore, the critical tradition was not appropriate for the current study.

4.2.2.2   *The positivist tradition*

Positivists study phenomena through static empirical means (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). Bryman and Bell (2007) maintain that positivists use natural science methods to study social reality and do not regard the two disciplines as separate entities. Positivists take a narrow perspective of phenomena and believe that there is only one true version of an event. They do not consider that people may have different perceptions of events, where there is truth in each view point (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This narrow point of view makes positivists unable to come up with solutions to social problems – since they lack understanding of the causes of certain phenomena, they are unable to intervene (Taylor, 2007).

Positivists believe that human nature is universal and do not account for differences in people due to race, culture, religion and historical contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). By quantifying the social world into static variables, positivists may destroy valuable data by imposing their world on the subjects. Positivists are unable to develop meaning and useful findings from experimental research and research techniques. Experiments in laboratories, field research and the use of questionnaires create suspicion in participants, and they may answer surveys in such a manner that it does not reflect what they believe or feel, but what researchers expect (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Since the current study deals with the lived experiences of Indian women managers, where variables such as race, culture, religion and the organisational context are vital and a deeper interpretation of phenomena is sought, the positivist tradition was an unsuitable paradigm. The emphasis on subjectivity in this study also precluded the use of questionnaires with predefined measures. The current research dealt not only with the Indian women's cultural background, but also with Indian women's cultural background against a South African background, which is different from Indian cultures in India and in other Western countries. South African Indians have a different history, which has influenced their culture and ways of thinking that are different to those of Indians in other parts of the world. One has to account for these cultural and historical differences which have had an impact on the Indian South African women who participated in the study.

4.2.2.3   The interpretivist tradition

According to Bryman and Bell (2007), interpretivism is an alternate view to positivism. Interpretivism is concerned with an understanding of complex human behaviour and social settings (De Villiers, 2005). Interpretivists believe that most of our knowledge is gained through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents and other artefacts which have meaning in people's lives (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Thus, researchers have their own understanding, their own interpretations and world views regarding the phenomenon in question due to their own cultural and historical influences (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is therefore imperative that social scientists understand and interpret the

social world from individual participants' perspectives and to recognise that their own backgrounds will influence interpretations of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2007a).

In the current study, I was interested in understanding the social world of the participants and relating their experiences to their cultural and religious values and beliefs and the world of work which have had an influence on the identity of Indian women managers. One cannot understand these aspects without understanding the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptive worlds in which Indian women managers operate, namely their communities, their homes, the broader South African society and the world of work. I therefore needed to come to understand the deeper perspectives of the issue under investigation, captured through face-to-face interaction with Indian women managers, in a form recommended by Marshall and Rossman (1999). I also had to understand my own interpretations as a researcher of the Indian culture.

De Villiers (2005) argues that the interpretivist approach is value-laden, as results cannot be generalised to settings other than the context in which the research was conducted, and different researchers will also interpret findings according to their orientations. The advantage of interpretivism lies in allowing a researcher to obtain rich, in-depth data from participants. This is illustrated in the current study, as I obtained in-depth information regarding the participants' early lives, cultural, religious and organisational backgrounds. I also built a relationship with the Indian women managers who participated, as suggested by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), so that I was better able to comprehend the subjective worlds of my participants and was less focused on my subjective interpretations, as Weber (2004) advises.

An interpretivist researcher is also interested in gathering all the relevant information that relates to the lived experiences of subjects and the phenomenon in question (Denzin, 2002). The emphasis is on the context in which participants live and work, so that researchers are better able to comprehend the historical and cultural background of participants (Creswell, 2007b). I was interested in collecting data related to Indian women managers' childhoods, adult and professional lives that

resulted in their upward mobility within organisations and how they negotiated their identities in the process.

Table 4.1 compares the positivist and interpretivist approaches to research, focusing on these approaches' metatheoretical assumptions.

Table 4.1: Metatheoretical assumptions of positivist vs. interpretivist research

Metatheoretical assumptions about:	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology	**The person (researcher) and reality are separate.**	The person (researcher) and reality are inseparable (life-world).
Epistemology	**Objective reality exists beyond the human mind.**	Knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a person's lived experience.
Research object	**The research object has inherent qualities that exist independently of the researcher.**	The research object is interpreted in the light of the meaning structure of a person's (researcher's) lived experience.
Method	**Statistics, content analysis.**	Hermeneutics, phenomenology, etc.
Theory of truth	**Correspondence theory of truth: one-to-one mapping between research statements and reality.**	Truth as intentional fulfilment: interpretations of the research object match the lived experience of object.
Validity	**Certainty: data truly measures reality.**	Defensible knowledge claims.
Reliability	**Replicability: research results can be reproduced.**	Interpretive awareness: researchers recognize and address the implications of their subjectivity.

Source: Adapted from Weber (2004, p. iv)

4.3 KEY SCIENTIFIC BELIEFS

In this section, I look at the research approach I selected and justify my choice by reflecting on the relevant key scientific beliefs.

4.3.1 Ontological position

Ontology deals with the nature of reality (Gioia, 2003). An ontology implies that researchers question the existence of things that are in the world (Christou & Anastasiadou, 2008; Marsh & Stoker, 2002). Snape and Spencer (2003, p. 20) explain that "within social research key ontological questions concern whether or not social reality exists independently of human conceptions and interpretations; whether there is a common, shared, social reality or just multiple context-specific realities; and whether or not social behaviour is governed by 'laws' that can be seen as immutable or generalisable". Taylor (2007) posits that the societies in which we live influence and constrain how we act and think. Therefore, through their subjective understanding, individuals can attribute different meanings to the same situation, and conversely, different reactions result out of similarly expressed views, which in turn lead to a state of constant revision (Bryman, 2001; Niehaves & Stahl, 2006) and various interpretations of social reality (Williams, 2000) which are accessible to a researcher through respondents only (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

From an ontological perspective, I was able to access the life stories of the Indian women managers who participated in the study, and gained an understanding of the challenges they faced in negotiating identities due to cultural, societal and organisational factors. I was interested in finding out the reality for Indian women in corporate South Africa who were on their way to top managerial positions and how they experienced this journey.

4.3.2 Epistemological position

Ontology deals with the nature of a phenomenon. By contrast, epistemology focuses on how we acquire knowledge about a phenomenon which stems from a researcher's view of the world (Marsh & Stoker, 2002; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Taylor, 2007; Weber 2004). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) point out that in an interpretivist paradigm, epistemology is subjective, as the researcher and the participants are engaged in jointly creating understandings.

I adopted interpretivism as the epistemological perspective most suited to the study, as I was interested in the lived experiences of Indian women managers and wanted to acquire a deeper understanding of their life and career journeys. An interpretivist epistemology allowed for rich, in-depth data to be collected through in-depth life stories. The analysis and themes that emerged were shared with the women in the study to assess whether their realities had been captured correctly. This implied a joint creation of understandings.

4.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY – THE QUALITATIVE METHOD

4.4.1 The qualitative research method

Strauss and Corbin (1998b, p. 10-11) explain that "qualitative research is not arrived at through statistical procedures or other means of quantification but deals with research about people's lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions and feelings as well as about organisational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena and interactions between nations".

Qualitative studies deal with understanding phenomena that naturally occur in specific contexts, where researchers do not manipulate the phenomena that they are interested in (Patton, 2002). A qualitative researcher focuses on capturing what people say and do, and how they interpret the world (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Hancock, 2002; Lee, 1999) and how they feel about events in their lives (Beins, 2004). A qualitative method is a useful way of generating theories of what occurs in organisational settings. What are discovered through qualitative research are not generalisations, but contextual findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

In order to capture and analyse unstructured information, qualitative researchers use interview transcripts and recordings, notes, feedback forms, photos and videos (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005), verbal summaries of research findings (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister, 2003), flow diagrams and narrative descriptions of events and processes (Landy & Conte, 2004).

Qualitative researchers commence with general research questions, collect extensive verbal data from a few participants, organise data in a coherent fashion and use verbal descriptions to portray the situations they have studied (Neill, 2007). Data are used to develop concepts and theories that assist the researcher in understanding the social world. This is an inductive approach to the development of theory (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Qualitative researchers make specific observations and then draw inferences about larger and more general phenomena. Data analysis is subjective and driven by a search for patterns (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

A more personal, literary style is used in qualitative research reports, which includes the participants' language and perspectives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Qualitative research reports are descriptive, encompassing expressive language and the 'presence of voice in the text" (Hoepfl, 1997). The criteria used to assess reliability and validity is different from those used in quantitative research.

Different sampling techniques are used as well. Qualitative sampling techniques are concerned with seeking information from specific groups and subgroups in the population (Golafshani, 2003). The intensive and time-consuming nature of data collection necessitates the use of small samples. A few participants who can shed light on the phenomenon are investigated (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Qualitative research is a category of research methods in which the researcher plays an active role in interacting with the participants to be studied (Muchinsky, 2003) and becomes personally absorbed in the entire research process (Spector, 2005). Qualitative researchers do not dissociate themselves from their roles and involvement in the research process (Winter, 2000). The researcher is the human instrument of data collection (Hoepfl, 1997).

Lee (1999) points out that qualitative research designs are adaptable. Compared to quantitative research designs, qualitative research designs allow a researcher to react much more quickly to constraints in the context by switching to more suitable data collection methods and approaches. In qualitative research the methods of collecting data, the use of instruments and the methods of analysis vary across researchers (Lee, 1999).

Considering the dearth relating to research on identity work engaged in by Indian women managers in South African organisations, I felt that the best way to approach the current study would be from a qualitative perspective. Using the qualitative method, I was able to explore the issue at hand to reach a deeper, more complex and detailed understanding of the identity work engaged in by Indian women managers. I also wanted to hear the silenced voices of Indian women managers with regard to the identity negotiation they engaged in during their climb to top managerial positions.

I found a focus for the inquiry in my own experience of having to negotiate my career within a white male-dominated hierarchy. A pilot study was first conducted to identify central themes. Thereafter, the main data collection took place using the life story approach. A purposive sample of Indian women managers in senior and top managerial positions was interviewed. Snowball sampling was used to identify this purposive sample. The interviews were recorded on audiotape and transcribed. I completed the transcriptions of interviews and engaged in ongoing inductive data analysis, which yielded a more focused set of research questions. Data collection was conducted in the participants' offices and homes.

4.4.2 Researcher's role in the study

Rager (2005) points out that in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument through which participants are studied. The researcher should therefore be empathetic towards participants and view the world from the subjects' perspectives. Wincup (2001) cautions that the emotional involvement of the researcher in the study should be acknowledged in qualitative research, as most studies disregard this aspect at their peril. According to Smit (2002), part of the role of the researcher is to be aware of personal bias and preconceived ideas, since assumptions will lead a researcher not to see some of the data.

A researcher should be experienced and skilled when interviewing participants, gathering information and analysing data, and he or she should have good communication skills (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). The researcher should be familiar with the topic and should know when to probe deeper, get the participant to

elaborate or broaden the topic of discussion (Ehigie & Ehigie, 2005). Patton (2002) suggests that the researcher should be involved and immersed in the research as the real world is subject to change.

I developed interviewing skills through my experience in the human resource field of recruitment and selection. This enabled me to be at ease with interviewing participants and at the same time I was able to make my research sample comfortable during the interviews. I also reflected on my role during the research process and was sensitive to how my personal experiences would shape the study. I explained the purpose of the study to the participants, as well as the benefits that would be gained from participating in the study and their roles within the study.

Because of my subjective experiences, I was able to probe and follow up on responses during the interviews. I also kept a journal to capture my reflections on and thoughts after the interviews.

4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Babbie and Mouton (2006), research methodology focuses on the research process and the kinds of tools and procedures to be used. It focuses on specific tasks, such as data collection or sampling, and on the individual steps in the research process and the most objective procedures to be followed.

4.5.1 The manner in which entry was achieved

For the current study, I obtained the telephone numbers of some Indian women managers from Indian and non-Indian females (contact groups) in lower level positions. These contact groups briefed the Indian women managers regarding the study. I contacted the contact groups who provided the names and telephone numbers of the Indian women managers who were willing to be interviewed. Thereafter, I contacted the willing participants and provided more details on the purpose of the research. Participants were free to choose a venue that would allow audio privacy and visual privacy. A meeting was set up at the participants' work places and/or homes, in line with their preferences.

4.5.2 The sampling methods employed

Qualitative research uses non-probability samples for selecting the population for study. In a non-probability sample, units are deliberately selected to reflect certain features of or groups within the sampled population. The sample is not intended to be statistically representative: the chances of selection for each element are unknown. Instead, the characteristics of the population are used as a basis for selection. It is this feature that makes this kind of sampling suited to small-scale, in-depth studies (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). A non-probability sampling strategy was appropriate for the current study, given the purpose of the study.

There are four reasons for keeping sample sizes small in qualitative research. First, if the data are properly analysed, there is a point where very little new information is obtained from each new sample, as phenomena need appear only once. Second, the sample needs not be large enough to provide statistically significant results. Third, qualitative studies yield a substantial amount of information from each individual therefore sample sizes can be kept small. Lastly, it would be impossible to conduct and analyse hundreds of interviews, observations or groups unless a researcher intends to spend a few years doing this (Ritchie et al., 2003).

For the pilot study in the current study, in-depth interviews were conducted on a sample of seven Muslim and Hindu women at a middle management level. For the main study, I conducted in-depth life story interviews with Indian women managers regarding cultural, religious, family, personal and organisational aspects in their identity formation and identity work. For the main study, a larger group of 13 Muslim and Hindu women at senior and top management levels were chosen. The same samples were not used for the pilot and main studies.

4.5.2.1   Purposive sampling

Babbie (2008) states that, in terms of purposive sampling, a sample is chosen by the researcher on the basis of the researcher's knowledge of a population, its elements and the purpose of the study. The power of purposive sampling lies in choosing

information-rich cases for in-depth analysis dealing with the central issues being studied (Berg, 2004).

I chose Indian women who were in middle, senior and top management posts, working in different business sectors, and who either belonged to Muslim or Hindu religious denominations. The women in such positions represent the first cohort of Indian women entering the South African workplace and were likely to have grown up in the apartheid era.

4.5.2.2   Snowball sampling

This kind of sampling refers to asking people who have already been interviewed to identify other people they know who may fit the selection criteria. It is a useful approach for dispersed and small populations (Ritchie et al., 2003). Babbie (2001) argues that this procedure is appropriate when the members of a special population are difficult to locate, such as homeless people. I used snowball sampling in the pilot and main phases of the study in order to identify Indian women managers in middle, senior and top management positions in organisations. The reason for this decision was that there were few Indian women managers in organisations and the most efficient way I could contact these women was by being recommended by others working in the same organisations as these women. However, I never indicated to those who made recommendations the identity of women in the final sample.

Since new members are generated through existing ones, there is a danger that the diversity of the sample frame is compromised. This risk can be mitigated to some extent by, for example, specifying the required characteristics of new sample members, by asking participants to identify people who meet the criteria, but who are dissimilar to them in particular ways, and by avoiding family members or close friends. An alternative approach would be to treat those identified by existing samples as links, not interviewing them, but asking them to identify another person who meets the criteria (Ritchie et al., 2003). In order to avoid these problems in snowball sampling, I asked Indian women in administrative positions to identify Indian women at middle, senior and top management levels to be interviewed. I also asked women from other races to identify Indian women in middle, senior and top

management levels within their organisations to be interviewed for the pilot and main phases of the study.

4.5.3 Biographical data on the sample

Table 4.2 depicts the biographical data of the sample of women who participated in the main interview phase. Each participant was given a pseudonym so that her anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. To protect the women's anonymity and confidentiality, I also use ranges for some of the biographical details in the table.

See annexure B for a short narrative profile of the women.

Table 4.2: Biographical data of the Muslim and Hindu female managers in the main study

Pseudonym	Religion	Age range	Overall tenure (years)	Tenure in management (years)	Marital status	Educational level	Children (Yes/No)	Management level (Senior or Top)	Post
Shamila Rumi	Islam	40-46	> 10	> 10	Married	Postgraduate	Yes	Senior	Business Application Manager
Saira Rehman	Islam	33-39	> 10	5-7	Single	Postgraduate	No	Top	Chief Financial Officer
Waheeda Banu	Islam	33-39	> 10	3-5	Married	Postgraduate	Yes	Senior	Senior Public Prosecutor
Shabana Mahal	Islam	40-46	> 10	> 10	Married	Postgraduate	Yes	Top	Chief Financial Officer
Firdous Azmi	Islam	47-53	> 10	> 10	Married	Postgraduate	Yes	Senior	Executive Director Operations
Zeenat Khan	Islam	40-46	> 10	> 10	Married	Postgraduate	Yes	Top	Chief Communications Officer
Bipasha Chaudry	Hindu	33-39	> 10	7-9	Married	Postgraduate	Yes	Senior	Operations Manager
Mahima Basu	Hindu	33-39	> 10	5-7	Single	Postgraduate	No	Senior	Legal Manager
Preity Sen	Hindu	33-39	> 10	5-7	Single	Undergraduate	No	Senior	Project Manager
Sushmita Zinta	Hindu	47-53	> 10	> 10	Married	Postgraduate	Yes	Top	Human Resource Director
Rani Kapoor	Hindu	33-39	> 10	> 10	Divorced	Postgraduate	No	Top	Human Resource Director
Karina Mukerjee	Hindu	40-46	> 10	> 10	Married	Undergraduate	Yes	Top	Marketing Manager
Shilpa Chopra	Hindu	40-46	> 10	> 10	Married	Postgraduate	Yes	Top	Human Resource Director

4.5.4 Data collection method: interviews

4.5.4.1   Interview procedure

Before discussing the life story interviews with the women in the study, I briefly discuss the interview protocol I followed with the Indian women I interviewed. Figure 4.2 illustrates the interview procedure used in the current study, as adopted from Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 431).

Figure 4.2: Development of the interview
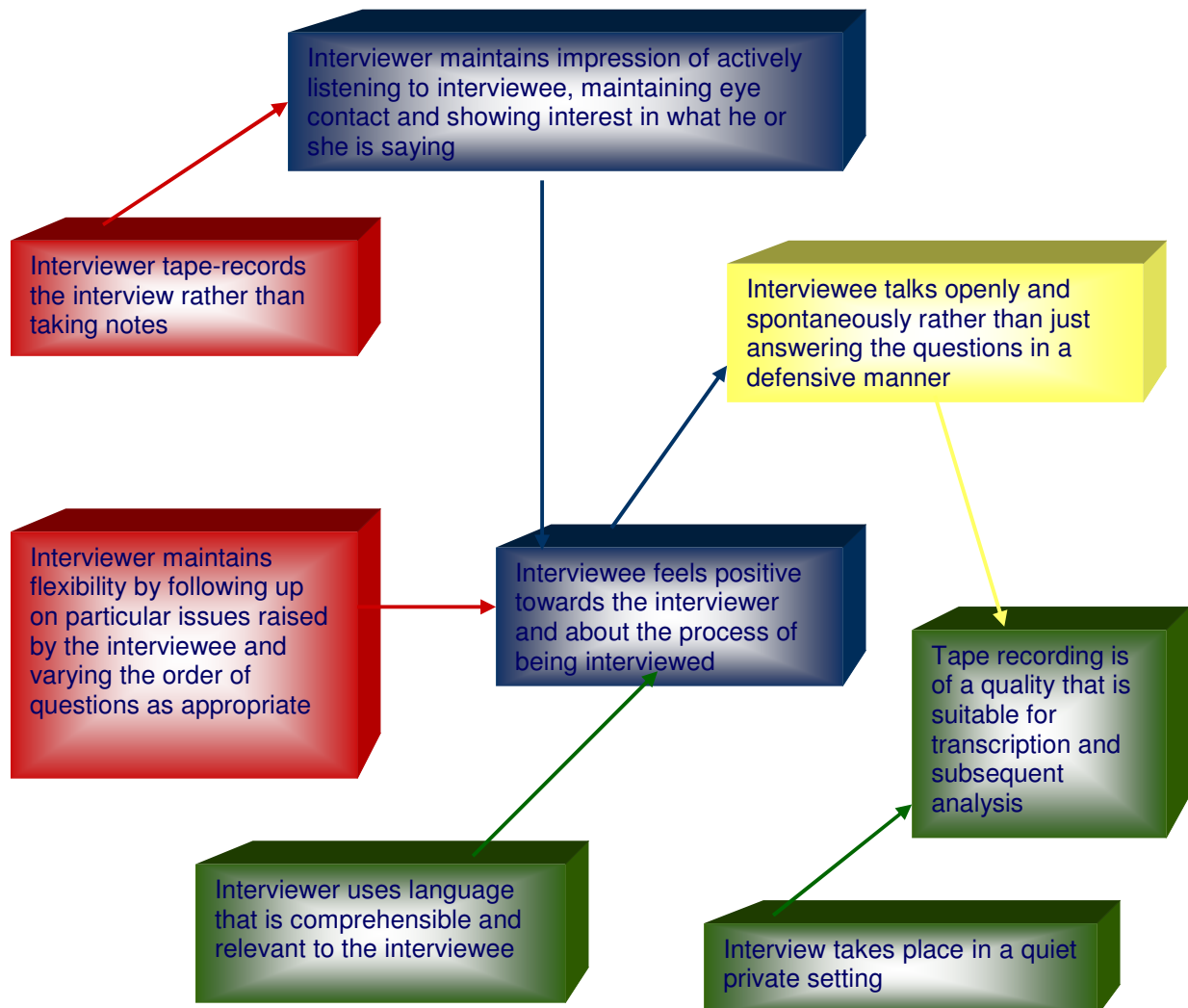
Source: Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 431)

None of the participants were coerced into taking part in the study. All participants were provided with information regarding the purpose of the interviews. Interviews were conducted in the offices or homes of the interviewees and questions were straightforward and simple to understand. Interviews were audio recorded and were easy to transcribe, as the sound was crisp and clear. The researcher was transparent and open at all times and where necessary would ask questions in order to obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon in question. The researcher also ensured participants' anonymity, which allowed the women to be more open in their answers.

4.5.4.2   Life story interviews

I now elaborate on the life story interview approach used in the current study:

A **life story** is an individual's internalized narrative rendering of his or her life in time, entailing the reconstructed past, perceived present and anticipated future. More than traits, motives, values, and so on, life stories function to establish identity, in that a story is the best available structure that persons have for integrating and making sense of a life in time (McAdams et al., 2001, p. 475).

Atkinson (2001) argues that in presenting their life stories, the research participants want to tell others about themselves and also that part of their past and present which they comprehend and believe is at the core of their lives. Through narrating their life stories, people convey their experiences to others and develop their identities by creating new possibilities in their lives (Douglas & Carless, 2009).

Life stories include how events have been interpreted at various stages of life and in different historical eras. Life stories also reveal how people use different strategies to reconcile and resolve past conflicts. A life story allows people to gain a sense of context and the meaning of their lives. The shape of a story allows the participant and researcher to arrange the information about the participant's personal and social life, how they view their past life, the values and beliefs that guide those understandings and their hopes and plans for the future. As participants tell their stories, a complex pattern of identity construction and re-construction emerges.

Life stories can change an individual, elicit an emotional response from a person and influence future action (Etherington, 2009). Shamir and Eilam (2005) suggest that in telling their life stories participants seek to interpret reality in terms of the meaning these stories add in their lives and self-concepts. Life stories, according to these authors, are people's identities of "who they were", "who they are" and "who they want to become" and are "created, told revised and retold" throughout people's lives (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 402). Simmons (2002) claims that, besides answering the question of "who am I?", life stories also provide answers to questions such as "how did I end up being here?". In terms of the current study, this implies that the participants would answer the question of how they ended up in leadership positions.

Researchers can use different questions with different participants in a given study, depending on the focus of their research and what research subjects are discussing at that point in time (Rae & Carswell, 2001). I gained a broader contextual understanding of the identity work that the Indian women in the study were engaged in at the workplace by also taking into account their childhood identity formation, the apartheid system, the women's culture, religion and organisational experiences. Through this type of interviewing technique, I was able to ascertain how the participants' past influenced their present and could have an effect on their future.

Life story interviews delve into participants' personal lives and are intrusive, but such questions are necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena (Biesta, Hodkinson, & Goodson, 2005). I found in the life story interviews with the women in this study that when I touched on an especially sensitive and painful experience of one of the participants, she refused to elaborate on her experiences. She did not confide in me on this matter during that interview or in a subsequent interview.

As Shacklock and Thorp (2005) point out, the challenge in life story interviews is that the researcher has to convince the participants to take their narratives seriously and for the researcher to reflect on his/her role in the process. I also realised during the interviews that reflexivity on my part was essential, as it allowed me to reflect on my stance as a researcher (I elaborate on this reflexivity in Chapter 9, which is about my research journey), and it enabled me to establish a caring, understanding relationship with the participants.

Life story interviews were conducted on a total of 13 Muslim and Hindu females in senior and top management positions in various organisations in South Africa. Interviews ranged from one to two hours in length. Follow-up interviews were planned with all 13 participants, but, since data saturation was achieved after a few of the follow-up interviews (with only six of the participants), the rest of the participants were not interviewed again.

Two follow-up interviews were conducted with three Muslim and three Hindu females. I read through the initial interviews and noted further points stemming from these interviews for probing in follow-up interviews. I found it difficult to arrange interviews with some of the women, and usually follow-up interviews were conducted at the participants' convenience and took place, in some cases, two to four months after the initial interviews.

Overall, the interviews were conducted over a period of a year. The Indian women managers who agreed to participate in the current study were extremely busy and graciously fitted me into their busy schedules. I was fortunate to find that six of the women in my study agreed to two follow-up interviews each, although they were swamped with work and scheduled two hours from their busy schedules for each interview. The follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify points from previous interviews and to capture the long life stories of the women. I spent between four to six hours in total interviewing each of these six participants over the three interview sessions.

Clarke (2003) suggests that, in qualitative research interviews, researchers should approach the social world from an "experience-near" perspective. With regard to the idea of an "experience-near" perspective, I, like the participants in my study, am a South African Indian woman who has occupied a managerial position and was therefore able to relate to their childhood and work-related experiences. Something that was of concern to me, however, was that the women who participated in the study took a lot for granted when discussing Indian culture and religions with me because I am an Indian female. This necessitated my asking them to explain what they meant by their statements during the interviews, as I did not want to impose my thoughts and ideas on their stories or to interpret the data from my perspective.

The questions for the current study were open-ended, but semi-structured. These questions related to the main research question. The questions were designed in line with a life story approach. They began with the women's early childhood, followed by the adolescent stage, young adulthood to their adult and career years. At the same time they were asked questions focusing on the influence of culture, gender, race/ethnicity and apartheid in their lives. Although I had a list or schedule of questions to focus the interviews, I deviated from these questions where I needed to probe deeper into the life stories of the participants. As Atkinson (2001) mentions, researchers who are conducting life story interviews should be flexible and adaptable in eliciting information from participants during the interview. This principle was applicable to my interviews as well. Sometimes participants would start talking about their work problems and I would have to start my questions from the present and then move into their past. At other times, I could ask participants about their childhood and end up asking questions relating to their current work situations. Some examples of interview questions are given in Annexure C.

4.5.5 Managing and recording data

4.5.5.1 Recording data

Legard, Keegan, and Ward (2003) advise researchers to audio-record the interview and to take notes during the interview if necessary. This allows the researcher to pay full attention to the participant and to probe in-depth. There is also a flow of discussion, as the interviewer does not have to write down the answer to the previous question before moving on to the next one. In note-taking, a risk of bias arises, as the researcher is likely to make notes of comments which make immediate sense or are perceived as being directly relevant or interesting. Audio-recording ensures that the whole interview is captured and allows for complete data analysis later, so cues that were not taken cognisance of in the interview situation can be recognised when listening to the recording. Interviewees may also feel inhibited when the interviewer suddenly starts writing and the participants wonder whether what they have mentioned was of interest (Hancock, 2002).

This method allows a researcher to record interviews *verbatim* and with precision, as well as the language used by participants, which includes their hesitations and tone, in more detail than when the researcher takes notes only. Audio-recording becomes a more neutral and less intrusive way of recording the interview than note-taking, as note-taking gives participants cues such as that they should slow down or pause if the researcher is writing or that they have said enough if the researcher is not writing (Legard et al., 2003). Hancock (2002) postulates that a researcher can listen to the recording of the first interview and make a note of important points that can be pursued in a second interview. This can also be done for subsequent interviews. This leads to a first interview being different to the last interview, as in each interview more information is gained.

I used an audio-tape recorder to record the participants' conversations. I explained the value of recording their conversations to participants and reassured them of confidentiality and explained how tapes and transcripts are stored. After the interviews, I transcribed the taped interviews.

4.5.5.2   Managing data

According to Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor (2003), data management usually involves deciding on the themes or concepts under which the data will be labelled, sorted and compared.

In the current study, at the start of the analysis, I first gained an overview of the data covered and became familiar with the data set. I focused especially on the data set that pertained to the objectives of the research. I also focused on the diversity within the Indian female sample so as to identify any gaps or overemphasis on certain issues, as well as differences between participants' characteristics and circumstances. I then identified recurring themes and ideas using the ATLAS.ti programme.

4.5.6 Lessons learned from the pilot study

In qualitative research, a pilot study allows a researcher to focus on specific areas that may have been unclear previously, or to test certain questions. This then allows the researcher to make modifications with a view to quality interviewing during the main study (Strydom, 2005).

I interviewed seven Indian female managers for the pilot study. They were all in middle management positions and were fairly young (their ages ranged from 26 to 30 years old). The women in the pilot study had been raised in and exposed to a different historical context, namely post-apartheid South Africa, when they attended university and entered the workforce. I realised that they were a generation apart from the cohort I was interested in exploring (namely older senior and top Indian female managers), so I did not choose them for the second phase of the study.

I also had a very limited glimpse of the childhood experiences and social contexts of the women in the pilot study, as the interviews were short (only one hour each). Since I was interested in exploring the life stories of senior and top female managers in the second phase of the study, I decided to probe childhood experiences of thirteen women managers in the main study. I believed that their experiences within the family, Indian community and the broader political context would in some way have influenced the choices they made in terms of their careers and these factors would have had an influence on their upward mobility within organisations. This led me to explore their life stories in more depth, as I believed this method would provide richness and would highlight the complexity of the various factors that had an impact on their lives even at this point in their careers.

4.5.7 Grounded theory

According to Creswell (2007a), the aim of grounded theory is not to provide descriptions of events, but to uncover a theory. Grounded theory methods deal with organised, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories "grounded" in the data themselves (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher starts with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the

data. Theory obtained from the data is more likely to resemble reality than when theory is imposed on a series of concepts based on experience or speculation. Since grounded theories are drawn from data, they are likely to offer insight, both enhancing understanding and providing a meaningful guide to action (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded theory is an iterative process whereby researchers move between data collection and analysis (Bringer, 2002). Analysis of early data informs the researcher about the route to follow for subsequent data collection. The researcher may bring in participants with an alternate viewpoint or change the schedule of the interview (Kennedy & Lingard, 2006).

Glaser (2002) posits that grounded theory generates emergent conceptualisations into integrated patterns which are denoted by their categories and properties. This is achieved through the many rigorous steps of grounded theory woven together by a constant comparison process which is designed to generate concepts from all data. Thus, data form the basis of the theory and the analysis of the data generates the concepts that are constructed. One of the main doctrines of grounded theory is that coding should emerge from the data. Thus, any concept in the analysis should be supported from the data, rather than from preconceived models, theories or hypotheses (Bringer, 2002). The idea is to learn what happens in a research setting and what the participants' lives are like by studying how they explain their statements and actions and ask what analytic sense can be made of them (Daengbuppha, Hemmington, & Wilkes, 2006).

Participants in the study would all have experienced the process and the development of the theory may assist in explaining practice or offer a framework for further research. In the current study, I was interested in the challenges Indian women faced in corporate South Africa in reaching top managerial positions. This was where I started my enquiry and after I had listened to the stories and analysed the data from the participants in the pilot study, I realised that their culture, families and community played a major role in their identity formation. I followed the participants' lead and in the main study I delved more into the identity work in

childhood and thereafter in adulthood of women in senior and top management levels.

Grounded theory is therefore a qualitative research design in which the enquirer generates a general explanation of a process, action or interaction shaped by the views of participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In line with Glaser's (2002) contention (see above), I regarded everything related to my research topic as data. The data I collected highlighted the historical, social and situational conditions in which the Indian women managers who participated in this study operated in. In qualitative research, all sources of information (for example, interviews, observations, historical documents, organisational information in meetings, newsletter and memos) are regarded as facts which are constructed by people, although they may not be actual experiences (Charmaz, 2003a).

The main premise in this theory development is that theory does not come from the literature reviewed, but is generated or "grounded" in data from participants who have experienced the process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). My analysis of the data gleaned from the interviews with the Indian women managers in the study was also grounded in the data. The initial aim of my research was to find the barriers Indian women managers faced in corporate South Africa. I used a general framework to guide the content of my life story interviews with the women. As the interviews with the women progressed, this changed, and intersectionality, identity work and hybrid identities became the main focus of the research, as described in the literature review in Chapter 3. By using inductive data analysis, I was able to generate themes relating to identity, which was not the original focus of my study.

The following are the reasons for my use of grounded theory in my research, in line with Daengbuppha et al.'s (2006) argument:

- through conducting grounded theory research I was able to explain complex social phenomena such as intersectionality, identity work and hybrid identities in my study,

- as a researcher I was fully immersed in the field and in the data, as I was interested in gaining insight into and an in-depth understanding of the subjectivity and diversity of Indian women's experiences,

- it is an approach which allowed me to pierce the reality of these Indian women managers' experiences,

- as a researcher I was able to interpret holistically the active role of the Indian women managers' shaping their lives and the experiences they engaged in, and

- it allowed me to gain rich data from a range of perspectives, as it emphasised a focus on meaning and interpretive understanding.

Grounded theory methods have been criticised by some postmodernists and poststructuralists, who argue that positivist principles are used overtly and covertly by researchers who use this method in their data analysis (Charmaz, 2003a). Charmaz (2003a, p. 250) claims:

> Strauss and Corbin's (1990, 1998) stance assumes an objective external reality, aims toward unbiased data collection, proposes a set of technical procedures, and espouses verification. Their position moves into post-positivism because they also believe in giving voice to their respondents representing them as accurately as possible, discovering and acknowledging how respondents' views of reality conflict with their own, and recognising art as well as science in the analytic product and process.

Charmaz (2003a) argues that grounded theory needs to be flexible and broad. Deriving meaning from grounded theory research enhances understanding rather than constrains interpretive meaning. Grounded theory can be used in research without having to use positivist methodologies. Due to the strictness with which grounded theory research is conducted, researchers have a set of logical guidelines from which they are able to build explicatory frameworks that indicate relationships between concepts. Grounded theory does not centre on providing explanations on

how to collect data, but focuses instead on the creation, enhancement and connection of concepts with each other.

4.5.7.1   Constructivist grounded theory

Constructivist grounded theory focuses on knowledge of empirical data; it is situated between positivism and postmodernism and uses methodologies which are easily available (Charmaz, 2006). According to this method, multiple social realities can be compared; knowledge is created by the researcher and the participant (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006), and subjective meaning is comprehended through interpretive understanding. The main premise of a constructivist approach to grounded theory is a focus on studying people in their natural setting and moving away from positivism (Charmaz, 2003a).

Constructivists look at and analyse data from shared experiences and relationships with participants. The interpretive work that participants engage in is theorised and is constructed by participants. The theory that emerges depends on the researcher's perspective. While various researchers may have similar ideas, the theory they employ will differ (Charmaz, 2006). A constructivist researcher has to be aware of situations when differences between people become visible and cannot treat participants in a vacuum divorced from their social contexts and situations. People's experiences should not be treated as isolated incidents as the power of analyses decreases. Constructivists also use a reflexive stance and work through their own assumptions and interpretations relating to the topic under study (Charmaz, 2006).

In the current study I engaged in reflecting on my assumptions relating to the study being an Indian woman who has also occupied a managerial position. I tried not to steer the analysis from my perspective but attempted to remain true to the data. I also approached the participants and discussed the analysis of the data with them to ascertain whether I had conducted the analysis as close to reality as possible.

4.5.7.2   Data coding for grounded theory

Walker and Myrick (2006) indicate that Strauss and Glaser (1967) proposed two procedures of data analysis. In the first procedure, the researcher codes all data and analyses the codes to verify a given proposal. In the second procedure, the researcher inspects the data for properties of categories, using memos to track the analysis, and develops theoretical ideas. Coding allows the researcher to gain a new perspective on the data presented, and opens up avenues for further data collection, and it may lead to unpredicted results (Charmaz, 2003a).

In grounded theory, the researcher's interpretation of the data determines the emerging codes. Codes lead to theory development. Codes that emerge from the researcher's analysis as a collective lead to emerging theory, which in turn results in the data being explained. This then leads to additional data-gathering (Charmaz, 2003a). In grounded theory, data are separated, sorted and created through qualitative coding. Coding implies that labels are attached to segments of data to represent what each segment is about. Coding refines data, sorts them and allows a researcher to manage making comparisons with other segments of data. Grounded theorists also emphasise what is happening in the scene when they code data (Charmaz, 2006).

In the current study, after I had completed the transcription of the interviews, I uploaded the data into the Atlas.ti program, where I coded segments. There were some codes that were significant in the lives of the women, such as the role of their fathers in their upward career mobility, which I probed even further. Focusing on another segment of the study, for example, Indian culture, I again noticed that the role of fathers was significant and therefore this area of the study was also probed for more data. The more I interacted with the Indian women managers in the study, the better I understood their views, and this allowed me to refine my codes and gain an understanding of the data from their perspectives. These strategies were combined with a number of other techniques to enhance the eventual interpretation of the data. These are discussed below.

