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Causes of gender stereotyping in the workplace

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this exploratory research was to explore the causes of gender stereotyping in the workplace. The study sought to gain insights on stereotyping, particularly factors that cause the development of stereotypes and the role played by organisations in promoting stereotyping.

In this qualitative study, thirteen purposefully selected participants were interviewed through in-depth face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. Data was analysed using content, narrative and frequency analysis methods.

Understanding of stereotyping and gender stereotyping was tested and confirmed amongst participants. Similarities in defining stereotyping and gender stereotyping were found, which implied an automatic association of stereotypes to gender. The study found evidence of the existence of stereotypes in the workplace; however stereotypes are formed in childhood, particularly in the school and home environments. Finally, the study found that the workplace plays a role in the formation of gender stereotypes through comments made by its employees, employee behaviours such as awarding special privileges to female employees, and through work social settings such as sports events, particularly where alcohol is served.

KEYWORDS

Stereotyping - is the act of categorising people according to characteristics they have in common, for example, gender, age or race.

Gender stereotyping – is the act of categorising or grouping together a specific group based on their gender, expecting that group to conform to specific behaviours determined for that group and punishing those who behave in a contradictory manner to the stereotype.

Workplace – is a place where people gather to work, also referred to as organisation, corporate world or office.

Cause – ‘something that brings into effect a particular result’

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Keneiloe Constance Selamolela

09 November 2011

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1. Introduction

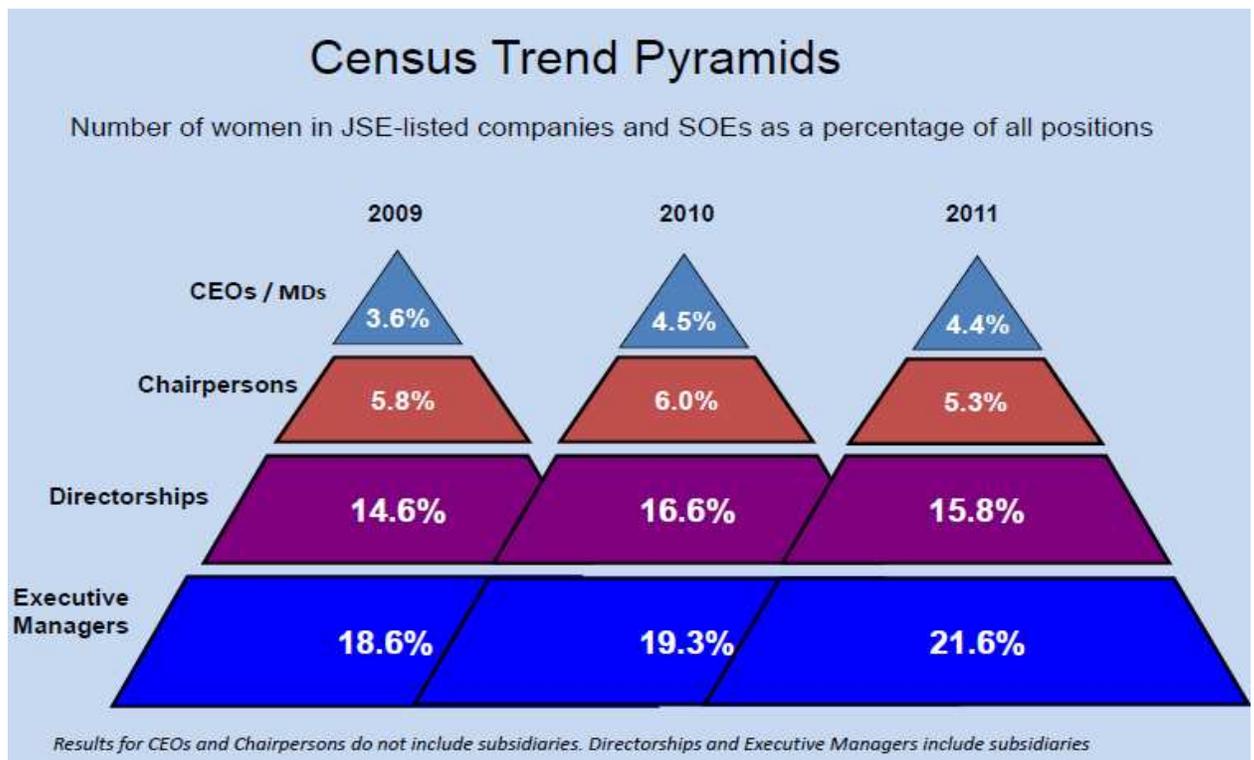
General consensus exists amongst numerous authors that women remain underrepresented in the workplace, particularly in the higher echelons of management (Women Matter, 2007), with ample statistics from across the globe to confirm this. In South Africa, women make up 51.6% of the adult population, however “only 44.6% of working South Africans are women” (Business Women’s Association of South Africa, 2010). The Commission for Employment Equity (2010-2011) confirmed that women make up 44.8% of the economically active population, which compares unfavourably to men. Even further afield, women remain under-represented. Catalyst (2011) reported that in 2010 in the United States of America, women made up only 46.7% of the labour force.

In management, The Business Women’s Association of South Africa (2010) reported that women constitute only 19.3% of all executive managers and as low as 16.6% of all directors in South Africa. The survey further reported that in 2010, South African women held 19.3% of all executive positions, followed by Canada at 16.9%, the United States at 13.5% and Australia at 10.7%. Even though this may seem as if South Africa is doing well, the 19.3% is low considering that women make up 51.6% of the adult population. The survey concludes that women are significantly underrepresented in top corporate leadership positions, with absolute numbers indicating only 15 women CEOs and 20 women board chairpersons in

South Africa. Elacqua, Beehr, Hansen, and Webster (2009) concluded the women under-representation argument by asserting that women have a disproportionately low presence in top levels of management and proposed that there are various interpersonal and organisational factors that contribute to this. The figure below illustrates the number of women in JSE-listed companies (Johannesburg Stock Exchange) and SOEs (State Owned Enterprises) as a percentage of all positions in South Africa (Business Women Association of South Africa, 2011).

Figure 1: Number of women in JSE-listed companies and SOEs as a percentage of all positions.

Source: Business Women’s Association of South Africa, Women in Leadership Census 2011, p13



Various factors contribute to this under-representation of women in the workplace, key amongst them being the slow progress women make in moving from junior to senior management positions. Catalyst (2011) argued that women's progress in the workplace is slow and has, at some levels, even stagnated. The report stated that women's representation in Fortune 500 companies' leadership positions has only increased marginally in recent years, with the number of women in Executive Officer Positions increasing slightly from 13.5% to 14.4%, and Board Seats from 14.6% in 2006 to 15.7% in 2010. Schein (2007) supported this view and argued that the rate of progress women are making in increasing their share of managerial positions is slow and uneven. The author asserts that women's share of managerial jobs increased by only between 1% and 5% in 26 countries between 1996-1999 and 2000-2002. Aside from executive managers, the other positions show a decline in women ratios. Progress is thus slow and the decline is further cause for concern.