- **Comparative methods**

Harry, Sturges and Klingner (2005, p. 5) mention that when conducting constant comparison, "researchers move back and forth among the data and gradually advance from coding to conceptual categories, and thence to theory development". I conducted comparisons at every level of analysis. I also compared interview statements within the same interview and with earlier and later interviews for each participant (Duchscher & Morgan, 2004). The constant comparison method also allowed me to decide what data to collect in subsequent interviews. Through the constant comparison method, I was able to compare new data to older data that I had already collected. Boeije (2002) states that conducting constant comparison, makes it easier for a researcher to obtain a theory inductively. In this way, the internal validity of a study is enhanced.

- **Open coding**

After transcribing the interviews, I coded the data line-by-line, which allowed me to look at the data critically and not to impose my ideas on the information obtained (Duchscher & Morgan, 2004). I identified, named and categorised each different idea, which I later grouped, and these became my categories, as recommended by Borgatti (2007) and Bryman and Bell (2007). My main questions reading through my interview transcripts were "What is the participant saying here?" and "What aspect of the participant's life is highlighted here?" Conducting coding early in the research allowed me to learn early in the interview process what the participants were saying and were grappling with (Charmaz, 2006).

After I had completed the coding and the interpretation of the data, I showed the results to my participants. They agreed with my interpretation of the codes. I also asked my participants more deeper and probing questions relating to intersectionality and how they negotiated their gender, racioethnic and professional identities as well as the formation of hybrid identities (Charmaz, 2006). Highlighting intersectionality, identity work and hybrid identities as part of the themes I had extracted also provided new insights to my participants,

after which they viewed their struggles from a different perspective (Charmaz, 2006).

- **In vivo codes**

In vivo codes use the participants' terms and assist in maintaining their views through coding (Harry et al., 2005). *In vivo* codes also undergo comparative and analytic analysis and are incorporated into the theory. *In vivo* codes take three forms. The first is the terms one hears in everyday conversations. The second is the interviewees' creative terms that portray the events in their lives. The third is when participants use terms that are peculiar to their particular group. Interviewees may also use certain terms because they believe others also understand the use of these terms (Charmaz, 2006). I did not make use of participants' words in coding the data.

- **Focused coding**

After I had completed the line-by-line coding, I made a list of the most important and most common codes in my initial coding process. In this step, I sifted through huge amounts of data. I applied focused coding, as I wanted to ascertain whether the codes were sufficient or whether I required additional codes. This step proved to be fruitful, as I realised that I required additional information which I had not had sufficient time to probe. I compared participants' responses and realised that new information had also surfaced in some of the interviews which I needed more information on. This step also allowed me to decide which codes I would require to conduct my analytical categorisation of the data, as well as which codes could be combined. There were codes that consisted of only one line of data and could be incorporated with other codes (Charmaz, 2006).

- **Theoretical coding**

Glaser (1992) argues that theoretical coding should be done before axial coding. Open coding is like breaking up a building into smaller pieces and theoretical coding is a construction of the structure of the building but in a better form that is analytical and coherent. When used in a proper manner, theoretical

coding can provide greater accuracy when the data analysis is sound. Cutcliffe (2000) points out that, when theoretical coding is conducted, it enables a researcher to see how codes relate to each other and form a theory. Theoretical coding allows a researcher to understand social processes and human interactions better.

As a researcher, I did not force my preconceived codes and categories onto the data. I ensured that I developed a deep understanding of the identity work the Indian women who participated in the study engaged in during their childhood and adulthood and the subsequent hybrid identities that emerged. The participants in my study also had a deep understanding of their experiences and this made my data collection easier (Charmaz, 2006).

- **Axial coding**

In the third step of coding, referred to as axial coding, I linked categories and sub-categories formed in the open coding phase (Rambaree, 2007) at a conceptual level (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) and ascertained their relationship with each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In highlighting the links between categories, Strauss and Corbin (1998) start with *conditions*, which are the events that form the structure of the phenomenon under study. Then they list *actions/interactions,* which are interviewees' normal responses to problems and situations. Thirdly, they include *consequences*, which are the results of activities or dealings. Sub-categories answer questions about the phenomenon, such as when, where, who, how and with what consequences, thus giving the concept greater explanatory power (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Hoepfl (1997) states that, during axial coding a researcher is responsible for building a conceptual model and determining whether there is enough information to support the interpretation.

Researchers who are able to work in more adaptable ways need not conduct axial coding. However, I preferred to use axial coding as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The connections between the categories and subcategories reveal how the data made sense to me. For example, the Indian women managers in my study spoke of how their brothers were favoured in their

homes and how unfair they felt this was. Although this code related to the unfair treatment of women in the home, I related it to the Indian culture category where women are ascribed a low status within Indian society (Charmaz, 2006).

- **Writing memos**

Writing memos is one method through which a researcher analytically interprets data and transforms it into theory (Lempert, 2007). I wrote memos after coding each interview, which allowed me to explore ideas and to recognise the codes as being interrelated – it enabled me to see the bigger picture. The codes allowed me to develop a structure for sorting the data. This step allowed me to view the data from a different angle and led to further data collection. Since I had compiled memos from the outset I did not get lost in the data, as I was better able to focus on the analysis of my interviews (Charmaz, 2003a).

At the memo writing stage, a researcher elaborates on assumptions, processes and actions that form part of the codes. Memo writing allows a researcher to delve even deeper into discovering the codes and to develop the processes the codes suggest. If they omit this stage, researchers are not conducting grounded theory research (Duchscher & Morgan, 2004). After each interview, I would think through what the participant had said and tried to make sense of the data presented to me. I made short notes of my thoughts relating to the interview. For example, Saira's words to me after the first interview were: "I wonder what my father would have thought of my success if he was alive today?" These words struck me and I thought about her relationship with her father on my way home from the interview. I made a note of probing further into her relationship with her father when he was alive in a subsequent interview.

I searched for patterns in my study and probed for events in the lives of the Indian women managers in the study. For example, I found in my study that men were responsible for the Indian women managers' subordination and I probed this aspect even further in my study by focusing on the women's emotions and how Indian men's subordination of Indian women affected women's upward mobility in the workplace. When a researcher places

participants' *verbatim* material into memos, it allows for comparisons to be made easily and accurately (Charmaz, 2006).

- **Theoretical sampling**

Theoretical sampling is a significant element in grounded theory and is dependent on the comparative methods in grounded theory research. Theoretical sampling is used to develop the nascent categories and makes them more constructive and precise. The objective is to refine the categories and data and not to increase the size of the sample. Conceptual boundaries are identified and the importance and how the categories fit into the overall picture are established through theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2003a).

Charmaz (2003a, p. 266) explains theoretical sampling as follows:

> Theoretical sampling implies that grounded theory cannot be accomplished through one interview only. The researcher has to compare data, compile categories and then go back to the field to ascertain to what extent the categories are relevant. Theoretical sampling assists the researcher to define the properties of the categories; to identify the contexts in which they are relevant; to specify the conditions under which they arise, are maintained and vary; and to discover their consequences. Through using comparative methods we specify the conditions under which they link to other categories. After we decide which categories best explain what is happening in our study, we treat them as concepts. These concepts assist us to understand many issues or incidents in the data.

Strauss (1990) maintains that theoretical sampling should take place early in the research process, but Charmaz (2003a) believes it should take place later in the research, so that the direction of analysis emerges naturally from the data.

Once I had clarified the relevant categories and formed theoretical constructs, I identified gaps in my data. Theoretical sampling was the last stage of my analysis, in line with Duchscher and Morgan's (2004) advice. I probed for information until data saturation had been reached, in other words, when I could not find any new information (Charmaz, 2006). So, for example, when I probed into the apartheid era, I compared the information provided to me by the different respondents. This information centred on living in designated areas, difficulties interacting with different races, their parents not discussing the political situation in the country, inferior schooling, not being able to study at higher level educational institutions of their choice, limited career opportunities and upward mobility in the workplace. Once I was unable to obtain more incidents relating to the negative effects of apartheid, I knew data saturation had been reached relating to this category.

- **Sorting, diagrams and integrating information**

I engaged in comparing the various categories and conceptualised how they would be ordered. I then wrote the first draft of the analysis chapter, and then, after a discussion with my supervisor, I shuffled my categories once again and **sorted** them as they are currently presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Charmaz (2006) states that sorting provide a researcher with a nascent theory. Sorting also assists in generating and enhancing theoretical links and combining categories. Additionally, sorting enables a researcher to compare categories at an abstract level. In my study, significant events were both the negative and positive events in the participants' lives. Negative events were, for example, the women's experiences in the apartheid era, their subservient roles in their communities, homes and workplaces. Positive events in the Indian women managers' lives were, for example, their promotion into managerial positions, negotiating egalitarian roles with husbands, and fathers' encouraging them to study and work.

Diagrams in my study allowed me to visualise the relationships between the categories more easily. I mostly used figures to demonstrate and extract

relationships during the analysis phase of my research. Examples are included in Annexure A.

In **integrating** my categories, I first focused on the childhood identity formation of the Indian women in the study, and thereafter I focused on the identity work in which the women engaged in their adult lives. This was done to ensure that grounded theory would reflect the sequencing of the women's lives. In the analysis of their childhood, I focused on the macro environment – Indian culture, the role of the community and parents in their identity formation. In the analysis of their adult lives I focused first on individual and corporate barriers to their career advancement and thereafter on the individual and corporate facilitators that advanced their careers. I compared the information relating to each theme across all participants. This enabled me to extract the information that the majority of participants mentioned related to a theme. This process made it easy for me to write up the analysis chapters as the information obtained became clear, and I was able to integrate the various categories.

Figure 4.3 provides a schema for summing up how I approached the grounded theory process. In the current research, there are several research questions relating to my study; however these changed and were added to due to the analysis that I conducted after each interview. The initial coding enables a researcher to use line-by-line coding, which allows for the data to be studied closely. Focused coding allows a researcher to separate, sort and synthesise large amounts of data. Writing memos allows a researcher to develop ideas, generate concepts and categories (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Memos also allow a researcher to compare data, to explore ideas about the codes and to direct further data-gathering (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). Memos "serve as reminders of what is meant by the terms being used and provide the building blocks for a certain amount of reflection" (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 589). The final concepts are discussed in the next chapters, and emerged from this process.

Figure 4.3: Grounded theory process
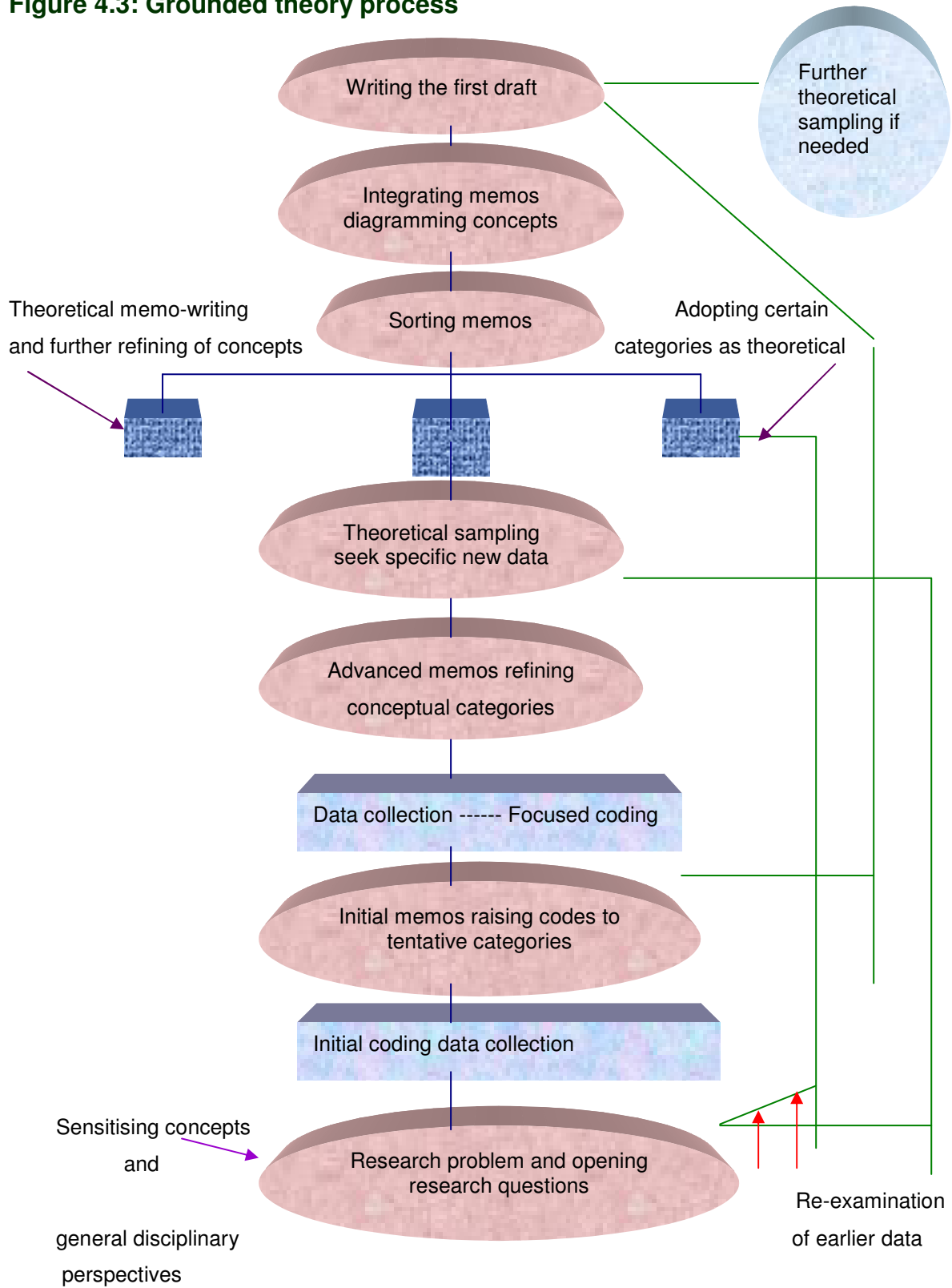
Source: Charmaz (2006, p. 11)

4.5.8. Data analysis using Atlas.ti

Qualitative data analysis takes place when a researcher has collected a huge amount of information that has to be condensed and explained (Lacey & Luff, 2007). Smith and Short (2001) point out technological advances have increased the efficiency of qualitative data analysis. However, qualitative data analysis can be time-consuming and expensive when one is using a huge amount of data. Broom (2005) laments, that qualitative data analysis is not an easy skill to develop. It is a skill developed from rigorous, high quality social science training.

Wickham and Woods (2005) indicate that software programs referred to as Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) can be used for data analysis and coding large amounts of data. The advantage of the CAQDAS system is that it allows a researcher to manage data more efficiently, and storage, search and retrieval becomes easier. The details of the steps involved in the development of the researcher's interpretation and analysis also become easier to record. This makes it easy for a reader to retrace the logical steps of the development and the basis of the researcher's conclusion (MacLaren & Catterall, 2002). Through efficient documentation, the transparency and rigour of the analysis process can be enhanced, and the study can then be replicated (Wickham & Woods, 2005). For the current study, I used Atlas.ti, which is a CAQDAS program.

Muhr (2004) points out that one advantage of the Atlas.ti program is that it allows a researcher to analyse unstructured data in an organised fashion. Atlas.ti assists in examining the complex phenomena concealed in the data. Data are transformed into useful knowledge. Muhr (2004) mentions that there are four attributes of Atlas.ti that can be captured by the acronym VISE:

- **Visualisation** – the researcher is able to approach the data in an organised manner and to picture diverse relations between objects during the analysis of data using various tools in the program;

- **Integration** – the various sections of a study are incorporated in such a way that the researcher does not lose sight of the whole when focusing on a

particular aspect of the study: all pertinent information is stored in the "Hermeneutic Unit";

- **Serendipity** – Atlas.ti allows a researcher to uncover constructs which the researcher may not even have been looking for; and

- **Exploration** – Atlas.ti allows for exploring data in a systematic manner.

The Atlas.ti package was developed to enable a grounded theory approach (Silverman, 2005). Atlas.ti is a qualitative data analysis program used to analyse large amounts of textual, visual, graphical and audio data (Guidry, 2002; Smit, 2002). It was used in the current study to discover the identity work and the formation of hybrid identities by Indian women managers in the workplace on their ascent to top managerial positions. Atlas.ti allowed me to manage a huge amount of data, but I also realised I had to perform the data analysis on my own and conceptualise the codes (Guidry, 2002). With the Atlas.ti program, I obtained a comprehensive overview of my study and was immediately able to search and retrieve information with ease. I was also able to connect certain texts, memos and codes by means of diagrams (Smit, 2002).

The Atlas.ti software program has been used in various types of research, including studies relating to diversity management. For example, Hibbins (2002) used Atlas.ti to manage and analyse data collected from semi-structured interviews conducted on migrant males relating to the role leisure plays in their lives and the influence of gender on the construction of their identities. Chang (2009) also analysed the responses of 28 IT staff in 12 multinational firms regarding the implementation of diversity training initiatives in the organisations using the Atlas.ti software program. Cadieux, Lorraine, and Hugron (2002) coded data gathered from interviews conducted on four women business owners in the manufacturing industry in order to gain an understanding of succession in family-owned businesses using the Atlas.ti program. Kemp (2005) used Atlas.ti to identify repetitive themes and patterns relating to the decision-making approaches used by women executives. McEldowney, Bobrowski, and Gramberg (2009) managed and analysed their data gathered from interviews relating to their study on how young women perceive the challenges of leadership. These are only a few examples of the use of the Atlas.ti

software program in qualitative research. These are numerous examples in other fields of research (medical, anthropology, sociology) where the Atlas.ti program has been used to manage and analyse large amounts of qualitative data in a systematic manner.

4.5.9 Strategies used to ensure the quality of the research

Guba and Lincoln (1989) recommended four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research to reflect the underlying assumptions involved in qualitative research. Their criteria are listed in Table 4.3 below, comparing them to the criteria commonly used in quantitative research.

Table 4.3: Comparison of criteria for judging the quality of quantitative versus qualitative research

Conventional terms	*Naturalistic terms*
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Source: Hoepfl (1997, p. 58)

The trustworthiness of a study is increased when a researcher keeps an audit trail (Koch, 2006). In the current research, I kept a journal and an audit trail to achieve a reasonable account of the investigation. The journal aided me in identifying my own biases before, during and after the study and to report on how subjectivity may have affected various facets of the study, in line with Mishoe's (2003) advice. The audit trail made it possible to examine the study's procedures and thus to verify credibility from the detailed account of the entire research process, which includes raw notes, edited notes, records of research meetings, data documents, guidelines used to analyse the data, decision rules to categorize data, interview guides and complete documents. The audit trail may be the single most pivotal technique for trustworthiness because it purposely organises the evidence so that someone external to the study can review the data and processes to form an independent opinion on the credibility and consistency of the results (Mishoe, 2003).

4.5.9.1 Credibility

In quantitative studies, internal validity deals with determining what one sets out to measure. Strong internal validity means that a researcher does not only have reliable measures of the independent and dependent variables, but is able to justify the links between them (Rolfe, 2006).

Patton (2002) posits the credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher. Shenton (2004) maintains that in qualitative research, credibility is achieved through ascertaining how compatible the findings of a particular study are with reality. Credibility in the current study was achieved in various ways. I use Shenton's (2004) measures of credibility to justify the extent to which my study achieved credibility.

Firstly, I conducted the study employing well-established qualitative methods such as life story interviews and grounded theory, which are used to a great extent by other researchers in the field of gender studies.

Secondly, while I was not able to spend time with my participants before the initial interviews were conducted, I was able to build a relationship of trust between the participants and myself. Because I am an Indian woman, the participants felt comfortable talking to me, and I was regarded as one of them. I had also informed the participants from the outset that I was in a managerial position and this made them feel they could be open with me, as they felt I was in a position to relate to their stories. However, I did not allow my familiarity with Indian culture and my personal experiences as an Indian woman manager in a South African organisation to influence my professional outlook relating to the study.

Thirdly, I used triangulation with regard to the data sources (Shenton, 2004), in that I sought the opinion of others who were familiar with Indian culture and who had lived through the apartheid era in order to verify the information supplied by the participants. I consulted with older people in the Indian community, who provided me with insight into Indian culture and religion in respect of certain issues which were highlighted during the interviews. These discussions provided me with a greater

understanding of underlying reasons for Indians in South Africa to uphold their cultural beliefs, and these insights allowed me to write on the results with an in-depth understanding of the cultural expectations of South African Indian women.

Another method of triangulation I used was to use documents obtained from participants. I requested the participants to provide me with a copy of their CVs to peruse their work history and the time it took them to reach senior and top management positions. Site triangulation was achieved because I obtained the opinions of Indian women managers in different organisations to reduce the chances of obtaining information that was restricted to a particular organisation, and to obtain diverse views.

Fourthly, I allowed each participant I had approached for the study an opportunity to refuse to participate. Of the 27 Indian women I approached, 10 had responded in the negative, as their work and family commitments did not allow them free time for other activities. Four did not respond. I therefore only interviewed Indian women managers who were genuinely willing to be part of the study and offered information freely. Even before the interviews commenced I informed the participants that the utmost care would be taken to provide confidentiality and that they had the freedom to express themselves freely, as there were no right or wrong answers. I also made it clear to the participants before the interviews commenced they were free to withdraw at any stage of the study and that they did not need to provide any reason to me for doing so. Three participants did withdraw from the study after the first set of interviews had been conducted with them and I accepted their decision without questioning their motives for doing so. However, I still included the information they provided during their respective interviews.

Fifthly, I had frequent debriefing contact sessions with my supervisor. I discussed my findings with her. I initially also gave my supervisor the first interview transcript for her comments. She reviewed my analysis and raised questions that forced me to probe more deeply into my coding and interpretations. I was also challenged to provide more detailed and thick descriptions about the complexities of the women's life stories. All of this enhanced the quality of my interpretations and analysis.

Sixth, I also requested that my peers examine my research. When I attended the Academy of Management conference in August 2010 in Montreal (Canada), I also had an opportunity to share my research findings with scholars who conducted research in diversity management, especially relating to gender issues. They also provided me with valuable feedback relating to my study.

Seventh, I kept a reflective journal in which I recorded my thoughts, findings and made notes of my views of the interviews, the participants in the study and discussions with my sister. These thoughts and reflections are elaborated on in Chapter 9.

Eighth, before commencing with my PhD studies, I had already been working in the human resource field for about six years. I worked in recruitment and selection for two years, and was involved in conducting interviews and compiling reports on a daily basis because the organisation I worked for was huge (it had 14 000 employees). Managers were constantly filling vacant posts in their respective departments and this kept me extremely busy. I was therefore comfortable with conducting interviews, and I believed I had the knowledge I needed to elicit information from respondents. When I commenced my studies three years ago, I had already been working in corporate South Africa for more than eight years, and I believed I had the potential to conduct research, as part of my duties in human resources were to investigate problems in the workplace and to report on these.

Ninth, I conducted member checks (Bryman & Bell, 2007) with five participants after completing my analysis and discussion chapters. The participants expressed surprise that I had extracted such a comprehensive list of themes from the information they had supplied me with. They thought my write-up would deal mostly with their childhood experiences and the problems at work. Since they did not understand the concepts of identity work and hybrid identities, I explained these concepts to them and we had a discussion on identity negotiation and identity formation in general. They also mentioned that the concepts of religion and culture are fused and that they find them difficult to separate, which I had noticed from their responses.

Tenth, I used thick descriptions in the current study, which I believe adds to the credibility of the current study.

Lastly, I compared my results with prior research to assess the extent to which the results in my study are congruent with those found in other similar research. This comparison is discussed in Chapter 7.

4.5.9.2   Transferability

In quantitative research, external validity addresses the extent to which a study can be generalized to other people and other situations (Hoepfl, 1997). In qualitative research, the term transferability is used and refers to the extent to which the results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Payne and Williams (2005) posit that transferability depends upon rich descriptions of the fieldwork, the richness of the data collected and a full report. The reason for this is that it demonstrates reliability and validity in the researcher's account, and secondly, it allows the reader to decide whether the findings can be transferred to other settings.

I have provided thick descriptions of the context in which my study was conducted. For example, I have provided information on the geographical location of the organisations in which the study took place, a description of the sample in the study, the number of participants in the study, the data collection methods used in the study, the number of interviews and their duration with each participant, and the period over which the interviews were conducted, as recommended by Shenton (2004). Another researcher can use the same methods I have used in another setting to ascertain the extent to which the same results can be obtained.

4.5.9.3   Dependability

Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that dependability refers to whether decisions, choices and analysis can be audited by reviewers. This implies ensuring that complete records are kept of all phases of the research process – from the problem formulation, to the selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions and so on, in an accessible manner (Bryman & Bell, 2007). I kept records of tape recordings of interviews, interview transcripts, all correspondence with participants and also the Atlas.ti document which I used to extract themes. These are stored in a secure place in line with ethical requirements.

4.5.9.4   Confirmability

Objectivity deals with reliable knowledge, checked and controlled, undistorted by personal bias and prejudice (Kvale, 1996). Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results are indeed reflective of the experiences of the participants (Shenton, 2004). There are a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability.

I tried to remain as objective as possible when conducting the current research. I used various forms of triangulation, as mentioned above, to reduce my personal bias. I have also explained in this chapter why I used a qualitative method and interpretivism rather than other methods in the current study. I have described the methodology I adopted comprehensively in the current chapter. I have also described how the data for the study were collected and processed in the current chapter. In order to enhance reliability, the contributions of another qualitative data analysis expert were sought, and I had a face-to-face discussion relating to the codes I had used with the qualitative research expert. The expert agreed that there was correspondence between our codes. I discussed with the expert how I had conceptualised my coding and the expert confirmed that I had used the correct procedure for my coding.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS APPLICABLE TO THE STUDY

Marshall and Rossman (1999) mention, that ethical consideration such as informed consent and protecting participants' anonymity are vital in research. Researchers are expected not to pass judgement, even when they are dealing with people from their own culture. Bryman and Bell (2007) adopt Diener and Crandall's (1978) division of ethical issues into four main areas, all of which I applied in my research:

- I ensured that there was no **harm to the participants** in my study. I ensured that participants were protected from various forms of harm, such as physical harm, harm to their development or self-esteem, stress, harm to career prospects or future employment, and I did not invite or force participants to perform reprehensible acts.

- I ensured that where a **lack of informed consent** existed, I did not force potential participants to participate in the study, as Creswell (2003b) recommends. I provided the participants with as much information as possible so that they could make informed decisions about whether they wished to be part of the study or not. Each participant was given a consent letter (see annexure D) that described in detail the purpose of the study, the procedures followed during the study and the risks and benefits of the research, and alternatives to participating, as set out by Hoyle, Harris, and Judd (2002).

- I also ensured there was no **invasion of privacy**. Since each of my participants had a high regard for her privacy, I did not transgress this boundary. One of my participants refused to answer some personal questions relating to her family relationships, and I respected her right to privacy and did not pursue this line of enquiry any further.

- I also did not use deception in my research. I did not represent my study as something other than what it is.

I promised the participants confidentiality in my research. In order to maintain the confidentiality of each participant, I assigned a pseudonym to each participant in my study. I also clarified the procedure of the research from the onset, so that the participants knew what to expect, as recommended by Richards and Schwartz

(2002). I also practised mutual respect for my participants, as I opened myself to understanding their viewpoints, in line with Beale, Cole, Hillege, McMaster, and Nagy's (2003) advice.

In the application of these ethical principles, I also complied with the requirements of the University of Pretoria, which approved my research ethics at the proposal stage of the study.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I described the research design and research methodology which formed the building blocks of my research. I also stated my ontological and epistemological stance, as well as explained the research methodology used. I used a grounded theory approach. Atlas.ti was the means by which I coded and organised data. The ethical issues relating to the study were also discussed.

The next two chapters report on the results of the analysis: Chapter 5 discusses the themes emerging from the women's childhoods, while Chapter 6 discusses the findings relating to their adulthood and professional lives.

CHAPTER 5:

UNPACKING CHILDHOOD IDENTITY THEMES

"My family tended to suppress us, especially as females. I always felt it was unfair, as the boys were allowed to express their views once they were 15 or 16 years of age. That's the problem in Indian cultures – we do not become as independent as people in other cultures because we have to suppress our views and thoughts. You find out that you are slightly behind and you don't express your views so people think that you just follow other people and it is a problem when you grow up." (Preity)

5.1   INTRODUCTION

My interest in exploring the challenges experienced by Indian female managers in the South African workplace was to understand the multiple forces that have influenced their current life and career situations (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Bell & Nkomo, 2001). In addition to understanding the organisational context within which the women are now situated, I also set out to probe the influence of their early lives, as well as that of their cultural and religious context. These multiple influences are positioned within the broader historical context of South Africa, particularly the history of Indians in South Africa and their socio-economic and political location during apartheid and post-apartheid.

My focus in this research is on understanding the women's entire life structure and the interdependence among the different aspects. This focus assumes that an Indian woman manager's professional life does not exist apart from other life spheres or the historical and social context within which it is embedded in line with the arguments of Bell and Nkomo (2001). However, I do not take the position that the women were passive receptacles of the influences of their contexts. I wanted to learn about the strategies that the women in my study used in breaking through the barriers they encountered on their journeys to management careers. Following the principles of grounded theory, in this chapter, I share my interpretations of these influences and their significance for their journeys.

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The focus in Chapters 5 and 6 is on the 13 women managers who participated in the main part of the study. Pseudonyms are used in this chapter and Chapter 6 when quoting the women's words to protect their identities. Many of their comments are cited *verbatim*, and their words are printed in italics and indented to highlight and honour their voices. However, identifying information is omitted to maintain confidentiality.

I honour the participants in this study for their candour and commitment to exploring their life and career journeys with me. What was discussed occasionally brought up discomfort, pain and new insights for both me, as the researcher, and for the participants. I also acknowledge my own subjectivity in this interpretation, which was a filter for the understanding I am about to share.

5.2 THE WOMEN'S EARLY LIVES

In order to understand the journeys of Indian females into management, their pasts have to be understood to gain a better understanding of their present situations. Hence, I discuss the participants' early lives in terms of the historical context in which they were raised, namely apartheid. I then move on to discuss the influence of Indian culture, religion, the family and society in the lives of these women and how these elements interacted and became part of these Indian females' identities. In Chapter 6, I then show how these early life influences informed their career journeys to and experiences in managerial positions in corporate South Africa. My analysis of the women's early life stories took me back and forth, through concentric circles of apartheid, culture, family and religion, all of which shaped their gender and racio-ethnic identities, as depicted in Figure 3.1.

5.2.1   Historical context – apartheid

5.2.1.1   A sense of apartness

The 13 Indian women managers who participated in the main part of the study were born and raised in the apartheid era and were confined to demarcated Indian townships, because at that time South African society was hierarchically stratified

according to race. They were all educated in designated Indian schools. During this era, every fibre of the lives of Indians was governed by apartheid policies. Indians were confined to separate residential and trading areas, schools, hospitals, sport, recreational facilities, Indian colleges and even an Indian university, namely the University of Durban Westville (Bhana, 2008). Forced segregation of amenities was enforced by the *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, No 49 of 1953*, which aimed at reducing contact between whites and blacks (Boddy-Evans, 2010). The participants were all negatively affected by this era in various ways, some more than others. Many remember the ruthless manner in which non-white people were treated. Discrimination and exclusion were common, and oppression was harsh, deeply rooted, continuing and difficult for non-whites (Denmark & Paludi, 2008).

For the women, memories of the segregation of apartheid were paramount. The words of Karina capture the sense of apartness that the women experienced growing up under apartheid:

> *"I think apartheid was very rife in the era I was growing up in. I remember going to beaches and it would say blacks, whites and Indians. I remember in Durban those days. The buses and the toilets and certain restaurants were for whites only. I remember those things and going to the beach front and you are a little kid and want to jump on the trampoline and the security guard would come to you and say 'it's for whites only' and you did not understand that but you grew up in that era."*

One of the tenets of apartheid was that there should be no mixing of the races – a doctrine that many groups internalized, because it was harshly reinforced by the government. The majority of the participants did not have any contact with members of other races, except for the African maids and gardeners working at their homes. Many parents shielded their daughters from the cruelty of apartheid and would not expose them to situations which involved interactions with whites while these young women were growing up. Their parents would therefore not send them to any public places where they had to stand in separate queues or use amenities which were segregated. Nevertheless, apartheid was a reality and one from which they could not escape in the long term, no matter how much their parents tried to protect them, as

they had to venture out into the world to study and work. The protection Mahima's family provided against white rejection was experienced by all the women:

> "We were very sheltered and protected by the family and we never went to restaurants, and when we went to restaurants…it never really clicked that these are owned by Indians and they were predominantly Indian, but we're always surrounded by Indian people. So I can't say we went to or were exposed to something where our family went to something and we were turned down."

Waheeda, like the other women in the study, could not escape apartheid:

> "My father always spoke about how badly the Indians were treated during the apartheid era and how privileged the whites were. We also grew up in that era, so we were aware of how it was. My parents always encouraged us to do our best and to get good jobs. They had a lot of faith in a bright future for us."

Apartheid became such a part of the women's lives that they internalized and perpetuated the enforced segregation in their interactions with people from other racio-ethnic groups. Very few of the women had contact with or formed substantive relationships with blacks or whites. Most of the women attended multicultural universities. However, when they had the opportunity to interact with non-white pupils from other race groups in sport tournaments they could not cross the racial divide. At university, where whites tended to befriend Indians the women would not associate with these whites, as they were pressurized by Indian peers not to form such friendships. Shamila, like the other participants, found that racial segregation was present at the university she attended:

> "The first time was when I went to university. What became apparent was the lack of mixing. All the Indians would be together, all the whites would be together and all the blacks would be together. If you were Indian and you would socialize with the whites, then you would be acting beyond your social status and being friends with the enemies and the pressure came from internal groups and not so much from others."

After 1976, television provided an opportunity to "see" how white people were living and conducting their lives. The characters they saw on their television sets during the evenings while they were growing up provided them with a glimpse into the lives of white families. Subjects taught at school were geared towards portraying blacks as inferior. Depictions of idealized white family life and the purported superior strength and intelligence of white people had the effect of creating a belief among Indians in the superiority of the white race. Waheeda echoes the sentiments of the other women who participated in the study in her description of Indians' believing in white supremacy:

> "Our history books always showed the white man winning wars, having superior intelligence, and even watching television shows we always saw the whites as being good people and having such good lives and the non-whites always suffering and being bad people. We grew up feeling the white man is better than us in every aspect. But the history books were distorted and the television shows were not reality but to make non-whites seem inferior. Many Indians still believe whites are better, as they will call a white guy to fix their broken television set, but have no faith in an Indian man, for example."

It is important to understand not only the ways in which apartheid led to a physical separation of races, but also how much terror and force were used to ensure compliance with this legalized separation. It was illegal to criticize the apartheid government for its policies, and people suspected of opposing the government were arrested, were detained indefinitely without being charged, or were even killed (Underwood, 2010). Hence, Indian parents would not discuss political issues in their homes with children, as they were afraid of being detained without trial. Saira's comment depicts the women's parents' suppression of speech and fear of imprisonment during apartheid:

> "My parents did not talk about race or issues of being Indian. During the apartheid days, parents were afraid of talking about these things. If these types of things had leaked they would be arrested and sent to prison."

5.2.1.2   Inferior material resources

The Indian schools were not properly equipped. They did not have a wide choice in curricula and the Indian community had to sponsor any additional developments on school property. All the women were aware of the inferior level of education they were receiving, but did not protest against the injustices perpetrated by the government against them. Their reaction was to passively accept the inferior school conditions, as their parents were instrumental in discouraging them from protesting against the government in fear of retaliation. However, they did not realize the extent to which the education they were receiving at the time was inferior, until post-apartheid South Africa, when school pupils have a much higher level of education and far better facilities at school than they ever had. Waheeda's comment on the ill-equipped schools Indians attended during the apartheid era epitomises the opinions of the other women as well:

> *"I attended a government school. We had no choice but to attend an Indian school… We did not have a choice of subjects, so children who wanted to branch out into medicine were disadvantaged when applying for careers in the medical field, as they did not offer biology in the school and we had poorly equipped science laboratories… In terms of athletics, Indians did not have opportunities. If we wanted any improvements in school, the community used to sponsor such things."*

Apart from Indians' receiving an inferior education due to their race, the syllabus of Indian schools was segregated according to gender. Since women were regarded as second class citizens during the apartheid era and the State was patriarchal, subjects in school were segregated according to gender. The women were encouraged to do needlework and boys used to do woodwork. This further highlighted the women's inferior status in the wider society. Preity comments on having to take on "feminine" subjects at school, as were the case with the other women:

> *"I used to hate needlework. I would have preferred doing woodwork. Since I was a girl I had to stick to the traditional feminine subjects assigned to me in school by the apartheid government."*

Apartheid plagued and constrained the women in all aspects of their lives. Most of their parents had not completed their schooling, as the government of the day had made the school syllabus extremely difficult. As a result, the majority of the women did not have educated role models in their immediate families whom they could emulate. After matriculating, the majority of the participants enrolled at historically white English-medium universities, which appeared to resist apartheid but implemented racial quotas and were not committed to the liberal principles they ostensibly advocated (Padayachee, 2003).

A prevalent theme in the participants' stories was that they could not pursue careers that interested them, as there were restrictions due to the Job Reservation Act of 1926. Indian females were mainly teachers, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses and workers on factory floors. Careers in the medical field allowed them to operate medical practices in their designated Indian areas. The apartheid government's aim was to support the Job Reservation Act where elite jobs and professions were reserved for whites and lower level posts for Indians. If Indian females received higher education levels they would aspire to jobs that were reserved for whites (Hart & Padayachee, 2000). The majority of the women's parents had their own businesses or they were teachers.

However, one of the findings of this study is that some of the women were brave enough to pursue careers previously closed to blacks, such as chartered accounting and human resource management. In order to register as a chartered accountant, Indians had to serve articles, and during apartheid, no firms would employ Indians as articled clerks. The result was that Indians became bookkeepers, as serving articles was not a prerequisite for that profession. Human resource management was reserved for whites. Nevertheless, some of the participants pursued these two types of career in spite of being warned by Indian lecturers to abandon their pursuits.

By the mid-1980s, multinational organisations were recruiting Indians to serve articles and these women were recruited immediately after completing their studies. However, whites held on tightly to their positions in human resource management, and it was only in the early 1990s that companies started recruiting top Indian female graduates into the human resource field. These women applied for jobs in

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multinational organisations which were dominated by foreign nationals, as they believed they would have a chance of being employed due to their outstanding university results and were immediately recruited in the human resource and chartered accounting fields. However, their Indian female friends who were not top academic achievers in these fields were only recruited into South African organisations after the demise of apartheid. The first signs of the cracks in the apartheid system were noticeable during this period, and Indian females who were top academic achievers could actually enter careers once deemed not pursuable by the South African Indian community. Shabana captures the negativity the women experienced when applying for jobs after graduating:

> *"I started my articles in 1986, so until a year before that, Indian people couldn't become Chartered Accountants because they couldn't serve articles. I went along for an interview with Company E. In those days, it was the Big 8 firms – the international firms. I went along to them and to my mind they were never going to give me a job, as they had not really employed any Indian females up to that point – they had a couple of Indian males, but they hadn't appointed any females. So I thought, well, what do I have to lose? They're never going to appoint me. …it was interesting – they offered me a position the same day."*

I will now turn my attention to the role of the Indian culture in the socialization of the women in their youth. Because their families had weak ties with families abroad, they could not go back to India and lived apart from other races in South Africa, so Indian culture played a significant role in the lives of these women. The aspects of the Indian culture I focus on are gender roles, values (obedience and respect, honour and shame, passive and subservient behaviour, and hard work), the role of the extended family and community and religion. The family was the main socialization mechanism through which Indian culture was transmitted.

5.2.2   Socialization through Indian culture

5.2.2.1   Gender roles in Indian culture

Indian culture prescribes marriage and household duties for women, and careers for men. When the women who participated in the study were growing up, Indian females who worked were frowned upon. Labour outside the home was not a part of an Indian female's role. After completing school, when these women enrolled at universities, in the majority of cases, their friends and cousins got married and became housewives, as prescribed by Indian culture. I found that sons were treated in the same way as daughters until puberty. Thereafter, sons were not encouraged to assist mothers in household chores. Shamila mentions the gender role expectations of males and females in Indian culture which was also mentioned by the other women in the study:

> "The Indian culture prescribes men to handle the affairs of business and women should focus on the home."

Most of the women's friends were trained to be efficient housewives and were not motivated to excel in school or to pursue further studies. The main reason they did not pursue tertiary education was that their parents felt it was the duty of husbands to care for their daughters. At the end of her schooling career, Saira, like the other women, were amongst the very few who pursued tertiary education:

> "Most of my friends married after school and most of my family as well. For a female to be educated was not important, as the emphasis in the Indian culture is for a woman to be a good wife and mother and to take care of her home, although Islam does not prevent a woman from being educated. So all my friends and cousins married men who could support them financially, and none of them have ventured into the workplace."

Nevertheless, professional women were regarded with respect, provided they were in the medical field or law, as these fields were regarded as prestigious. These types of career would then raise the status of the family and these females would be

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sought after by eligible bachelors and their families. Waheeda captures the essence of Indian society's views on women who worked in the era she was raised in:

"In the 1980s fewer females were going to study and I think their opportunities were less. I suppose because it was the 1980s Indians were more conservative and not many Indian females were being educated and working and people would look down upon a working woman because she was regarded as low. They only had respect for women who were doctors, dentists or lawyers, because once again there were double standards. These are occupations that bring prestige to the community and improve the class status of the family and Indians are generally prestige-orientated and want to be part of the upper class and therefore these women are regarded with awe and respected, but women in other occupations are regarded as low."

Regarding mixed-gender gatherings, the women found men always dominated and would be in the forefront. Women would take a back seat and were not encouraged to conduct presentations or coordinate formal gatherings. The women would be in a physically separate location from men, and would be passive recipients of information presented by males. Leadership roles were thus discouraged, as they conflicted with the cultural expectations of appropriate behaviour for Indian females. Waheeda highlights the separation in mixed-gender gatherings which other participants experienced as well:

"In the Indian culture, the woman is encouraged to be more in the shadow than in the limelight, so we play more the support function as opposed to the leadership role. Even in our religious gatherings, the men would give the speeches and conduct the talks. When women give talks, it will be in a religious gathering where there are women only. These will then be small group gatherings and do not occur so often as the male gatherings. Whereas with the male religious gatherings, women will attend, but will sit separate to the men or the gathering will consist of males only, and will then be huge gatherings where women are not encouraged to deliver talks."

The next section deals with the values emphasised by the Indian culture in the socialization of the women in the study.

5.2.2.2   Values emphasised by Indian culture

- *Obedience and respect*

The women mentioned that an obedient daughter and wife are the ideal of womanhood in Indian culture. Obedience to authority is an important part of Indian culture and the participants found that as daughters they were not allowed to challenge parents, elders and teachers. All the women mentioned that they were obedient as children, as rebelling against parents or their teachers was against their value system. Mahima's comment encapsulates the obedience these women displayed in their childhood:

> *"The teachers were very fond of me because my homework was always up to date and I was a quiet and obedient child. Usually teachers approved and liked quiet children as we were the ones giving teachers the least problems."*

For Shamila, respecting elders is a prerequisite in the Indian culture, as the other women also pointed out:

> *"In the Indian culture, the young are supposed to respect the elders, otherwise the whole community will talk bad about you if you are rude towards your elders and even your parents get insulted for raising ill-mannered children."*

- *Honour and shame*

The participants remarked that, being confined to Indian townships and having nowhere else to go, their families had to conform to Indian cultural expectations. Family honour became vital to South African Indians, as it is connected to women's modesty. The women pointed out that honour is related to sexuality in Indian culture – the reputation of a family depends on the behaviour of its daughters. The women reported a number of restrictions relating to their freedom

of external movement and association. In keeping with the idea of chastity as prescribed by Indian culture, the women were expected to dress modestly, because wearing revealing clothes would have implied flaunting their sexuality. They were allowed to participate in extracurricular activities and go out with friends, but always had to be chaperoned by elders in the family. The reasons provided by their parents were that chaste daughters enhanced the reputation of the family and were more likely to attract suitable marriage prospects. Also, living in close proximity to one's family and the community in Indian townships, and having close contact with family abroad acted as a deterrent to families' deviating from the prescribed cultural and religious norms. It was for this reason that women were not allowed to associate with boys once they reached puberty. When they were not participating in activities outside the home, they were largely housebound. Even as young adults, they were not allowed to live on their own and had to attend universities in their home towns and live with their parents. Saira commented on the sheltered lives women such as the participants led while growing up:

> "We were three of us, two girls and a boy and my father was very strict with my sister and me. He never allowed us to go out with our friends unchaperoned. The way we dressed – he never enforced traditional dress on us, but he was particular in what we wore. We had to wear long tops with pants and we were not allowed to wear tight clothes with short tops. We were not allowed to expose our bodies and wear sleeveless clothes and open back dresses."

Mahima, like the other women, was always supervised when playing with boys before reaching puberty. Upon reaching puberty she had to stop associating with boys:

> "Even before I reached puberty my mother would supervise me closely when I played with boys. When I was 13 years old, my parents told me it was not appropriate for me to play with the boys, as I have reached puberty, and in the Hindu culture and religion once a girl reaches puberty she should start looking after the honour of her family and not

be seen with boys. Up until that age, they regarded me as a child, but once I reached puberty everything changed.”

Bipasha highlights some of the other women's feelings when she draws attention to the strict control parents exercised in protecting the honour and dignity of their daughters:

“My mother was fine to let go of us when we were married, but if you are single you had to live at home. I mean my sister used to go to the Laudium College of Education and we were living in Lenasia. She wasn't allowed to go stay at the res there. She had to travel a distance of 60 kilometres every day from Lenasia to Laudium.”

Shamila, like all the other women, never had a boyfriend, even when she was a young adult at university:

“In the Indian culture, having a boyfriend brings the reputation of your family down and a girl's honour is her family's honour, so I was not allowed to have boyfriends.”

Waheeda underscores the importance of maintaining close links to extended family on the Indian subcontinent, although most of the women's families were third and fourth generation South Africans:

“Most Indian families kept in touch with their families in India and Pakistan. As most of the Indians who came to South Africa were from the same district in India and interrelated, so if a girl misbehaves in South Africa, her relatives and the whole district in India or Pakistan will hear about it, as family members and neighbours broadcast it abroad. So basically it is a 'small' community we are living in. Till today we cannot get away from our families abroad. There is still that link. Among us Indians when a girl and boy want to get married, the first question is 'who are your grandparents?' In that way your family lineage is linked and if your grandparents or great-grandparents were not good people, the marriage between the girl and boy will never take place. This is changing in many families these days, as marriages take place between

girls and boys of different castes, but in many traditional families this still takes place."

- *Passive and subservient behaviour among women*

The women in the study state that the Indian culture encourages women to behave in a passive and subservient manner. Women are not encouraged to be outspoken, but are expected to be gentle in speech, to exercise restraint and not to engage in public outbursts. Conflict is viewed in a negative light in Indian culture, and women therefore abstain from arguing with people outside the home. The participants mentioned that another reason they did not engage in arguments with neighbours and the community was that they did not want to create the impression they were from low-class families, and their cultural upbringing emphasised harmony with the wider community. Once again, living in a tight-knit community, not having the freedom of living amongst other races and having to face the members of the community on a daily basis, the women interviewed in the study reported that they did everything possible to maintain harmony and to enhance their social status. In the event of any misunderstandings with members of their community, their fathers and brothers would solve the problems or such conflict would be ignored to maintain harmonious relationships. The women displayed passivity when confronted with conflict. Shamila typifies the passive behaviour the women had to engage in due to cultural expectations as follows:

"Indian females are supposed to be docile and subservient. Otherwise they will be regarded as being uncouth. That [docile and subservient behaviour] is regarded as appropriate behaviour in the Indian culture for women, as men are to be the ones to fight for the women's rights and to stand up for them. Women are not supposed to behave like men, who are supposed to be loud and outspoken."

- *Hard work*

All the participants mentioned that they worked hard, as this is the value that was most emphasised when they were growing up. The women also witnessed their

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parents working hard and being successful. Hard work had earned these women awards and leadership positions at school and this acted as a positive motivator, and was a catalyst in achieving university graduate status. Saira said the idea of working hard was inculcated in her at a young age, and this applied to the other women in the study as well:

> "For us giving our best and working hard has been instilled in us by our parents from a young age. Also our parents were hard workers and by seeing them working so hard, we believe it is something normal and we should also be like that."

In line with the above discussion of Indian culture in general, I now turn my attention to the role played by the women's extended families and community regarding their socialization in terms of Indian culture. I focus specifically on the roles of the extended family, teachers and the community in this regard.

5.2.2.3   Role of the extended family and the community in socializing girls

The women in the study were trailblazers within their respective families and communities regarding the pursuit of tertiary education and careers. Their parents' siblings tried to dissuade their fathers from sending these women to study further. The **extended family** felt that, by pursuing further studies, these women were breaking all traditions and argued that this would bring humiliation to their family and would ruin their honour. The participants also complained that jealousy from their extended families was rife when they wanted to attend university, as in most cases even their male cousins did not pursue tertiary education. Their mothers were also subjected to derision from the older females in the extended family for supporting the decision of their daughters to pursue tertiary education. Shabana's mother, like most of the other women's mothers, was a victim of taunts from her female relatives because her husband and she had dared to go against their conservative family's ways and had educated their daughters:

> "There were all these proposals coming for my sister and myself when we were at school. I was in Standard 6 and now I was expected to get married, as the girls did not go beyond Standard 6 or 7. So my mother

bore the brunt of all this because they were too scared to tell my father anything. So my mother suffered from all of this because all my aunts were at my mother all the time because what a scandal, how could she do this and allow her daughters to go to school and finish and go to university and what were they going to do and how she would pay for it and go to hell. So it was extremely difficult for my mother."

Waheeda's extended family placed tremendous pressure on her father when he wanted her to attend university – this was an experience most of the participants had with their respective extended families:

"My extended family was always discouraging me from studying. They were always talking to my father not to allow me to study and I was fortunate my father did not listen to them. They were jealous and they are conservative and felt women should not study."

I found a contradiction in terms of the women's behaviour towards their extended families. On the one hand, the women rebelled against extended families' requesting them to adhere to cultural norms and not pursuing tertiary education, but, on the other hand, when visiting the homes of extended families, the women conformed to the dress code and behaviour regarded as appropriate in Indian culture, for example, not discussing politics and business with the men in the family, as the men regard such talk as inappropriate for women. Saira's comment on her clothing encapsulates the amount of respect the women displayed toward members of the extended family:

"In the extended family I would never dress like this. You know not for anything else other than respect because you know wearing jeans and a shirt or whatever is a problem for them. I've got cousins who are Aalimas (female religious authorities), all of them you know, in scarf or covered, so you tend to stick out there."

School is another form of socialisation where children learn acceptable forms of behaviour in the wider society. Indian culture was perpetuated in the schools the women attended. Teachers did not encourage girls to fight with boys, as the teachers regarded such behaviour in a negative light. The women therefore

suppressed their anger and approached problems without tackling the males head on. The teachers were strict disciplinarians and expected pupils to obey and respect them without asking too many questions. Critical thinking was not encouraged and girls were discouraged from being outspoken by their teachers. Here again teachers subscribed to the cultural behaviours they deemed appropriate for women. This further encouraged the participants to adopt passive behaviour. In addition, teachers also practised segregation of sexes outside school hours. The participants found it strange that during school hours male teachers were friendly toward them and spoke a lot to them. However, the same male teachers who were so friendly during school hours would not even greet the women or even talk to them outside normal school hours as they were afraid the community would accuse them of having an illicit affair with the female student.

I however also noted a contradiction to the traditional Indian cultural norm expectations when participants mentioned some male teachers who did not discourage the participants from progressing in their studies. These women noticed how female teachers were subjugated by male teachers within the school system. Within the education system as a whole, women faced a double-bind in that they were disempowered both by the apartheid system and by Indian male teachers who subscribed to Indian norms relegating women to second class citizen status and homemaker roles, thus leading to female teachers' subjugation and subordination. Shamila, like the other participants, lost confidence from a young age due to the negative attitudes of male teachers towards her:

> *"We lack confidence and assertiveness and it has a lot to do with our schooling. In our school days our teachers were suppressed and they were transferring that on to us subconsciously, that's number one. Number two when you have weak teachers and you ask questions and the teachers cannot answer the questions, they actually insult you so that they don't feel they are incompetent. And that happened to me when I was in school. And now you're a shy person and you're unassertive and that goes to your head and you ask yourself, what have I done so wrong and you don't do it again. You never question again and that definitely happens at school."*

Saira felt that teachers perpetuated Indian culture at school, a belief the majority of the participants shared:

> *"Teachers perpetuated the Indian culture because you congregated together and that is how you maintained the Indian culture."*

The **community** within which the women who participated in the study were raised ensured that young girls adhered to the Indian traditions and norms. These women remarked that when young girls and women were perceived as not toeing the line, the community would take up the issue and would reprimand the transgressors and their families. The participants therefore ensured they did not deviate from Indian cultural expectations, as it would bring shame and dishonour to the family. Parents were more concerned about what society would think of their daughters' behaviour than about how their daughters felt, and would therefore curb the women in their exploration toward self-discovery. Mahima explains that society dictated how she dressed and behaved, and her views were reiterated by the other women in the study:

> *"It was more a societal expectation of what others are going to say, what others are going to think, but has always been the norm in my family and I think that when you walk out wearing a short skirt, it is not so much about whether you are comfortable or your child is comfortable, but more about what other people will say and how they will look at you, and this will not necessarily reflect your character or the way you are as a person, but your image gives the person looking from the outside thinking that is not acceptable for a female. Or look at her and how she is dressed, you know, that kind of comment that you would hear other people saying."*

5.2.2.4 The role of religious leaders in socializing the women

I thought *a priori* that religion would be found to play a separate role in the early lives of the participants, but discovered that it forms part of the culture. While religion played a pivotal role in the lives of these women, they did not highlight it in their discussions relating to their childhood and mainly made reference to it by discussing

the role played by religious leaders in inculcating religious values. Religion did, however, become salient in the women's adult lives, and especially in their workplaces, as I discuss more fully in Chapter 6.

Religious institutions played a role in the process of socialization when the women were growing up. Religious leaders played a major part of the formative years of these women's lives. Both Muslim and Hindu women attended religious classes every afternoon after school and in this way their religious beliefs were moulded and shaped by spiritual leaders, in addition to their teachings at home. Religious classes also allowed the women in the study to learn their vernacular languages. The women reported that they were restricted in their movements, as religious teachers monitored their behaviour all the time. Since their parents invariably subscribed to the belief that religious teachers cannot be questioned, the participants had to walk the straight and narrow path in case there were any complaints about their behaviour. Saira describes her experiences of religious teachers monitoring her behaviour, a phenomenon which the other women also encountered:

> "The religious leaders would watch our every move, even out of Madressah (classes Muslim children attend after school to learn about the teachings of Islam). We were told to wear Islamic clothes outside Madressah and we would get a tongue lashing if we did not; we had to behave modestly and not to stand on the streets talking to boys, etc. In that sense it was good as they taught us values that would enhance our reputation. We were not allowed to attend any parties at school. They did not emphasise secular education and they did not want us to take part in netball, for example, and wear shorts. We were not allowed to take part in drama classes, but I took part in all these events as my father encouraged it."

While the wider community played an important role in moulding the participants, family played a critical role in shaping the women's gender identities and played a dominant role throughout the early lives of these women. Specifically, family structure influenced the women's behaviour, the values they learned as young girls and their understanding of what it means to be a woman.

5.2.3   The family's role in the socialization process

Josselson (1996) points out, that children are born to a particular family in a particular social time, to a social class, a race and gender. Our families teach us what is acceptable behaviour and what is not, and we are provided with a religious structure and a set of values that form our outlook on the world.

5.2.3.1   Family structure

The majority of the women who participated in the study lived in nuclear families, but some lived in extended families for a part of their childhood before their parents moved into their own nuclear units. In Western cultures, living in a nuclear family is the norm, but an extended/joint family structure is standard in Indian culture. In the past, living in nuclear families was the exception rather than the rule amongst Indians in South Africa. Joint and extended family units are still prevalent among many South African Indians. Since the women in the study were raised in families that went against the model of acceptable Indian family structures, I feel that this aspect of the family structure should be explored at this juncture, as I want to make it clear that they were living in nuclear family units. In the current study, I found that, although the women lived in nuclear families, they still maintained relations with their extended families. Extended family members had limited influence on major decisions in the women's lives relating to their education and careers, but they still influenced the participants' prescribed gender role behaviours to a large extent. Sushmita summarises the women's close connection to extended families as follows:

> "I think growing up in an extended family had the advantage that you had a fantastic support network, you had role models – you had lots of people that influenced and shaped who you became. My parents then moved and we were a family unit of our own. For me that was not a problem, because we all lived close to each other. We lived almost as neighbours, so they were still very much part of my life."

5.2.3.2 Fathers' contradictory messages in socializing daughters

Fathers play a pivotal role in socializing daughters in terms of Indian culture. In the majority of cases, the fathers of the participants were entrepreneurs operating their own businesses. To me it seemed that the women's fathers' roles in socializing these women according to Indian cultural traditions were a push-pull factor. On the one hand, the participants' fathers wanted their daughters to pursue tertiary education and become independent, and on the other hand, these women's fathers wanted them to adhere to Indian cultural values such as obedience and respect, and passive and subservient behaviour, and to promote family honour while avoiding family shame. I provide a few examples the women mentioned in terms of these push-pull factors below.

All the women's fathers supported their daughters' pursuing careers, although these dreams went against the gender role expectations in Indian culture, where women were expected to stay at home. These fathers wanted their daughters to be independent career women, and did not emphasise household chores, which was at odds with Indian cultural norms. These fathers also prevented their wives from burdening the participants with cooking and housework, as the fathers wanted their daughters to perform well at school, so that they would be in a position to pursue tertiary education. This worked in the women's favour, as they could focus on their studies and were not hampered by mundane household chores. Mahima voices the experiences of the other women relating to fathers' emphasising education more than household chores:

> "My father had given me the opportunity to study and had allowed me to focus on my studies and had not forced the traditional Indian gender roles such as cooking and learning to run a home on me. He always told my mother to leave me alone, I will come around."

The high career expectations from fathers led the women to become achievers at school. Hard work was modelled and encouraged by their parents. Parents, especially fathers, supported the women in their achievements at school. It is also for this reason that the women were not pushed into marriage by their fathers. Their fathers' encouragement appears to be unusual within the largely patriarchal Indian

society in which the women grew up. One possible explanation for these fathers' behaviour is the effect that apartheid had on their ability to improve the lives of the family. These fathers realized that education would give their daughters an edge over other Indian women who were struggling. No matter how well the women performed at school, their fathers would always encourage them to perform even better. This propelled the women to achieve even higher results, as they felt they did not want to disappoint their fathers. Karina's father's expectations of her school performance are typical of the expectations of the other women's fathers:

> "My father made me feel terrible. I wasn't a 90s student. I was more between the 60s and 80s student and that made me feel terrible. My father still made me feel terrible – you can do better. It was always you can do better, you can do better. And I grew up with that. Good is not enough and if you got a good in your report it was not good enough – they wanted excellent. You know that type of thing."

Fathers adhered to the usual cultural socialization of sons and daughters. When it came to conversations related to business, these were restricted to the males in the family. While education was encouraged by fathers, the women were kept away from business discussions, which is once again a contradiction in how the participants' fathers behaved. Fathers exposed sons to business wheeling and dealing from a young age, but daughters were not included in these types of activities. Most of the women therefore entered the corporate environment ignorant of how to conduct business and of corporate life. Shamila encountered the same type of unfair treatment in relation to her brother which the other women also experienced:

> "Indian men have always been in charge of the financial affairs in the home, as they are till today in many homes the primary breadwinners in the family. The Indian culture prescribes men to handle the affairs of business and women should focus on the home. Indian men believe they are providers and should take charge of everything related to paying bonds, insurance, etc. supporting the family and it is so much a part of their socialization that they believe since the woman's domain is the kitchen, women should not interfere in the financial side of affairs.

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> *Especially when they have sons – their sons are groomed to take charge of financial affairs of the home."*

The participants' fathers' contradictory messages led to a number of consequences within their families and these eventually filtered through to the community. Due to fathers' undermining the women's ability to conduct business, their sons [the participants' brothers] did not adopt egalitarian views towards the division of labour and instead embraced sexist views towards the females in their homes. Where mothers assisted fathers in the businesses, sons were raised with the notion that it is acceptable for women to be both workers and housewives, thus further weakening any egalitarian views sons might have had towards a division of labour within the home. Fathers thus gave the participants contradictory messages. One was that they should pursue careers like men, and the other was that they were responsible for household chores. Although the participants' fathers stopped the participants' mothers from involving their daughters in too many household chores (because they wanted the participants to succeed in their studies), the message that came across very strongly was still that housework is a woman's domain. Waheeda captures the contradictory messages the women received from their fathers regarding females' gender roles in the following comment:

> *"My father had raised my brothers not to do any household chores, as he believed that is a woman's domain and men should not be involved in doing housework. That is the Indian male mentality where they want the women to run a home, as it is their duty as females, but women should also assist them like men in their businesses. So my brother grew up in a house full of women – we were four sisters – and he never lifted a finger to assist in the house. My mother had no say in the matter, as my father would scold her if she even asked my brother to assist in keeping his room clean. My brother was therefore raised in a very patriarchal fashion where the men have their role and women have double roles – their traditional roles in the homes and to be career women."*

Fathers also gave brothers more freedom regarding dating and staying out till late at night, compared to their sisters. In this respect, Rani echoes the experiences of the rest of the women and their roles as females in Indian families:

"I think within Indian families, irrespective of what cultural background you are from or sect, as a female you should have an unblemished record, okay. And I think you will be able to identify with what I'm saying to you. It's like if you were involved in a physical fight as opposed to your brother, the way it's going to be dealt with will be very different. So even in terms of relationships, my father was very distinct with me. You will not have a relationship with anyone until you are 22. And that is something I did. Whereas with my brother, I, on the other hand, was ordering his flowers, etc. for his girlfriends at school, of which my parents were aware of. They didn't mind that. Yet if the roles were reversed it would not have been received well."

The participants all admitted that they had a closer relationship with their fathers than with their mothers. Fathers played an important role in the success stories of these women. Had it not been for their fathers' being far-sighted, liberal-minded, wanting a better start in life for their daughters and going against the grain of society, these women might not have been able to pursue tertiary education. Fathers also allowed their daughters to choose their careers, as in most cases the fathers themselves were not fully cognizant of the careers available to their daughters and what these careers entailed. These fathers placed an equal emphasis on the education of their sons and that of their daughters. Firdous, like all the other participants, regards her father as the most significant person in her life in encouraging her to study:

"I think the most influential person in my life was definitely my father. He placed a very high premium on education and allowed equal opportunity to all his children to acquire as much education as we wanted."

5.2.3.3 Non-identification with mother

The participants' mothers were homemakers. Some of the women's mothers became wage earners, but the majority were never exposed to earning a living. For those women whose mothers were earning, their jobs were a necessity rather than a choice. The participants' mothers never entered the corporate environment, but earned a living in the informal economy, either by assisting their husbands in the family businesses, or by engaging in their own entrepreneurial endeavours due to

financial difficulties. The participants' mothers did not step out of the confines of the Indian townships to gain employment. Their work was restricted to Indian areas and interacting with Indian people, which led them to maintain strong cultural and religious values. For the women's mothers, gender stereotypes, gender prejudice and patriarchal factors dictated they should be subjugated and under the control of men and should only work when a male was no longer able to support the family. Mahima aptly describes the role of her mother as a housewife which she and the other women observed in their formative years:

> *"My mother had to learn cooking and cleaning skills as opposed to wanting to work. The reason being, that the norm in the Indian culture is that the primary role of a woman is that of a wife and a mother. More importantly it is supporting her husband by being a good wife and therefore a professional life becomes secondary."*

One aspect that encouraged passive behaviour among the women who participated in the study was that they grew up in homes where they witnessed their mothers being controlled by their husbands. Their fathers made the final decisions in the homes and, in the majority of cases their mothers were overruled if they expressed an opinion. The participants' fathers were breadwinners and even where mothers were working, their monetary contributions to the households were secondary. The women witnessed the subservient behaviour of their mothers towards the males in the home, and they also modelled their mothers' behaviours by dutifully obeying fathers' and brothers' demands. In the majority of cases, the women's brothers were revered and their mothers were at the brothers' beck and call. Even where brothers were younger than the participants, sisters would carry out their commands. These women were socialized in patriarchal families and societies where females are placed in subservient positions. They internalized patriarchal attitudes and beliefs which oppressed and discriminated against them. Waheeda found herself in a weaker position compared to her brother, like the majority of the women in this study:

> *"My brother always did have more power and I accepted it. There was nothing I could do about it as my father gave him the power and my father's word was law… So it was very difficult for me to rebel against him and since I was living in his house, his word was law. Sometimes it*

made you feel lousy, especially when my brother used to also treat us older sisters without respect and like he was the boss of the house where we had to be at his beck and call, but I accepted it."

Unlike with their relationships and strong identification with their fathers, the women who participated in the study did not wish to emulate their mothers and accordingly their mothers had a much smaller influence on them. The majority of women were tomboys and they did not enjoy cooking and when their mothers would ask for assistance they would grudgingly assist in household chores. When they could, they hid behind their studies in order to avoid being too involved in conducting "feminine" tasks. The majority of the women at some point in their childhood learned to cook and assist their mothers in household chores. Unlike their mothers, however, these women focused on their studies and careers. They did not have very close relationships with their mothers, as their mothers wanted them to be perfect housewives and cooks, and these women were rebelling against these types of gender prescriptions. These arguments affected them into their adult lives when they were married with children, and their mothers would still be arguing with them regarding their cooking skills. To this day, the women in this study are not passionate about cooking and engage in this activity out of necessity to feed their families, rather than for the love of it.

Shamila, like the other women in the study, had a rocky relationship with her mother because Shamila was not passionate about the home:

"The things my mother wanted me to do I did not like to do, such as cooking and homely things. That was not me at all. Being a good housewife was the biggest issue we constantly had."

The participants' accounts of their early life stories led me to explore the metaphor of a caged bird to illustrate the restrictive lives the women led when they were growing up, as set out in the next section. The metaphor of the bird is divided into two parts. The first part deals with a description of the cage and the second part deals with a description of the characteristics of a bird.

5.3   METAPHOR OF A CAGED BIRD

When I started analysing my data I did not anticipate I would be using a metaphor to unpack the lives of Indian female managers. However, as I listened to and re-read the women's life stories and generated themes, I felt I could associate their life stories with a metaphor.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (2006-2007), a metaphor is a figure of speech replacing one idea or object with another to suggest an analogous relationship. Analogous in this context implies that if dissimilar things relate to each other in some aspects, they are likely to relate in others too (Carpenter, 2008). Aita, McIlvain, Susman, and Crabtree (2003) suggest that using metaphors in qualitative research as an analytic strategy assists in explaining complex experiences and leads to a deeper understanding of phenomena, such as the life stories of Indian female managers.

I toyed with the idea of two metaphors and started researching both. The first metaphor I chose was that of birds with broken wings. However, I realized reading through the women's stories that their wings were not broken and decided on a second metaphor which I felt was more suited to the life stories of these women, namely that of caged birds.

Listening to the life stories of the participants and later analysing my data, images of caged birds sprung up in my mind. Their early life stories painted a picture of many constraints on who they were as young girls and what they could become as adults. However, the cages failed to constrain them in the long run, although there was a certain sense of yearning for freedom among the participants. It is clear that this group of women found ways to escape the strictures placed upon them and found a means to escape the cage.

At this point, I feel I need to paint a picture of the features of the bird cage and explain what it symbolises in the current research. Thereafter, I will provide a description of Indian female managers and why they are like birds in a cage by summarising the themes generated from the data. I call the first cage the women

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found themselves in the "**childhood cage**". I named the bigger cage, which the women encountered in the workplace, the "**corporate cage**", which is elaborated on in Chapter 6.

5.3.1   Features of a bird cage

The main features of a bird cage are that it

- is strong,

- restricts movement,

- allows limited interaction with the outside world

- protects what is inside the cage from harm,

- allows a view outside the cage, and ,

- has a door for entry and exit.

All these features are depicted in Figure 5.1 and are discussed individually below.

Figure 5.1: Features of a bird cage

Restricts movement

Limited interaction   Strong

Protects   Cage door only escape   View outside cage
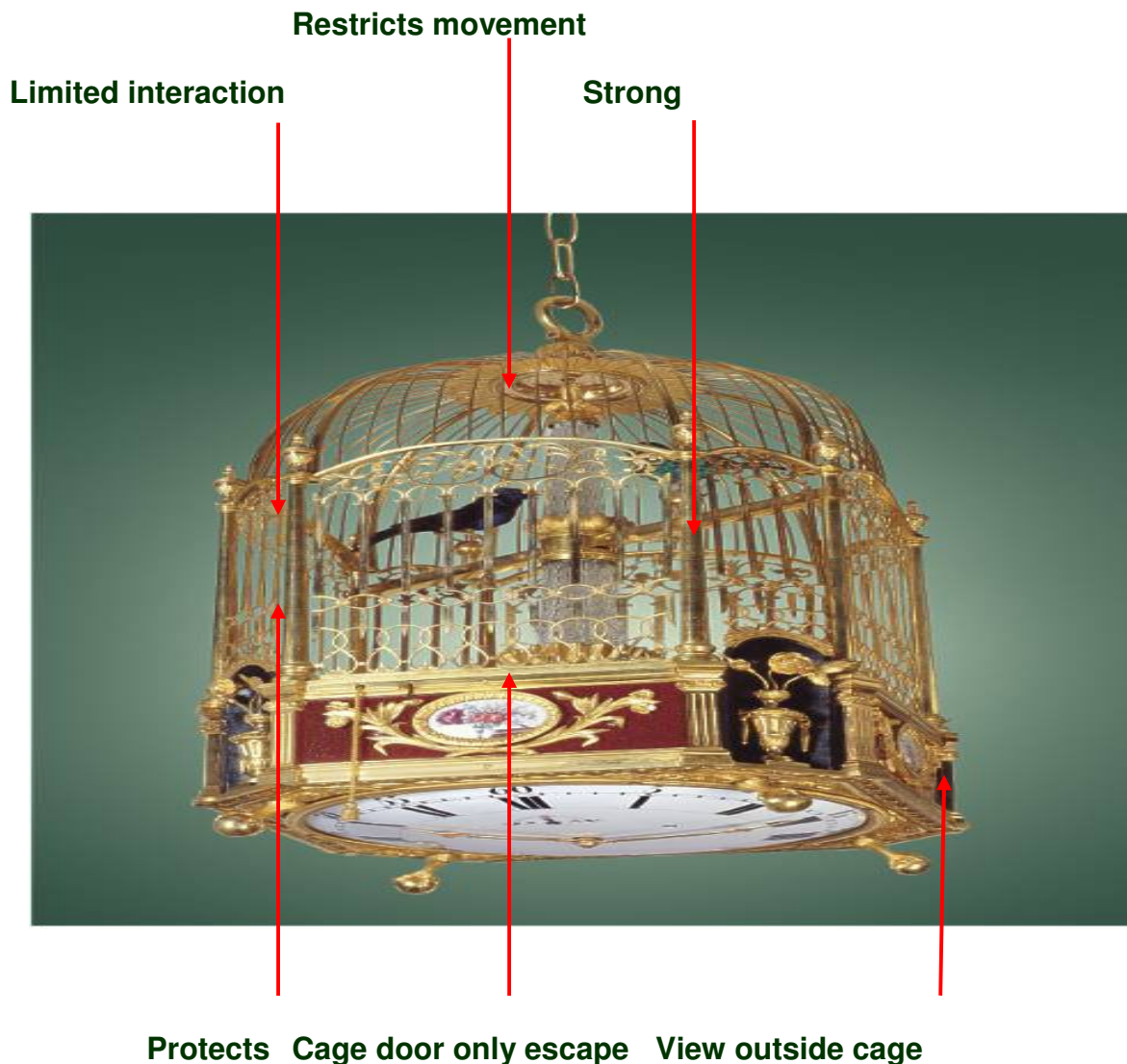
5.3.1.1   Strong

What does their cage look like? The cage is made of strong metal bars that connect to make a strong prison. Metal bars that intertwine are much stronger than single bars on their own because it would take more strength to separate the bars from each other. A single bar is not attached to anything, so to break it would be easier. The strong metal bars depict the different elements in the lives of these women, such as their family, culture (Indian), religion (Islam or Hinduism) and the societal system within which they were raised (in this case, apartheid). These multiple elements intertwine to create a strong barrier through which it is difficult to escape. When one

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element is overcome, there are others attached to it that are difficult to separate from this element and so it takes great tenacity and strength to break down all these elements. The strong links between the bars are more difficult to break through and since the bird is not a very strong creature, it may not be able to break through any of these bars, but may make only a small dent in the structure. In the end, the bird may be more harmed by pushing against these bars than the damage caused on the cage.

5.3.1.2   Restricts movement

A cage restricts movement. Birds are not free to explore and have to fly in the confined space within the cage. While some cages allow enough space for birds to fly, other cages are smaller and birds have very little space they can navigate in. Movement was also restricted for these women, as they lived in designated Indian townships and did not venture to other areas. Some women lived in very small Indian townships where their movements were even more restricted, as they were subjected to a small town mentality. Their movements were further restricted by family and Indian community. Fathers kept them homebound, and community members would monitor their every move and as a result their freedom was curbed. These women were entrapped by the patriarchal beliefs practised by their families, culture, community and the State. Once again, the different elements rose up to restrict their movements. These restrictions were tolerated by the women during their childhood, as they had no power to stand up against their family and community.

5.3.1.3   Limited interaction

Birds are usually confined to their bird cages, and when they are allowed to fly, it is usually in a limited space, thus making interaction with other birds difficult. Usually similar types of birds are kept in a cage and the birds are not allowed to interact with birds of other species due to a fear of their being harmed. The restrictions imposed on them by the macro-environment, community and the family limited the participants' interaction with people from other ethnic groups. Even when they had the freedom to associate with people from other ethnic groups, their community would frown upon such interactions. Their childhood was spent interacting with

Indian people, and they thus found it difficult later to interact with people from other races and also men within their own community.

5.3.1.4   Protects

A bird cage protects smaller birds from humans, animals and bigger birds that may harm or kill them. In the same manner, not only were the women who participated in this study protected by their community, which kept a watchful eye on them, but their parents shielded them. Parents protected these women from unwanted pregnancies by not allowing them to date or to go out with friends on their own, and they lived under their fathers' roofs even when they were studying at university.

These daughters did not have to work part-time while at school or university, as their fathers provided for them financially. Parents provided emotional and psychological support to these women regarding their progress at school and university. The women were living in a safe environment which was well insulated from the riots taking place in the African townships.