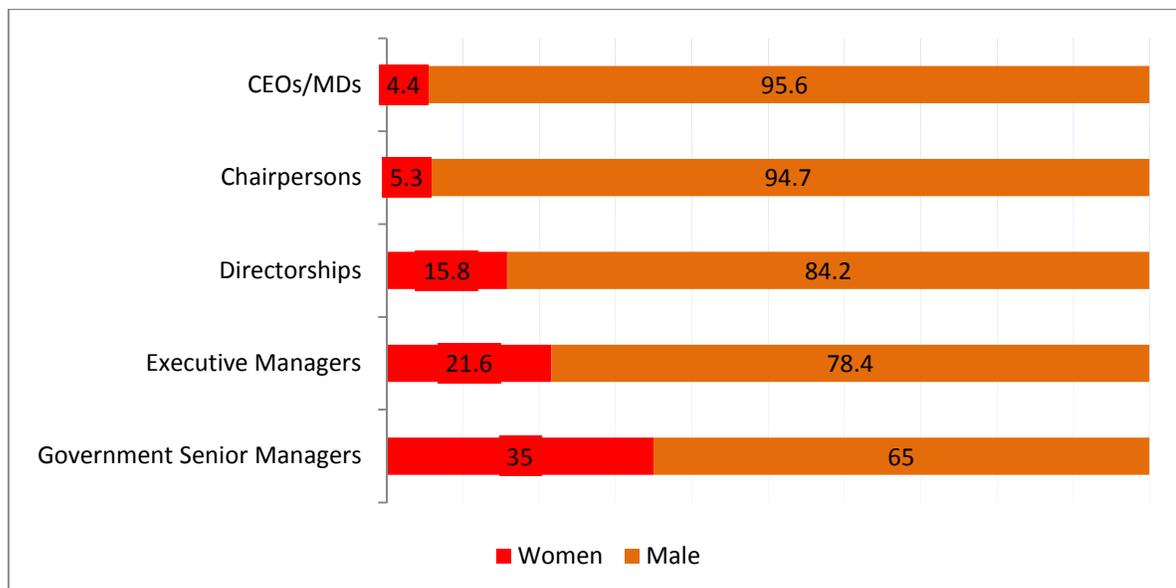
As women remain underrepresented, males continue to dominate the top management levels in the workplace in South Africa (Commission for Employment Equity, 2010-2011). "Male representation is almost double that of their EAP (Economically Active Population) and nearly four times of women at this level" (p9). Booyesen and Nkomo (2010) also argued that although women have made some gains in entering and rising in the managerial ranks of the organisation, worldwide, men continue to dominate executive and senior management positions. Furthermore, among the Fortune 500 companies, 95-97% of vice-president level

jobs and 93% of all line officer jobs are still held by men (Business Women’s Association of South Africa, 2010). Within the Fortune 500 companies, only one in eight corporate officers are women and very few occupy positions of CEO, president, COO, or executive vice president (Business Women’s Association of South Africa, 2010).

The Business Women’s Association of South Africa (2011, p14) recently reported figures on workforce representation in South Africa. “The direct comparison of men versus women in the upper echelon of the workforce portrays a stark reality - women are clearly in a minority amongst their male counterparts.” The figure below illustrates the percentages of female versus male representation across various senior roles in different sectors in South Africa.

Figure 2: Female vs. male representation across various senior roles in South Africa.

Source: Business Women’s Association of South Africa, Women in Leadership Census 2011, p14



Finally, McGregor (2010) concluded in her argument that there is a need for continued gender based research, by arguing that every credible and reliable international measurement of women's progress shows inequality in women's participation and representation in the labour market, in management, and in governance, across both the developed and developing worlds.

1.2. Business case for a diverse workforce

One of the compelling reasons for equal representation of all genders in the workplace is that numerous studies have proven that businesses with a more diverse composition perform better than those without. (Women Matter, 2007)

A McKinsey study conducted in 2007 amongst 231 public and private companies which evaluated 115 000 employees, demonstrated a correlation between a company's level of excellence in nine organisational dimensions and its financial performance. The nine dimensions used were: leadership, direction, accountability, coordination and control, innovation, external orientation, capability, motivation, work environment and values. The findings indicated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions scored more highly, on average, for each organisational criterion than companies with no women at the top. It was further noted that "performance increases significantly once a certain critical mass is attained, namely, at least three women on management committees for an average of 10 people" (Women Matter, 2007, p12). Another

McKinsey study, conducted in 89 European listed companies, analysed various companies' financial performances relative to the average for their sector. The results proved that, on average, companies that were adequately represented by women outperformed their sector in terms of return on equity, operating result, and stock price growth over the period 2005-2007 (Women Matter, 2007).

Catalyst (2004) conducted a study in which it explored the link between the representation of women in top management and a corporation's financial performance. The study found the existence of a link, as well as evidence that, on average, companies that have higher women representation on their top management teams financially outperformed those companies that have lower women's representation. The study also found that on average, companies with the highest percentage of women among their top officers had a return on equity 35.1% higher than those with the fewest high-level women. Total return to shareholders was 34% higher for the companies with the most executive women, compared to those with the fewest.

Other than the organisational and financial performance of the companies that are adequately represented, further reasons that boost the representation argument include:

- The role that gender diversity plays in the image of the company. “Gender diversity is an asset for the corporate image and helps bring closer together the company, its employees, its shareholders and its customers (Women Matter, 2007, p10).
- In the context of the emerging global economy, understanding gender and cultural differences is critical to business success (Gilbert, Burnett, Phau, & Haar, 2010).
- Changing consumption trends. “In order to adapt to changing social and consumption trends, companies increasingly need to integrate women into their decision-making processes, as women now have a major influence on purchase decisions, and in Europe, they are the driving force behind more than 70% of household purchases, even though they account for only 51% of the population” (Women Matter, 2007, p10).
- The role of women in business. Heffernan (2007) brought in another important element into the debate when the author stated that one in four businesses that start up in the United States are started by women, and that women-owned businesses are three times more likely to survive the first five years than men-owned businesses. This means that women play a crucial role, not only in large existing corporations, but also in start up businesses, which are known to contribute significantly to employment creation.

The evidence cited above indicates that there are compelling reasons why representation of women is crucial for business performance and cannot be ignored in today's business world. Therefore, the question arises that if gender equality has been proven to be beneficial for business, why do women continue to be under-represented in the workplace?

There are various reasons that have been offered as reasons why women continue to be under-represented in business. Women Matter (2007) suggested, amongst other reasons, that the cause is the 'double-burden syndrome' – which they define as the “combination of work and domestic responsibilities”. They argue that women remain at the centre of family life (maternity, child-rearing, organising family life, care of the elderly etc) and as such are constrained from fully engaging and participating in work life, unlike their male counterparts. In fact, family life has been argued to be among the top reasons why women exit the workplace. Hewlett and Luce (2005) found that 44% of women that exited the workplace cited 'family time' as their top reason.

Another reason that has been offered amidst a myriad of reasons why women continue to have a low presence in leadership positions, is that the leadership role has been stereotyped to be suitable for men. “Probably the single most important hurdle for women in management in all industrialized countries is the persistent stereotype that associates management with being male” (Schein, 2001, p676).

The authors further stated that “if a managerial position is viewed as a masculine one, then all else being equal, a male candidate appears more qualified by virtue of such sex typing of the position than a female candidate (p676).

Stereotyping has been defined as the act of “judging someone on the basis of one’s perception of the group to which that person belongs” (Robbins & Judge, 2007, p.152). Gender stereotyping has been said to be one of the reasons why this underrepresentation of women in the workplace and in leadership positions continues (Schein, 2007; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010).

This inequality in women’s participation in the labour market (McGregor, 2010) and their persistent low presence in top level management positions (Elacqua *et al.*, 2009) form the basis of inquiry for this paper. Unless the root causes of the problem of under-representation are addressed, this phenomenon will stay firmly in place (Women Matter, 2007). It is the intention of this study to examine the causes of gender stereotyping amongst employees in the workplace. The literature review section of the study aims to examine the role of stereotypes as a factor behind this under-representation in the workplace, with a focus on demonstrating the need for more equal representation.

1.3. Research Problem

There is a general consensus that stereotypes exist and that they impact the progress of women in the workplace (Schein, 1973; Schein *et al.*, 1996; Schein & Muller, 1992; Jackson, 2007; Heilman, 2001; Booyens & Nkomo, 2010). There is also evidence that gender stereotyping is one of the reasons why this underrepresentation of women in the workplace and in leadership positions continues (Schein, 2007; Booyens & Nkomo, 2010). Though there have been studies on the manifestation of stereotypes in general, no known study has focused on the causal factors as well as the role of the organisation in its totality in forming stereotypes. Therefore, an attempt is made to understand the underlying causes of these stereotypes in the workplace so as to begin to curb them

1.4. Research Motivation

An academic, political and business rationale motivates the undertaking of this study. At an academic level, there are various quantitative studies proving that stereotypes exist in the workplace, but very few exist at a qualitative level. This study is an attempt to understand the causes of stereotypes at a qualitative level. Secondly, in their survey, Booyens and Nkomo (2010) recommended that further research be conducted to uncover the underlying causes of gender stereotypes using qualitative methodologies.