5.3.1.5   Views outside the cage

The birds can see out of the cage although it is strong, as it has gaps between the intertwined bars. The caged birds can look out through the cage bars and perhaps see other birds flying freely. They aspire to be free like the birds living in the open where the sky is their canopy and the earth is their bed. The free birds are free to fly anywhere in the world, while birds in a cage are confined to a small space. The women saw in the media how successful white women were in terms of their careers and they aspired to be the same. They could also see that their brothers were treated differently and had lots of freedom. The women in the study felt it was only a matter of time before they too would be flying outside their restrictive cages. Fathers also played a role in allowing daughters to see the world through their eyes. Most of the women's fathers had travelled and had been exposed to other cultures, and they wanted their daughters to learn about other people's cultures, as they would have to learn to work with different types of people.

5.3.1.6   The cage door as the only escape

Birds that are cage-bound find it difficult to venture out, as they do not interact much with other birds and they find the cage a safe haven. In order to avoid such phobias, bird owners sometimes leave cage doors open so birds can fly out of their confining space and interact with other birds. In the case of the participants, fathers were instrumental in opening the cage doors so their daughters could fly out of their restrictive cages. This was the women's only escape route from the confines of the cage. Their mothers also became a kind of reverse motivator, as the participants did not want to be like their mothers, and always tried to escape their gendered duties.

Taking the first step in attending university took courage. The women however escaped into the bigger cage (the university cage), although university life did not provide them with much freedom. The women still lived with their parents and did not have much freedom, as they were bound by rules set by their fathers, and parents protected their daughters, as the participants were not allowed to go out as they pleased. At least they had some emotional and physical freedom from their parents while they were on campus during the day. At university, they learned to solve their own problems with lecturers and administrative staff, and this was their first small taste of the real world. They did not rely on their parents to resolve their problems at university.

However, because apartheid was so entrenched in their lives, even when they had an opportunity to socialize with students from other racio-ethnic groups, they chose to remain with students from their own racio-ethnic group only. If they tried to cross the great divide between races, fellow Indian students would prevent them from associating especially with white students, who were regarded as the enemy. This led to interactions that were limited to their own ethnic group. They had to still take care of their family honour and did not indulge in activities that would bring shame to their families. The bars of the community, family, the macro-environment, culture and religion were still very strong, even in the bigger cage (the university cage) that they had entered. They also realized that education was the key to their freedom and did not want to jeopardize their future so they dedicated themselves to their studies.

What they saw through the bars of the cage this time was the world of work and their so-called freedom.

5.3.2   Characteristics of a bird

The metaphor of the caged bird also requires a closer look at the characteristics of a bird, to explain why and how, and to what extent, the participants managed to liberate themselves from the cage. Figure 5.2 demonstrates the relevant characteristics.

Figure 5.2: Characteristics of a bird
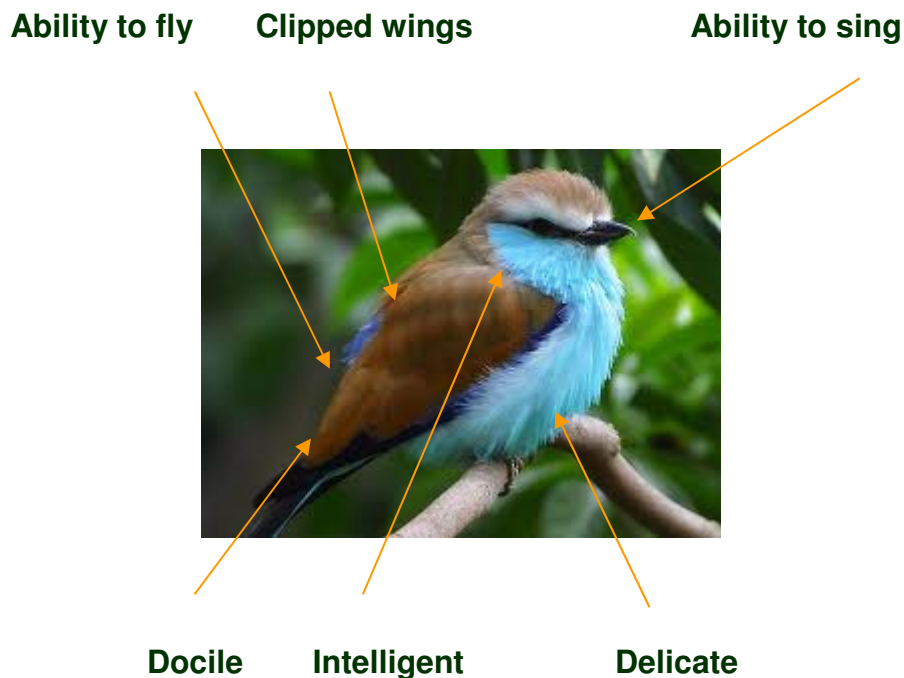
5.3.2.1   Ability to fly

Birds have the innate ability to fly. Even birds that are born and bred in cages can learn how to fly. Birds will find any escape route to free themselves from the confined space within cages and fly away into the wild. They want to be free and not live cooped up in cages. It became clear through the women's stories that they yearned to escape, but the cages created by the Indian culture are so secure and strong that it is difficult for them to fly away from such a stronghold. Even when their fathers opened the cage door for them, they flew only into a larger cage, namely the

"university cage" – their flight was not one to complete freedom, although they were on their journey to greater independence.

5.3.2.2   Clipped wings

The main reason for clipping a bird's wings is to prevent the bird from flying. A bird with clipped wings finds it difficult to fly far and will always be found near the cage. The women's wings were clipped when they were growing up, as they were prevented from exploring the outside world on their own. Parents and Indian community prevented the women from travelling alone by keeping a watchful eye on their movements. The apartheid system restricted their movements to Indian townships and facilities only and they lived in environments that were oppressive and dehumanising. Since they were secluded in their Indian townships, the media was censored, political activists were detained and parents did not speak against the government, they were not fully aware of how the apartheid system was disadvantaging them. One thing they were aware of, however, was that they faced restrictions in terms of educational and vocational opportunities, and at every turn they were made aware of their powerlessness.

5.3.2.3   Ability to sing

While some species of birds learn to sing from others, there are other species that have a genetic predisposition to sing on their own. Birds sing for various reasons: males sing courtship serenades; birds sing the dawn chorus and others sing during flight. What were the women singing? These women were raised during the 1970s and 1980s when freedom songs such as "We shall overcome" were sang by pupils all over South Africa against the policies of the apartheid government. These women's songs also consisted of prayers of freedom from their restrictive cultures and communities.

5.3.2.4   Intelligence

Birds are intelligent and have the ability to learn. These women are all intelligent and were achievers at school. At school they received awards for academic

achievements. All of them are university graduates, and 85 per cent of these women have obtained post-graduate degrees, implying that they are highly intelligent achievers.

5.3.2.5   Dependency and delicacy

Birds are dependent on their parents for food when they are fledglings. Birds are described as delicate, but they have the knack to survive in the wild and this takes courage from their side. As children these women were dependent on their parents to take care of them. Their fathers were, however, overprotective over them. Unlike free birds, these women were caged and they were unaccustomed to the wild, as they lived insulated lives while their fathers groomed their brothers to face the world.

5.3.2.6   Docility

Caged birds tend to be docile compared to birds in the wild. The owners of the cage make them passive, as they are provided with food and drink and do not have to hunt or look for seeds for survival. The women were raised in male-dominated homes and communities. In Indian culture, men are the breadwinners, pay the bills and handle problems outside the homes. These women were not placed in positions where they had to stand up to the community or family, as they were encouraged to walk away from conflict and not to assert themselves outside the home.

Bearing in mind this metaphor of a birdcage, what impact did growing up in the apartheid era, being raised by parents subscribing to patriarchal cultural beliefs, being influenced by Indian societal norms and practices have on the gender identity formation of the women in the study? This issue is discussed in the next section.

5.4 IDENTITY

A person's identity is shaped not by a singular factor, but multiple factors. Identity is about "who am I?". The question to be answered then is how these women saw themselves as Indian females.

In this section, I discuss the intersectional identities of the women in terms of race, gender and ethnicity. These core elements of their identities are interdependent, interactive and dynamic, rather than independent and static. The data clearly indicates that the context within which they were raised played a significant role in the participants' identity formation. Aspects relating to the context within which they were raised include the following:

- the apartheid era,

- Indian cultural values (this includes gender roles, obedience and respect, honour and shame, passive and subservient behaviour, and the role of the extended family and community in the socialisation process), and

- the family (which includes the immediate and extended families).

Cultural and religious values which are transmitted through the community and family also affected the identity formation of these women. These various elements cannot be isolated, but operated simultaneously in the identity formation of the women during childhood.

Figure 5.3 sets out identity formation in childhood.

Figure 5.3: Identity formation in childhood

Factors	First-order codes	Theoretical categories	Aggregate theoretical dimensions
APARTHEID	• Restrictions on education and access to certain careers due to apartheid	Material limitations	Oppression and discrimination
	• Being confined to Indian townships through law	Limited physical mobility	
	• Races not interacting • Community and university students objections to them associating with Whites • Low race status	Racism	
INDIAN CULTURE	• Brothers and males having higher status and power in family and society; • Males in leadership positions in society; • Fathers exposing sons to business as per cultural and societal expectations	Low gender status of females	Male hegemony
	• Mothers encourage women not to fight outside home • Fathers do not allow women to be outspoken in public • Men handle conflict outside the home as prescribed by culture and expected by society • Women are expected to be soft-spoken and to restrain their behaviour in public • Women may not back-chat parents and elders	Subservient behaviour is expected	Passive behaviour

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Figure 5.3 (contd)

INDIAN CULTURE

- Modesty in dressing is enforced by father, culture, religious leaders and community

→ Decent dressing

- Statements relating to obeying laws of unjust state and not rebelling against government
- Statements relating to obeying and respecting elders in family and community

→ Obedience and respect

- Women must uphold the family name
- Fathers confine women to homes
- Families control women's sexuality by controlling their behaviour as prescribed by religion and culture and enforced by family and society

→ Honour and shame

Decent dressing, Obedience and respect, Honour and shame → **Modesty**

- Expectations of community channel behaviour
- Community watches women's every move and restrict their movements
  Religious leaders watch their every move and restrict their movements

- Brothers and males have higher status and power in family and society
- Males hold leadership positions in society
- Fathers expose sons to business as per cultural and societal expectations

→ Indian society socializers → **Society regulates behaviour**

- Religion and culture intersect and play a role in lives
- Aware of religious values relative to others
- Identify with religious and cultural values

→ Importance of cultural norms and values → **Racio-ethnic identity salient**

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Figure 5.3 (contd)

F A M I L Y

- Mothers enforce traditional gender roles
- Daughters resist traditional gender roles
- Women are tomboys
- Women resist marriage at a young age
- Women develop identity separate from mothers
- School system enforces "gendered" subjects

Resistance to gender roles

Agency and resilience

- Fathers encourage studies and careers and not housework and marriage
- Women as achievers at school and university
- Extended family role weakened in career decisions

Fathers dominant in lives

Fathers encourage education and educational achievement important

I focus on the women's consciousness of not being treated fairly and what aspects of their identities they internalized and accepted and the aspects they resisted and rejected which are depicted in figure 5.4:

Figure 5.4: Conceptual model of identity formation

Awareness of unfair treatment

Agency and Resilience

Building resistance against subordination

Internalising some aspects of subordination

5.4.1   Awareness of unfair treatment

Structural barriers that existed in the identity formation of the women were patriarchal socialization of the women within the family and community, racism, cultural and religious principles to which women had to subscribe. One set of values that Indian parents and society in South Africa firmly clung to was the socialization of daughters according to Indian cultural norms and values. Patriarchal cultural beliefs amongst South African Indians remain central in socializing women and influenced the gender and racio-ethnic identity formation of the women who participated in this study. Patriarchy also influenced both Islam and Hinduism, as both religions are egalitarian, but have been distorted to suit the agendas of males in society (Moosa, 2004).

The women in the study revealed that their parents, and especially their fathers, had played a major role in their gender identity formation. Through socialization and ensuing adherence to Indian culture, the Indian community ensured that the women do not deviate from prescribed gender roles. The women witnessed their mothers' submission to cultural and societal values and norms, resulting in their mothers' not completing their schooling. Instead their mothers became housewives due to family pressure to conform. As part of their socialization, the participants were expected to be the custodians of their family reputation by being the epitome of obedience and respect. They had to be modest in their dressing and were chaperoned when going out as a method of controlling their sexuality. The women were very aware that their external movements were monitored by parents, the community and religious leaders. Voicing their opinions within the immediate family circle was permissible, but they could not challenge elders in the community.

The women were very aware of the power, freedom and advantages their brothers had within the family and externally. The women observed male hegemony when their brothers took advantage of their power in the home and Indian community. This often took the form of disrespect for sisters, even older sisters. The patriarchal social dynamics the women observed and experienced in Indian society and in the home had a profound effect on how

they came to understand the gender role of Indian women. Women were in the shadow of males who held power within the family and Indian society. In this shadow role, Indian women were dependent on men for support and stature. Thus the women in this study became aware of their gender disadvantages and consequently low status and had to adopt behaviours that did not necessarily reflect their personalities.

The message and realities of their gender subordination was further confounded because of the racial oppression of Indians under the apartheid system. Racism was the key component through which structure influenced the inequalities these women experienced in education, their exclusion from certain careers, social and economic disadvantages experienced during their childhood. They were aware of some of their parents being unable to complete schooling due to apartheid and of their own schools being ill-equipped. Apartheid also restricted their career choices and opportunities. Not only were career choices in South Africa racialized; they were also gendered. White women were confined to female occupations, and in this range there were some occupations African and Indian women could access. The women's interviews indicated that they were aware of their low status due to their gender and also their low racio-ethnic status within the country.

5.4.2   Internalizing some elements of subordination

The social, cultural and historical context played a large part in the identity formation of the women in the study. For the women to develop a healthy personal and group identity as a member of a marginalised group involved personal self-acceptance of being part of the oppressed gender group and acceptance of being part of a marginalised racio-ethnic group. The women mentioned the salience of their racio-ethnic group. They belonged to several marginalised groups (Indian, Muslim, Hindu, black) within South African society. In formulating their racio-ethnic identities, the women identified themselves as belonging to these marginalised groups, implying that they internalized being members of an oppressed racio-ethnic group in South Africa.

One form of unfair treatment by the apartheid government was keeping the races separate. Racio-ethnic identity was salient, especially during their childhood, as they lived in Indian areas, attended Indian schools, ate at Indian restaurants, watched movies in Indian cinemas, shopped at local Indian stores, played in Indian parks and on Indian beaches. The women accepted these types of discriminatory practices because their parents and the majority of the members of the Indian community did not stand up against the apartheid government, in this way encouraging passivity. Even when the opportunity to interact with other races arose, it was difficult for the majority of the participants to do so, due to societal pressure and internalized racism.

The oppressive structures of apartheid made it virtually impossible for the women in the study to escape its effects and resulted in a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. The words of Zeenat capture the effects the women felt in the following way:

> *"We came from a time in history where apartheid broke us in every way; it broke us psychologically."*

In a sense they had nowhere to run and had to accept the Indian culture as a life raft and anchor which provided refuge from being marginalised, resulting in a strong racio-ethnic identity. The women therefore identified strongly with Indian culture and their religion. The women felt a connection to their culture and did not need to deviate from the cultural and religious expectations of their community. There was no deep exploration of alternative cultural and religious values, norms and beliefs, as there was limited interaction with other groups, even at university. The women internalized many aspects of their culture and religions. Many of the cultural prescriptions placed the women in an inferior position to men. Religious tenets were also distorted to uplift the status of men and to subjugate women. Most of the women internalized some of these norms and were unable to express in public their dissatisfaction against their subjugation, and this resulted in a lack of self-confidence. This is evidenced in the women's not taking on leadership positions at university. The women passively accepted the restrictions placed on them through the Indian

culture, because belonging to the Indian racio-ethnic group became a source of self-esteem and solace in the realization of knowing who they are.

The women accepted restrictions on their mobility and behaviour by not dating, even when they had the opportunity to do so at university. They dressed modestly; they obeyed parents, teachers and elders in the community; they accepted their low status in their families and Indian communities and they were dependent on their fathers to resolve conflict outside the home. The women allowed brothers to have power in the home and did not rebel against such arrangements. The women were surrounded in their insulated environments by women in the community who did not rebel against restrictions imposed on them by Indian culture and, having nowhere to escape to Indian women accepted such treatment without questioning it.

The women in the study were, however, different. They were raised in nuclear families where fathers wanted a better life for their daughters and the women themselves wanted to escape the strictures of Indian culture. The women's idea was not to become totally isolated from the Indian community by rebelling against all norms and customs, but to fulfil their dreams within the limits deemed acceptable and not too outrageous in the Indian community. Certain restrictions and limitations imposed by their community were acceptable to these women, but they rebelled against barriers to their future educational advancement.

5.4.3   Building resistance against subordination

According to Atewologun and Singh (2010), agency refers to an individual's capability to change his or her circumstances. The women in the study are a heterogeneous group and have had different experiences while growing up. They also responded differently to the expectations of how the community and family wanted them to behave. Those living in smaller communities were expected to conform more to family and societal expectations than those living in larger communities. Some were allowed to voice their opinions in the immediate family situation only, some protested in school boycotts against the

apartheid government and fought for equal educational opportunities, while others were allowed to stand up for their rights against members of the community, but had to approach the matter in a dignified and respectable manner.

The women resisted internalizing the gender roles their mothers were trapped in. This was one of the reasons why most of the women in the study had difficult relationships with their mothers. Their mothers felt that their daughters should be socialized into performing gender-appropriate roles, as this was their primary function in life, and that their daughters should not be too involved in their studies. The participants did not enjoy domestic chores and cooking and performed these duties only out of obedience to the requests of mothers rather than internalizing such gender roles.

The only professional women who were favourably regarded in Indian society in the participants' youth were those in the medical profession, teachers and lawyers. There were only a handful of women who pursued these careers. The women in the study defied Indian communities' views on working women and pursued non-traditional professions.

Education was another tool of agency and resistance. When it came to the participants' studies, their fathers deviated from the prescribed gender roles for their daughters and instead stressed self-development and academic success. They allowed the women to focus on their studies and would also stop mothers from burdening their daughters with domestic duties that might interfere. This behaviour on the part of their fathers helped the women to develop resiliency.

Aside from their fathers' encouraging them to study, the women were themselves motivated to study, as they resisted the prescribed gender roles of being housewives prescribed for adults. The women also felt that hard work; individual effort and being diligent in their studies would lead to their success. These women were academic achievers, despite the structured inequalities of

apartheid within their schools. Educational achievement signified resiliency in the lives of these women.

The women were resilient against extended family members and society who tried to block them from their studies. These women were aware of structural barriers within their extended families and the way Indian society regarded females who were focused on their studies. The women, however, did not pay attention to objections regarding their academic achievements. Instead of extended family deterring them, interference seemed to make them even more determined to succeed. The women in the study ensured that they succeeded at school and pursued tertiary education despite the objections from extended family and society. Once again the resilience of these women in pursuing individualistic goals is evident. While their friends married and had children, these women focused on their education.

For some, the motivation to pursue tertiary education was to have financial independence, while others had lost their fathers as a result of parents' divorcing or death and they had to take on the responsibilities of the home. However, they were also aware of the structural barriers at university as a result of apartheid that would hinder their progress towards their goals. Their resiliency helped them not to allow such obstacles to deter them from studying and applying to universities.

5.5   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I firstly outlined the role of apartheid, Indian culture, religion and the role of the family in the lives of the women. Thereafter, I elaborated on the identity formation of these women during their childhood years and at university. Context as well as race, Indian culture, religion, the community and the family played important roles in their identity development. The women held strong cultural values, as they were confined to Indian townships where deviation from the norm was frowned upon. Their identity formation comprised multiple dimensions that overlapped, although sometimes certain dimensions were more prominent than others.

Despite the oppressive national context and gender subordination experienced in their families and Indian society, the women have forged identities that were agentic and resilient. Thus core themes in their narratives are agency and resilience. Throughout their early lives they had to change their circumstances either through leveraging the support from their fathers or they had to resist oppressive forces on their own. The women did not give up in the face of difficulties and persevered to overcome obstacles. While certain experiences took their toll on their self-confidence and self-esteem, excelling in their educational achievements boosted their morale and self-esteem.

The next chapter deals with the individual barriers to the participants' success and enhancers of their upward mobility, as well as the organisational barriers they faced in the corporate environment in their way to the top. The caged bird metaphor is again explored in terms of the organisational cage in which the women are stuck and where freedom implies perching with eagles on mountain tops. Identities influenced by their experiences in the workplace are also a focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6:

STRUGGLING FOR IDENTITY IN THE CORPORATE CAGE

"In a male dominated environment like our company, it's also difficult for them to include females. There are these difficulties, so you find not only are you reserved but from their side they are also reserved. It's like this boulder in the way. But I think over the years it's gotten better. It was a difficult thing for me to get through and chisel away at the boulder."

(Shamila)

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the childhood socialization of the women who participated in the study. The focus was on the socio-historical context within which the women were raised. Apartheid, Indian culture and the family played a central role in the women's childhood socialization and identity formation. Their fathers' support for higher education, agency and resilience were the core aspects that led the women to resist the restrictions imposed on them by prescribed gender roles in Indian culture and society.

The first step into the external world was their entry into university. However, entry into university did not free the women from the restrictions that existed in childhood. The women's lives changed minimally, except that at university the institutions were larger. They were exposed to different races, various ideologies which were unlike the predominantly Indian high schools they had attended. Moreover, in the university environment, the majority of the women focused on their studies and did not have the confidence to enter into leadership positions or get involved in social groups on campus. Fellow Indian students coerced the women not to form relationships with white students and this resulted in minimal interaction with other races. Lasting bonds were not formed with friends on campus, as the women mentioned that relationships ended a few months after graduating, as none of the parties made an effort to sustain the bonds. The women lived with their parents while they were at

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university and had to continue to abide by Indian cultural norms as prescribed by family and community. Fathers controlled the women's external movements, and as young adults the women were still chaperoned by family members and had to obtain parents' permission to visit friends.

The women in the study belong to the first significant cohort of Indian females to enter corporate South Africa and reach senior and top managerial positions. After completing their studies, the women entered the world of work where they felt they would at last enjoy some measure of freedom. Little did the participants realize that they were entering the "corporate cage", where organisations comprised cultures that were alien to these women, who up to that point had been predominantly exposed only to Indian culture. The women entered the corporate world with strong Indian cultural and religious beliefs and naively believed it would be easy to chart their way to top managerial positions.

From my analysis of the participants' adult stories, it seems that gender, professional and racio-ethnic identities were themes which were salient in their lives. These identity themes are illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Identity salience in the corporate environment

Factor	First-order codes	Theoretical categories	Aggregate theoretical dimensions

GENDER IDENTITY

- Difficulty attaining top managerial positions
- White males dominate in top management
- Norms against which women evaluated are masculine
- Male managers are consulted instead of the women
- Males undermine women's authority
- Male colleagues presume women are incompetent
- Women are treated as workplace mules
- Women maintain their femininity in terms of dressing and language use
- Women do not stay for social events after hours
- Women do not promote themselves and feel hard work and quality of work should speak for themselves
- Women are not "one of the guys"
- Male-skewed social activities dominate in top management

→ Gender identity salient → Gender identity centrality

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

- Women do not attach work tasks to gender
- Women do not have professional networks or mentors and learn skills on their own
- Husbands support wives' careers
- Domestic chores and childcare are outsourced
- Relocating due to job opportunities
- Marriage is delayed due to career
- High levels of self-efficacy relating to work
- Women became assertive
- Women gained confidence to challenge authority and older employees
- Women learned to handle conflict
- Women learned to work in an all-male team
- Business experience was gained at work

→ Professional identity salient → Professional identity centrality

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Figure 6.1 (Contd)

Factor	First-order codes	Theoretical categories	Aggregate theoretical dimensions

R A C I O - E T H N I C   I D E N T I T Y

- Religious practices in workplace are not deemed important
- Dietary requirements are not catered for
- Religious festival days are not taken into account when arranging meetings and work-related social events
- Strenuous social activities take place during fasting months
- Meetings are held during compulsory weekly prayer times and minority staff are not allowed to attend prayers

→ Religious identity salient

- Poor at building social networks across race
- Do not engage in political games, as it is regarded as unethical in Indian culture
- Subscribe to Indian cultures values of hard work
- Do not want to socialize alone with males in outings
- Do not flirt with males or discuss personal problems as family reputation is important
- Placing husbands' careers first
- Still living in Indian townships

→ Cultural/ethnic identity salient

- Not promoted into top managerial positions due to race: mostly White females found in top management
- No Black females in top management
- Male colleagues regard Black women as incompetent

→ Race identity salient

Racio-ethnic identity centrality

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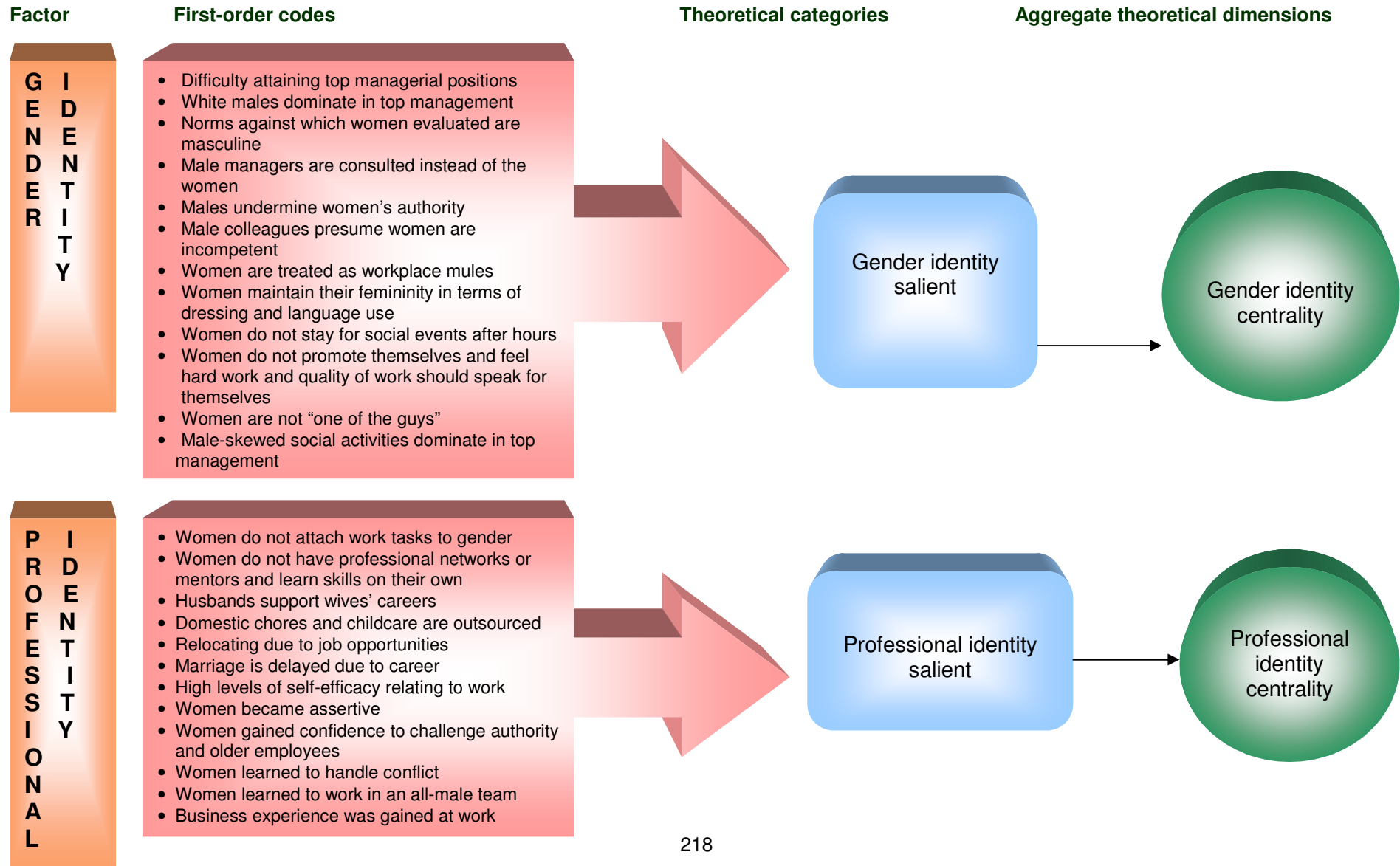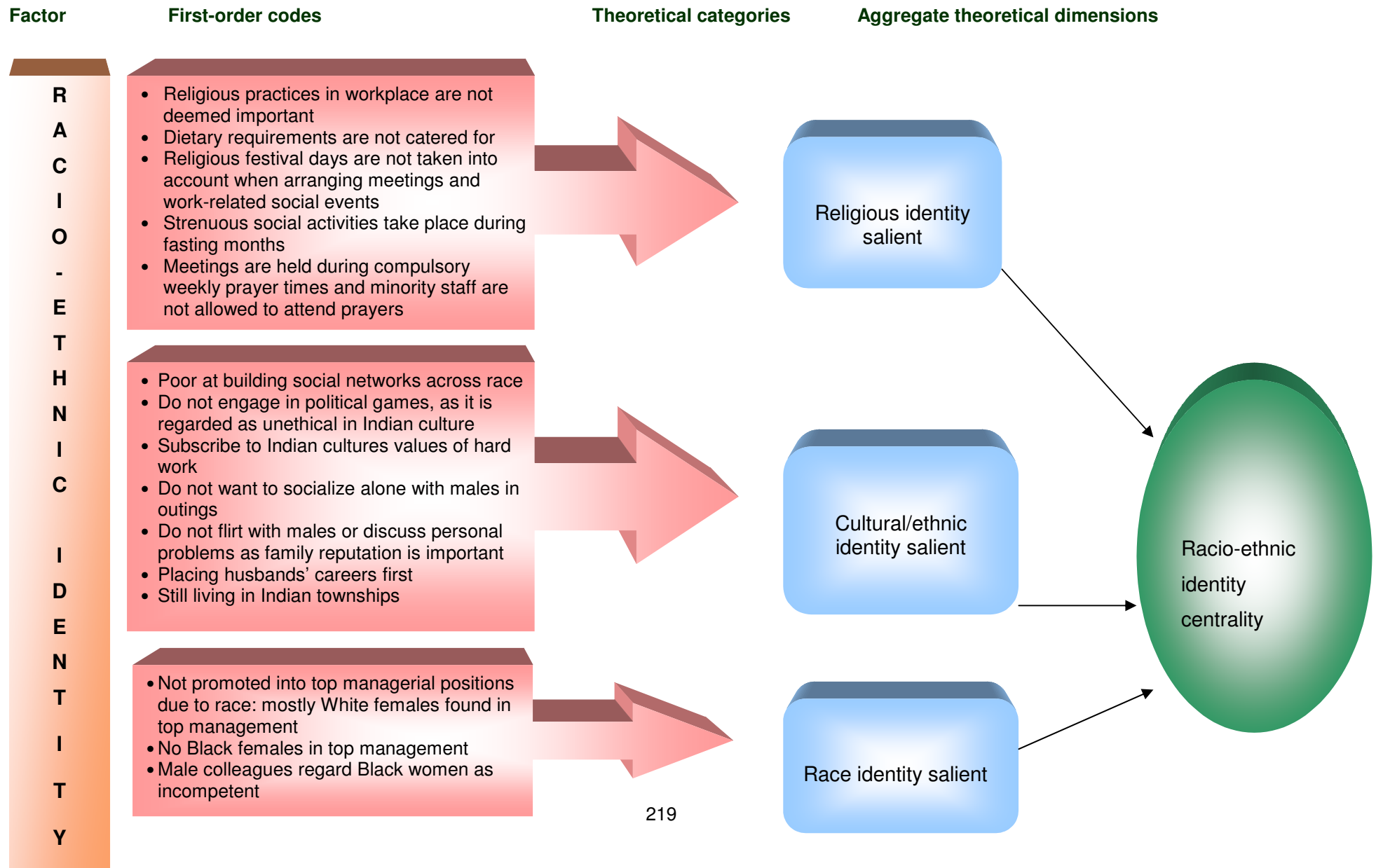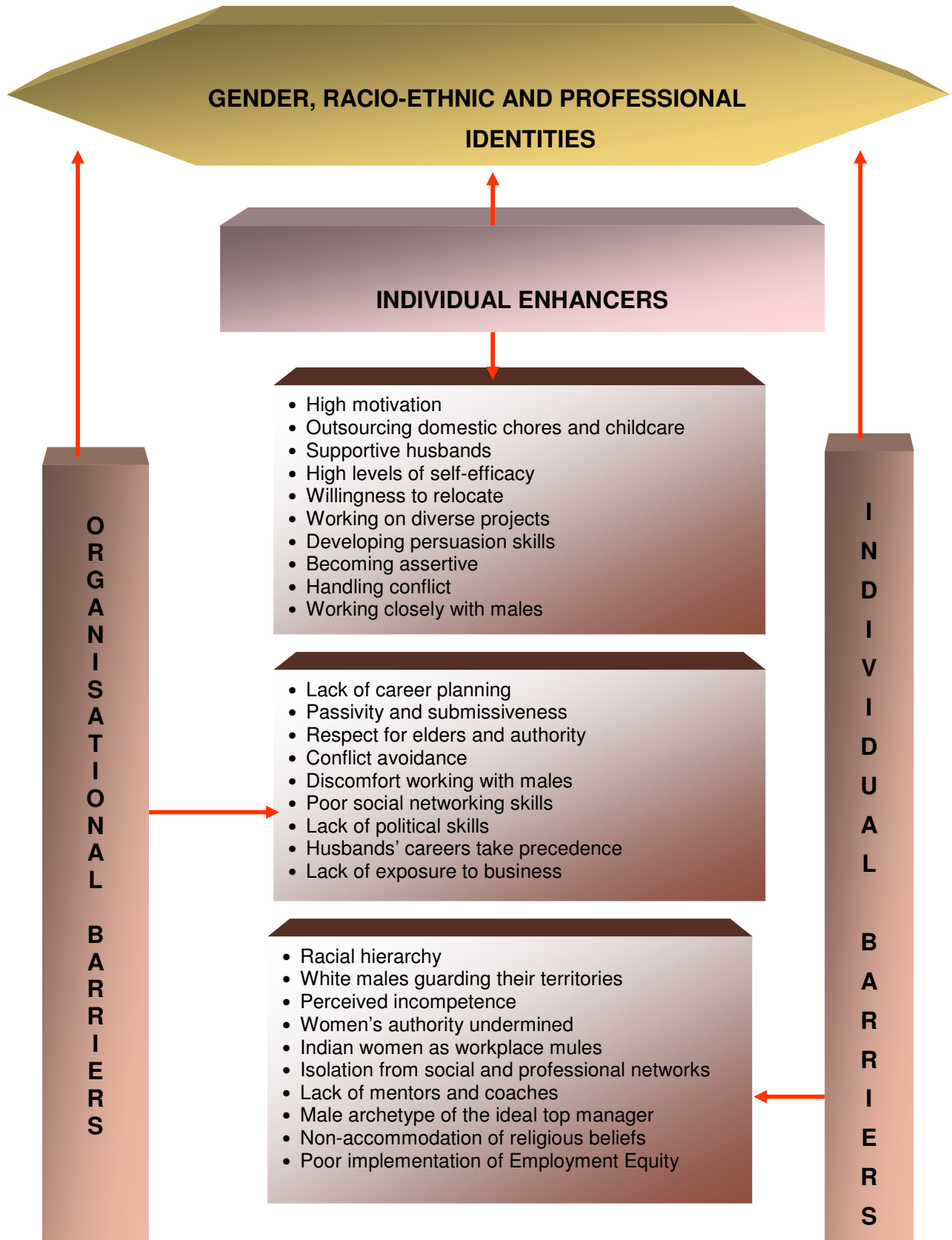
In unpacking gender, racio-ethnic and professional identities, I uncovered a gradual progressive adaptation to individual and organisational barriers and the development of individual factors that enhanced the participants' upward mobility. Figure 6.2 illustrates the individual and organisational barriers and the individual enhancing factors which formed part of the women's identity work.

Figure 6.2: Model of individual and organisational barriers and individual factors that enhance advancement forming part of women's identity work

GENDER, RACIO-ETHNIC AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

INDIVIDUAL ENHANCERS

- High motivation
- Outsourcing domestic chores and childcare
- Supportive husbands
- High levels of self-efficacy
- Willingness to relocate
- Working on diverse projects
- Developing persuasion skills
- Becoming assertive
- Handling conflict
- Working closely with males

- Lack of career planning
- Passivity and submissiveness
- Respect for elders and authority
- Conflict avoidance
- Discomfort working with males
- Poor social networking skills
- Lack of political skills
- Husbands' careers take precedence
- Lack of exposure to business

- Racial hierarchy
- White males guarding their territories
- Perceived incompetence
- Women's authority undermined
- Indian women as workplace mules
- Isolation from social and professional networks
- Lack of mentors and coaches
- Male archetype of the ideal top manager
- Non-accommodation of religious beliefs
- Poor implementation of Employment Equity

ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS

INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS

6.2 INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT

The participants entered the South African workforce with values that clashed with the organisational cultures they encountered. The women modified some of their behaviour in order to advance, while other characteristics and elements were firmly ingrained and were difficult to change and acted as barriers to advancement. The individual factors that were regarded as barriers to advancement by the women were a lack of career planning, passivity and submissiveness, respect for elders and authority, conflict avoidance, discomfort working with males, poor social networking skills, a lack of political skills, husbands' careers taking precedence and a lack of exposure to business. These items are discussed in more detail below.

6.2.1 Lack of career planning

When the women first entered the workforce, they were not aware of the importance of planning their career trajectory. Because Indians had generally not had opportunities to move up the corporate hierarchy due to apartheid, there was no one to advise the women on how to plan their career routes. Their exposure to professionals was limited to non-corporate individuals such as teachers, nurses, and medical practitioners who operated their own medical practices and pharmacies, and lawyers managing private law practices within Indian townships. Most of the women's fathers ran small businesses or shops and were largely excluded from the corporate environment. Career counsellors, due to their lack of knowledge of the corporate environment, could not point out the career paths the women could follow in their respective professions, nor was such guidance obtained at university. As a result, the majority of women did not have structured plans regarding their career paths and their main focus was on getting jobs and establishing careers. Shabana, like the other women in the study, had never planned for a career, as her aim was just to get a job:

> "It was a case of you had to go to university, get a qualification – that would enable you to get a job and earn a living."

Even after they entered corporate South Africa, the women did not proactively chart their future career paths with their managers. In retrospect, the women feel it is imperative to plan one's career at each stage. The women took advantage of the opportunities that were presented to them in terms of advancement and applied for promotions as posts became available, without knowing the career trajectory these higher posts would lead to. As the women progressed in their careers, the number of hours spent at the workplace increased as workloads became heavier, which left little time for further studies and engaging in developmental courses. Shamila's comment captures the outcome of a lack of career planning relating to the women's advancement within the workplace:

> *"It put me back personally a lot of years not planning properly for my career. It was not your career that you were concerned about but establishing and building back your foundation."*

6.2.2 Passivity and submissiveness

Socialization into Indian culture was responsible for the majority of participants being passive when they entered the workplace. Being raised in a patriarchal society where males dominated, the women's voices were at first silenced and the transition to behaving assertively in the workplace was initially daunting. Colleagues perceived the women as subservient and took advantage of their silence. Shilpa was unassertive, like the other participants, when she first started working:

> *"I was more confident because when I came into that role I was already 12 years into my career. I would have been very different had I joined them earlier on. I would have been seen as non-assertive. I believe when I started working I was not as confident as I am now. I have grown my confidence over time."*

Most of the women mentioned there is an element of passivity still present in their general orientation. The women realized that this is the case – when some of their less qualified, incompetent colleagues are promoted into higher level management positions, they accept it and do not protest against unfair organisational practices. The majority of these women did not take the initiative to ask to be developed further

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in their respective careers. In Indian traditional culture, female needs are secondary to those of males, which may explain why the women in this study were not aggressive in seeking developmental opportunities. A quote from Shamila illuminates what was heard from other women in the study about the strong influence of Indian culture on their gender identity:

> *"We feel guilty and terrible for asking for what we need. I felt like I'm doing something horribly wrong as I sat there and expressed to them my needs. That is that I need further development and how they are not fulfilling it for me, and I need more support from them to move in a different direction. And I felt bad doing that. I felt bad because as Indian females our needs are placed second, third, fourth or fifth – it's never first. It's cultural and the way we've been raised. Up to today we behave that way and I was feeling bad for asking for what's rightfully mine. We're too loyal. We are concerned about what the next person will think of us. Are we making them feel bad? Then the ability to articulate what it is that we need. We lack confidence and assertiveness."*

6.2.3   Respect for elders and authority

The women had been taught to respect elders and not to question authority from a young age, and this behaviour was enforced by parents and the community. In most cases, fathers were instrumental in discouraging daughters from rebelling against supervisors, as male family members would not be able to provide protection in the workplace. Waheeda's father, like most of the other participants' fathers, inculcated respect for authority in her:

> *"I feel standing up for myself should have been inculcated in me a long time ago, so by the time I got to the workplace I could have also voiced my opinions with confidence. I must say my father always told me not to get onto the wrong side of my boss and to avoid confrontations and conflicts with them."*

The respect Saira had for elders was also a characteristic the other women in the study displayed:

"As Indians we are taught not to be outspoken towards our elders, as it denotes disrespect. I've got people reporting to me who are older than me. That's the difficulty. It just doesn't feel right, that you're telling them what to do and you're the instructor, you're the authority figure and that's where the awkwardness comes through. You learn to get over that."

6.2.4   Conflict avoidance

The participants were raised in a culture where conflict, especially female engagement with it, was viewed negatively by the community. Fathers and brothers handled conflict situations outside the home. Conflict was avoided at all costs with neighbours, family and friends. Bipasha's comments summarize the other women's attitudes towards conflict:

"We didn't realize it when we were growing up because we grew up in an all-Indian environment where people were nice to each other and we would stand together as a community. We did not experience any vulgarity and violence in our community because people were passive and everyone was concerned about their family name. We then came into the lion's den, when you literally had to fight your way out of it and here other races do not worry about their reputations."

The combination of conflict avoidance and passivity created a formidable individual barrier that the women had to overcome.

6.2.5   Discomfort working with males

Working closely in an all-male team is still a problem for the women who participated in the study, as Indian society frowns upon close relations between males and females who are not relatives. This fact is accentuated through religious precepts where intermingling of the sexes is prohibited, a point emphasised by most of these women. Mahima highlights the difficulty the women experience working in an all-male team:

"It was hard to adjust working closely with men in the workplace. It took me a few years getting used to being in male-only meetings and being in

charge of males because I had this innate shyness in me. I guess due to always being told by family not to mingle with men, and even in the school I went to, society's expectation was that we should be segregated although we attended a co-ed school."

6.2.6   Poor social networking skills

The women were successful at school and university due to working hard and adopted the same traits in the workplace. While the women were growing up, their fathers emphasised the relationship between hard work and professional success. Most of the women's parents had made a success of their businesses by working hard and they felt the same strategy could be used in the workplace. Since fathers were not exposed to the corporate environment, they could not advise their daughters adequately, and it was only by entering the workforce that the women realized that working hard was only part of the formula to success. The women soon learned that networking is also vital to being promoted. Mahima captures the women's fathers' encouragement relating to hard work:

> *"My dad always indicated if you want a better life you need to work hard in order to make life better. So that was something that has always driven me from school and there is the conditioning if you do well you will be successful. If you excel and give your best, you will be successful as well. So I think that was the kind of culture I grew up in."*

The women who participated in the study tend to avoid social events at work and only attend when such functions are unavoidable. The women are aware that these functions are vital for upward mobility, but they still believed hard work and high work standards would lead to promotions. Shamila's comment is typical of the women's views relating to building relationships in the workplace:

> *"I find in building relationships with people you might not necessarily agree with what they stand for, but you have to have a relationship with them. And I don't think we are at all scaled up for this, not in the slightest. And you know simple things that we think are a waste of time like meet in the pub for cocktails and discuss business, we would avoid*

*it. We don't have other opportunities to build relationships and therefore
it is important to attend such events."*

In their current positions, the women are provided with opportunities to participate in golf outings but refuse to participate in an all-male group. The women mentioned that they do not play golf, as young adult females are not encouraged to engage in sport activities in Indian culture, due to prevailing notions about honour and shame. Family commitments are another reason the women are unable to learn how to play golf. The women also feel they are bound to hear malicious gossip through the grapevine from colleagues relating to being the only females participating in an all-male group. Since the women were socialized in a collectivist society where what others think of them is vital to their self-concept, they abstain from such outings. Another reason for abstaining from attending social events with males is that the women have a strong sense of what it means to be a respectable Indian female. The women also believe male subordinates who attend these outings may begin to view them as friends and that this might compromise the respect they should have with subordinates. Saira aptly describes the experiences of the participants relating to male-skewed social activities:

> *"When you go out to conferences they arrange activities like extreme adventure sport where you're swinging from tree tops or diving down cliffs or shark caves or going golfing – these are activities that don't appeal to me. It is a disadvantage, as it is a bonding experience because you find men at all levels can bond and identify with that sort of thing. So my junior can have a stronger and a better relationship with someone who is senior to me because they share common social activities."*

These women also do not make time to socialize with female colleagues during the weekends or in the evenings. For the women, time is a precious commodity and they rather engage in activities with family than with friends or colleagues. Living in close proximity to large, close-knit extended families, even in their childhood, the women did not have a host of friends and associated with one or two classmates only. Likewise, in their adulthood, close bonds are not formed with female colleagues. The majority of women in the study have experienced jealousy from female colleagues

when they were promoted to higher managerial positions. The result is that the women are afraid of building close relationships with females at work. Most of the women reported having only one female friend that they confide in and they do not allow such relationships to extend beyond workplace boundaries. Also, maintaining family honour and dignity is of the utmost importance to the women, and they do not discuss their personal lives with workplace colleagues. Saira, like the rest of the women in the study, separates her work life from her personal life:

> "There are certain women I have close relationships with, but I can't say I have made a concerted effort with other women. With these women it is personalities that have clicked. I think women at senior positions can also be dangerous and they can be as bad as male colleagues. They tend to backstab you and you cannot trust them. They will do everything to ensure you do not get promoted and they move ahead of you. I guess I don't trust any of the women I work with, and I have therefore not made the effort to get close to them. Especially when it is a limited group, there aren't that many women who are promoted, women tend to be less supportive than men, they tend to be more critical and they tend to be more vocal about their criticisms as well. I tend to be more wary of women."

6.2.7 Lack of political skills

The women do not believe in playing political games in order to enhance their careers. The women believe that, in a corporate environment, white males and females tend to play political games and are promoted because of that. Having been raised in an Indian culture that emphasises ethical behaviour and integrity, the women reported that political games are contrary to their value system. From a personal perspective, the women felt they do not have the savvy to play political games. Saira voiced the other women's beliefs regarding playing political games:

> "There tends to be a very traditional way executives are supposed to behave and there's almost like a template; it's very political – terribly political. A lot of your success can depend on relationships rather than ability. I'm hopeless at political skill because it's dangerous when you're

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not a political player, because you don't help yourself as well. You can sit and watch people who are less hard working, stupider, but who have the savvy to bypass you. It's also because it does not feel ethical and I sit here and my hard work and everything I put out there, I feel should speak for itself and I shouldn't play funny games and if that's not good enough for this organisation then I'm not the right person for the organisation. I don't think it's any different in other organisations. Political skill leads to you battling with your conscience and you do and say something you don't believe in. I always lose respect for political players because you don't know when they're playing you."

6.2.8   Husbands' careers take precedence

Out of the 13 women interviewed, 10 were married, two were single and one was divorced. When I asked the married women if they would place their husbands' careers before their own professions, the women answered in the affirmative. The married women admitted they are still traditional and perform the subservient gender role of females in Indian culture and would therefore give priority to their husbands' professions. This type of socialization stems from Indian culture, where a wife places her concerns and her welfare second to her husband's. Although the husbands do not demand it, the married women still hold on to their cultural beliefs and values. Thus, the married women's careers become secondary to their husbands' professions. The married women in the study are, however, fortunate as their husbands have never requested their wives to place their careers on the back burner. Waheeda's words reflect the attitudes of the other married participants towards their husbands' professions:

"We have shared our career dreams with each other, but I will give up my job in order to promote him. As an Indian female my household duties take precedence and his job takes precedence, as is the traditional expectation."

6.2.9   Lack of exposure to business

Although most of the participants' fathers had their own businesses, commercial skills were taught to sons only. Fathers did not nurture their daughters' business talent when these women were growing up and this has had negative consequences in the workplace as they had to learn simple financial transactions, negotiation and persuasion skills in the corporate environment. The women entered the workplace with only theoretical knowledge and rudimentary experiential exposure. These women did not have the confidence to express their opinions in front of males for fear of being embarrassed, due to their lack of practical business skills. When they initially started working, they lagged behind their peers in terms of business skills and had to put in extra effort to catch up, which, however, they did within a short period, exceeding expectations. Shabana, for example, had not been exposed to business when she was growing up and this had a negative impact on her when she first entered the corporate environment:

> "…how was I expected to become a chartered accountant when my first experience of a cheque book was when I first actually started working? I opened up a bank account and I got my own cheque book. Or the first time was when I went out to audit and how do you audit… when you've never seen an audit before?"

Having discussed the individual barriers these women encountered, I can now focus on the organisational barriers the women described as stumbling blocks on their career ladder.

6.3   ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS

The organisational barriers the women faced were the racial hierarchy, white males guarding their territories, perceived incompetence, the women's authority being undermined, Indian women being treated as workplace mules, isolation from social and professional networks, a lack of mentors and coaches, male archetypes of the ideal manager, non-accommodation of religious beliefs, and poor implementation of employment equity.

6.3.1   Racial hierarchy

The government's policy of apartheid not only played a detrimental role when the women were growing up, but continued to have an effect on their workplace experiences. During the apartheid years, the division of labour in South African organisations was structured along the lines of race, as well as gender. Through the Job Reservations Act, skilled and supervisory jobs were reserved for whites, while low-paying unskilled jobs were allocated to blacks (including Indian females). Training was also affected by job reservation, as it focused on skilled jobs reserved for whites (Daniel, Habib, & Southall, 2003). The women who participated in the study did not have the luxury of choosing the organisations they wanted to work for and settled for organisations that provided them with job opportunities. Waheeda, like most of the women, felt she was held back in her career progression due to apartheid:

> "I applied to enter the workforce in the apartheid days just before Mandela came into power, but was constantly rejected. There were two or three firms that would take on whites only, and I remember one particular firm telling me (and this was just after Mandela came into power and introduced Affirmative Action) they would rather pay the fine than to take on people of colour. They will only take whites on. This pushed me back a few years, as I could have had those extra few years of experience in the workplace and been in a higher position today."

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, when these women first entered the workplace, apartheid was still rife in South Africa. Managers did not envision that Indian female personnel would one day be promoted to managerial positions and subsequently did not provide advice on career trajectories. These women were promoted after working in their respective organisations for an average of seven years. One of the main reasons the women gave for their being promoted was that, due to the demise of apartheid, previously black employees stagnated at lower levels. Saira's organisation did not have any succession or career plans for black junior employees, and similar issues were noted by the other women at their companies:

"The organisation I'm working in does not have proper succession planning nor do managers assist in career planning."

6.3.2   White males guarding their territories

The women experienced organisational culture as patriarchal, in that male managers dominate, and this is a major barrier to the advancement of Indian women. Although the women have been in their respective workplaces, on average, for 12 years, most do not hope to advance to top managerial positions, as male managers are blocking their advancement. The women reported that top management positions are dominated by white males, who prefer appointing white females. In rare cases they appoint African females. In Bipasha's organisation white males and females are recruited for top managerial positions, which is also the case in the companies most of the other women work for:

"White males and white females find it easier to get to the top and in our organisation- they are still in the majority in top managerial positions."

6.3.3   Perceived incompetence

Most of the women in the study had experienced sexist behaviour, especially from white and Indian male colleagues. Many of the women shared being targeted by senior white male colleagues who constantly challenged their expertise in their respective professions. Most of the women ensured that they became even more knowledgeable in their respective fields and even anticipated the questions male managers would pose and prepared well before entering meetings so as to counter attacks. The challenges that Rani encountered from male colleagues are typical of the stories shared by the participants:

"In my last position I was the only female in Company B and from the time I walked into that company, I was like a dartboard. Three white men were aiming darts at me all the time. They were all my colleagues. I think you don't have to be quiet, you have to be active. Because what was happening is every decision I made I had to substantiate and they

found a problem with everything I did. To the extent it became personal where I had to look over my shoulder and that is not normal."

The prescribed roles and subordinate positions of women in Indian society seem to spill over into the workplace. The women in the study found that their Indian male colleagues preferred the opinions of white males and females, and ignoring the participants. For example, the women spoke of being ignored by Indian males during meetings. The women believe this stems from internalized racism and sexism, and the concomitant belief that white males and females are more intelligent and experienced in their jobs than Indian females. In addition, the women believed it also stems from the beliefs that Indian males have regarding Indian females, namely that Indian women are homemakers and should not be in the corporate environment. The women feel that because Indian males are accustomed to taking unilateral decisions in their homes and treat their sisters, wives, daughters and mothers as subordinate, they perpetuate the same type of behaviour towards Indian females in the workplace. Saira's remarks about Indian male behaviour towards professional Indian females captures what was generally heard from the other women:

"Indian males don't like Indian females being in higher positions – they constantly challenge them and they want to always show their women are not capable of doing the job. Once again – Indian male pride which comes from the Indian culture."

6.3.4   Women's authority undermined

The women in the study found that male managers prefer to discuss important issues with their male managers and by-pass the women. Although the women feel that they have been promoted on merit, they believe that the perception amongst most senior male managers is that these women are filling the quotas as per legislative requirements and are incompetent to make strategic decisions. Shamila elaborates on the lack of confidence many male managers appear to have toward Indian females in managerial positions:

"I'm in charge of doing all changes on applications and I was instructed by my GM that we will tolerate no change. So HR wanted a change and

I sent an e-mail and said under the current circumstances we cannot afford to make any changes, and can you please prepare a countermeasure to the problem that you have. The HR Manager wanted a meeting with my GM. I set up a meeting with the GM. The GM wanted me at the meeting because I was in charge. So I went for the meeting. The guy says to me, I am not starting this meeting if your GM is not here. So I said to him I am in charge here. He says I am not having the meeting with you and he banged the table and spoke harshly to me. So I said, in that case, I'm leaving and you can have a discussion with my GM. I phoned the GM and said: apparently having the title means nothing. I will not tolerate the bad manners I'm exposed to so I'm leaving and will you please come and I left."

Saira, like the other women, believes that one needs to be assertive in order to be heard:

"Unless you are the sort of person who's willing to dig in your heels and say, no, I've got an opinion and I want to be heard, you can easily be brushed aside. I mean that's where I am right now. It hasn't been easy. The entire road here has been to prove that you're actually not as good as, but you are actually better than most. So it hasn't been an automatic acceptance."

The participants encountered problems with lower-level male employees of all races. The biggest problem encountered was the refusal of males to take instructions from women. This stems from the general patriarchal nature of the Afrikaner, English, Indian and African cultures in South Africa. During apartheid, women were legally regarded as minors and the majority of males have been raised believing that women should not be obeyed, as men are rulers in the homes. Since men are socialized to believe they should not be controlled by women, such behaviour spills over into the workplace to the detriment of all women. However, in the case of Indian women, this is exacerbated by their being from a race that was perceived to be inferior during apartheid. Rani described an incident in which she experienced insubordination from one of her male lower-level employees:

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"I had to dismiss one individual who reported directly to me. He was the HR manager. What he was doing was impacting negatively on me. I had no alternative but to dismiss him. It seemed as if I was speaking to myself. Nothing I said was heeded to, nothing I ever said was right. I was doing his work for him, because whatever work I would ask him to do, he would refuse.

So I had to manage his performance and eventually I had to terminate his services. He took the company to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) which resolves labour disputes, but I represented the organisation and we won the case. Males generally don't like reporting to females."

6.3.5   Indian women as workplace mules

The participants believed that all professional women in their workplaces had to work harder than males to prove themselves. However, they believed that as Indian women they had to work even harder because they could not refuse work assignments, as doing so would jeopardize their opportunities for promotion. Thus, the women in the study do not refuse work assigned by their managers, even if they are already overextended. There is a strong need to make a good impression on their managers, and to do so, they tend to go the extra mile and end up working more than others. The more the women work, the greater the demands of male managers become. The result is that these women are often bogged down with too much administrative work and take fewer strategic decisions. In the end, their willingness to take on the extra assignments works against their promotion prospects, because they are then told they lack the strategic skills required for success in top managerial positions. This results in an untenable catch-22 situation for the women. Bipasha's experiences illustrate this dynamic:

"As Indian females we are hard-working and accepting. Every time they restructure and retrench people, you accept more on your plate. That's what happened to me. They restructured and retrenched the legal person and I took over the legal portfolio. My position grew from credit to include legal. They restructured again and gave me the billing

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environment. I was one senior person doing three people's work. They do compensate you by giving you a couple of thousand rand but I'm doing three senior people's jobs and not getting their salaries. I saw it as new challenges and growth opportunities. I should have been promoted to a higher position. If I was not passive and was more aggressive, I should not have accepted the position. I thought I'm moving from a senior to an executive level because if I leave it there are two white males fighting for the position, so let me rather take the position and fight while I'm there, but that transition never happens the way you want it to."

Shamila's reference to her administrative duties is indicative of the lack of time the women in the study had for strategic decisions:

"In some cases, the men recognize women are very good at certain tasks but, most importantly, they use the women to do all the real detailed work. So what happens? As a female, you are getting bogged down with loads and loads of detailed work which limits your ability to actually manage at a higher level. When I'm talking of detailed work I'm talking of detailed administrative work."

6.3.6   Isolation from social and professional networks

During the interviews, the women in the study talked a great deal about the isolation they experienced as a result of their solo status in their organisations. When they initially entered the workplace, the women held solo status in their respective units and found that members of other races tended to form same-race social groups and networks. These groups were rarely welcoming. The women described a feeling of being "in-betweeners"-- belonging neither to the white group nor to the African group in their organisations. This phenomenon largely reflects the status of Indians within the racial hierarchy established under apartheid. Indians were not as privileged as whites nor were they as disadvantaged as black Africans under apartheid.

At the same time, gender was also a factor. The "old boys' network" is still very prevalent in male-dominated South African organisations and it was difficult for the

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women to penetrate these networks. Interestingly, they also shared their experience that Indian males did not interact with them at social events or invite them into their networks at work. As noted previously, this represented not only a spill-over from Indian culture where males and females do not interact casually, but also from the gendered nature of the workplaces in which they worked.

Mahima captured the discomfort the women experience at social gatherings:

> "This usually happens when we have a social event and you attend it and then the Afrikaners will converse in Afrikaans and the Africans will talk in their own language and I find it difficult to follow either conversation. They make no effort to include you in the conversation and to me that is a form of racism. I was raised not to talk in my language when there are others who don't understand you. It is very difficult in such situations being the only Indian female in the group. I definitely will not latch on to the Indian males as they will regard me as being forward."

The women commented on the differential access of white and Indian females to senior white male managers during social events. The women found white males tended to accommodate white females in their conversations, but do not make the same effort with Indian females. White females are also able to converse with white males on topics such as sports, farming and hunting, which Indian females are not familiar with as such activities do not form part of the Indian culture. As a result, the women feel uncomfortable and marginalized and tend to leave social events early. Shamila described the ease with which white women converse with males at social events:

> "In the white society, the women have been through the stage we're at now and they have moved on. So when they're in a social gathering they can discuss topics with their uncles and fathers and they're comfortable discussing these things. But we're not – we haven't got that. It doesn't come with our socializing that we do when we're growing up. It certainly does not come from the socializing we do when we're women – in fact, it gets worse because you ought to know better."

The majority of the women believe that currently, with more females in managerial positions, there is less pressure to socialize after work and over weekends, as females typically have more responsibility for taking care of their homes and families. Shamila, like the other women, does not feel much pressure to attend social events after work:

> *"A couple of years back, you had to be one of those drinkers. You had to go to the pub and discuss things, and now with more women in management you don't have to. Women have different pressures. They know they need to go home and see to their families."*

The participants mentioned that they do not belong to any professional networks related to their careers, as they did not believe such groups would be beneficial in advancing their careers. In hindsight, the women realize that not building on professional networks has disadvantaged them in establishing contacts outside their current workplaces. The women mentioned that the repercussions of having limited networks outside their immediate workplaces are a disadvantage, because there is then limited opportunity for them to move to other organisations and higher managerial positions. Preity's attitude reflects what was generally heard from the women:

> *"No, I am not affiliated to any organisations – if I want to advance my career, I will do it on my own."*

6.3.7 Lack of mentors and coaches

The participants complained of a lack of mentors and coaches in their journey towards senior managerial positions. Although supervisors advised them on work-related issues and provided them with opportunities to grow within their respective work units, mentoring and coaching was not provided in an informal or a formal way. The women believed that a lack of coaches has hampered them in their upward mobility, as advancement would have been much quicker and higher through the guidance and networks provided by mentors. The women found that at lower levels, white males are willing to share work-related information, but white females tend to

be insecure and do not want to impart their knowledge. Waheeda, like the majority of women in the study, never had a mentor:

> "I feel had I had a mentor I would have become more assertive and less passive much earlier in my career, and at least a mentor could have made me more visible with the dominant people in the organisation, and I would have been able to deal more effectively with some of the challenges I am faced with in the organisation. At least a mentor would have guided me in how to go about resolving some of the issues. A mentor could have acted as a buffer against me being discriminated against and at least I could have had a friend within the organisation I could have trusted and who could have been my confidant. Perhaps I would have had more confidence in approaching certain issues head on and not been afraid of being victimized. That is something that has been missing in terms of my development."

6.3.8   Male archetypes regarding the ideal manager

The participants are aware that the preferred management style in top management is masculine. The participants do not want to adopt masculine dressing and management styles and mannerisms, as maintaining their femininity is a vital part of their self-concept. The women found that men in top management have their own rules, which are male-centred, such as having meetings during the evenings when females are unable to attend. In a way, this could also count against the females and their moving into top managerial positions, as they are often unable to attend such evening meetings. Shamila pointed out the leadership styles preferred in South African organisations:

> "Men are preferred in leadership positions because there is a perception that men are born leaders and if you think about a management position, you automatically think a male will be occupying the position. I guess we have these stereotypical beliefs."

6.3.9   Non-accommodation of religious beliefs

Most of the women felt that because they are members of a racial/ethnic minority group, in the corporate world, managers do not take cognizance of their religious festivities, and continue to schedule important meetings and events on festival days. Although the women do make the organisers of these meetings aware of their festival days, these requests are usually ignored. The result is that the women have been working during their festivities. Another problem the women encountered is that organisations are lax in accommodating their dietary requirements. The women are either not accommodated or food is not purchased from the requested outlets. Bipasha's gripe against the organisation's not accommodating her religious beliefs is a problem shared by most of the other women as well:

> "It's sometimes a bit difficult because we don't eat pork and beef and Muslims eat halaal. They do cater for our dietary requirements, but it is up to us to remind them each time there is a function. If you forget to inform them about your dietary requirements, then you stay without the food. They cater for a Western environment where they serve pork, beef and salads and no halaal food. When we go out for team building, I consider people's dietary requirements. I make sure we cut for prayer time on Friday for our Muslim colleagues so they can pray. But that's not done in all departments. In certain white-dominated departments they do not consider minority people's religious practices. They are not sensitive to other religions and even though it has been explained to them that it is a religious observation, they don't care."

6.3.10   Poor implementation of Employment Equity

Employment equity legislation worked in the women's favour, until they reached senior management positions. Beyond this point, rubbing shoulders with top management became the criterion for upward mobility. The participants believe that top management in their respective organisations is not concerned with employment equity legislation and is willing to pay the fines imposed for non-compliance by the Department of Labour. The women mentioned the perception in corporate South Africa is that there are too many Indians in management and therefore their

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organisations are no longer promoting and recruiting Indian females. For the women in the study, this assumption is flawed, as in their respective organisations they are sometimes the only Indian females in management. Saira voiced the concern the other women feel relating to the misconception that there are too many Indians occupying managerial positions in corporate South Africa:

"There is a perception that there are too many Indians in management and that makes it bad for us. Even here, I hear there are too many Indians. Yet when I look around I don't see many Indians. We are just a handful. Like I said, in my division I am the only Indian female and now I'm talking at all levels. There are no other females at lower levels. We are at least a few hundred people in our division and yet no Indian females, except me. So I can't understand why they say we are too many Indians."

Another dilemma facing the participants was that organisations are paying more attention to promoting according to race and not gender. The result is that more Indian males are being promoted, compared to Indian females. The women therefore feel despondent of ever advancing into top managerial positions. The few women in the study who had advanced to top managerial positions in their respective organisations admitted that entry into these positions would not have been possible without networking through involvement in various projects. Shamila commented on the tendency in organisations to focus on recruiting to fill quotas according to race and to discount gender:

"They only look at racial discrimination and not gender discrimination. That is why there are hardly any Indian females in the organisation and there are more Indian males."

Having discussed the individual and organisational barriers faced by the women in advancing in the workplace, I move on to discuss the factors that enhance upward mobility at the individual level.

6.4 INDIVIDUAL FACTORS THAT ENHANCED THE PARTICIPANTS' PROGRESS

The individual factors that promoted the women's upward career mobility that emerged from the interviews were high motivation, outsourcing domestic chores and childcare, supportive husbands, high levels of self-efficacy, willingness to relocate, working on diverse projects, developing persuasion skills, becoming assertive, challenging authority and elders, handling conflict and working closely with males.

6.4.1 High motivation

I wanted to understand what motivated these women to pursue careers outside the home, despite early socialization which dictates that women should work in the home. The women mentioned that they worked because their families depended on their additional income, due to adverse life situations such as losing a father through death or divorce, and husbands needing financial assistance in maintaining the home. Rani, like the rest of the women, worked to assist her family financially:

> "For the last say about 12-13 years, I have taken care of my parents in all aspects of their lives because my father was ill. So I think my need to succeed and all of that was even greater than an average person because though I did not have kids to support I had a family that needed me financially, emotionally and in all areas of life."

Most of the women I interviewed mentioned that even if they did not have adverse life conditions, they would continue working. One reason was that, growing up as tomboys, they could not adjust to adopting the housewifely role in their adulthood. The majority of these women still do not enjoy cooking and housework and engage in such chores only as part of their gender role in their homes. Bipasha's comment is typical of the other women's attitude toward "feminine" chores:

> "I hate cooking. I cook because I have to put a meal on the table for my family."

6.4.2 Outsourcing domestic chores and childcare

The women agreed they would not have been able to cope with the demands of work and housework had it not been for the possibility of outsourcing such chores to domestics and *au pairs* who took care of their children. Although the women have learned to minimize child care and household duties, the responsibility for the home still rests on their shoulders. Assistance from extended family members is sometimes requested, especially when the women go out of town on business trips. Shilpa's comment reflected the sentiments of the other women regarding outsourcing household and childcare duties to others:

> "Our set-up with our au pair *and our domestic is very settled. There's not much to do when I'm not there. I also bring my mother-in-law to live with us when I go overseas, like I've just come back last week from overseas. So she comes and stays with us and she spoils us. I use my mother, father, mother-in-law and sister-in-law. I'm not afraid to ask for help. And I think women in powerful and senior positions must ask for help.*"

Even as adults, the women do not identify with the gender role their mothers subscribed to, as they are motivated by their careers. Most of the women mentioned that a major bone of contention between them and their mothers was housework and taking care of children. Mothers could not understand why their daughters did not focus more on the children and housework. In turn, the participants felt that their mothers did not understand the importance of their careers and the number of hours one needs to spend on work in order to be successful. Shamila describes the problems she, like most of the other women in the study, had regarding taking care of the home and children:

> "Being a good housewife was the biggest issue we had. My mother felt an Indian female's home and children should take precedence above all other things. Of course, I would make sure there was food in the house and the house is tidy. But I couldn't do everything – I couldn't be career focused and come home and downscale and switch off and get into the housewifely mode. That was extremely difficult for me, but it was more

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difficult for her, because she could not understand why I was not like that... Previously it was such an issue for her to see the lack of homely skills, but in the end she realized you could be the career woman and get someone to manage your home without you doing it, you know."

6.4.3   Supportive husbands

The majority of the women in the study had delayed marriage after completing their studies and worked for a few years before settling down. In this study, 67 per cent of the women married at an average age of 28, because it was difficult to find partners in the Indian community who would accept professional wives. The mindset of the Indian community was that women should be at home taking care of children and not focused on their careers. Mahima elaborated on her views of marriage, which the other women also endorsed:

"The traditional role has always been that by the time you're 20, 22, 25 you should be married and already starting your family. Now with my mom that was what she did, but it does not necessarily reflect that is what I'm going to do or that is what I would have done. And you know, as much as parents want their children to be married and as much as children want to be married, it doesn't have to happen in a particular time frame, in a particular time span because things are very different now. So from that perspective I think very differently from my mom."

In the majority of cases, the participants are in dual career couple relationships. Two of the women, however, are married to men who are lower-level employees, resulting in the wives being the breadwinners in the family. Since the majority of the participants' husbands have equally demanding jobs as managers, they are fully aware of the challenges their wives are facing on a daily basis. These husbands therefore do not make unnecessary demands at home. The women mentioned that their biggest support relating to career advancement are their husbands, who have egalitarian views relating to career-oriented Indian females. These women's husbands always encourage them to excel and mentor them to handle difficult situations with personnel at work. Since these husbands also work late in the evenings, they understand the need for their wives to be working late. When the

women are working late, husbands take care of the children and cook the evening meals, as in the majority of cases domestics do not work in the evenings. The women's husbands do not request elaborate meals, as is the custom in most Indian homes. The women felt that they were fortunate to have found spouses who encourage them and allow them to follow their careers. Sushmita's husband, like the other women's husbands, is her confidant and best friend:

> "One of my big mentors and my friend although I don't always acknowledge that is my husband."

Bipasha echoed the sentiments of the other women when she described the support she obtained from her husband:

> "If I owe anything it would be to my husband. He was extremely supportive. He did not expect me as a wife to cook. He is the sort of person who would come home and put up a pot of food and see to the kids. If I'm gone off on a business trip he used to take care of the kids. I think it's him and the support he gave me that made things possible."

6.4.4 High levels of self-efficacy

The participants displayed a high level of self-efficacy relating to their work. The women are confident in their skills and abilities and have extensive knowledge in fields unrelated to their job portfolios. The women did not want to point to affirmative action as the reason for being promoted, as they saw it as a barrier. Instead, they gave credit to the quality of their work, the Indian work ethic and the values they learned as young Indian women, their hard work and their adherence to high work standards that has resulted in their success. Preity believes that an individual's ability to do the job should be the main criterion for promotion. Race and gender should play a secondary role in promotions, a belief the other women in the study also subscribe to:

> "It's all about your work ethics and your potential to do the job. You don't just advance a person because of skin colour and gender. Even as Indian females we need to prove ourselves. We should not be window dressers just so they can say they have an Indian female up there."

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6.4.5 Willingness to relocate

The Indian culture does not encourage unmarried women to live on their own. I was surprised to find that fathers who upheld traditional Indian culture and norms and would not allow their daughters to go out unchaperoned and monitored their every move outside the home even as adults allowed their daughters to relocate. The majority of the women in the study had relocated for better job opportunities. Many parents found it difficult at first to allow their daughters to live on their own, but eventually supported their relocation, as it meant the women would advance in their careers. Relocating was therefore not out of choice but out of necessity.

In other instances, the organisations the women were working for relocated them to branches overseas in order for them to be exposed to other aspects of the business and thereafter be promoted. In most cases, the Indian communities and their extended families frowned upon the women's relocation, as they felt Indian females are supposed to be living in their parents' homes and not alone. This led the women not to broadcast their business trips, but to keep them a family secret, as their parents would be reprimanded by the Indian community and extended family for allowing their daughters too much freedom. This again suggests that the participants' fathers did not stand between the women and their success in their respective careers.

Shabana voiced the trepidation the women felt in obtaining permission from their parents to relocate due to work-related needs:

> "I had to convince them to go overseas. Ultimately they agreed because it was going to further my career and my progress and they had never stood in the way of that. I convinced my brother who convinced my parents. Ja, they let me go and again it was very difficult for them. People thought it and said it, but they didn't say any of it to my father. They spoke about it amongst themselves and they said it to my mother. 'How can you let her go? She's never going to come back.'"

6.4.6   Working on diverse projects

One strategy that most of the women in the study used to enhance their visibility in their respective workplaces was to get involved in various projects outside their scope of work. Shilpa provides one good example from the various projects she was involved in. She specialised in recruitment and selection, but when her manager informed the staff that he needed volunteers to conduct company-wide presentations to the various departments on how organisational restructuring would affect their jobs, she was the only one in her section that jumped at the opportunity. She, like the other women, volunteered her services every time there were new projects, as she felt that this would enhance her visibility and chances of being noticed by other managers.

Because the women were not able to achieve visibility through social networks, they used this strategy toward being promoted, as managers from other sections in their departments became aware of their potential. Also, when applying for promotions, these women could outsmart their colleagues, as they had a broader knowledge of the various functions within their respective departments and managers were already aware of the quality of their work. The women learned to network with different managers on a formal basis through various job assignments. Like most of the other participants, Shilpa enhanced her visibility by involving herself in diverse projects:

> "So I had goals to get to the next level and I took small steps to reach my target. I asked myself: what should I do to get to a top management position? Which projects should I be involved in? Where can I make a positive contribution? I decided on the projects I wanted to be involved in and the managers I wanted to network with. I have in the past not involved myself in certain meetings and projects and I wish I had, as I would have been able to network better. So I think where my confidence was lacking at the time, my interest was there. I would say to people who want to get ahead you have to push yourself. So let's say if I didn't like IR I wouldn't get involved in it, but it may have affected my knowledge later on because I had no knowledge of it. If I had gotten involved at the time, it would have been better for me. So did I network? Not in a deliberate way when you think of networking as rubbing

shoulders; wining, dining, having coffee and teas – not in that way – it was more through being involved in the right thing and being seen in the right places."

6.4.7   Developing persuasion skills

Another skill the participants developed was the ability to convince senior managers to make certain decisions. The women mentioned that it took them on average five to six years to become experts in their respective fields. Once the women had gained confidence in their ability to do a job well, they were willing to propose different solutions to problems facing their departments. Shamila gave an example of top managers' considering suggestions by females who are experts in their fields:

"In an automotive environment the chances of them actually listening to me were slim. Partly because I was in a lower position but I have the same responsibility now in a senior management position as I had then. It was also because I was not visible and I was in the background and doing all this work. Suddenly this project started blowing from all ends and I stabilized it and then they started listening to me as they realized that I knew my job. After that I could convince them of many strategic decisions as they started listening to my suggestions."