At a political level, the African Union has declared 2010-2020, the African Women's Decade (Business Women's Association of South Africa, 2010). The Southern African Development Community (SADC) members, of which South Africa is one, are committed to ensuring greater equality for women in the region by 2015, as evidenced by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. The protocol is based on the belief that the integration and mainstreaming of gender issues into the SADC is key (Business Women's Association of South Africa, 2010).

At a business level, current labour legislation requires businesses to have equal representation of women in the workforce, with stiff penalties for non-compliance. The Employment Equity Act of South Africa, No. 55 of 1998, aims to, amongst other goals, achieve a diverse workforce broadly representative of all people. Chapter III of the Act deals with Affirmative Action and prescribes that employers must:

- take measures to identify and eliminate employment barriers, including unfair discrimination;
- take measures designed to further diversity in the workplace based on equal dignity and respect of all people; and
- make reasonable accommodation for people from designated groups in order to ensure that they enjoy equal opportunities and are equitably represented in the workforce of a designated employer.

Designated groups in the Act are defined as black people, women and people with disabilities. Furthermore, the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of South Africa (BBBEE) 2003, aims to “increase the extent to which black women own and manage existing and new enterprises, and facilitate their access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills training”. Companies that comply with the Act earn points on their BBBEE scorecards, which translate to economic gains through preferential procurement.

Finally, the business rationale for women’s inclusivity in the workplace lies in valuing diversity. The Employment Equity Act and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act are legal frameworks that force businesses to include women. However, valuing diversity moves past both of these Acts and results in a management designed to reap the benefits that a diverse workforce brings (Grobler, Warnich, Carell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2006). Diverse teams are likely to have diverse abilities and information and should be more effective (Robbins & Judge, 2007). “When a team is diverse in terms of personality, gender, age, education, functional specialization, and experience, there is increased probability that the team will possess the needed characteristics to complete its tasks effectively” (Robbins & Judge, 2007, 349).

The basis for this chapter was documented literature that has been reviewed. The next chapter will discuss the literature reviewed in detail.

CHAPTER 2 – THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature reviewed in this section will begin by defining the concept of stereotyping in broader terms, followed by a discussion on the documented causes of stereotypes as well as the impact it has on those stereotyped. The types of stereotypes will be discussed in an attempt to fully explore the concept of stereotyping in the workplace. The section will conclude by discussing gender stereotypes, their impact and the common gender stereotypes used in the workplace.

2.2. Stereotyping defined

“Despite increasing contact between nations and ethnic groups, stereotypes continue to haunt communities and institutions, and the effects are particularly conspicuous in the organizational context” (Operario & Fiske, 2001, p45).

Stereotyping refers to the act of “judging someone on the basis of one’s perception of the group to which that person belongs” (Robbins & Judge, 2007, p152). It is basically, “the unconscious or conscious application of (accurate or inaccurate) knowledge of a group in judging a member of the group” (Agars, 2004, p104). A stereotype is a view held by one or more individuals and applied to a group of

individuals (Bryson & Davis, 2010). Finally, Bell (2007, p85) defined stereotyping as “over-generalizations of characteristics to large human groups”.

These few definitions highlight key aspects of stereotyping:

- Firstly, stereotyping involves ‘judgment’ – stereotyping occurs when there is judgment of one individual/group by another. This judgment is perceptual, i.e. it is based on perceptions and thus it may not be entirely factual. Stereotypes are shortcuts to perceptions. In essence, to make sense of and simplify our complex world, we generalise our observations about people, groups, places etc. Grobler *et al.* (2006, p77) explained that: “a stereotype is a fixed, distorted generalization about members of a group”.
- Stereotypes are often unintentional. “Even the most well-intentioned people are prone to stereotyping others, and targets of stereotypes may have no definitive grounds for suspecting bias” Operario and Fiske, (2001, p56)
- Another key aspect highlighted by the definitions above is that to stereotype, one must selectively store information pertinent to that stereotype. As Grobler *et al.* (2006, p77) explained, “Stereotypes require that the exaggerated beliefs about a group be sustained by selective perception and/or selective forgetting of facts and experiences inconsistent with the stereotype”. Bell (2007) explained that when confronted with information about an out-group member that is contradictory to stereotypes, people tend to see this as ‘unique’, rather than use it to question and discard their beliefs. When confronted with

behaviour that confirms a stereotype about an out-group member, people attend to such information and then hold faster to the stereotypes. Therefore we can deduce that stereotyping occurs when an individual or group forms perceptions and beliefs about another individual or group and generally assigns those beliefs to another individual or group, whilst selectively forgetting facts that prove those stereotypes wrong.

- Stereotypes have a consistent association with prejudice; and the concepts have long been viewed as interrelated (Devine, 1989). “The basic argument of the inevitability of prejudice is that as long as stereotypes exist, prejudice will follow. In essence, knowledge of a stereotype is equated with prejudice toward the group” (p5). Boysen, Fisher, Dejesus, Vogel and Madon (2011, p330) also added that “the importance of stereotypes to social cognition includes their relation to prejudice, effects on perceptions of others, and ability to affect behaviour without conscious awareness”. However, Devine (1989) argued against this automatic association of stereotypes and prejudice. The author asserted that this approach overlooks an important distinction between the knowledge of a stereotype and personal beliefs, that is, even though one may have knowledge of a stereotype, their personal beliefs may or may not be congruent with the stereotype. Therefore, although they may have overlapping features, stereotypes and beliefs are conceptually distinct cognitive structures.

To broaden the understanding of stereotypes, Operario and Fiske (2001) offered four critical points about the nature of stereotypes:

- Stereotypes are elusive in nature, they are difficult to identify and even harder to control, thus their omnipresence in the workplace. The authors argued that stereotypes are elusive because they are difficult to pin down definitively and to control personally;
- People can use stereotypes to explain or justify inequalities in organisations and institutions;
- Stereotypes can influence the behaviours of both the stereotype agent and the target, thus making it seem as if the stereotypes are grounded in reality; and
- Stereotypes are responsive to human intent, so they can be held in check with personal motivation and social norms created in organisations.

2.3. Causes of stereotypes

Understanding why people stereotype requires an exploration of the origins of stereotypes. Johnson and Redmond (2000, p123) explained that “stereotypes arises when we assume that an individual will have particular norms, values and modes of behavior because of some feature such as colour, race, nationality, education or upbringing”. The authors continued to argue that even with the same cultural groups, there are quite marked deviations from the dominant patterns of norms, values and behaviours on the part of a very large proportion of the people involved.

The need to simplify the world through categorising received information is a well documented cause of stereotypes. People use categorisation to simplify and cope with the large volumes of information to which they are continually exposed. They often use visible characteristics, such as race, gender, and age to categorise others (Bell, 2007). “Categorizing the social world in order to induce structure” (Stapel & Noordewier, 2011, p239) is also explored by Operario and Fiske (2001). “Categorization offers a speedy and adaptive means for understanding others with little effort” (p47). Considering these seemingly innocent views of categorisation, when then does categorisation become a stereotype? Operario and Fiske (2001) argued that “stereotypes stem from categorization, but represent a fixed, static generalization about a group often as a means to explain bias and inequality” (p46). Bell (2007) offered similar reasoning: “People’s propensity to categorize, coupled with the need to then evaluate the person categorized, leads to stereotyping” (p72). However, both authors concurred that with concerted effort, stereotypes can be deactivated and automatic categorisation can be stopped.

Stapel & Noordewier (2011) used the concept of ‘system justification theory’ to explain in which situations people are likely to use stereotypes. System justification theory purports that people stereotype to justify the social system, which is the social structure they are a part of. According to this theory, people use stereotypes to maintain their belief in a just world and to rationalise the status quo. “People use stereotypes to explain why some groups of people get so little, while others get so much, as a way to view the world they live in as fair. Put differently,

people stereotype because stereotypes are handy tools that allow them to blame society's victims (poor people are just lazy) and to idolize its winners (rich people simply work hard)" (Stapel & Noordewier, 2011, p239). They concluded that stereotypes help people to interpret and give meaning to social behaviour. They help to categorise the social world and thus induce structure.

Jussim, Coleman, & Lerch, (1987) summarised the reasons why people stereotype as follows. Firstly, stereotypes result from the 'complexity extremity theory', which holds that people have different levels of contact with other groups and as such there is a tendency to evaluate them along fewer dimensions, which leads to more extreme evaluations which are either very favourable or unfavourable. The theory suggests that "when there are many independent dimensions on which an individual (or stimulus) is judged, evaluations should be less extreme (Jussim, *et al.*, 1987, p536). Secondly, stereotypes could result from the 'assumed characteristics theory', which states that stereotypes occur as a way to fill in information voids about people. In the absence of information to the contrary, people generally assume that other groups possess less favourable traits than them. Thirdly, the 'expectancy violation theory' suggests that stereotyping occurs as a result of a reaction to unexpected behaviours from other groups. The authors suggest that in the 'expectancy violation theory', "when an individual's characteristics violate stereotype-based expectations, evaluations should become more extreme in the direction of the expectancy violation" (Jussim, *et al.*, 1987, p537).

Stapel and Noordewier (2011) offered another view on why people stereotype. The authors argued that people are more likely to use stereotypes when their system or ideology is threatened - not to restore their specific system, but to satisfy their basic need for structure. Therefore, “when people are confronted with system threat, both positive and negative stereotypes may provide them a sense of structure” (Stapel & Noordewier, 2011, p241). In their study, Stapel and Noordewier (2011) conclusively found that “people stereotype when they experience system threat, when they feel that the system they are part of is in some way illegitimate and unfair. This is due to the fact that systems provide people with feelings of non-randomness, meaning, and predictability. Systems give structure. Therefore when structure is threatened, psychological needs for structure will increase. One way to satisfy this need is to use stereotypes. That is why system threat amplifies stereotyping effects” (p241).

Grobler *et al.*, (2006, p77) argued that “stereotypes usually come from outside sources, not individual experiences”. For example, when exaggerated beliefs about a woman’s ability to function in the workplace are repeatedly told until they are believed, they become stereotypes. Stereotypes require that the exaggerated beliefs about a group be sustained by selective perception and/or selective forgetting of facts and experiences inconsistent with the stereotype (Grobler *et al.*, 2006). The impact of this, however, is that stereotypes negates people’s individuality and limits their potential. Also, clinging to negative stereotypes about people different from ourselves results in prejudice, which is the processing of our

stereotypes in such a way as to reinforce one's own sense of superiority to the members of that group (Grobler *et al.*, 2006).

Accordingly, it becomes crucial to note that this “selective perception/forgetting” is not necessarily intentional; individuals don't intend to stereotype. Agars (2004, p104) explained that “the act of stereotyping is not necessarily the result of intent, malice or blatant prejudice”. This means stereotyping is usually unintentional but manifests itself, particularly when left unchallenged. Devine (1989) also argued that individuals often invoke stereotypes without conscious awareness and the application of stereotypes is often unintentional.

Schmitt and Wirth (2009) provided a more specific cause of stereotyping, particularly in the workplace. The authors argued that stereotyping occurs through the division of labour according to gender. According to Schmitt and Wirth (2009, p431), “the division of labour according to gender leads to stereotypes that rationalize the division of labour”. For example, because women disproportionately occupy roles that require nurturing behaviour, people come to see women as a group as more nurturing. Men's overrepresentation in positions of status and power leads to stereotypes of men as independent and agentic, (possessing achievement oriented traits) suggesting that “men are better suited for occupations that require characteristics such as instrumentality, ambition, and authority” (Cabrera, Sauer & Thomas-Hunt, 2009, p420).

From the causes stated above, it is evident that the literature is abundant with content on the causes of stereotypes. To summarise, people stereotype:

- When they make assumptions that individuals will have particular norms, values and modes of behaviour simply because of some feature such as colour, race, nationality, education or upbringing (Johnson & Redmond, 2000);
- To simplify and cope with the large volumes of information to which they are continually exposed through categorisation (Bell, 2007; Operario and Fiske, 2001) To justify the system's unfairness - system justification theory (Stapel & Noordewier, 2011);
- To simplify evaluation of others by using fewer dimensions (complexity extremity theory), to fill information voids about people (assumed characteristics theory), and as a reaction to unexpected behaviours from other groups (expectancy violation theory) Jussim *et al*, 1987;
- When their systems or ideology are threatened so as to induce structure (Stapel & Noordewier, 2011); and
- By division of labour according to gender (Schmitt & Wirth, 2009).

2.4. Types of Stereotypes

Stereotypes are ubiquitous, meaning they are ever-present (Boysen *et al*, 2011). As such, many types of stereotypes exist, including sexual orientation (Boysen *et al.*, 2011), age (Bennett & Gainnes, 2010; Bonneson & Burgess, 2004) and self-stereotypes (Burkley & Blanton, 2009), amongst others. In this section, the literature review will focus on common stereotypes in order to broaden understanding of stereotypes. The types of stereotypes mentioned below are not intended as an exhaustive list, but simply as a synopsis of types of stereotypes that exist.

2.4.1. Age Stereotypes

Bell (2007) defined ageism as “discrimination directed at a person because of his or her age” (p312). As a form of stereotyping, it is used to define the negative attitudes toward older adults and the lack of knowledge about aging that combine to form an extremely pessimistic picture of older adults and the aging process. It is regarded as the “ultimate prejudice, the last discrimination, the cruellest rejection. It is the third great “ism” in our society, after racism and sexism; it is discrimination and prejudice against a class of people because they are old; (Bennett & Gaines, 2010, p435)

A common age stereotype is the use of the phrase ‘senior moment’, a concept that typically refers to a momentary lapse of memory, which implies that older people

are forgetful. “People unknowingly adopt negative old-age stereotypes long before they reach old age, and consequently to experience a senior moment hints the beginning of inevitable incompetence and a downward slide into frailty and dementia” (Bonneson & Burgess, 2004, p. 133). Since language does not occur in a vacuum, phrases such as ‘senior moment’ are indicators of larger societal attitudes towards aging and individual interpretations of the ageing process. (Bonneson & Burgess, 2004) concluded that the increasing popularity of the ‘senior moment’ phrase, suggests that negative stereotypes of older adults remain socially acceptable.

Bell (2007) cautioned against the common perception to limit the ageism debate only to older workers though. This stereotype affects both the young and the old.

2.4.2. Race and Ethnic Stereotypes

To list various examples of common racial and ethnic stereotypes, Cox (1994) conducted a study amongst culturally diverse MBA students, participants were asked to post labels containing stereotypes they were aware of. The results showed that Blacks are stereotyped as athletic, poor, and greedy, amongst others; Jews as rich, penny-pinchers and well-educated; White men as competitive, racist and intelligent; White women as ‘easy, passive, and money-hungry, while French men are stereotyped as, romantic, egotistical and sexy. The study also revealed that the majority of the descriptors listed as stereotypes were negative for all groups. This highlights the negative nature of stereotypes.