Shilpa, like the other women in the study, realized that she had to develop her persuasion skills in order to make a positive impact on her supervisor:

"When I engage with people I'm not thinking of myself as a female, I'm thinking of myself in terms of what I'm trying to achieve. So my career path at Company X was never affected by my being Indian or being female. What I think affected my progress more was style, confidence, being able to influence and impact and that I had to learn to do – those were new skills for me."

The women were socialized in Indian culture to be passive, to respect authority and their elders, to avoid conflict and not work closely with males who were not relatives. Upon entering the corporate workplace, the women realized that these Indian

cultural norms were in conflict with organisational values relating to career advancement. The women therefore decided to adapt some of their behaviours according to organisational requirements in order to enhance their chances of upward mobility. The changes in their behaviour which the women mentioned related to becoming assertive and handling conflict and working closely with males.

6.4.8   Becoming assertive

The women were subservient when they first entered the workplace and their managers realized this. The women were afraid of speaking out, because they had witnessed when they were growing up that girls who behaved assertively were reprimanded by their elders for being "aggressive". In the workplace, the women found that assertive behaviour was welcomed. Most of the women were encouraged by their managers to be outspoken and assertive. Managers would place them in situations where they were forced to voice their opinions because they wanted the women to stand up for their rights. Once the women realized this aspect of the expectations of their respective managers, they slowly started voicing their opinions, although it was initially difficult for them to do so. In time, speaking out became easier and resulted in the women becoming more self-assured and confident. Preity pinpointed the fear the women had of displaying assertive behaviour:

> "That's the problem in Indian cultures – we do not become as independent as people in other cultures because we have to suppress our views and thoughts. You find out that you are slightly behind and you don't express your views so people think that you just follow other people and it is a problem when you grow up. At work when you don't express your views you are regarded as being passive. Luckily for me, as I grew older and I started working, I became more confident and more independent and now I speak my mind. When I started at Company M, I was very shy and I felt what if I say the wrong thing to people I will be reprimanded, so this went on for two years, but I started opening up when I realized people were expecting me to express my views. The reason I was afraid to say the wrong thing is at home I would get reprimanded for saying the wrong thing and that is why I was so afraid to speak my mind. I felt I would get reprimanded by my

colleagues. So as the years went on, then since 2002 I became very expressive and very confident."

The organisational culture thus dictates that, in order to move up the corporate hierarchy, the participants would have to provide solutions to problems, which could end up not coinciding with the views of managers.

To climb the corporate ladder, the women could not allow themselves to be intimidated by older employees. Because of the changing demographics of the South African corporate workplace, the women in this study were often placed in positions where they had to work with older employees and managers. Although it was not easy and was in contradiction to their core beliefs and values, the women learned to present contradictory opinions to their supervisors and to assert themselves with older employees. Due to the nature of their jobs, the women learned to present views and handle disagreements in a dignified manner. Shamila, like the other women, learned to overcome her passive behaviour when she could no longer tolerate being bullied and treated unfairly by supervisors and older employees:

> *"Even if the superior is wrong, it is such bad manners to challenge him and especially if it is an older person. And now you come into an environment and I remember I was not getting a good enough bonus and I kept quiet and eventually I couldn't take it anymore. I asked my supervisor why was I not getting a bonus and they* [she shows respect here and therefore uses the plural 'they' instead of you to denote respect for an elder and superior as is the norm in the Indian culture] *said well you are not assertive enough. I said you are confusing bad manners with assertiveness. We expect as our superior, our teacher, our mentor, as our manager, as our boss you would see who we are, you would understand who we are and you would write to us that sort of motivation. And his answer was I can see nothing, you have to tell me. It's totally different from the way we are brought up – totally, totally different. It took me a long time to learn that."*

6.4.9 Handling conflict

The participants had to learn that conflict was not always negative and they had to develop the skills they needed to handle conflict situations and build on dealing with confrontational situations in the workplace. The women experienced females from other races as being assertive and confrontational. The women realized that if they did not learn to handle conflict constructively, they would be perceived as docile, and senior managers would not consider them for advancement. Once the women came to terms with the fact that conflict is a part of organisational life and is an aspect that has to be handled in a proactive manner, they learned to deal with it in a professional way. Shamila's comment epitomises the changing views of the women relating to conflict:

> "As Indian women, we are not encouraged to quarrel the whole day with our neighbours and friends. We tend to overlook a lot of things that once you come into the workplace you realize you cannot overlook. For example, if a subordinate does not do his or her job, you need to take that person on and not ignore the issue just because you want to avoid conflict."

6.4.10 Working closely with males

The participants realized that, while working with males who are not relatives is frowned upon in Indian society, the male presence in the corporate workplace is ubiquitous. Working with males is an inevitable part of corporate life. The women therefore decided that, since they are unable to avoid interacting with males, they should adopt a professional relationship with the men they worked with. To prove to me that their work-related relationships with males were based on professional interactions only, several of the participants commented that none of them had married their male colleagues. Mahima highlights the difficulties and reservations the women experienced working with males, but eventually overcame:

> "When it came to addressing young and middle aged Indian males, I would shy away from it all. The reason being that Indian females are usually in the background when it comes to social gatherings and the

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men give the speeches and are in the forefront in gatherings and this type of mentality makes it difficult to be out there. So in that sense, when I started off in management, I used to feel self-conscious when addressing a room full of males, which I had to do on several occasions in my career. So, one of the challenges facing women is that men perceive women managers as not having enough confidence to do their job in the workplace. Being nervous in a room full of men used to make it seem as if I was not confident enough to present my views. It's not that I didn't know my job, but I used to become shy and blush easily and I was very self-conscious around men. Though after I had done this three or four times I started gaining the confidence and today I am more than ready to face a room full of men."

The discussion so far has focused on the individual and organisational barriers and individual factors that relate to the participants' rise in the organisational hierarchy. The interviews with the women about their adulthood experiences revealed that the bird cage metaphor was still appropriate to their situation. This led me to think of a way of portraying the linkages between the bird cage metaphors applied to their earlier lives and the corporate cage metaphor that captures the essence of their career experiences.

6.5   CONTINUING THE CAGED BIRD METAPHOR

A bird born in captivity does not know the freedom that it was meant to enjoy, with no ceiling and walls to confine its movement. It only knows the limits set by the cage, and feels comfortable in the confines of the cage. It is not aware of the freedom of birds that fly freely in the wild, whose only canopy is the sky and the only walls the endless horizon. In the previous chapter, I discussed the characteristics of birds in cages and how this metaphor applies to the childhood experiences of the participants.

An analysis of the information gathered during the life story interviews about their adult lives suggests that the caged bird metaphor is still applicable to the women's adulthood and work experiences. The women were raised in their "childhood cage",

which shaped their identities while stifling their growth. Yet they managed to escape from one cage, only to fly into a bigger cage -- the corporate cage. The question then arises whether these Indian women attained complete freedom after they started working, or whether they are still confined by societal, cultural and now organisational pressures? Are they free or are they confronted by organisational bars that will again suppress and oppress them?

After completing university, the women expected that they would at last taste freedom from childhood restrictions and formulate an individual personal identity where the pressure to conform to Indian culture, the family and the community would be reduced. They did not want to be tied down in cages. In their quest for freedom from childhood restrictions and for self-definition, these women entered the world of work, and so another phase of their life journey began.

Upon entering the world of work they found that they had flown into a bigger cage, but a cage nevertheless. I call this the "corporate cage". This cage posed and continues to pose major challenges to the women and their identities as Indian females. The women had moved out of the insulated environments in which they were raised and had flown into a corporate culture that could aptly be described as a "no Indian woman's land". Because of their gender, culture and ethnicity, they did not fit. The organisations the women became a part of are dominated and shaped by racialized and gendered value systems. Because South African workplaces have been historically white- and male-dominated, the cultures of the organisations these women joined continue to reflect values and ways of working that feel comfortable to the dominant group.

Fathers were no longer able to protect the women from the onslaughts experienced from other races, especially males. The "corporate cage" consists of bars, just like their childhood cage, namely restrictions due to apartheid, the Indian community, the family and Indian culture, but includes an additional bar that stems from the organisational culture. The organisational culture bars consist of race and gender inequalities within organisations dominated by white males. In the corporate cage, the women engage in identity work, by struggling to assert and integrate their gender, cultural and professional identities. This is no easy endeavour and clearly

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makes identity work difficult for the women. In the next section, I describe the key dynamics and features of the corporate cage.

6.5.1   Intruders

When new birds are placed in a cage, they are not usually welcomed by the birds that occupy the cage already. The resident birds tend to fight for their territories and do not welcome intruders, as they feel threatened and insecure. Likewise, the participants were at first regarded as intruders in the South African corporate workplace. The men they encountered in lower level managerial posts were reluctant to give up their positions of power, but were forced to do so due to employment equity legislation. In an effort to protect their territory, male managers placed many obstacles in the paths of these women on their journey to the top. Saira believes that there are many barriers to women's advancement to top managerial positions:

> *"There are lots of things to inhibit our advancement. It's the old boys club, it's the networking, it's the relationships and the perception that women are not good enough until they get there and they can prove themselves and women themselves, and I always have this problem, maybe I'm not good enough, maybe this is flukes, this happened by chance. So I think sometimes we are our biggest enemies."*

6.5.2   Perching on mountain tops

To be free from the bounds of the organisational cage, the women have to fly high. The literature uses the glass ceiling as a metaphor for women's being able to see top management positions, while they are unable to reach it, but I feel that the women in the current study who have not reached top managerial positions are trying to reach the summit of a steep mountain. Managers in top positions are like eagles perched on the tops of mountains. Every time the women try to reach the top, the eagles swoop upon them and prevent them from establishing themselves on the mountain tops, as depicted in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3: Eagle swooping on smaller bird

Eagle swooping down on bird
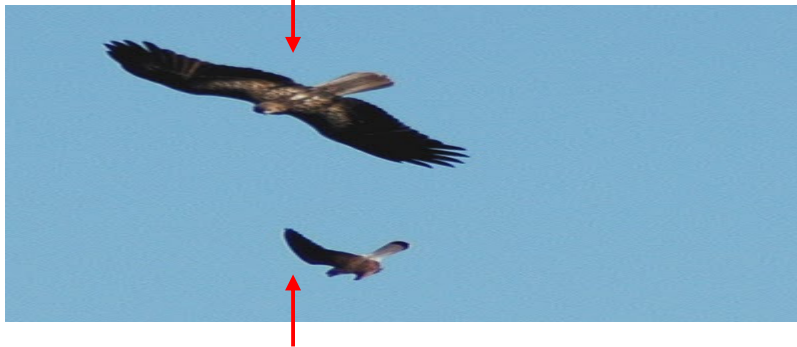
Bird trying to escape from eagle's attack

Eagles are territorial and protect their areas from other birds. Other birds are regarded as being a threat and eagles will kill and maim birds who try to perch on their aeries. The women's narratives suggested that managers in top positions protect their positions fiercely, and felt threatened by these women wanting to enter their levels. Bipasha felt that transformation in organisations should be applied more forcefully:

> "I think as long as you have your white male barriers at top managerial positions you're going to have that problem of not being promoted. I think South Africa is trying to work through this by trying for certain demographics and certain employment equity strategies, but they have to have more profound audits and structures and penalties in place to get companies to adhere, since we leave the decisions to white males, and multibillion dollar companies like ours are not worried about paying a R250 000 fine. That's probably one person's monthly income. They don't worry about that. You as an Indian female have to be more forceful if you want to get ahead."

The women in the study who had made it into senior management feel that they are not going to progress to top managerial positions in their respective organisations. Most of the women are currently striving to reach top managerial positions within their respective organisations. However, they feel that the rise to top managerial positions is very slow, as legislation is not enforced by external governmental

agencies in corporate South Africa. Preity, for example, aims to move into the top management position:

>"The next is a crucial move for me – and the position is that of a Strategic Executive Director (SED). I'll stay long enough in that position to prove I can do the job better than the current SED. I feel the current SED is useless and I can do the job better than her and to prove what I have been saying all this time, that she does not know her job. So my aim is much higher now and that is to move into a top management position, but the process of getting there is very slow, as employment equity is not implemented correctly."

Entering corporate South Africa, the participants' experience of moving into senior and top managerial positions has affected the identities of the women in the study. Certain identities became more salient compared to others in the workplace as the women tried to fit into their respective organisational cultures.

6.6   IDENTITY

In discussing the identity of the women in corporate South Africa, I am interested in the salience of social identities such as gender, professional and racio-ethnic identity. I am also interested in whether professional identity is central for the women, and the role of the above-mentioned identities in the participants' commitment and desire to be part of their respective organisations. I used the concept identity work to understand the social interactions and experiences that raised the questions of "Who am I?", "Who are we?" and "How should I act?" in relation to these women's encounters in the corporate environment. The women in the study are constantly engaged in a process of reworking through their identities, even in senior managerial positions. Identity work is a lifelong process and has not stopped even for these women occupying top managerial positions.

The next section focuses on the struggle of the women to fit into their respective organisations. Figure 6.4 illustrates the inequity and struggles the women encountered in fitting into the corporate environment and the influence it had on their commitment to their respective organisations.

Figure 6.4: Struggle for corporate identity

Perceived inequity in the organisations

Women's struggle for corporate identity

Commitment to organisation

Fitting into the majority culture
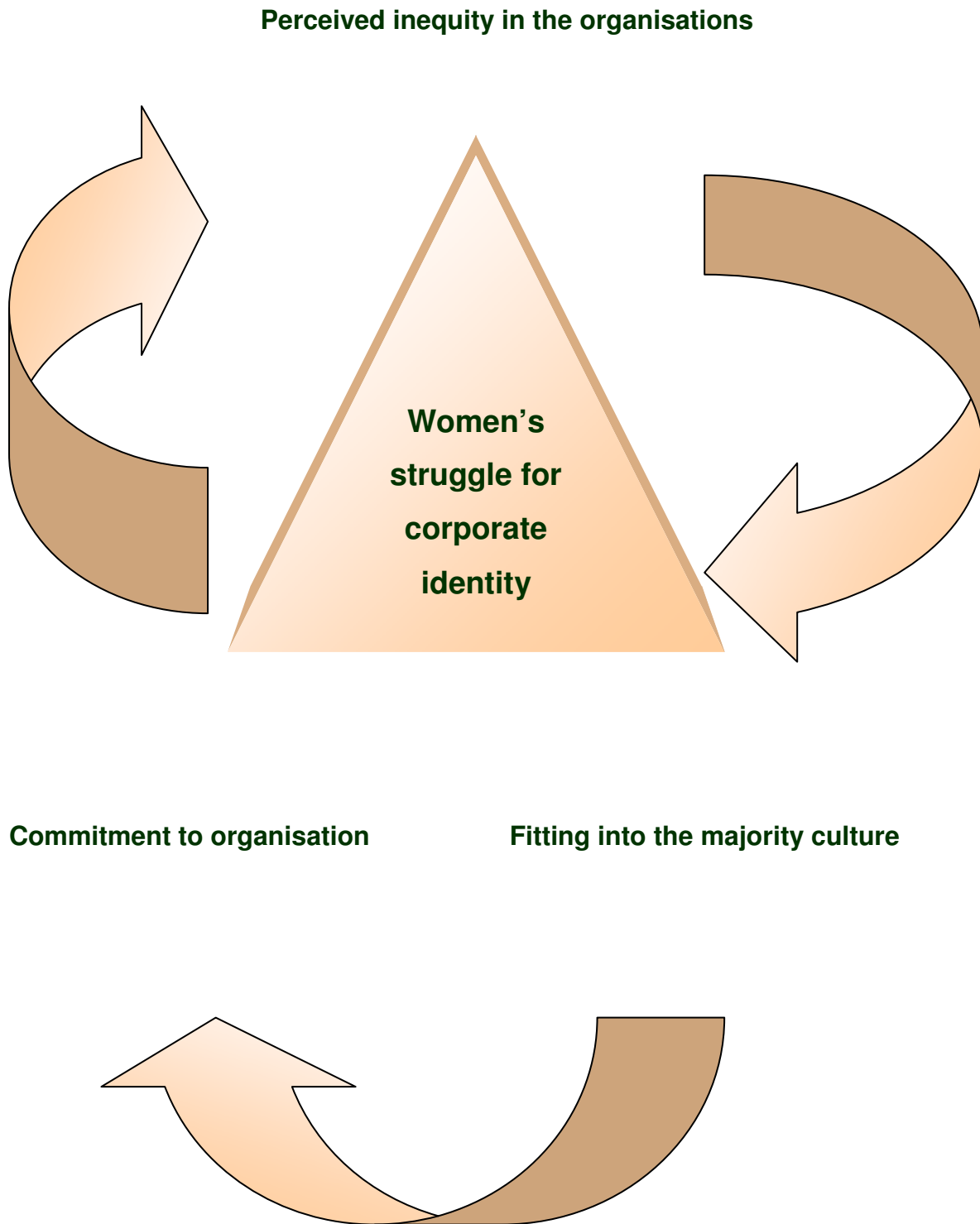
6.6.1 Perceived inequity in organisations

The majority of women work in organisations that are dominated by white males and where race plays a major role in appointments to top managerial positions. The participants expressed their frustration at not being able to climb the corporate ladder due to race, ethnicity (Indian) and gender (female). Top managerial positions are still dominated by white males who prefer to promote white females who are perceived to subscribe to masculine norms.

The participants have refused to become "one of the boys" and this is evident in their appearance, their language and the artefacts in their offices, which were laden with feminine and cultural connotations. Although the majority of the women interviewed wore trouser suits, costume or real jewellery was almost invariably part of their apparel. The women mentioned they would not wear traditional Indian clothes to work, although they wore such attire at home, because white male managers perceive females who wear traditional clothes at work as submissive and not as management material. The women mentioned that they never swore or screamed at colleagues or lower level employees, as this went against their religious teachings. The artefacts in their offices, such as family pictures on the walls, ornaments on desks, such as a vase depicting an Indian couple, a pen holder in the shape of a mosque, a calendar on a desk with Indian celebrities, were some examples of how the women projected their racio-ethnic identity. Although these artefacts were often small and I initially did not notice them, they were still subtle manifestations of the women's presence as Indians in the workplace.

6.6.2 Fitting into the majority culture

The participants were unable to integrate into the majority organisational culture. However, the women have undergone acculturation to some extent, in terms of the behaviour they feel is necessary in managerial positions, such as strategic assertiveness, handling older employees and supervisors in a professional manner, working closely with an all-male team and handling conflict in a constructive manner. Integration was difficult to achieve because their religion and Indian culture form part of their core identities. Racio-ethnic identity takes precedence, for example, in terms

of the women's being poor at building social networks within the workplace. The women also refuse to play political games to get ahead in their respective organisations, as such games are seen as unethical in Indian culture and they believe hard work would help them to get ahead. The women do not attend social functions with an all-male group, or flirt with males, as this is regarded as inappropriate behaviour for respectable women. The women would not discuss personal problems, as family reputation takes precedence. They are willing to place their husbands' careers first, as this is the expectation for a respectable wife in Indian culture. The majority of women still live in Indian townships, as they want their children to grow up with Indian cultural and religious values. Indian culture and religion continue to play central roles in their lives.

Although the participants' lives revealed intersectionality, different identities came to the foreground in certain situations. The women's identities are constantly evolving and do not operate in isolation from the context of the workplace and their culture, religion, gender, ethnicity and race. There are situations in the workplace where the women's religious identities become more salient than their professional identities. The women feel cut off from their religion in the workplace, because, since they belong to a minority group, their religious festivals, prayers and dietary requirements are not a priority in the workplace. The women are made to work during their festival days, meetings are often planned during their prayer times, strenuous physical social activities are planned during their fasting period, and in most cases they have to constantly highlight their dietary requirements, as this is not automatically catered for. Waheeda, like the other women, pointed out how she is excluded from social functions due to her religious beliefs:

> *"I am 'excluded' from corporate social functions due to my religion and culture. For example, I usually get invited for the year end function, but they do not cater halaal. They go to places where no halaal food is served and where there is alcohol. They do not take into account my religious requirements and find it a burden."*

The women feel like intruders in a corporate world where they feel unwelcome, like pariahs. The participants felt that the corporate culture still does not accommodate their diverse beliefs, as they are in a minority, and theirs are lone voices fighting

solitary battles. The women feel like in-betweeners and expressed feelings of loneliness, social isolation and powerlessness. Yet, the women refused to be regarded as tokens, although in the majority of cases they were the only Indian females in top managerial positions in their companies. The women felt that they are not welcomed by white males in higher positions, nor are Indian males accepting of them in corporate South Africa. Bipasha, like the other women in the study, highlighted her feelings of isolation in the top management meetings she attends:

> *"I sit in board and strategic meetings with Chiefs and Executive heads as my peers. I don't sit in meetings with people at my level so I belong to that grouping and they don't see it and if I come back to it, it is because I'm an Indian female. For Bosberaad meetings, I'm the only one at an E1 level who gets invited. It's not only happened here. It's happened in my previous organisation as well, where you become such a threat that you become isolated. And look, as Indian females we deliver what we have to deliver and we succeed at it. Often you do it at a detriment to yourself because our children, spouses and our health suffer. Because you're not recognized by anyone as long as you're giving the output, they don't recognize you anymore."*

Forming friendships with other females is also a problem for the women due to a lack of trust. The women are also caught in an in-between space where they have a need to maintain their Indian identity and adapt to the corporate culture. However, there is some resistance among the participants to totally integrating with the majority organisational culture, as the women value their cultural values and norms. The tension between their Indian identity and the demands of the corporate culture in their organisations is an on-going struggle and reflects a resilience to survive in a world where they feel marginalised. Resilience also featured as a topic in the discussion on the women's childhood identity theme.

6.6.3 Commitment to the organisation

Despite the barriers the women encountered, their interviews suggested that they are committed professionals. The women expressed a sense of normative commitment to their professions which stems from their childhood socialization,

where parents instilled in them a sense of loyalty towards employers and friends. In spite of perceiving inequities within their respective organisations and continuously struggling to marry their cultural and corporate identities, I noted a strong sense of loyalty toward their respective organisations. The women are in a constant state of identity work where they redefine and rework their corporate identities without relinquishing their cultural and religious identities. Waheeda, like the other women in the study, pointed out the difficulty of negotiating cultural and corporate identities:

> "Where I am at the moment, it's difficult to get anywhere if you don't have the contacts. For me, I got the position due to my hard work and although I had to wait longer than other people, I got it on my own merit. They eventually could not deny my hard work and I was producing high quality work as well. They had overlooked me for years, but eventually they couldn't, because it was becoming too obvious they were discriminating against me."

6.7 HYBRID IDENTITIES

In working through their professional identities and adapting to the workplace culture, the participants have developed hybrid identities, where they have adopted certain organisational norms and values that led to their upward mobility and that they found acceptable, but at the same time, they maintain their prescribed cultural customs. For example, being assertive is not a value prescribed by the Indian culture for women, but the women have learned to become assertive in order to prove to their supervisors they are capable of handling difficult employees and older workers. This type of behaviour is regarded as acceptable by managers and has led to their career advancement. Shamila aptly summarised the hybrid identity formation the other women also alluded to:

> "In order to fit in with male managers, you tend to become more assertive and learn to handle conflict constructively. However, you struggle to advance in the organisation, stemming from the fact you cannot bridge cultural and organisational values and norms, as the Indian culture remains a major part of you. You're not one of the boys and that is where we struggle because we're caught in this chasm of

we're not very 'male', neither are we very 'western female' and we're caught in this trap. You can't make it in the male domain because you're not into drinking and golf. So, there is always conflict between who you are as an Indian female and who you are as a professional working in a western corporate culture."

6.8   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have outlined the individual characteristics which acted as barriers to the participants' advancement, some of which they adjusted or eliminated early in their careers such as becoming assertive, learning to work with males, handling conflict and behaving professionally toward older employees and supervisors. However, these women still find it difficult to network socially, especially with an all-male group, and they do not want to engage in political games and organisational politics to enhance their chances of upward mobility, as such behaviour is considered unethical in Indian culture and religions. The women have followed certain strategies to enhance their chances of climbing the corporate ladder, such as delaying marriage, relocating to pursue job opportunities, developing skills to persuade managers, working on diverse projects in order to make other managers aware of their high levels of competence, and outsourcing domestic chores and child care.

The women shared that organisational barriers restricted their upward mobility, such as male managers undermining their authority and regarding them as incompetent, white males not wanting them in top managerial positions, the women being treated as workplace mules, and organisations not accommodating their religious beliefs. While they found that employment equity works in terms of lower managerial positions, the legislation is not effective at higher levels of management.

In the end, despite the women's efforts to adapt strategies and behaviours to be successful in corporate South Africa, they did not receive the advancement and promotion opportunities they expected, as advancement to top managerial positions is slow. Moreover, organisations were not helpful in advancing the women in their

respective careers. The women believed that advancements in their careers were due to their hard work and high work standards.

The caged bird metaphor was again used in this chapter to illustrate the struggle of the women to escape the organisational cage and perch on mountain tops. The bird cage also depicts their struggle for identity. Their cultural identities remained important to them as women, and their gender identity was influenced by what they perceived it means to be an Indian woman. Within the corporate cage, the women are continuously engaged in reworking their identities as they try to answer the question "Who am I?"

The women's identities are still heavily influenced by the factors that shaped their early lives – Indian culture and values, gender roles, the family, the Indian community and the apartheid system. Indian culture and religion has remained salient to what they were and are in the workplace. These are parts of themselves that they are not prepared to abandon totally despite their efforts to learn how to be successful managers in their organisations. There is always a tension between cultural identity and corporate identity.

The next chapter presents a discussion of my findings in relation to the literature. In addition, I discuss the ways in which my study brings about new insights into identity work.

CHAPTER 7:

DISCUSSION – WORKING AND REWORKING IDENTITIES

7.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss the key findings from the study as reported in the previous two chapters. I assess my findings by relating the findings with the relevant literature to determine where they converge with or diverge from current theoretical understandings (Charmaz, 2006). When I designed this study, my goal was to understand the barriers and obstacles that Indian women managers face in reaching top managerial positions in corporate South Africa. I followed this line of enquiry by formulating questions that enabled me to focus on their life stories.

In the course of engaging with the participants, I learned a great deal about the identity work they had to do throughout their lives. Therefore, one of the questions I used in interpreting the data was what type of identity work the women engaged in and I looked at the hybrid identities that emerged on their way to top managerial positions in corporate South Africa. The women's interviews indicated that the journey into adulthood for them had not been easy, and that they had to work continuously at forming coherent identities during adolescence and in adulthood. On their journey to top managerial positions in the workplace, the women were continuously adjusting and reconstructing their identities to ones they were comfortable with. They formed hybrid identities that allowed them to fit into the majority culture, whether that was in the Indian community or in the workplace.

I found that the participants' racio-ethnic and gender identities played an important role throughout their lives. In adulthood, formulating a professional identity became salient. The women's life stories illuminate the complexity of identity work and the concomitant hybrid identities formed. Especially when these identity negotiations were accompanied by the interlocking of gender and racio-ethnicity identities against the backdrop of an oppressive historical context the women engaged in all their lives. A central finding of the study is that these women had to integrate multiple influences on their identity emanating from Indian culture, family, and society as well as the

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pressures of fitting into the white male-dominated corporate cultures that they encountered as the first cohort of Indian women to embark on management careers in South Africa.

In order to understand the identity work of the women who participated in this study, I used avian imagery to illustrate the desire of caged birds to be free and to demonstrate the constant power struggle the Indian women in my study faced in terms of being subdued, resisting the suppression imposed by apartheid, the restrictions of Indian culture, their community and family, and a largely white, male-dominated workplace. This struggle formed an essential part of their identity work and the formation of hybrid identities. I therefore do not see their identities as static, but regard them as multiple, complex, fluid, and fragmented.

The use of the caged bird image is an established scholarly instrument used by feminist writers such as Fanny Fern, Kate Chopin and Susan Glaspell to illustrate the subordinate status of women in their respective societies. Women are depicted as birds in literary writings to illustrate their vulnerability, subjugation and beauty (Campfield, 2009). However, I extended this metaphor by demonstrating how the Indian women managers in the study have resisted the confines of the cages.

The literature confirms that women in various communities across the world have resisted male power and control. Resistance by women against strictures placed on them by men, the community, culture, religion and the workplace are illustrated by these examples from the literature. Abu-Lughod (1990) conducted a study relating to Bedouin women in Egypt and indicates the strategies used by these women in resisting male dominance. Katila and Meriläinen (2002) conducted a study on women academics in Finland. Their focus was on the strategies women in academia used to resist patriarchal expressions of their professional identities and the organisational discussions the women's resistance resulted in. Killian and Johnson (2006) conducted work on North African immigrant women in France relating to how they negotiated their ethnic identities. The result of their study indicated these women negotiated their ethnic identities and resisted being classified as immigrants.

I now discuss identity, identity work and hybrid identities in relation to the experiences of the women in the current study and how the findings have been supported by the literature. In studying identity, I take a contextual position rather than assuming that the concept is fixed (Hall, 1992). Such an approach to identity implies that identity is always being negotiated within particular contexts (in the current study, namely the home, work and the community) and suggests that the women are constantly negotiating binaries in their lives and not moving away entirely from the gender and cultural identities that are ascribed and prescribed to them.

7.2 IDENTITY AND IDENTITY WORK

The life stories of the participants reveal the identity work they engaged in over the course of their lives, whether it was in the Indian community, the family or the workplace. The women were confronted with situations that did not always match their self-concepts and their aspirations for who they wanted to become. For example, in their youth, when friends and cousins were getting married after completing their schooling, the women aspired to pursue tertiary education and careers. In the workplace, the women aimed for managerial positions and had to rework certain aspects of their identities. The women were socialized into being passive, meek in the presence of authority and to avoid conflict. In the workplace, the women embraced bold and assertive stances when they realized that adopting the characteristics of the "ideal" Indian woman espoused by their extended family and the Indian community would not lead to upward mobility for them in the corporate world. They negotiated the intersectionality between their gender and their racio-ethnic identities, as they wanted their supervisors to consider them for promotion and they therefore needed to "act the part".

The identity formation of the women who participated in the study was influenced by their culture, family, community and the larger society in which they were raised. During the apartheid era, forced segregation did not allow Indians to interact on a social level with other races. Even when the women had the opportunity to interact with other races, it was difficult for them to do so. At university, other Indian students discouraged the women from interacting with whites. The result was there was

minimal transfer of cultural values and beliefs across race groups. Since the women were confined to their race group, community and family, cultural values became deeply entrenched and formed a core part of their identities.

Identity development is a fluid concept and occurs throughout an individual's lifespan (Maslak & Singhal, 2008). Erikson (1968) was one of the pioneers in the study of identity in terms of developmental stages, arguing that an individual progresses to the next stage only after issues in the previous stage of development have been resolved. 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 et al., 2008). It is important to note that Erikson (1968) focused on identity development in adolescents from a white, male, middle-class, English-speaking Eurocentric perspective (Ferguson, 2006). Erikson's model ignored how race, class, gender and ethnicity made identity development more complex for non-dominant groups in society (Constantine, 2002).

Gender, racio-ethnic and professional identities were all salient at various junctures in the lives of the women in this study. This finding is consistent with intersectionality theory, which emphasises social experiences rooted in multiple dimensions of difference that interlock and shape identities (Mahalingham, 2001). While some identities were more salient in the women's childhood (for example, racio-ethnicity and gender), others (racio-ethnicity, gender and professional identity) became more central in adulthood. Studying these identities in isolation in the lives of the women would have led to reductionism and would not have captured the intricacy and complexity of their life experiences (Constantine, 2002). These interlocking social identities had to be worked at and reworked through a process of identity work that the women in my study engaged in to reach a coherent sense of who they are.

The concept of identity work has gained currency in organisation studies as a means of understanding how individuals identify with their work, but also as a means to study the process that sustains identity development. Atewologun and Singh (2010) conducted a study on minority male and female black professionals in the United Kingdom and how these professionals construct and negotiate their gender and

ethnic identities in the workplace. Their study indicates that blacks are not a homogeneous group, as they have different experiences and use different strategies and adopt various aspects of "black identity".

Another study using identity work was conducted by Mehrotra and Calasanti (2010) on first generation Indian immigrants in the United States and the salience of their ethnic identities. The study reveals that Indian families can be a source of both support and oppression. The family is a source of support against the Indian immigrant community, while at the same time it reinforces gender inequality.

Essers and Benschop (2009) took an intersectionality stance and focused on the interrelationships of work identities with the ethnic, gender and religious identities of Moroccan and Turkish women within their entrepreneurial context in the Netherlands. The authors took Islam to be the boundary in order to establish how religious customs overcome cultural ones and to allow for individualism, honour and entrepreneurship.

Slay and Smith (2011) conducted a study on African American journalists and how they negotiated their professional and stigmatised cultural identities in the construction of their professional identities. The results of their study indicated that the development of professional identity for blacks involves redefinition and not adaptation. In addition, the environment shaped these journalists' careers. However, the journalists reported from their side they also shaped the environment, thus providing narratives that showed how blacks are viewed by society.

In the present study, Indian culture was also a source of support and oppression for the women who participated in my study, both in their childhood and adulthood. I now discuss my findings on the influence of Indian culture on the participants' identities.

7.3 THE INFLUENCE OF INDIAN CULTURE ON THE PARTICIPANTS' IDENTITIES

The life stories of the women I interviewed show that, although Indians have been in South Africa for more than a century, they still hold on to traditional Indian customs. This filters through to sons and daughters as being raised and socialized into appropriate gender roles continues to be regarded as vitally important to upholding cultural and religious values and beliefs. In the case of the participants, they received patriarchal messages from parents, the Indian community and extended family, and this played a key role in the identity work the women engaged in at their respective workplaces. Thus, identity work and their subsequent hybrid identities allows me as a researcher to understand the ways in which the women worked with and through their racio-ethnic and gender identities, where they were placed in positions of both empowerment and disempowerment, similar to what is also described in a study by Joseph (2009).

One of the reasons for holding on to their customs was that the apartheid government forced Indians to live in segregated townships. This mono-cultural environment reinforced a common heritage, values and norms. Individuals and families had to subscribe to norms dictated by the community, because rejecting prescribed customs would have led to being ostracized. Subscribing to shared cultural values and norms allowed Indians in South Africa to have a positive sense of self in an otherwise negative macro-environment. This resulted in Indians forming a collective identity in subduing women's freedom to pursue careers. The community ensured that women were policed in order to maintain their purity (Dwyer, 2000). During the apartheid era, additional Indians from the subcontinent were not allowed to marry and reside in South Africa. For this reason, South African Indian women married within the local community. Therefore, maintaining the family reputation was vital, as girls from "disrespectable" families would not be able to marry (Dwyer, 2000). Even in post-apartheid South Africa, the majority of Indian women marry local Indian males.

Being a minority group in South Africa increased the salience of Indians' racio-ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006). The findings of the current study confirm what others have written about the effects of culture on ethnic minorities. Minority groups aim to maintain their traditional culture and embrace a stable, positive sense of ethnic identity (Dasgupta, 1998; Malhi et al., 2009) which leads to self-esteem (Farver, Bhadha, & Narang, 2002) and psychological well-being (Hyers, 2001). Das Gupta (1997) found in her study of second-generation Indian women's ethnic identity formation in the United States that parents held on to narrow-minded values and norms no longer practised in India. This stemmed from the pride that Indians living outside the Indian subcontinent take in preserving their cultural beliefs and their pleasure in raising their children with traditional cultural practices. Farver et al. (2002) posit that Indians on foreign soil are more religious than those living in India.

In the next section, I discuss the identity work that took place during the women's early lives and how this was shaped by the Indian culture, the Indian community and family. I then turn to the identity work the women engaged in as professionals in the workplace and as the first cohort of Indian women managers.

7.4 IDENTITY WORK IN THE WOMEN'S EARLY LIVES

To use the metaphor of birds in cages, the women's wings were clipped (Marshall, 2004) during their early lives by the families and communities in which they were raised. In their childhood, the women were not allowed to deviate from Indian cultural norms, as they were surrounded by the community and family who practised and enforced these values and beliefs. For example, members from the Indian community they were living in, religious leaders, teachers at school and the extended family were all instrumental in enforcing appropriate gender roles and behaviours. The participants' fathers allowed some deviation from the expected gender roles of daughters being housewives, but they still enforced gender division of labour where the women had to conduct housework and sons were involved in business. The women also witnessed their mothers being controlled by fathers and sons. Being

obedient, being aware of the prevailing norms of honour and shame, respecting elders and avoiding conflict were all patriarchal messages the women internalized.

The women were not allowed to deviate from the norms prescribed by Indian culture regarding what it meant to be a "good" Indian girl. The women's movements outside the home were restricted and they could only venture out under close adult supervision. Once they reached puberty, they were not allowed to interact with boys and this extended to not being allowed boyfriends even at university. Conflict situations in the community were resolved by the males in the family. As young girls, the women were expected to dress modestly. The women watched as their brothers flew freely outside the confines of the cage of the home, airing their views, engaging in challenging family business deals, enjoying male superiority in their homes and Indian society, as also reported of male-female relations in the Punjab by Winkvist and Akhtar (2000). The women's stories tell of being restricted to the confines of their homes, relegated to performing women's work, such as household chores typical for the Indian community (Srivastava & Misra, 2001).

The Indian community and family the women were raised in was collectivist. The women were raised in a hierarchical community where elders had to be respected, autonomous decisions were not valued, and group interdependence was promoted, and they were encouraged to conform to traditional Indian norms and values, a phenomenon also described by Oyserman and Sakamoto (1997). For example, when they were growing up, teachers did not encourage the participants to be outspoken, to think critically or to engage in public fights. The community was also instrumental in enforcing that the girls and their families abided by cultural norms and expectations. In order to maintain social harmony, the women abided by these gender identities imposed on them in order to avoid conflict.