2.4.3. Self Stereotypes

One of the most harmful qualities of stereotypes is that they are rarely under the control of the people targeted at them. However, at times those same people embrace the stereotypes as truth (Burkley & Blanton, 2009). One explanation for self-stereotypes is that they are chronic, internalised beliefs that stem from cultural exposure (Burkley & Blanton, 2009). This internalisation can be divided into chronic internalisation and functional internalisation. Chronic internalisation “refers to a long term dispositional tendency to internalize self-stereotypes” (p287). This type of internalisation occurs when the stereotype targets inevitably adopt other’s views. Functional internalisation, on the other hand, “refers to a short-term, contextualized tendency to internalize self-stereotypes” p287). This is when an individual would endorse a negative stereotype in a particular situation so as to react to a specific event, but may reject the very same stereotype under different circumstances. Boyesen *et al.* (2011) offered another explanation on self stereotypes. They argued that because of the ubiquitous nature of stereotypes, “individuals even hold stereotypes about social groups to which they belong” (p331). This could be motivated by a desire to maintain personal integrity, although the effects are not uniformly positive.

2.5. Impact of stereotypes

To fully understand stereotypes, it is crucial to explore the potential pitfalls and the impact of stereotyping. Cox (1994) highlighted two pitfalls in using stereotyping as a mental efficiency tool:

- To be used as a mental efficiency tool, it is vital that the assumptions one makes about the characteristics of the group are accurate, as inaccurate assumptions will lead to incorrect generalisations about that group; and
- A second pitfall of stereotyping is the assumption that any particular member of that group will be characteristic of the group.

A notable impact of stereotyping is referred to as ‘stereotype threat’. A plethora of literature exists on the concept of stereotype threat, including the work of Steele, Spencer, & Aronson *et al.*, (2002); Wout *et al.*, (2008); Goff, Steele, & Davies, (2008); Shapiro & Neuberg, (2007); amongst others. (Steele *et al.*, 2002) argued that “when a negative stereotype about a group that one is part of becomes personally relevant, usually as an interpretation of one’s behavior or an experience one is having, stereotype threat is the resulting sense that one can be judged in terms of the stereotype or that one might do something that would inadvertently confirm it” (p389). Goff *et al* (2008, p92) further defined stereotype threat as “the sense of threat that can arise when one knows that he or she can possibly be judged or treated negatively on the basis of a negative stereotype about one’s group”. Wout *et al.* (2008) argued that stereotype threat has been shown to

increase targets' concerns about how they will be perceived. "It appears that stereotype threat might be driven by concerns about being personally reduced to a negative stereotype. Alternatively, stereotype threat depresses performance by forcing targets to contend with the possibility of conforming that a negative stereotype is true of their social group" (p793). These definitions highlight a crucial aspect of stereotyping; the threat that comes with the fear of being judged according to a certain group, which, especially if that judgment is negative, may result in altered behaviour to try and confirm and/or dispute the stereotype. As Shapiro and Neuberg (2007) concluded, stereotype threat has been characterised as a psychological predicament in which individuals are inhibited from performing to their potential by the recognition that possible failure could confirm a negative stereotype that applies to their in-group and, by extension, to themselves.

A form of stereotype threat is the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' effect, which refers to a process wherein perceivers cause others to confirm their preconceived biases. Perceivers who believe that a group possesses certain attributes treat members of that group accordingly. When targets reciprocate the treatment they receive, perceivers then view their preconceptions as valid (Operario & Fiske, 2001). The most prominent example of the self fulfilling prophecy is the 'Pygmalion in the classroom'. In this study, teachers were told that a certain group of students were more 'intelligent' than others. In reality, the students were randomly designated. However, upon post assessment, the results revealed that those labelled as 'intelligent', performed better than their counterparts. It was noted that the

teachers had seemingly given those students more personalised attention, positive reinforcement and challenging work, thereby bringing to fruition their perceptions (Operario & Fiske, 2001).

2.6. Gender Stereotypes

2.6.1. Introduction

The stereotype which has received great attention in research and literature is gender stereotyping, particularly in the workplace. This is probably because gender identity is regarded as one of the most important components of societal formation (Dietert & Dentice, 2009). “In terms of gender, many societies adhere to a male/female binary that identifies people as either male or female. The social construction of this normative gender binary arrangement maintains conformity and limits non-binary gender identities by providing two mutually exclusive choices of gender identity” (p122).

2.6.2. Gender stereotyping defined

Gender stereotyping can be described as the “totality of fixed ideas about the natural determination of male and female social characteristics” (Kliuchko; 2011, p17). A typical definition of gender stereotypes involves schematically generalised, simplified, and emotionally coloured images of womanliness/femininity/women and manliness/masculinity/men. The author further quoted a more encompassing definition: “Gender stereotypes are socially constructed categories of ‘masculinity’

and ‘femininity’ that are confirmed by different behavior depending on sex, different distribution of men and women within social roles and statuses, and are supported by a person’s psychological needs to behave in a socially acceptable manner and to feel integral and not discrepant” (p17).

These definitions are quite apposite as they bring forth pertinent issues relating to gender stereotypes.

- Firstly, they highlight the permanency of the ideas held by society about male and female characteristics;
- Secondly, stereotypes are societal constructions of what masculinity and femininity is; and
- Thirdly, it touches on the crucial element of the role of stereotypes in influencing an individual’s identity and their quest for a sense of belonging.

Kliuchko (2011) further highlighted other important aspects about gender stereotypes. The attribution of qualities according to masculinity and femininity tends to ‘pigeonhole’ individuals. Characteristics such as “Active-Creative” are attributed to masculinity, including activity; dominance; self-confidence; aggressiveness; logical thinking; and leadership ability. “Passive-Reproductive” principles are attributed to femininity with characteristics such as dependence; solicitude; anxiety; low self esteem; and the emotionality associated with it. Heilman (2001) argued that this attribution of qualities to gender becomes problematic when they begin to elicit gender bias from evaluators. “They produce

the perceived *lack of fit* responsible for many types of biased judgments about women in work settings” (p660).

Foldy (2006) argued that gender schemas and stereotypes that associate leadership qualities, potential, and ability with men serve as a psychological barrier to women’s advancement in managerial and leadership roles. The male stereotype was characterised by high needs for dominance, achievement, aggression, and autonomy, compared to the female stereotype that was characterised by high needs for affiliation, nurturance and deference (Fullagar, Sverke; Sumer & Slick, 2003). Gender stereotyping of the managerial position has been offered as a possible reason why women are not well represented in top level positions. Heilman, (2001); Schein *et al*, (1996); Elaqcua *et al.*; (2009). Heilman (2001) proposed that the primary cause of women’s scarcity at the top level of organisations is gender bias in evaluation. “Because of gender bias and the way in which it influences evaluation in work settings, being competent provides no assurance that a woman will advance to the same organizational levels as an equivalently performing man” (Heilman 2001, p657).

Gender stereotyping, which is also referred to as ‘sex-role’ stereotyping, has been “consistently identified as a psychological barrier to women’s advancement in the workplace” (Fullagar *et al.*, 2003, p94). One of the reasons for this is that gender stereotypes tend to be associated with certain family and professional roles. “For a

woman, housewife and mother is considered the most significant social role. She is assigned to the private sphere of life: home, giving birth to children and responsibility for interrelations in the family is entrusted to her. Inclusion in social life, professional success, and breadwinning are the lot of men” (Kliuchko, 2011, p18). This alludes to the prescriptive bias that characterises gender stereotypes. Heilman (2001) argued that gender stereotypes are not only descriptive, but prescriptive as well. They prescribe what women should be like and how men should behave. Those not fitting to these prescriptions are judged harshly by society.

2.6.3. Common workplace gender stereotypes

The workplace abounds with gender stereotypes that can impact women negatively. This section aims to illustrate the most common gender stereotypes found in the workplace. The first four gender stereotypes discussed below (Women are emotionally unstable, weak and timid’, ‘Women are risk averse’, ‘Women are intuitive decision makers’, ‘Anger is not feminine’) are generic gender stereotypes about women, their abilities and attributes, while the subsequent three (think manager, think male; the masculinity of the leadership role; displacement of communal attributes in leadership) will focus on the leadership element of workplace gender stereotyping.

2.6.3.1. Generic gender stereotypes

a) 'Women are emotionally unstable, weak and timid'

(DeArmond, Tye, Chen, Krauss, Rogers, and Sintek, 2006) asserted that most research findings have consistently shown that men are judged to be emotionally stable, strong, assertive and workplace achievers. In contrast, women are often seen as emotionally unstable, weak, and timid. Ridgeway (2001) also reported that women are considered to lack the assertive ability and the leadership skills that are crucial when interacting with people. She also argued that the gender system is deeply entwined with social hierarchy and leadership because gender stereotypes contain status beliefs that associate greater status worthiness and competence with men than women.

b) 'Women are risk averse'

A common perception about women in the business world is that they are risk-averse (Maxfield, Shapiro, Gupta and Haas; 2010). In their survey, Maxfield *et al.* (2010) found strong evidence that women are not risk averse, but in fact embrace risk. They argued that women continue to be perceived as risk averse because of three factors: their risk taking is unrecognised; they mitigate costs when taking risks; and their engagement in role-congruent behaviour leads to the perception that they are risk averse. This therefore means that the perception that women are risk averse is not entirely true; they embrace risk but the perception is perpetuated by some behaviours displayed by women in the workplace, which are then

interpreted as being risk averse. Heffernan (2007) also supported the argument that women are not risk-averse, but are rather cautious. She listed evidence to demonstrate that women, for example, take on more personal debt to fund their businesses than men do, and that they are generally more willing than men to go out on a limb. She argued that women are willing to embrace huge risks in their search for self determination, which is one of the reasons so many of them leave the formal workplace to join the entrepreneurial world.

c) 'Women are intuitive decision makers'

Women managers are seen to embody what are perceived to be the emotional, illogical and sexual aspects of organisations, compared with men who tend to symbolise gender-neutral rationality and decision making (Green & Cassell, 1996). However, Hayes, Allinson, and Armstrong, (2004), in their research on intuition and women managers, disproved their hypothesis that female managers are more intuitive than male managers, meaning that there is no difference between male and female managers in terms of intuitive orientation. Robbins and Judge (2007, p169) argued that women analyse decisions more than men do. They explain that women “ruminate” about more than men. They defined ‘rumination’ as reflecting at length, meaning that they are more likely to over-analyse problems before making decisions, thereby dispelling the myth that they are intuitive decision makers.

Furthermore, Gilbert, Burnett, Phau, and Haar (2010), in a study conducted in three English-speaking countries (America, Jamaica, and Australia), examined the differences between female and male business professionals. Their findings were that there were few notable or significant differences between the work preferences of female and male business professionals within different countries. Hayes *et al.* (2004), found evidence that suggests that there are fewer differences than expected, especially when studies control for the effects of age, work role and achievement. “So ingrained is the idea of female intuition that it is tempting to think this social stereotype must contain a kernel of truth” (Hayes *et al.*, 2004, p404).

d) ‘Anger is not feminine’

Brescoll and Uhlmann (2008) conducted research consistent with this stereotype. The authors examined the relationship between anger, gender and status conferral. They argue that emotion theorists suggest that displays of certain emotions, such as anger, can communicate that an individual is competent and is entitled to high social status. However “women who do not display ‘womanly’ attributes and men who do not display ‘manly’ attributes are judged less psychologically healthy and are evaluated less favourably than those who do (Heilman, 2001, 661). Females who express anger violate this feminine norm and therefore may not experience the boost in status enjoyed by angry men. Brescoll and Uhlman (2008) found that for men, expressing anger may heighten status: men who expressed anger in a professional context were generally conferred

higher status than men who expressed sadness. On the contrary, for women, expressing anger had the opposite effect: professional women who expressed anger were consistently accorded lower status and lower wages, and were seen as less competent than angry men and unemotional women.

2.6.3.2. Leadership oriented gender stereotypes

e) 'Think Manager, Think Male'

One of the most common stereotypes is the manager as male stereotype, which fosters bias against women in managerial selection, placement, promotion and training decisions (Schein, 2007). Booyesen and Nkomo (2010) argued that it is important to study the perceptions individuals hold in regards to the stereotype. When we think manager, we think male. An important hurdle for women in management in all countries has been thought to be the persistent stereotype that associates management with being male (Schein, 2001). Most people associate the role of manager with the male gender. This stereotype fosters bias against women in managerial selection, placement, promotion and training decisions (Schein, 2007).

Schein (1973) pioneered research in the 'think manager-think male' stereotype, when she tested the relationship between gender role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics. The author developed three forms of the *Schein Descriptive Index* to define gender stereotypes and the characteristics of

successful middle managers. This index contained 92 descriptive terms and instructions. The results confirmed a relationship between gender role stereotypes and perceptions of requisite management characteristics, particularly amongst male respondents. She coined this phenomenon as the 'Think Manager, Think Male' stereotype, meaning when people think about a manager role, they automatically think of a male candidate, a view that tended to work women seeking to enter and advance into management positions. Many other authors have replicated the same study using slightly different dimensions since then and have proved this stereotype to be true (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein 1989; Heilman, Block, Martell and Simon 2001; Schein *et al.*, 1996; Jackson *et al.*; 2007; Fullagar *et al.*, 2003; Booyens & Nkomo, 2010).

Brenner *et al.* (1989) replicated Schein's (1973) study in the United States amongst male and female managers. Their study found that male middle managers still adhered to male managerial stereotype. The difference between Brenner *et al.* (1989) and Schein (1973) is that the former found a weaker resemblance of the sex type stereotype amongst female middle managers, thereby indicating a stronger resemblance among men.

Other studies have subsequently been completed and also confirmed this stereotype, with slight variations in either descriptors, place of study, participants profile or seating arrangements.

Heilman, Block, Martell, and Simon (1989) also replicated Schein's (1973) study, although extended their research design to include four additional categories: male managers, male successful managers, female managers, and female successful managers. They elaborated their categorisation as they had felt that in Schein's study it was possible that when the men were asked to characterise 'women in general' they may have thought in terms of housewife and mother - the model American woman - whereas when asked to think about 'men in general', they may have thought in terms of an employed breadwinner. Their results paralleled those of Schein in so far as 'men in general' were described as more similar to successful middle managers than were 'women in general'.

Schein, Mueller, Lituchy and Liu (1996) replicated the study in Japan and China amongst management students. Their findings were that males and females in both countries perceived that successful middle managers possess characteristics, attitudes and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general. Fullagar *et al.* (2003) also found the stereotype to be consistent, however the sex-role stereotype was observed to be weaker among Turkish participants than Swedish participants. Schein and Mueller (1992) also replicated the study among management students in the US, Great Britain and Germany. Their results revealed that males in all three countries perceive that successful middle managers possess characteristics, attitudes and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general.

Booyens and Nkomo (2010) conducted the same study in South Africa amongst males and females of different races. Their aim was to investigate the gender role management stereotype, with an emphasis on the race aspect of the stereotype. Their findings were that the 'think manager, think male' stereotype exists for black and white men but not for black and white women. They raised a concern in this racially divisive finding, particularly in the South African context, with its history of racial segregation.

Finally, a discussion on the work done on the 'think manager, think male' stereotype would not be complete without including the research conducted by Jackson, Engstrom and Emmers-Sommer (2007). They also based their work on the 'think manager, think male' stereotype, however focused their attention on the seating arrangement of the leader. They used social and gender identity theoretical frameworks to examine some gender biases and the situational leadership cue of the end-of-the-table position. Their findings were that men and women significantly differ between groups regarding their choice of leader. Men were more inclined to choose a male leader and women a female leader.