The women's personal identities therefore became fused with the group identity when they were growing up (see also Raval & Kral, 2004), as they followed prescribed gender roles and performed duties such as housework and cooking, and were not involved in their fathers' businesses like their brothers (see also Farver et al., 2002). The idea of their identity being fused with the community is noticeable for

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these women, as they adhered to being passive and obedient, and avoided conflict. These behaviours have long been prescribed by Indian culture as the cornerstone of being a good daughter, mother, daughter-in-law and wife in terms of Indian women's code of conduct (*Stridharma*) (Raval & Kral, 2004). The women therefore adhered to community and family expectations of being "good daughters" in order to gain social approval and acceptance, which is an expectation for Indian women in collectivist communities (Inman, Howard, Walker, & Beaumont, 2007). In adulthood, the participants indicated that they would place their husbands' careers above their own, indicating an adherence to the concept of an "ideal wife" and the relational nature of their identities. This also indicates the importance of family in the lives of these women and is consistent with findings in collectivist societies (Raval & Kral, 2004).

The women were socialized to place family honour above personal desires and to maintain sexual purity. They did not challenge men for leadership positions in the Indian community as such behaviour would be frowned upon. As part of maintaining their sexual purity, they did not have boyfriends at university and they did not mingle with males at community social functions.

As the data revealed, the women internalized these cultural norms (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002) and had to work towards revisiting some of these beliefs once they entered their managerial careers (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). Previous research on Indians outside the Indian subcontinent has reported similar observations about the powerful role of culture and that Indian women identify strongly with preserving their natal traditions (Chae, 2002; Mehrotra & Calasanti, 2010; Qian, Blair, & Ruf, 2001). Indian women also tend to avoid behaviour that would harm the family name and status (Dasgupta, 1998; Farver et al., 2002; Levine, 2006; Mahalingham & Leu, 2005), because identifying with the group remains vital (Mahalingham & Haritatos, 2006).

However, the findings of the current study also indicate that the women who participated in the study developed a sense of identity that was not relational and interdependent. The women negotiated a sense of developing separate identities from others which led them to engage in identity work and form hybrid identities. The

answers to questions relating to "who am I?" and "how should I act?" led to identity negotiation. This is evident from what they reported about their childhood, as they did not follow the cultural norms prescribed by the community relating to girls marrying early and focusing on cooking and household duties. Instead, they engaged in higher educational pursuits revealing a hybrid identity. The women also admitted that they identified more with their fathers than with their mothers. This finding supports the findings reported from a study conducted by Raval and Kral (2004), who indicated that a retired Indian woman principal living in Canada admitted that she had developed a self-identity that was not completely related to social ties. Lamb (1997), in a study on older Bengali women, showed that these women developed a sense of self that was partially related to others, but that at several junctures in their lives such as adolescence, adulthood and marriage, the women were also able to develop a separate sense of self.

In many respects, the participants' grounding in Indian culture shaped a gender identity that might be viewed as subordinate, but paradoxically it also served as a means of empowerment. A clear message the participants' fathers in the current study gave their daughters was that some traditional gender roles should be negated to allow for women's empowerment and progress, especially relating to education and careers. The participants' fathers also allowed equal opportunity to sons and daughters relating to further education and careers. When daughters performed well at school, their fathers encouraged them to do even better, a finding in line with that by Asher (2008). These fathers rejected Indian cultural precepts of daughters being financially dependent on males and confined to their homes. The fathers therefore encouraged their daughters to reject certain elements of patriarchy within their community which placed demands and burdens on Indian women's gender roles. In adulthood, fathers allowed their daughters to relocate due to job opportunities, which are contrary to Indian cultural norms, once again resulting in a hybrid identity. Thus, the participants' fathers were instrumental in laying the foundation for a hybrid identity which became part of these women's identity negotiation in the workplace during adulthood. The women started living their lives more on the periphery of the cage (Johnson, 2010b) in adolescence, engaging in identity work and anxious for fathers to open the doors to freedom. The women's desire was to pursue careers

and enter the workforce, which was frowned upon in the Indian community (Budhwar, Saini, & Bhatnagar, 2005).

My study reveals the women internalized agency and resistance as part of their striving toward identity coherence, and these characteristics were further supported by their fathers, who encouraged such behaviour (see also Inman et al., 2007; Mathur et al., 2008). The women resisted conforming to essentialized identities in some instances (see Sirin & Fine, 2008). The participants' fathers emphasised education over housework and careers over marriage resulting in the women identifying less with the traditional gender role expectations in Indian culture (Schroeder, Blood, & Maluso, 1992) that women should be homemakers and mothers only, as subscribed to by their mothers and other women in their respective families and communities (see also Bandyopadhyay, 2000). This is evident in the conflict they experienced with mothers who tried to inculcate in them a passion for cooking and housework, as also described by Liao (2006) and the women resisted these chores and performed these tasks unwillingly. My study contradicts the findings in the literature (e.g. Kallivayalil, 2004) that indicate that mothers' attitudes toward gender roles have a major impact on daughters.

The participants also broke with traditional expectations of women marrying immediately after completing their schooling, which confounded the expectations of the community and their extended family. This finding is in line with other research that indicates that the marrying age of professional women in India is increasing (Ahmed, 2001). The parents of the women in my study were criticised for supporting their daughters' desire to pursue careers and tried to cushion their daughters from the onslaughts of the extended family and the community.

Thus the findings of my study relating to particularly fathers and daughters are in line with those of a number of other studies. Zhou and Bankston (2001) conducted a study on Vietnamese refugees in the United States and found that fathers encouraged their daughters to pursue education and careers. Bell and Nkomo (2001) found in their study of African-American women managers in the United States that fathers exposed their daughters to business and played a major role in

encouraging their daughters to study. Abbas (2003) conducted a study on South Asian women in Birmingham in the United Kingdom whose fathers supported the further educational and careers of their daughters. Parents in India were the greatest form of support relating to their daughters' pursuing education and careers in Maslak and Singhal's (2008) study. D'Mello (2006), however, found that most fathers in India still do not subscribe to daughters pursuing tertiary education and careers. Levine (2006) found in her study of Nepalese women that fathers did not encourage their daughters to complete their schooling.

While the women in my study were expected to be subordinate in the family and community, the emphasis on acquiring a higher level of education led to their empowerment and individuality, where they made decisions relating to their careers and eventually their spouses in adulthood. Identity work in their early lives was just the beginning of their journey of self-discovery which continued into adulthood when the women entered the organisational cage. Challenging the status quo and resisting gender roles were two ways adopted by the Indian women managers in this study to embrace an identity of their own making. Yet the data also strongly suggest that their identity work is ongoing, as they constantly struggle to balance Indian cultural expectations and the need to forge a professional identity for successful management careers. A key challenge continues to be reconciling agency and resistance with expected cultural norms. The women continue to revisit some of the aspects of their culture in their adulthood and this leads to further identity negotiations. The bird cages became too confining for them during adolescence and they were ready to spread their wings and enter a new phase of their lives.

In the next section, I discuss the identity work the participants have been engaging in their workplaces and personal lives as adults.

7.5   IDENTITY WORK IN THE PARTICIPANTS' ADULT LIVES

Although the participants tried to escape the restrictive definitions of what it meant to be a good, respectful Indian woman, some Indian cultural norms have become so much a part of their identity that these values and norms have become like shackles.

While birds try and escape the confines of their cages when they are initially caged, they eventually become accustomed to their confinement (Brasaemie, 2007). Even when the door of the cage is left open, they will not venture out without coaxing (Johnson, 2010a). In this study, the women did venture out of the cage, largely due to the support of their fathers. At the time, it was highly unusual for Indian women to pursue tertiary education and careers.

The study reveals that the women still have a strong cultural identity. The majority of women are still living in Indian townships and have strong bonds and relationships with extended family, and therefore they still maintain their cultural values. Also, the fact that their friends are family members and other Indian women means that they still hold on strongly to their Indian values, as the influence of other cultures on them is minimal. They have not learned to become intimate with women from other races outside work as a result of apartheid's keeping them apart and because they have large extended families where they do not feel a need for friends. In the workplace, they tend to have at most one close confidante, but do not have a relationship with that person outside work. They regard some white women's behaviour during social events as career-limiting and subscribe to an Indian culture which honours women's sexuality in a way that is different to some white women's libertine ways (Mahalingham & Leu, 2005).

The participants' stories suggest that they were themselves somewhat surprised at how much they had internalized particular cultural values and norms about how women should behave. Having been socialized to be subservient, passive, respectful of elders and authority, to avoid conflict, and to have no contact with non-related men, the women found it daunting to display the kinds of behaviour required to be viewed as a successful manager in corporate South Africa (Adya, 2008; Choudry, 2001) and developed an essentialized sense of self.

For the women it was important to negotiate their identities in the workplace for two reasons. The first reason was that they were spending most of their day in the work environment and had to learn to blend in and fit into the corporate environment. The second reason was that they wanted to progress in their careers and had to learn the

appropriate behavioural requirements for future managers. The women negotiated their identities within organisations and formed hybrid identities which Spivak (1987) describes as a form of strategic essentialism: they kept their cultural identities, but also adopted professional identities to move up the organisational hierarchy. When women's positions are vulnerable due to their gender and racio-ethnicity, they have to negotiate their identities to a greater extent (Spivak, 1993).

The women's narratives indicated that there was dual pressure on them between continuity and disjunction. That is, there was a need for them to change and adapt to organisational norms and values, but at the same time to belong and be connected to Indian culture. Identity work therefore related to finding and maintaining a point where they were comfortable and achieved balance, which led to renegotiating their identities and forming hybrid identities. This led to conflict that resulted in the women's being in a liminal space when the boundaries between their culture and organisational expectations began to shift and rub against each other. Identity work led the participants to re-evaluate their cultural and gender identities and renegotiate disjunctions between previous and new identities (see also Butcher, 2004).

As Swann (1987) states, identity negotiation is a process where people construct their identities in context across different domains. In this case, the workplace and the family and Indian community are two distinct domains in which the participants learned to negotiate their identities in such a way that they adhered to their cultural identities in the workplace and at the same time did not negate values and norms espoused by the organisation relating to their professional identities. A bicultural identity cannot be placed on these women, as they do not abandon their Indian culture in the workplace, unlike some African-American minority women who separated the black culture they practised at home from the white culture in the workplace (Bell, 1990). Rather, the participants' Indian culture forms part of their professional identity in the workplace and I therefore want to employ the term hybrid identity in their case, as their adult identity is a mixture of their cultural identities and the identities they have negotiated in the workplace.

The participants' identity work in the workplace was largely about negotiating how to fit into a white-male dominated organisational culture that specifies what is required to be a successful manager. The women in the study were raised in a patriarchal society where males dominated, and they found it daunting to be outspoken (see also Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999). Their fathers also encouraged them to be obedient to their supervisors and to avoid conflict. Their fathers were aware that racial discrimination existed in the workplace and felt that if their daughters displayed insubordinate behaviour toward their supervisors they might be considered rebellious and would be retrenched.

Their fathers' unwillingness to expose the participants to business in their youth placed the women at a disadvantage when they first entered the workplace. They would not air their opinions for fear of being embarrassed. When the women first entered the workplace and displayed these characteristics, their white male managers regarded them as passive and realized that the women avoided conflict and favoured group harmony even when they were slighted. In many cases, their managers placed the women in situations where they would be forced to defend their views and would encourage them to be outspoken, which led to their becoming able to present contradictory viewpoints. In other cases, the women were bullied by women from other races and they learned to become assertive through the guidance of older white women. Through this type of indirect coaching, the women learned to negotiate their gender and racio-ethnic identities and formed hybrid identities. They no longer regarded women's assertive behaviour as aggression, as they were socialized into believing when they were growing up. They became assertive and learned to handle conflict in a constructive manner. By watching the bold manner in which white women in senior positions resolved workplace issues, the women soon learned that in order to be promoted they would have to change the way they behaved.

However, the women still maintained some level of passivity as they are unable to refuse their supervisors' work assignments and are bogged down with work. This indicates the limits of a hybrid identity, as the women still adhere to a cultural identity. The participants were aware that adherence to Indian cultural norms

reinforced perceptions of Indian women as subservient and passive, as also described in a study by Fearfull and Kamenou (2006). However, their entry into corporate South Africa led these women to renegotiate past identities with new identities in the workplace and they started displaying a hybrid identity in the workplace that juxtaposed the Indian and organisational cultures, as also reported in a study by Maira (1999).

Entering corporate South Africa meant entering a new cage. Adapting to this new form of confinement took courage and time. When the women entered corporate South Africa, they faced three dominant forms of discrimination. First, they were ascribed low status due to being a woman in a male-dominated profession. Second, they belonged to an "inferior" racial group in apartheid's racial classification system. Third, this problem was compounded by the patriarchal nature of South African society (Baden et al., 1998). Historically, women of all races have been subjected to patriarchal laws that entrenched a subordinate status relative to men. As a result of these factors, males in lower positions in the organisations in which they worked displayed disrespect for the women, despite their managerial positions. White and Indian peers stereotyped them as homemakers who did not belong in the corporate workplace, as also reported in a study by Slyomovics (2005). The men they encountered subscribed to traditional, patriarchal views, as also described in other studies (Budhwar et al., 2005; Kantor, 2002; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000; Wolfram, Mohr, & Schyns, 2007), and in a real sense regarded the women as "intruders in the workplace" (Eveline, 2005, p. 648). The behaviour of junior colleagues and peers (Bagilhole, 2006) undermined the women's professional identity as managers. They had to expend a lot of time and energy defending their professional identities as managers.

Over time, the participants adjusted their behaviours and became more assertive in responding to disrespect from male subordinates by using their power to take appropriate disciplinary action. A different strategy was employed to deal with male peers in the workplace. These women chose to work even harder to prove they were worthy of their management positions. In terms of relationships with men in their homes and communities, they did not challenge the status quo and subscribed to the

cultural norms they had grown up with. This finding resonates with other research on professional ethnic minority women, which found that women from such backgrounds do not challenge the status quo in their homes (Maslak & Singhal, 2008). As previous research indicates, the women's gender beliefs combined with racio-ethnic and professional identities shapes their behaviour and responses to men in the various contexts they engage in (Randel, 2002).

The dichotomy between the Indian and organisational cultures became evident when the women were confronted with contradictory elements in the workplace and negotiated their cultural and professional identities to deal with the situations. The women negotiated their identities and engaged in selective integration according to situational demands, and this dictated whether their cultural or professional identities took precedence. Every time the women came across a situation in the workplace that would be frowned upon in their community and families, they renegotiated their gender, cultural and professional identities so that they were not alienated in the workplace, and at the same time they were still regarded as respectable Indian women.

For example, in the workplace, the participants were expected to work with males. Intermingling of the sexes is contrary to Indian cultural teachings, family and Indian community expectations. The women negotiated this identity dilemma by developing a professional attitude toward working with males and redefined their cultural boundaries. They justified working in close proximity with men in terms of achieving the goals of the organisation. However, the women also resisted some of the norms of the organisation and were not willing to attend social gatherings with all-male groups, as they adhered to their cultural identities regarding being respectable women (Rana, Kagan, Lewis, & Rout, 1998). This indicates that their identities were negotiated according to situational demands. This example indicates how the women moved back and forth in different situations and negotiated their gender, racio-ethnic and professional identities.

These types of justification for choosing to work with men and developing a pragmatic relationship toward men in the workplace are also evident from the

literature. One of the Turkish women entrepreneurs in Essers and Benschop's (2009) study created a boundary between herself and the men she massaged by stating that the men had approached her, and that she was free to refuse her services to men she was not comfortable with. Butcher (2004), in her study of minority youth in India and Australia, found that when youths moved from one context to another, they also changed their identity strategies. For the sake of continuity in the home, they adopted a traditional identity, but with friends they embraced hybrid identities. A study by Mishra and Shirazi (2010) focused on American Muslim women, showing how they negotiated new meanings in their everyday lived experiences of wearing the veil.

The life stories of the women who participated in my study revealed that they adhered to ethical behaviour as espoused in Indian culture and religions, and did not regard *impression management* as part of their self-concept. Hard work and high work standards were part of the women's self-concept in my study and they did not believe in using political skills, for example, in order to move up the organisational hierarchy. The women also avoided social gatherings where networking took place and which could be used as a means of enhancing their careers – they only attended when it was absolutely necessary. There was some tension between the strategies other people use to get ahead in the organisation and the women's cultural beliefs. The women did not compromise their cultural identities where hard work and high work standards are prescribed for advancement, but, as was also found in prior research (Agarwal, 2008; Catalyst, 2003; Singh, Kumra, & Vinnicombe, 2002), the participants in this study were not comfortable using impression management to advance their careers

The women in my study talked of the pain and unfulfilled expectations they experienced in the workplace. They were not able to construct their identities as they wanted to in the workplace, but they were constantly working toward negotiating their identities in the workplace and trying to find the best fit between their cultural and religious beliefs and the expectations of the workplace culture.

The women indicated that they did not wear traditional clothes or cover their hair at work, even on Indian cultural festival days, although they would wear such attire at home. However, in the workplace, they wore feminine accessories and clothes (but not anything that could be regarded as risqué) and kept their long hair, and they did not adopt masculine attire. The women were also aware that their upward mobility depended in part on their attire (see also Peluchette, Karl, & Rust, 2006), as women wearing traditional clothes are seen as passive and submissive by male managers (see also Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006). This highlights the salience of their gender and professional identities and the formation of hybrid identities.

Also, their dietary requirements at work are generally met with great difficulty and this was another point of concern that they mentioned. The women are not prepared to negotiate on their dietary requirements, and this point indicates the juncture at which hybrid identity formation fails. Research indicates that food forms a symbol of personal and group identity and is a form of cultural and religious expression (Brettell & Nibbs, 2009).

My study indicates that the women uphold the honour and dignity of their families by not discussing personal problems in the workplace. At mixed gatherings they do not stay at social events till late at night and adhere to their religious dietary requirements. The women have reworked their religious identities by not demanding to take leave on religious festival days and do not demand that meetings be scheduled outside their daily prayer times. The women have negotiated their cultural and religious identities to fit into the dominant culture, as they do not want managers to perceive them as being difficult. At social events, the women request that their dietary requirements be met. This aspect indicates the need to maintain racio-ethnic identities, but at the same time, the boundaries between organisational expectations and their cultural and religious identities are negotiated. These results corroborate findings from the literature, which reports that ethnic minority women negate some of their cultural and religious beliefs and adopt some western ways to fit into the dominant culture, as they do not want to be negatively perceived, and they do want to advance their careers (Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006; Pio, 2005).

The current research did find that, even though the women subscribed to Indian culture norms at home, the burden of family and domestic responsibility was mitigated by living in a country with access to affordable domestic help. Under apartheid, African women were largely restricted to low paying domestic jobs. Even with the end of apartheid and despite some efforts to improve wages, domestic help remains accessible and plentiful (King, 2007), unlike in most Western countries where professional women struggle with childcare options and household assistance (Mahalingham & Leu, 2005). These findings are corroborated in the literature which reports the need for women to negotiate egalitarian relationships with husbands relating to household chores and child care which indicates a negotiation of gender and cultural identities (Mehrotra & Calasanti, 2010; Sudha, 2000). The structure of Indian families also mitigates some of the need to fulfil domestic roles in the home. The extended families of the women assist in taking care of their homes and children when the women are on business trips out of town. Support from their mothers allows them to devote the time necessary to their professional careers and decreases the extent to which they have to perform traditional gender responsibilities in the home. This is in line with a study of professional immigrant women in the United States, in which Mahalingham and Leu (2005) also found that extended families assisted with child care.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The women in my study are continually engaged in identity work and forming hybrid identities. They have a clear sense of what they want, in spite of experiencing various obstacles in their lives. These women do not blame their gender or racio-ethnicity for their lack of advancement in the workplace and work harder than the next person. Support and encouragement from their families assist the participants in getting get ahead in life.

The women's stories revealed multiple dimensions and complexities through their lives which shaped their identities. Various aspects of identity were intertwined, and they all shaped the women's lives. For example, when addressing racio-ethnicity, gender could not be excluded (Kawahara, 2007). The women's identities are related

to the political context in South Africa and to other elements such as race, religion, ethnicity and gender. The identity of the Indian females in the current study can therefore not be understood without considering the impact of race, ethnicity and gender that results in their marginalisation in the workplace. The women engaged in identity work in their respective communities first, by resisting the norm of prescribed Indian cultural gender role expectations in their early lives and displaying agentic behaviour. Thereafter, the women engaged in identity work within their respective organisations and held on to certain cultural and religious beliefs, despite being marginalised. In order to maintain a coherent identity at work, the women had to make adjustments in their professional identities. The women also engaged in identity work relating to their relationships with their spouses.

The participants' lives are grounded in the Indian community, but they have adopted hybrid identities that distinguish them from their mothers, other women in the family and community. They have, for example, negotiated egalitarian relationships with husbands in terms of child care and household chores. The women's workplaces became places of cooperation and resistance where their hybrid identities were constantly renegotiated. The workplace can be likened less to a melting pot than to a chowder (stew) where not all ingredients are "melted", but float in the chowder in chunks. It is these chunks that are parts of the cultural identity of the women. The women's hybrid identities continue to emerge in the interface between the past and the needs of the present. They operate in a "third space" where they negotiate gender, racio-ethnic and professional identities (Bhabha, 2004). They have to work harder in the workplace in negotiating their identities than others, as they find themselves on the periphery where they have a need to balance between maintaining their racio-ethnic identities and adopting professional identities as required by their respective organisations.

The caged birds have survived the restrictions of both their childhood and adult cages. Each cage produced its own challenges, and the women have survived with the support of their parents and spouses. In trying to find out who they were, the participants had to venture from their childhood cages to their organisational cages – their desire being their freedom. In their quest for freedom, they had to work through

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and rework various identities, which resulted in freedom in certain contexts, and at other times reverted to and submitted to the restrictions imposed by the cages. Negotiating their identities is a lifelong process and they will always be grappling with identity work even after having reached the pinnacle of their careers, namely top management positions.

The next chapter presents the conclusion of the study, discussing the limitations of the study and making recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 8:
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my study was to explore the barriers and obstacles that Indian women in South African organisations face in reaching top managerial positions. I investigated Indian women managers' life stories using a qualitative, interpretivist approach. In the process of conducting the research, the concepts of identity work and hybrid identities became critical to understanding the life stories of the women who participated in the study. I found that the Indian women managers engaged in complex identity work during their childhood and in their adulthood on their way to top managerial positions. A grounded theory approach enabled me to illuminate the particular nature of their identity work as well as the content of the hybrid identities they formed in response to the multiple influences they were exposed to.

8.2   CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

The study focused on four research questions, namely, what barriers and challenges do Indian women managers encounter in the workplace? How did the Indian women managers who participated in the study negotiate the intersection between their racio-ethnic and gender identities during the early years of their lives? How did these women negotiate the intersections between their racio-ethnic and gender identities in the Indian family and community? How did these women negotiate the intersections of their racio-ethnic, gender and professional identities in the workplace?

In respect to the gender and management literature, specifically the women in management literature this study makes a number of significant contributions. First, it fills the gap in knowledge as it is one of the first studies of the historical journey of Indian women managers to corporate South Africa. To date, very little has been known about these women and the particular nature of their life and career journeys. As noted earlier, the literature on women in management in South Africa has primarily focused on samples of white women managers, with a few studies of the

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experiences of African women managers (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Mathur-Helm, 2005).

Second, although the gender and management literature has stressed intersectionality as a framework for understanding women in management, it has been difficult to execute empirically (Acker, 2012). This study demonstrates one means of capturing multiple levels of social identities. At the same time, it shows how they can be considered in understanding the formation of professional identities. Additionally, the research suggests the gender and management literature should pay attention to context in understanding the careers of women in management. The use of the life story approach shows how women's lives evolve over time and cautions against studies focusing only on their career lives as if their early lives were irrelevant to identity formation as managers. The life story approach enhances the ability to capture what McCall (2005) refers to as intracategorical intersectionality. That is having an in-depth understanding of the experiences of a particular category of women. Finally, another contribution to this literature is the need for researchers not to overlook the complex interplay between how women's early gender role socialization may influence how they ultimately respond to organizational barriers when embarking upon managerial careers. What is clear from this study is that the Indian women had to rethink and adjust how they have come to understand themselves as women as well as how to respond to male-dominated corporate cultures.

The study also illuminates the identity work that Indian women managers in South Africa have engaged in over the course of their lives. A life story approach allowed me to capture and describe the on-going tension between the influences of their early life cultural socialization of what it means to be an "Indian woman" and the need to negotiate a professional identity in corporate South Africa. This is an important finding, as much of the existing literature on identity work in organisation studies has focused on professional identities and has not explicitly considered early life influences. As the literature from the field of psychology indicates, identity formation begins early in life and cannot be assumed to just happen at the adult stage of life (Erikson, 1968). Furthermore, this study contributes to filling the gap in

knowledge about women in management on the African continent. As Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) note, the literature on women in management in Africa is generally sparse, compared to that in the United States and Europe.

The findings of this study are also in line with Alvesson et al.'s (2008) assertion that an individual's identity is formed by personal identities, as well as social identities. Social identities have not always been explicitly considered in most of the research on identity work in organisations. Consequently, professional identities are typically only juxtaposed to personal or self-identity. At the same time, identity work research has not taken into account how multiple social identities are accommodated and negotiated in the workplace (Cieslik & Verkuyten, 2006). Specifically, research on professional identities has generally not incorporated gender or racio-ethnic identity. A notable exception is a recent study by Slay and Smith (2011), who examined the professional identity construction of African-American reporters to demonstrate the identity work of persons with stigmatized cultural identities. The current study focuses on the intersection of multiple identities such as racio-ethnic, gender and professional identities and how these were managed and negotiated in the women managers' childhood and are being negotiated in their adult lives, as well as how "new" hybrid identities are formed.

Alvesson et al. (2008) also argue that an individual's identity is formed not only by personal and social identities, but also by the historical and cultural context beyond the organisation within which the person operates. The current study demonstrates how the apartheid and the post-apartheid eras (historical context) negatively influenced the women in their childhood and in their respective careers. This suggests that identity work research should be grounded within the broader socio-political and historical context shaping an individual's life experiences, as well as in the groups to which he or she belongs in society. Although the study focused on Indian women in South Africa, a "hybrid chowder" approach may be transferable to other groups within unique locations and socio-historical contexts (for example, the Indian diaspora). In other words, a three-level approach that includes context, social identities and intersectionality is important. Recently, diversity scholars have called for greater attention to context in understanding diverse identities in organisations

(Andersson, 2010; Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, & George, 2004; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2006; Watson, 2008).

Most studies on identity work focus on individual identities. The current study indicates that the women's cultural identities are still pivotal in their lives, and they retain a strong collectivist identity, as they still live within their communities. Even the women who do not live in Indian communities still practise their culture and place group needs above individual needs. Their Indian cultural identity is deeply rooted in their self-concept. All other identities are adapted or rejected according to this core identity.

The study also has practical implications in respect of South Africa's goal of achieving transformation and gender equality in the workplace. The research results that are reported here should enable managers in corporate South Africa gain a better understanding of the unique challenges and barriers that Indian women managers encounter as they struggle to become successful managers in the corporate environment. The identity work that Indian women managers are reported to engage in should alert top management, human resource practitioners and organisational psychologists to the importance of cultural and religious values in the lives of ethnic minority women. Organisations that expect these women to assimilate fully may end up compromising the potential contribution that these women can make. Finally, the research should also alert managers to the need to accelerate Indian women managers' career advancement as an important strategy for talent retention.

8.3   STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This study used a life story approach to understand the women's journeys toward management careers. Life stories have a number of advantages, as Shamir, Dayan-Horesh and Adler (2005) point out: the stories that leaders tell about themselves and their lives are means by which they convey important messages about their identities, traits, values and beliefs. The life story methodology used in the current study provided a means by which to capture the multiple influences on the

participants' identities and how they made sense of them. Life stories express the story-teller's identity, which is a product of the relationship between life experiences and how the person narrates those stories. In telling their life stories, people construct a longitudinal version of the self which explains and justifies the present self (McAdams et al., 2001).

Gabriel and Griffiths (2004, p. 114) point out that another advantage is that good stories are used to "educate, inspire, indoctrinate and convince". Stories are also a powerful research instrument, because they allow a researcher to understand the emotional lives of the participants. Listening to and comparing the stories of the different participants and examining how their narratives were constructed around particular issues allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the realities of identity negotiation in the lives of these women. Another reason I chose to use life stories was that it would provide me with rich data regarding the women's complex lives which a survey would not be able to capture.

No study of this nature is without its limitations, however. The life story approach also has its limitations. Life stories are highly subjective, and participants reconstruct accounts of their life stories according to the meaning and perception of events in their lives. The same life stories and events can be narrated to different people in different ways. People distort, hide and inflate stories, depending on their relationship with the interviewer and how they want to be perceived (Rae, 2000). Since I am an Indian woman who has been in a managerial position, the women in the study could have presented the data to me differently to the information they would have provided to someone with a different identity, for example. Additionally, while the current study reveals the broad historical, racio-ethnic, and cultural influences on the women's gender and professional identities, the life story approach used does not fully capture the complex texture of the day-to-day life of the individual women in the study.

Another limitation could be retrospective bias in the data (Wallace & Bergeman, 2002). The themes were generated according to the information provided by the women relating to their life stories during the interviews, and retrospective bias could

have been an element in their stories. I also channelled the interviews according to the information I wanted to gather from their life stories to a large extent and the women provided me with information I was interested in obtaining. The women therefore included certain information and left out other pieces of stories, according to their perspectives. Although I spent hours interviewing the participants, I am aware that I did not touch on all the elements of their lives. Retrospective bias may seem like a limitation in the current study and the life stories may not have been "complete", but they did allow the women to make sense of their current positions.

Another limitation in the study is the women's memories of their childhood. Most of the women are over 30 years of age and it was difficult for them to remember the details of certain episodes in their lives. I therefore focused on their life stories from adolescence, and did not probe into earlier stories, as these would possibly have been even more inaccessible.

Sometimes researchers tweak the truth by revealing certain elements in life story analysis and concealing others (Shamir et al., 2005). By focusing on the prominent themes emerging over the course of their lives, I believe I avoided tweaking the results in such a way. Furthermore, the use of Atlas.ti allowed for detailed coding and integration of data into themes. I also followed an important prescription of a grounded theory approach in allowing the data to expand the research from its initial focus on the challenges and barriers of Indian women managers. Nevertheless, I do acknowledge that researchers examining my data from another lens could find other themes, and they could interpret the women's life stories differently. I also tried to mitigate this, however, by having an independent expert review my analysis and the resulting themes.

8.4   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has implications for future research on identity work in organisations, as well as women in management in Africa. The study of the lives and career journeys of women managers on the African continent is still in its infancy (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Overall, there is a need to expand the body of research on identity work and

hybrid identities using an intersectionality lens. For example, there has thus far been very little research on how minority male managers negotiate their identities. Specifically, a fruitful study might be an examination of how Indian male managers negotiate gender identities rooted in the superiority of males emanating from Indian culture and a subordinate status relative to white males and African males in the South African corporate context.

Research relating to the extent of agency and resistance manifested in the hybrid identity work of minorities in organisations can also be explored in future.

In the current study I had focused on Indian women's struggle in negotiating identity work as managers. Identity work can be conducted on minority women in less demanding occupations, where the burden to maintain a particular image may be less.

Future research should also be conducted on a younger cohort of Indian women who were not raised in the apartheid era to explore how they negotiate their identities in reaching managerial positions.

Finally, a comparative study of the identity work of women who live within an Indian community and those who live in mixed communities may shed light on how contextual differences shape identity formation.

8.5 CONCLUSION

In the end, the research approach that was chosen has provided a thick description of the identity work engaged in by Indian women managers in South Africa by explicitly interrogating the multiple influences shaping their identities over time within a particular historical and political context. In addition to closing the gap in knowledge about a neglected group of women, namely Indian women managers, the study also makes a contribution to the growing literature on identity work in organisations. In this regard, it makes a significant contribution by heeding Alvesson et al.'s (2008) call for researchers not to shy away from empirically examining the complex factors that shape an individual's identity.

The next chapter shares personal reflections about my journey in conducting this study.

CHAPTER 9:

REFLECTIONS ON MY RESEARCH JOURNEY

"There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. That will be the beginning." (Successfx Publications, 2010)

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In this last chapter, I reflect on my research voyage in conducting this study. Part of my research voyage was to ensure the trustworthiness of the current study.

In this chapter, I share my cultural and religious background, as well as my experience in management as an Indian female. I found that, as others who have used a life story approach have noted (Shamir, Dayan-Horesh and Adler, 2005), one cannot engage others about their life stories without reflecting on one's own. In addition, because these women's stories have not previously been told, I felt a tremendous responsibility to make sure that I, as the researcher, represent their lives authentically and respectfully.

9.2 REFLEXIVITY

Face-to-face interviews remain the most widely used method of gathering data in qualitative research (Platt, 2002). Researchers' epistemology, subjectivity within the research process and the meaning they attach to what participants say is referred to as reflexivity (Riach, 2009). Hardy, Phillips and Clegg (2001) posit that reflexivity deals with thinking through how research is conducted and comprehending how the process of undertaking research shapes its result. There are various elements that have an impact on the research process, which leads to interpreting the results in a certain manner, and therefore one needs to use a reflexive stance to identify and comprehend the effects of these factors (Nadin & Cassell, 2006).

Reflexivity is a vital part of qualitative research, as it is an important concept in discussions on subjectivity, objectivity and social science knowledge and research

(Hsiung, 2008). One of the most important aspects of reflexivity is that it highlights possible researcher bias in qualitative research (Pillow, 2003; Pullen, 2006) which researchers should be constantly aware of (Hammersley, 2008). Nadin and Cassell (2006, p. 208-209) explain that the benefits of reflexivity are that "one is made more aware of the role and impact of the researcher; it increases the trustworthiness of the data and integrity of the research process". Who I am, how I perceive the world, what I feel, what I know – these are all vital elements in the research process, and a researcher not only has to take account of his or her own view point, but also that of the interviewees (Rose, 1997). The researcher has to be aware at all times how a person's race, gender, class and ethnicity influence the various phases of the research process (Callaway, 1992; Madge 1993). Since researchers are unable to divorce themselves from their own subjective metatheoretical focus, this focus should be examined through reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1990).

The aim of reflexivity is to produce authentic analysis. This can only be generated when a researcher continuously questions his or her understanding of each phase of the study itself (Hertz, 1997), from formulating questions through to writing about the subject matter (Olson, 2008), to the role the researcher plays in the research process and ethical issues relating to the study (Letiche, 2009).

Researchers conducting studies in organisations have faced difficulties in conducting and writing about reflexive research (Cunliffe, 2003). Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 262) argue that "[a]lthough reflexivity is a familiar concept in the qualitative tradition…it has not previously been seen as an ethical notion". Collins and Wray-Bliss (2005, p. 801) coined the term "ethical reflexivity", arguing that participants should have a chance to respond to the researched texts, and that researchers should question their own statements. Hammersley (2008) also suggests that ethical reflexivity deals with a researcher choosing to ask certain questions, collecting certain data, interpreting the findings, deciding which findings to emphasise and also taking into account the practical implications of the research.

One difficulty I encountered in the current study was deciding on how I should conduct reflexivity, as there is no fixed method to do so. Mauthner and Doucet

(2003, p. 413) lament that "whilst the importance of being reflexive is acknowledged within social science research, the difficulties, practicalities and methods of doing it are rarely addressed". I therefore decided to share my reflections on initiating the research, the contents of my reflective journal, and the tensions around analysing and reporting what I found.

I begin with my own life story, because it perhaps reveals what motivated me to embark on my research topic, as well as some of the feelings and emotions I have experienced over the last three years. I then discuss some of the incidents in the research, illustrating my comments with some extracts from my research journal. These extracts are highlighted by being placed in italics and in text boxes, to distinguish these extracts clearly from the transcripts of the participants' comments.

9.3 MY STORY

I was raised in a small segregated Indian township called Primindia in Brits during the apartheid era, where I attended an Indian school in the mornings and religious classes in the afternoons. Most of my childhood was spent studying, and during the holidays we would assist my mother in spring cleaning the house. Sometimes, during the summer holidays, my parents would send us to my grandparents' home in Laudium, which is an Indian township in Pretoria which was also segregated during the apartheid era.

I learned to cook at the age of ten, as my mother believed that having a career should be secondary to taking care of the home. By contrast, my father was more ambitious on my behalf, and encouraged me to study, as he wanted me to be financially independent and not to be totally dependent on a man. My father did not encourage me to marry after I completed my schooling. He always encouraged me to do well at school. I was glad when he did not force me to marry, as I wanted to pursue a career before I settled down in life. In my early life, I encountered many women who were abused by husbands who controlled the finances in the home and I did not want to be a mere statistic. My father was also aware of these situations, and he therefore wanted to safeguard me against such abuse by allowing me to

study so that I could be financially independent. My father was also aware that without a good education I would end up working in a shoe store or a supermarket, where I would be paid a pittance and would be abused and disrespected, like many of the Indian women working as cashiers and salespersons often were (and still are). I would always be financially in need, as these women earned a minimal wage. I understood my father's reasoning, as I did not want to have the same fate as these women.

My father allowed me to choose my own career. In fact, until recently, he was not even aware of what my career as an Industrial Psychologist entailed, as he operates his own business and did not have the opportunity to work in corporate South Africa, due to apartheid. My father, however, ensured that he completed his schooling through correspondence. He enrolled at a technical college and completed a diploma in electronics.

My mother has assisted my father in his business since they were married, but she did not complete her schooling. The reasons for her not completing her schooling are threefold. Firstly, she attended a girls-only Indian school where the pupils were taught "feminine" subjects. In order to complete her schooling, she would have had to attend a boys' high school and, since she had a traditional father, this option was out of the question. Secondly, she mentioned that when she was growing up, Indian parents aimed to marry their daughters at an early age and did not pay heed to educating their daughters. Thirdly, the apartheid government made the school syllabus difficult and the transition for my mother from feminine to masculine subjects would have been too difficult. My mother therefore did not complete her last two years of schooling. Although my mother was involved in my father's business, she ensured that she prepared elaborate meals for her family. She somehow balanced her work and home life and taking care of five children (my parents have six children, and my youngest brother was born when the oldest five were already at university).

Although my father encouraged our studies, he was also quite traditional. He did not allow me to have boyfriends, and I was also not allowed to attend parties and go to night clubs. I was, however, allowed to go shopping with female friends,

uncheperoned. When I attended university, I lived with my grandparents, and used to travel by bus from Pretoria to Johannesburg. Although I was allowed freedom at university, my father sent me to study on condition that I would not date. I honoured my father's request and successfully completed my studies.

When my father announced to extended family and members of the community that I was going to study, there were many objections, as people felt girls should not be allowed to study and the honour of the family and community would be compromised if I had, for example, dated boys or gone clubbing. My father did not heed the advice of the extended family or community, and still sent me to university. I asked my father not too long along ago if he regrets sending me to study. He said that in retrospect, he had made a wise choice, as he noticed that my female cousins (who had married straight after completing school) are finding it difficult to get well paid jobs.

After completing a Masters in Commerce (MCom) in Human Resource Management, I decided to pursue a doctoral degree. After the MCom degree, the last qualification on the academic ladder was the PhD. My main reason for pursuing a doctoral degree was that I had successfully completed all the necessary qualifications on the ladder and I only had one rung to climb to achieve the highest qualification in the human resource management field, and that would be the PhD. I always believe in completing what I start with, even if it takes me time to do it. I started off at the bottom of the academic ladder and I wanted to complete the circle by achieving the PhD.

Besides a doctoral degree, I always wanted to pursue an MBA, as I felt that would boost my career opportunities in the management field, and also to complete the Executive Leadership Programme once I had attained a senior management position. In between, I was also pursuing short courses that would enhance my skills and broaden my horizons.

After completing my Honours degree, I hunted for a job in the human resource field for three years before being employed as a call centre agent in mid-2000. Although I

started job hunting in the post-apartheid era, I was still told by personnel agencies that human resources jobs were reserved for whites only and that I would never be employed in the human resources department of any organisation. I worked for four and half years in the call centre before I was recruited as a human resource officer in the recruitment and selection department of my organisation. After working as a human resource officer for 18 months, I was promoted to a middle management level as a human resource generalist. After I had worked in management for 18 months, I was head-hunted by lecturers in the Human Resource academic department. They had also incidentally been my lecturers in the Master's programme. I started working at the university in April 2008 and my current position is that of a lecturer. I am still living with my parents, as Indian women are not allowed to live on their own. For me, this cultural norm is a blessing, as I would have been very lonely living away from my family. In the absence of a spouse, my nieces, nephews, brothers and sisters fill my life.

Entering academia was somewhat of a demotion for me, having been in a position of authority as a manager, and having to adapt to being treated like a junior employee as an academic. When I entered academia, I was placed in a lecturer's position. I took a drop in salary and at the same time a drop in status as well. For two years, the senior lecturers in the Human Resource Department had tried to convince me to join academia, but I had refused due to the low salary I was offered. I eventually gave in when one of my fellow students who was also an academic convinced me to come on board, as he advised me that I would be able to determine my own career progress. This idea appealed to me, as I was already aware that in the organisation I worked in I would not be promoted unless I was friendly with the men in top management.

I was thus always setting milestones for myself. Where I could find time, I would pursue short courses that ran for a day or two. These would give me a breather from the office and would boost my career, as I would take new skills back to the office to implement. In this way, I was constantly in touch with new techniques and ways of doing things as well and always in the habit of studying. I did this because I needed

to stimulate my mind constantly with new ideas, and one way of doing so was to be a student all my life.

My research interest was driven by my own career as a manager. In my quest for a topic, I focused on the challenges I faced as an Indian female manager in corporate South Africa. I was fairly quickly promoted into a managerial position once I entered the Human Resource Department of a municipality in Pretoria. I also realized my upward mobility would be slow from this point forward. Although I was well acquainted with most of the senior and top managers, I was not part of the inner circle. I was the only Indian female. There was only one white female and two African females at a senior management level. The rest of the senior and top management structure consisted of African and white males. As an Indian woman, I found it uncomfortable to be part of an all-male group because I had been raised in a family and community that practiced sex segregation at social gatherings. Also, the males in my organisation were friends, and did not invite me for any of their social outings. I always wondered whether other Indian women managers were part of the male social clubs at their respective organisations.

The question that was constantly on my mind was whether other Indian women managers in South African organisations also faced challenges in terms of their upward mobility. There were a number of expectations of me as an Indian female and daughter in the Indian community and family respectively. I was very aware that Indian men shy away from marrying professional Indian women, and I wondered if I would ever marry. I also worried that my career might be stifled because I would not be able to relocate due to family pressures and expectations. Thus, I was very curious to find out about the role of the Indian community and family in the lives of other Indian women managers and how this influenced their upward mobility. This topic then became the focus of my doctorate. I was excited about choosing this topic, as I was curious to find out what other Indian women managers experienced on their journeys into top managerial positions, and whether their experiences were anything like mine. I was also curious and excited to learn about the strategies they used in reaching top managerial positions and how they achieved a balanced life.

9.4   MY REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

It is believed journal keeping was first used by the Greeks and Romans (Janesick, 1998). Nowadays, journal keeping is used in therapy. Progoff (1975), a therapist, referred in his works to an intensive journal. Progoff (1975) suggests that journal writing results in a person's developing a deeper understanding of him- or herself as the writer explores multifaceted aspects of his or her life. A journal allows an individual to document personal growth as it occurs and leads to self-understanding.

Since the researcher is the research instrument in qualitative studies, keeping a detailed journal is vital in keeping track of the research journey. In my case, the journey brought me joy, frustration and tears. My research journey was also filled with episodes of tragedy, although these were not due to the study itself. The joy it brought me was due to discovering that I was not the only Indian woman in management experiencing barriers and challenges to my self-concept, and negotiating my identity. There were other Indian women like me who went through similar experiences to the ones I had had in reaching a management position. I also had hope of reaching a top managerial position after I listened to the life stories of my participants and realized that, although the process is slow and painful, it is well worth it when one finally reaches the top.

The main frustration of the study dealt with the interviews. Sometimes I was frustrated by the women's scheduling our interviews so far apart and sometimes cancelling an interview at the last minute. I remember that I once drove to Johannesburg from Pretoria for a follow -up interview with one of the participants. Her secretary phoned me two hours before the interview to inform me that the venue of the interview had changed and that I should drive to their office in another area in Johannesburg. However, the directions supplied to me by the secretary were poor. A typical half hour journey from Pretoria to Johannesburg took me one hour. I drove around for half an hour looking for the place, and finally got to the alternate venue five minutes before the interview, only to be told by the secretary that the manager was delayed and unable to see me. After I had waited for another half an hour, the

secretary informed me that the manager could not see me at all and we had to reschedule the interview for another day. I noted the following in my journal:

07 April 2009:

I am so frustrated with some participants who don't even consider I have to take a day's leave in order to interview them. I wish they would understand and let me know at least a day beforehand if they are unable to make it. I wish I could tell her I'm no longer interested in interviewing her. Unfortunately I'm at her mercy, as the other Indian women managers are giving me a hard time and are not willing to be interviewed. I guess beggars can't be choosers. I will hang in there. There's nothing I can do about her postponing the interview.

The tears I cried conducting the study were related to the literature review. Some of the literature I read relating to the treatment of women in India broke my heart. I remember reading about the oppressive dowry system that Hindu women are subjected to. One story I read made me feel depressed for days. A Hindu father once received a proposal for his 18-year old daughter. Since he was poor and unable to pay the dowry, his daughter's future family-in-law would not allow their son to marry his daughter. Seeing the humiliation and pain their father had to endure, the daughter and her two younger sisters all committed suicide, as they could not bear the pain and humiliation their parents had to endure due to their poverty and the demands of future families-in-law. This story made me feel how lucky I was to be born and raised in a country where the Indian community did not adhere strictly to these customs, as Hindu girls in South Africa had never been subjected to a need to commit suicide because their parents could not afford to pay dowry. The following entry in my journal reflects on this reading:

> *20 September 2009:*
>
> *I'm so glad I was not born in India. I would probably have been tortured by the community for not following unjust customs like the three girls who had committed suicide because their father could not pay dowry. I feel so sorry for the parents. Because of stupid people in the community, they lost their precious daughters. Such stupid customs should be abolished completely, because they only feed people's greed.*

Tragedy does not relate to my research, but I encountered it on my research journey. Although it did not completely distract me from my studies, when tragedy did strike, it affected my life negatively, and for a few days I would be distracted and would not be able to focus on my research. Tragedy struck my family two years ago, just when I was preparing to conduct my first set of interviews. Between January 2009 and August 2010 I lost four close family members. This was a period of distress for my family. I tried to be strong during these tragic times, and suppressed my emotions, so that I could focus on my PhD, as my greatest fear was that my grief would make me lose my focus on my goal. I took very little time out to grieve the loss of my family members, and so I realize that I still need to find closure, since my focus on my research detracted me from internalizing their deaths. While the rest of my family has come to terms with these deaths, I still have not internalized what has transpired in my life in the last two years. Instead, I opted to bury myself in my work.

> *28 August 2010:*
>
> *I can't believe so many of my close family members have passed on. It hurts so much, but I know if my grief swallows me now I will not get through my PhD. I will grieve for them later, but I have to get the PhD out of the way first.*

In the last three years, I had been intensely focused on my studies to such an extent that I spent all my free time on my research and have missed outings with family and

friends due to focusing on my PhD. My social and personal life has come to a standstill, as I have spent minimal time with family and friends. As I am nearing the end of my PhD, I feel that I need time to rebalance my personal and professional life. The following entry was in my journal:

> *10 April 2011:*
>
> *I have allowed the PhD to rule my life for so long. I have lost out on life and now I feel it is time to complete my studies. The loneliness in my life is overwhelming these days, as I have been engrossed in my studies and work with no time for family or friends. I really can't wait to be a part of my family again. My parents miss me so much. Life is too short to miss out on spending time with family.*

I kept a reflective journal during my study and recorded all my thoughts relating to the women's life stories, my observations of the physical location and appearance of the interview site, my personal feelings relating to the women's stories, as well as the women's appearances. Reviewing what I recorded in my journal has allowed me to see how it has informed my interpretations in the study. The journal entries captured the rapport I immediately established with the women in the very first interviews. I immediately sensed their desire to share their pain, their sorrows and their challenges in dealing with cultural restrictions when they were growing up, as well as in their respective organisations. I felt that I had a heavy responsibility to capture their stories as accurately as possible, and to present them factually, without distorting facts. The following journal abstract offers insight into the rapport I established with the women:

> *21 July 2009:*
>
> *I have already conducted the first round of interviews with the participants. I felt so comfortable talking to them. It felt like I was talking to my sisters during one of our "family-female get-togethers". The women spoke openly about their experiences. I feel like we are already friends after our first meeting.*

Talking to me allowed them to share their stories and allowed a burden to be lifted off their shoulders. The women were also eager to share their stories with me as they could identify with me as an Indian woman who had been a manager as well. I believe they felt I would understand their life stories better than someone who was not in a managerial position. During the interviews, when they mentioned a point in their childhood or experiences I could identify with, I would also agree with them and tell them I had also experienced such events in my life. For example, when the women mentioned they did not discuss family problems at work, I agreed with them. I tried to keep my side of the story very brief, as I did not want it to overshadow or influence the stories they shared. This also created rapport between us and I found that after my revelations, they would be willing to share even more information relating to their lives. The burden that was shifted to me was to write up their stories as accurately as possible and to let the world know the trials and tribulations they had encountered, as well as how they had negotiated their identities and their ultimate triumphs in their journeys toward top managerial positions. The following extract from the journal illustrates the eagerness the women expressed in talking to me:

> *15 April 2009:*
>
> *I was surprised Saira mentioned to me before the interview commenced when I explained to her about my topic she felt this is something she wants to contribute towards. Bipasha also mentioned to me when I first contacted her that she was looking forward to be involved in my research as she has not read about such a topic being explored in the South African context. These women's enthusiasm relating to my topic is encouraging to me as a researcher.*

I felt immediately comfortable with each woman I interviewed. I felt a bond and sisterhood. I felt like I was one of them and this is illustrated by the following note I made in my journal. This was also the time when I was busy with my last few follow-up interviews:

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> *10 September 2009:*
>
> *Each woman said something that touched a part of me and an aspect of my life – something in my past, my present and my experiences – where I could identify with them.*

I must admit that although I had bonded with all the other women in the study, one of the participants with whom I had conducted an interview in the first phase of interviews and who was in a top managerial position made me feel extremely uncomfortable. Although we had arranged the time and date for the interview, she ignored my calls the day before the scheduled interview to finalize the meeting. I contacted her an hour before the scheduled meeting to confirm the venue, but she ignored my calls. I arrived ten minutes before the meeting at her office and was told to wait for her, as she had scheduled another meeting for the time we had to meet. I waited about half an hour for her before I was ushered into the boardroom where she was waiting for me. Since she had another appointment afterwards, she finished the interview ahead of the agreed-upon allocated time. She was also the only participant who refused to conduct a follow-up interview with me. Fortunately for me, data saturation was reached and I did not have a need to conduct another interview with her, as many of the points she made had already been mentioned by most of the other participants. She was one of the first participants I interviewed. I made the following note in my diary:

> *23 May 2009:*
>
> *I feel so hurt by being treated like a nuisance by Shabana. She did not even smile with me when I met her, but seemed upset for some reason. Her first remark to me when we met in her boardroom was that she was wondering who was keep on calling her on her cell phone as she did not recognize the number. I told her I had called her to confirm our appointment, as I had to drive from Pretoria to Johannesburg and I wanted to confirm if she was still available, otherwise we could have rescheduled. She said nothing, but her tone was aggressive throughout the interview. We were also disturbed a few times by her staff asking her about sending out mail by courier and bringing documents for her to sign off during the course of the interview. She made it difficult for me to build rapport between us. I attempted a few times to make comments about similar experiences, but she cut me off in a middle of a sentence and continued with another story. It was as if she was not paying attention to me and was on her own mission. I really did not feel a connection with her. The other managers I had interviewed would instruct staff not to disturb us and would also pay attention to my comments during the interview and this enabled a much smoother rapport between us. My ego was deflated after the interview and I felt like a beggar she wanted to get rid of quickly. She scrutinized my attire and I felt uncomfortable, like I was placed under a microscope. Even when I asked her for a follow-up interview, she told me not to call her she would call me when she wanted to be interviewed. To this day she has not called.*

I also realized that being an Indian woman who had been a manager as well as having been raised in an Indian township during apartheid gave me an insider view of the participants' lives.

9.5   INSIDER VIEW

In conducting the interviews with my participants, I ensured that I remained as objective as possible, although I realized during the interviews that our lives mirrored each other in the majority of instances. Although I understood the context (for

example, Indian culture) that the women were making certain claims about, I would ask them to explain the context in greater detail. I tried to conduct the interviews as an "outsider" who did not understand the context, and in this way I was able to gather rich data from the women. This was not easy, because I could immediately understand what they were talking about. However, I also did not lead the women during the interviews, but instead probed for more detail in the stories they told me.

I realized that the life stories of the women managers I interviewed were complex. To allow the reader to understand the complexities in my participants' lives, I decided to use a caged bird metaphor as an analogy. The caged bird metaphor is apt, as it succinctly captures the essence of the Indian women managers' struggles against the barriers in their lives. However, I was initially reluctant to portray the women as passive and subservient. I felt that portraying Indian women in South Africa as passive and subservient reflects on me as an Indian woman as well, since I am also an Indian woman. At the same time I knew I had to be true to the data as well and any distortions would not capture the life stories of the women in the study.

Before writing up my analysis chapter, I had a discussion of my findings with the students in the human resource management honours class one evening. The class consisted of three Indian women and when they listened to the idea of my wanting to portray the women in my study as passive and subservient, they started protesting vehemently. Their argument was that they are not passive and docile. I asked them to describe their mothers to me and asked questions relating to their mother's status in the home and community. I also enquired about their mother's ages. Without the students' realizing it, many of the descriptions relating to their mothers consisted of elements of passivity and subservience which these young students did not subscribe to. I also pointed out to them that the women in my study were part of their mothers' generation, where Indian women's voices were subdued, although there were exceptions to the rule – for example, some famous South African women of an earlier generation were Fatima Meer (b.1928, d. 2010) and Maniben Sita (b.1926), who were political activists and voiced their opinions. There were many less well-known Indian women who also fought against the injustices of the apartheid system and were not subservient. These women were, however, the exception rather than

the rule of the general Indian female population in South Africa, who were silenced by male patriarchal beliefs. So, I was initially uncomfortable portraying the women as subservient and docile, but I had to show that part of their personalities in order to reveal how they resisted the cultural socialization of passivity imposed on them by engaging in identity work and at the same time strategizing to escape the cages that held them captive.

9.6 REFLECTIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE WOMEN'S LIFE STORIES

In my study, I had used both the life story approach, where I extracted themes relating to the Indian women managers' lives and grounded theory, in which theory surrounding their identities emerged and was grounded in the data. I realized that the women were successful in their respective careers and that they had obtained their managerial positions through determination and hard work. The women were open in sharing their personal lives with me, and I listened with empathy. I also realized that there were instances where their professional and personal lives reflected my own, but at other times I found myself learning from their experiences. The following journal entry reflects my thoughts:

26 July 2009:

Sometimes I feel like I'm seeing an image of myself in these women. I can't believe they are so much like me. But the interviews had also made me realize although we are all Indian women born and raised in South Africa we are also different. Shamila made me realize all Muslim women do not practice Islam the same way. She showed me the books she learned from are different to the way I practise Islam. She also does not believe in saying her five time daily prayers, which I have been taught is the second most important pillar of Islam. She also mentioned to me the Muslim group she follows educates women before men. This is interesting and news to me. Had I not conducted an interview with her, I would never have known this.

In the analysis of the women's childhood I was surprised that most fathers did not allow their daughters to go out with friends and they were either housebound or only allowed to go shopping with older women in their families who acted as chaperones. I was raised in a small town, and my father allowed me to go shopping with my friends. I never went to the movies with friends, however, as we only had one cinema in town, which was for whites only. I have the following journal entry:

> *11 April 2009:*
>
> *I wished I could interview some of the women's fathers and ask them why they did not allow their daughters to go out unchaperoned. It will be interesting to find out*

In discussing the participants' managerial roles, the one element that surprised me was that many of the women reported their loss of a sense of empathy toward lower level employees and said they became task and deadline-driven due to their work pressures, which was one aspect of their lives that had changed and which they did not approve of. I made this journal entry upon reflecting on what they said:

> *08 April 2009:*
>
> *I'm glad I'm not in some of the women's positions. I think it's a sad thing when you enter a profession and lose empathy for clients. I guess it goes with the territory when you are understaffed and overworked. I guess these women feel this way because they are suffering from burnout.*

In reflecting on the first set of interviews, I realized how important the stories that the Indian female managers told me of their lives were for subsequent interviews and for the study as well. An entry in my journal reads as follows:

> *15 April 2009:*
>
> *I realize I have to conduct follow-up interviews. Having only one interview leaves so many unanswered questions. I will contact the women for follow-up interviews.*

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I also used my sister Fatima as a sounding board and discussed Indian culture and the literature I had consulted with her. Our discussions helped me to crystallize insights into the identity formation of women in the Indian culture from the information I had gathered in the interviews. When I was searching for a metaphor, she suggested a metaphor of a butterfly in a cocoon. We debated the use of a cocooned butterfly, but I eventually came up with the caged bird metaphor. The following was the journal entry I made after our discussion:

30 July 2010

Today is my lucky day. I feel like Aristotle and want to shout out Eureka!!!!!! But refuse to run around naked. I have been having nightmares for the past week of how best to analyse the stories of my participants using an apt metaphor. I was not sure how to describe them. I therefore decided today I will bounce the idea off Fatima. She always comes up with ideas I have not thought of. She gets my mind ticking. I gave a general impression of my participants' stories to her without mentioning their names. She asked me to give her time to think through a metaphor. She came to me after an hour and said I should use the metaphor of a butterfly. I told her once a butterfly breaks out of its cocoon, it is free – my participants are still caged in the corporate world and still adhere to their cultural beliefs that chain them. And it was when I used the word "caged" that the caged bird metaphor struck me. I told Fatima – I've got it. They are like caged birds. She agreed with me and said my description of the participants sound like they are in cages trying to break free. We had a discussion of how difficult it is for a caged bird to fly out of its cage and the bars of a cage always confining the movements and freedom of a bird. I was so excited that I concluded our conversation quickly and immediately went to my computer to research the "caged bird" metaphor. I know this is an apt metaphor as it fits in so well with the stories of my participants.

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My sister also made me realize that my interviews dealt with the identity negotiations the women were engaged in. The following is an entry in my journal:

02 November 2010:

I had been discussing the concept of identity with Fatima and asked her opinion of it. She pointed out something to me that led me to re-examine my participants' interviews. She told me that every organisation I had entered I carried my cultural and religious beliefs with me. I always tried to get them to cater halaal food for me and reminded them of my fasting month when I could not attend social events where food was served. She pointed out that as Indians we have our culture, but we also try and blend in with others. I agreed with her and realize now after reading through my participants' interviews what she is saying is true – the women were, throughout their lives, engaged in negotiating their identities. I will explore the concept identity work and use it for my study, as I feel it is central to my study.

9.7   CONCLUDING REMARK

I have come to realize that this doctoral thesis is only the first step in my journey as a researcher. During my research journey, I experienced elation and some frustration as well. There were delays along the way, due to unforeseen circumstances, and this taught me to be patient. Conducting research is not a quick process. I would never have been able to complete this study without the mercy and grace of Allah (God) and the support of my family and friends.

I realized that I had taken many aspects of Indian culture and religions for granted because I am a South African Indian woman. I also found it challenging to write down my thoughts, as it was easier for me to express them verbally. As I began to realize that what I took for granted, some of my readers may not be aware of. I then had to document every aspect of the Indian culture related to the current study.

Overall, I enjoyed the journey and I have grown as an individual. I had to do a lot of introspection to discover who I really am during this journey. I had to read literature from many disciplines, including sociology, psychology, anthropology, organisation studies, and gender studies, to broaden my knowledge base. I have also enhanced my skills as a researcher by gaining insight into conducting research using the life story approach and grounded theory. I know I am now at a critical juncture on the journey to becoming a scholar. I feel privileged to have been able to interview the first cohort of women to have reached senior and top managerial positions in South Africa. I have gained a number of insights about identity, gender and ethnicity, especially the ways in which they intersect within a broader context to shape the experience of women in management. The challenge for me now is to explore these issues further, along with the unanswered questions emanating from the research.

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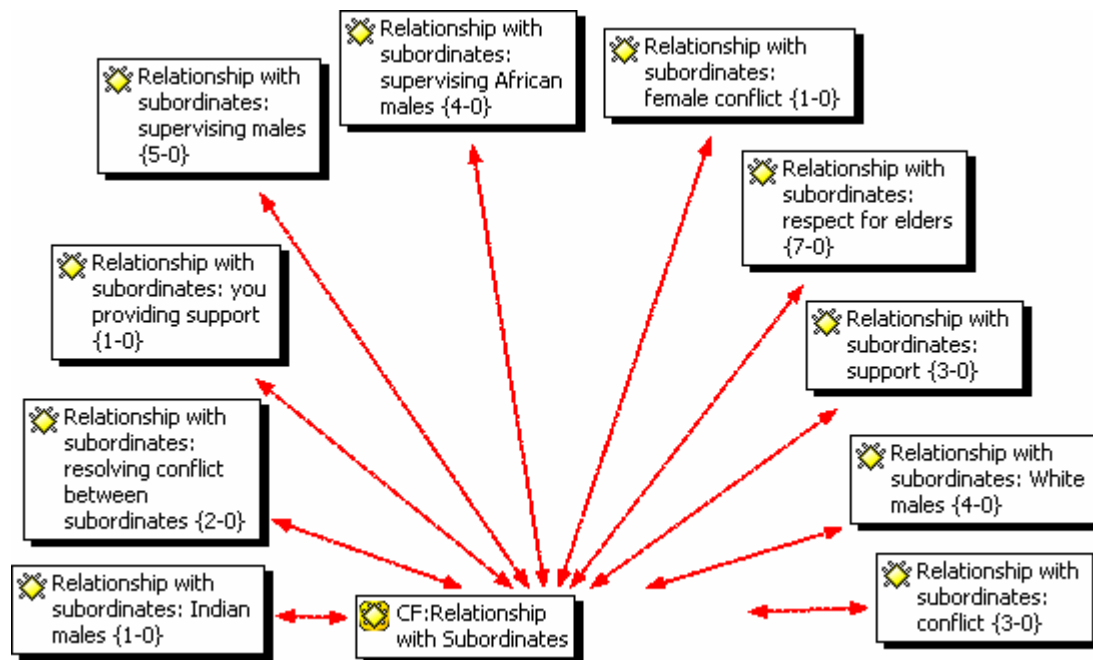
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ANNEXURE A:
FIRST-LEVEL CODING FROM ATLAS.TI

Example 1: Indian culture

Example 2:   Relationship with subordinates

ANNEXURE B:

DESCRIPTION OF THE WOMEN IN THE STUDY

Pseudonym	Description of participants
Shamila Rumi	Shamila Rumi arranged our first meeting at a coffee shop. What struck me about Shamila was that she did not look like a 41-year old, but at least 10 years younger. Shamila is a Muslim woman with shoulder-length wavy hair and a tan complexion. She had on a blue pants suit and appeared very calm and relaxed. Shamila was forthcoming and open about her experiences. She had an infectious laugh and a bubbly personality. Although she faced difficulties in her life, she still had a sense of humour. Reflecting back on her life, she laughed about some of the challenges she had had to face. She did not wear any make-up or jewellery. Shamila has a thorough knowledge of her job and at one stage provided a detailed description of her tasks. Our subsequent meetings took place at her home. At home, she wore shorts and T-shirts and walked around barefoot. She ensured that her sons did not disturb us during the interviews by inviting their friends over to play. She seated me at her dining-room table during the interviews and sat facing the window so she could keep an eye on her sons as well. She does not have a cluttered home – it is a house one can clean in two hours. She mentioned that she kept as few ornaments in her home as possible, because otherwise dusting would take hours. As she is always under time pressure, she prefers an uncluttered environment.

Pseudonym	Description of participants
Saira Rehman	I was invited by Saira, a Muslim woman, to meet her at her office. I arrived for the appointment a few minutes early, and she was busy on the telephone with a client. She requested the secretary to offer me refreshments in the boardroom and arrived for the interview on time. She is extremely time-conscious and did not inconvenience me by stretching her telephone call. Saira was dressed in a shirt and a pair of designer jeans, but she still maintained a professional appearance. She wore maroon lipstick and black eyeliner highlighting her beautiful brown eyes and tan complexion. She has waist-length sleek hair with a few blonde streaks which gave her a chic look. Saira is tall and slim and exudes an air of confidence and assertiveness. This came across very clearly in her speech and body language during the interview. Saira had arranged for the meeting to take place in her boardroom, as she did not want to be disturbed in her office. In subsequent interviews, I had the opportunity to interview her in her office, which is small but very neat, with the minimum number of documents on the desk. We did not have the conversation at her desk, as she directed me to a table in one corner of her office. At the end of the first interview, Saira commented: "I wonder what my father would say if he saw where I am today." There was so much sadness and pain in her eyes and she was longing to hear her father's words of praise and admiration. These words tugged at my heart strings, and I knew she knew the answer and her father's reaction to her achievements, but I affirmed her thoughts by saying: "He would really have been proud of you and your achievements. Wherever he may be, he is proud of you, Saira." These words brought a smile to her lips. I could see she really missed her father. She was his little girl all grown up and having to fight the battles on her own.

Pseudonym	Description of participants
Waheeda Banu	Waheeda, a Muslim woman, invited me to her flat while she was on annual leave. Our subsequent meetings also took place at her home. I met with her during the mornings when her children were at school. Waheeda is very fair-skinned compared to many Indians and has sleek shoulder-length hair. On all the occasions I met Waheeda, she was dressed in a tracksuit and running shoes. She did not wear any make-up and mentioned that at work she only wears kohl and lipstick. She is of average build and is full-figured. Waheeda's flat is very neat and cosy, but she feels that with four growing children she needs a bigger place and a yard where the children can play freely. She was house hunting at that stage. Her gentle manner hides the steel she must muster up every day as a Public Prosecutor to deal with hardened criminals. Waheeda had already started cooking before I had arrived for the interview. By the time the interview was complete, her food was also done. It is difficult for me to imagine her in a courtroom, as she seems so comfortable in a kitchen. I was amazed at how neat her flat was, considering she has four children. She mentioned she had taught her children from a young age to tidy up behind themselves. Her motto in life is "a place for everything and everything in its place".

Pseudonym	Description of participants
Shabana Mahal	Shabana Mahal, a Muslim woman, is the youngest of three children. She has an older brother and sister. I conducted the interview with Shabana at the organisation where she is a Board member. Shabana was dressed in a purple skirt suit with a cerise shirt and matching shoes. She has waist length straight hair and sharp features. Shabana had on purple lipstick and the same colour eye shadow. She has a wheat-coloured complexion. She is of average height and is slim. Before the interview commenced, she requested two staff members to follow through certain requests. She is assertive and this is reflected in her body language. I noticed that the staff literally jumped and quickly executed her requests. Shabana ordered refreshments for us, and while we were busy with the interview, her employees reported that the requests had been successfully completed.
Bipasha Chaudry	Bipasha Chaudry, a Hindu woman, invited me to her office for our meeting. Bipasha has a wheat-coloured complexion and shoulder-length layered hair with brown highlights. Bipasha is slim and of average height. Bipasha is very well-groomed and wore costume jewellery and light make-up which matched the colour of her clothes. She had on a blue pants suit with a navy shirt. Bipasha has a huge office which is well-furnished and neat, with all files behind closed doors. On the desk behind her, she had placed her awards, her family pictures and souvenirs from her travels abroad. She offered me a drink from a bar fridge in her office. Bipasha enjoys talking, and once she started on a subject, she offered lots of information.

Pseudonym	Description of participants
Mahima Basu	Mahima Basu, a Hindu woman, invited me to her office, where I conducted the interview. Her office was huge and sparsely furnished. The office environment was extremely quiet, as there were only two employees in the adjacent offices. Mahima is short and well-rounded. She has jet black hair that was tied in a thick plait which reached her thighs. Mahima was dressed in a grey pants suit and grey shirt. She asked me not to record the conversation, as she was uncomfortable with a tape recorder. After I brought it to her notice that I would have to write down her comments, she allowed me to record the conversation, as long as the recorder was placed in a corner of her desk where she would not see it. Mahima reminded me of a schoolgirl, as her youthful looks hid her intellect and ability to handle a senior management position. I was really impressed with how she maintained her youthful appearance. We met for follow-up interviews at her office.
Preity Sen	Preity Sen is tall, slim and has a wheat-coloured complexion. She has short cropped jet black hair and wears spectacles. Preity has an angular face and very sharp features. With her short hair, she looks very tomboyish. Preity wears pants suits, and when I met her, she wore a black suit with a white shirt and flat comfortable shoes, as she visits construction sites on a daily basis. Her jewellery was minimal, as she only wore earrings on the various occasions I met her. Her only make-up was kohl and maroon lipstick. She invited me to her office for all the interviews. She has a large rectangular office, which looks like a typical engineer's office, with plans on the tables and files neatly lined up on shelves. During our first interview, I witnessed two of her project managers trying to get the better of her on a project they were working on. She

Pseudonym	Description of participants
	stood her ground and in no uncertain terms persuaded them to approach the project from an ethical manner and to provide good service to the public. The two project managers were harsh towards her, but she was assertive and handled the situation with tact, without becoming aggressive. Her arguments were well formulated. I realised it is only someone with a thorough knowledge of the job that could have pulled off the difficult situation so easily. She used technical arguments and made her point very clear to the two men. Eventually, they conceded and agreed they would follow her method to conduct the project.
Sushmita Zinta	Sushmita Zinta, a Hindu woman, is the eldest of four children. Sushmita invited me to her office for the interview. Sushmita is petite and fair-skinned. She was very poised and bursting with energy when I arrived and informed me that she had another meeting after our interview. She had just finished a meeting with a staff member before I arrived. She did not look or sound tired or lethargic, although she had been in meetings since 7:00 that morning. Sushmita has black wavy short cropped hair, and wore a multi-coloured blouse with an orange skirt and fawn high-heeled sandals. Sushmita did not wear any make-up and wore dainty jewellery. Her office was decorated in shades of pink, with a huge work table and wall units. We sat at a conference table in her office which could accommodate twelve people. To me, her office seemed more like a dining room than a work office, as the furniture would be more suitable for a home. The office furniture was of solid oak and very expensive.

Pseudonym	Description of participants
Rani Kapoor	Rani Kapoor is the eldest of two children; she has a younger brother. Rani, a Hindu woman, invited me to her office, which consisted of one table with her lap top, and in one corner she had water and some sweets. Rani had resigned from her previous job and was temporarily operating as a consultant from a tiny office while she was searching for another job. She is petite with thick plaited hair that falls to her knees. Rani wore a shirt and pants, with court shoes. Her complexion is wheat-coloured and she did not wear any make-up. She is extremely soft-spoken and avoided eye contact during the interview. However, she is assertive and has been taking care of her parents for a few years. Three months after I interviewed her, Rani informed me she had been employed in a top management position at an organisation in Johannesburg.
Karina Mukerjee	Karina is the eldest child in her family. The interview with Karina was held at her office. She is a tall and slim Hindu female. She has bouncy black hair cut into a short bob. Her complexion is wheat-coloured and she wore no make-up or jewellery on the day of the interview. Karina wore a white blouse and black trousers. She is clearly an extremely busy person – her office was small and there were documents everywhere. She had a small round table in one corner of her office where we sat, and that too was covered with documents. The wall next to her work table displayed pictures of her family. We had a discussion over a cup of tea. After the interview, she rushed off to another meeting with senior managers.

Pseudonym	Description of participants
Shilpa Chopra	Shilpa is the eldest of three daughters and was raised in a Coloured community. Her family was the only Indian and Hindu family in the area. Shilpa invited me to meet her at the hotel where she was staying for a few days. She was here from the Cape for a series of meetings. I met with Shilpa early one morning for breakfast. Shilpa is tall and has a wheat-coloured complexion with big brown eyes. She has shoulder-length hair, which she had twisted into large curls. Her make-up was expertly done to highlight her light brown eyes and her high cheekbones. She wore costume jewellery that matched her outfit. She had on a white blouse with a navy pin-striped suit and high-heeled shoes to match. Shilpa looks every inch the executive.

ANNEXURE C:
EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your childhood –

    - the era in which you grew up;

    - the area in which you lived;

    - the school you attended.

2. Tell me about your parents –

    - what type of family were you raised in;

    - what your father's profession was;

    - what your mother's profession was;

    - your relationship with your parents;

    - who encouraged you to study and pursue a career;

    - what type of support you got from your mother and father relating to you studies and career;

    - how you were treated in comparison to your brother(s).

3. What were your experiences at university?

    - access to university;

    - mixing with other cultures;

    - choosing a career of your choice.

4. What role did Indian culture play in your life when you were growing up and now in your adulthood?

5. What role did religion play in your childhood and what role(s) does it play in your adulthood?

6. What was the norm for women studying when you were growing up?

- What was the reaction of the extended family when you pursued tertiary education and a career?
- What was the reaction of your community when you pursued tertiary education and a career?

7. Did you encounter difficulties in being hired after completing your tertiary education?

8. What were the challenges when you first entered the workplace?

9. What steps did you take to overcome challenges in the workplace?

10. What were the reasons for your being promoted into a managerial position?

11. Were there other Indian women who were already in higher managerial positions?

12. What challenges did you encounter on your way to a senior/top managerial position?

13. Tell me about relationships in your organisation relating to
- women (senior, at your level, junior, older);
- men (senior, at your level, junior, older).

14. How do you balance your work and family life?

15. Where to from here?

16. Is there anything else you wish to elaborate on regarding your childhood, adulthood or professional life?

ANNEXURE D:

CONSENT LETTER

**UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA**

Faculty of Economic and

Management Sciences

**Informed consent for participation in an academic
research study**

Dept. of Human Resource Management

TITLE OF THE STUDY

"Who am i?"-

South African Indian women managers' struggle for identity: Escaping the ubiquitous

cage

<u>Research conducted by</u>:

Ms. N. Carrim

Cell: 082 341 8697

e-mail: Nasima.carrim@up.ac.za

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Nasima Carrim, a lecturer at the Department Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to examine the identity negotiation of Indian females in corporate South Africa.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an <u>anonymous</u> survey. Your name will not appear on the questionnaire and the answers you give will be treated as strictly <u>confidential</u>. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.

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- Please answer the questions in the attached questionnaires as completely and honestly as possible.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

_____   _____

Respondent's signature   **Date**