The above cited studies indicate strong evidence that the 'think manager, think male' gender stereotype exists predominantly amongst men (Schein, 1973; Schein *et al*, 1996; Fullagar *et al*. 2003; Booyens & Nkomo, 2010). The research work cited above also confirms that the 'think manager, think male' stereotype holds true

in many circumstances in most countries and cultures. However, there is firmer evidence that the stereotype is held stronger by the male gender than the female gender, except in the one case where seating arrangement (Jackson *et al*, 2007) was factored in.

f) ‘Leadership is a masculine job’

Carli and Eagly (2001, p633) asserted that “leadership has traditionally been construed as a masculine enterprise with special challenges and pitfalls for women”. “The entry of women into senior levels within organisations over the last decade or so has brought this stereotype into question” (Wajcman, 1996, p333). Another similar perception is that successful managers are aggressive, forceful, competitive, self-confident, independent and have a high need for control, which fundamentally contrasts from the commonly held perception that women lack these qualities and are characterised as being relatively submissive, nurturing, warm, kind, and selfless (Hayes *et al.*, 2004). One of the reasons for this is that the leadership role has been “conventionally constructed in masculine terms” (Billing & Alvesson, 2000, p144). They further argued that this classification of leadership in masculine terms, “relegates everything socially perceived as ‘non-masculine’ to the marginal and places it primarily outside the organization” (p144) – and thus makes it harder for women to be recruited to and function in managerial jobs.

The authors warned that the continued association of leadership with masculinity feeds gender labeling and discrimination against women fulfilling leadership roles. This stereotype places women in a negative light when considerations are being made for leadership positions. Yoder (2001) clarified this leadership stereotype. She argued that firstly, “leadership is itself gendered”, meaning that how women enact their role as leader is inextricably intertwined with the basic realisation that they are women, bringing with it all the stereotypical baggage that comes with gender roles. Secondly, leadership is a process that occurs within a social context that itself is gendered. She concluded her argument by asserting that “leadership does not take place in a genderless vacuum” (p815). This continued classification of the leadership role as masculine forces women to, at times, act incongruently between their female gender role and typical leader role so as to fit in (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Finally, Robbins and Judge (2007, p450) dispelled the myth that “men make better leaders than women”. They discussed evidence from studies that showed that “female leaders, when rated by their peers, underlings and bosses, scored higher than male counterparts on key dimensions of leadership – including goal setting motivating others, fostering communication, producing high quality work, listening to others, and mentoring”.

g) Communal attributes have no place in leadership

In understanding leadership attributes, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) listed agentic (achievement orientation traits) and communal attributes as particularly relevant in understanding the leadership aspects of gender roles. They describe agentic characteristics, which are ascribed more strongly to men than women, as primarily assertive, controlling and confident — for example, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident and competitive. In employment settings, agentic behaviours might include speaking assertively, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity directed to assigned tasks, and making problem-focused suggestions.

Communal characteristics, which are ascribed more strongly to women than men, describe primarily a concern with the welfare of other people, for example, affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing and gentle. In employment settings, communal behaviours might include speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting others' direction, supporting and soothing others, and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems. These attributes displayed by women are viewed in a generally negative light and as contrary to what business leaders should be like. The essence however, is that these communal attributes are not necessarily negative - they may even be strengths, but due to the generally held views of those in the workplace about what leaders are, they are seen to be weaknesses.

These few examples of stereotypes, which continue to surface in the workplace, confirm the need to understand the underlying causes of these perceptions and stereotypes. The question that arises is that, if there are few notable or significant differences between the work preferences of male and female professionals (Gilbert *et al.*, 2010), especially when age, work role and achievement is accounted for (Hayes *et al.*, 2004), when there is sufficient evidence that points out that women's communal characteristics may actually be a strength than a weakness (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001), that they are not risk averse (Maxfield, Shapiro, Gupta, & Haas, 2010) but in fact embrace risk (Heffernan, 2007) and that they don't necessarily lead by intuition (Hayes *et al.*, 2004), that women who have made it to the top are, in most respects, indistinguishable from men in equivalent positions (Wajcman, 1996), then why is it that they continue to be perceived as weak and timid (DeArmond *et al.*, 2006) and as lacking assertive ability and leadership skills? (Ridgeway, 2001) Most importantly, why do these stereotypes continue to exist in the workplace? It is the intention of this study to uncover the causes of these stereotypes.

2.6.4. Impact of gender stereotyping

The impact of gender stereotyping in the workplace has been explored and documented at depth by various authors, including Bell (2007) - disparate treatment; Fiske (1995) - sexual harassment; Cabrera *et al.* (2009) - lower performance expectations for women leaders; Casell (1996) and Williams *et al.*

(2010) - unequal pay; Heilman (2001) - women's ascent up the corporate ladder; and Devine (1989) - prejudice.

Bell (2007) argued that common stereotypes about abilities, traits or performance of people belonging to certain groups may lead to disparate treatment in the workplace. Disparate treatment is defined as the “differential treatment of certain employees because of membership in a protected class” (p39). Disparate treatment is also referred to as intentional discrimination. The author offered an example of a stereotype that could lead to disparate treatment as “the assumption that women have limited math skills that could result in their purposely not being assigned jobs requiring math skills” (p39).

Cabrera *et al.* (2009) also contributed to the literature on the impact of stereotypes in the workplace. The authors used the concept of ‘role congruity theory’ to explain how female leaders may be perceived differently across varying industry contexts. According to Cabrera *et al.* (2009), ‘role congruity theory’ is an extension of ‘social role theory’, which argues that as a result of the allocation of women into domestic roles and men into paid work roles, women and men actively develop skills, behaviours and traits. These skills, behaviours and traits are then adopted by society as normative and internalised by individuals into fundamental gender roles that are both descriptive and prescriptive in defining how women typically do and should behave. This incongruity thus results in two potential biases against female leaders: “(a) lower expectations for women’s potential for leadership because

leadership ability is associated with being male; and (b) lower evaluations of the female leader's actual behaviour" (Cabrera *et al.*; 2009, p421).

Therefore, the role congruity theory predicts that in instances where the leader role is male stereotyped, the impact will be that female leaders will be subject to lower performance expectations and lower evaluations than comparable male leaders" (p 421).

This impact was aptly explained by Heilman (2001) when the author argued that when women succeed at male gender-typed jobs, they are, by definition, perceived to have the attributes that are necessary to effectively execute the tasks required. They are seen as having what it takes to succeed at a 'man's work', which helps eradicate the perceived lack of fit deriving from the descriptive aspect of gender stereotypes. However, a new problem arises when these women's success is seen as a violation of the prescriptive aspect of gender stereotypes. This perceived violation of the stereotype prescription is met with disapproval by society. "Women who do not display 'womanly' attributes and men who do not display 'manly' attributes are judged less psychologically healthy and evaluated less favourably than those who do" (Heilman, 2001, p661).

The consequences of violating the prescriptive and descriptive elements of gender stereotypes include (Heilman, 2001):

- *Devaluation of performance* - due to the stereotypical expectation that women will not be successful when they do ‘manly work’, when they do succeed, others would rather reject this disconfirming information, as accepting it would require a restructuring of beliefs. The performance expectations act to create self-fulfilling prophecies and evaluators engage in cognitive distortion that enables them to see what they expect to see. Also contributing to the devaluation of women’s performance is the tendency to interpret the same behaviour differently depending upon who the actor is.
- *Denying of credit to women for their successes* - despite the many obstacles blocking the acknowledgment of a woman’s successful performance in traditionally male work domains, there are times when her success is undeniable. But even then, a woman may not be viewed as competent. Rather, the expectation that she will fail is maintained by treating the success as not being due to the woman herself. Attributing responsibility in this way designates the woman’s success as an exception and unlikely to have happened without special circumstances.
- *Personal derogation* – women who succeed at male sex-typed jobs are personally derogated and “viewed as counter-communal”. Heilman (2001, p669) “Women can be penalized for their competence by the everyday use of terms for successful women, such as “bitch”, “ice queen”, and “battle axe” p668)

Furthermore, women who violate these stereotypes are often considered unfeminine and are disliked. Catalyst (2007) termed this phenomenon, 'The Double Bind – Doomed if you do, Doomed if you don't'. They argue that gender stereotypes create several predicaments for women leaders. Because they are often evaluated against a "masculine" standard of leadership, women are left with limited and unfavourable options, no matter how they behave and perform as leaders. The predicaments they face include:

Predicament 1: Extreme Perceptions – too soft, too tough, and never just right. When women act in ways that are consistent with gender stereotypes, they are viewed as less competent leaders, but when they act in ways that are inconsistent with such stereotypes, they are considered unfeminine.

Predicament 2: The High Competence Threshold. Women leaders face higher standards and lower rewards than male leaders. On top of doing their job, women have to prove that they can lead, over and over again; and manage stereotypical expectations constantly.

Predicament 3: Competent but Disliked. Women leaders are perceived as competent or liked, but rarely both. Respondents' comments revealed that when women behave in ways that are traditionally valued for men leaders (e.g., assertively), they are viewed as more competent, but also not as effective interpersonally as women who adopt a more stereotypically feminine style.

Finally, Bilimoria *et al.* (2007) alluded to ‘tokenism’ as one of the negative impacts of gender stereotyping. The authors argued that the proportion of women in top management positions still leaves them facing token dynamics behind the doors of the executive suite. They highlight factors that perpetuate tokenism such as: heightened visibility, which exacerbates performance pressures for them; polarisation, which leads to a sense of isolation from informal and social and professional networks; and assimilation, where they are encouraged to act in a gender-defined manner.

Gatrell and Cooper (2007) also acknowledged the relationship between tokenism and gender stereotyping. “As women managers progress to executive levels they are increasingly likely to experience the stress associated with tokenism where women who are the first of their gender to enter a particular role, feel isolated and excluded, and often experience stereotyping and discrimination from the majority group” (p65).

2.7. Summary and Conclusion

In summary, stereotypes are omnipresent in communities and institutions and are particularly conspicuous in the workplace. People stereotype by categorising people with similar characteristics in an effort to simplify the information received in interaction with others. Even though stereotypes may be unintentional, the act of stereotyping involves judgment and prejudice.

Various factors cause people to stereotype including categorisation, justification of the system they live in, and evaluating and filling in voids about other groups different from them. Also, people are likely to stereotype when their ideologies are threatened and their need for structure increases. As evidence of their abundance, stereotypes manifest themselves in various ways including ageism, racism and ethnicism, and self stereotyping.

Gender stereotyping, also involves categorising others, although in this instance the categorising is mainly done by gender. The danger of gender stereotyping is that the agent holds preconceived ideas about the abilities of the female gender, which they assigned purely on the basis of gender. Through gender stereotyping, qualities relating to masculinity and femininity are attributed to males and females which results in gender bias, particularly when evaluating roles in leadership.

Stereotyped women face many predicaments in the workplace such as the perceived lack of fit and a phenomenon commonly known as ‘double binds’. The ‘double binds’ phenomenon implies that regardless of the options selected by females, whether to act feminine and conform to the stereotype or act masculine and contradict the stereotype, they continue to be judged harshly with a no-win result.

In conclusion, gender stereotypes misrepresent the true talents of females and can potentially undermine women’s contributions to organisations, as well as their own advancement options.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1. Research Purpose

The literature reviewed has shown that stereotypes exist and that they can negatively impact those that are stereotyped against. It further revealed that gender stereotypes are even more pervasive in the workplace than elsewhere. The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the causes of these gender stereotypes in the workplace and to explore the role of organisations in forming these stereotypes.

3.2. Research Questions

3.2.1. What is the general understanding of gender stereotypes?

It was crucial to test the general understanding of stereotypes and gender stereotypes. The premise for this understanding served a dual purpose. Firstly, knowledge of stereotypes and gender stereotypes confirmed the appropriateness of the selected sample. Participants who didn't know what stereotypes and gender stereotypes were would not have been able to participate in the study as they would not be able to offer insights, which were the intended outcome. Secondly, this question served the purpose of soliciting participants' insights on stereotypes and gender stereotypes.

3.2.2. What are the factors that cause stereotypes in the workplace?

This question was aimed at gathering insights on factors that cause stereotypes in the workplace. These insights were the basis for conducting this study.

3.2.3. What role does the workplace play in forming stereotypes?

The literature review broadened the understanding of the nature of stereotypes and their omnipresence in the workplace. Consequently it was then crucial to explore the role played by the workplace in forming these stereotypes.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1. Research Method

The qualitative research method, which is exploratory in nature, was selected as the research method to be used in this study to obtain an overall understanding of the causes of gender stereotypes. A qualitative study is more likely to obtain unexpected information, as the more structured approach of a quantitative study directs the researcher more, leaving less leeway to explore other avenues (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Marshall and Rossman (2006, p53) argued that qualitative methodologies must be used for specific types of research such as “research that elicits tacit knowledge and subjective understanding and interpretations”, which is precisely what the study intended to accomplish. The study seeks to bring forth implicit knowledge on why people ‘gender stereotype’ in the workplace and the causes of these stereotypes. It is implicit knowledge because it is usually unspoken and stereotyping actions are embedded in the common workplace behaviours.

As cited in the literature review section, sufficient quantitative studies that quantify the extent to which employees hold various stereotypes have been completed, including the gender stereotype, ‘think manager, think male’ (Schein *et al*, 1996). Evidence from secondary data points out that some of the gender-based perceptions are not necessarily true. As such, it becomes important to understand the causes of these perceptions and stereotypes from a qualitative perspective. In

a qualitative study, it is likely that new and unexpected insights on stereotypes and their persistence will be uncovered.

This will help in understanding the underlying causes of these stereotypes. As Fortuin (2007) eloquently commented “At a fundamental level the outcome of qualitative research is therefore to understand rather than to explain.” Furthermore, Booyens and Nkomo (2010, p296) recommended that “further research is needed to probe more deeply into the underlying causes of gender stereotyping among men of all races in South Africa”. They suggested that qualitative methodologies be used as they will surface the reasons for gender stereotyping of the management role. Even though this author focuses on a broader sample than “men of all races in South Africa”, qualitative methods are still justifiable in this study.

4.2. Research Design

The purpose of exploratory research is to determine whether or not a phenomenon exists and to gain familiarity with such a phenomenon (Welman & Kruger, 2001, p.18). This study was exploratory in nature as the aim was to explore the fundamental causes of gender stereotypes. As mentioned earlier, previous research illustrated that gender stereotypes exist, but there is gap in published studies on the causes of these stereotypes, particularly in the workplace. An exploratory study will enable the discovery of these, which can later be narrowed down and quantified in further research. As Blumberg *et al.* (2008) stated,

“exploratory studies tend towards loose structures with the objective of discovering future research tasks.”

A cross-sectional analysis was undertaken as opposed to a longitudinal one. “Cross-sectional studies are carried out once and represent a snapshot of one point in time, while longitudinal studies are repeated over an extended period” (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008, p199).

4.3. Population and Unit of Analysis

“A population is the total collection of elements about which we wish to make some inferences”, (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008, p228). The population for this study was adult employees employed in various South African workplaces. The reasoning behind the broad population is based on the assumption that any adult employee will have experienced and/or observed gender stereotypes at some point in their working career.

According to Patton (2002, p229), “the key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study.” At the end of the study, the researcher will make statements about the causes of stereotypes. Patton (2002) offered further guidance on who can be selected as a unit of analysis when he

asserted that “often individual people, clients, or students are the unit of analysis” (p228). Thus the primary focus of data collection was on what is happening to individuals in a setting and how individuals are affected by the setting. As such, the unit of analysis was adult employees in the workplace, and the primary focus of data collection was gender stereotyping.

4.4. Sample Size

“Sample size is a function of the variation in the population parameters under study and the estimating precision needed by the researcher” (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008, p233). According to Patton (2002, p230), “qualitative enquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases ($N = 1$), selected purposefully”. The sample size of this study was 13 employees. To cater for the sub-groups, the sample included both genders and all South African races (six males and seven females; race represented as follows: five Black, four White, one Coloured and three Indian).

Mason (2002) advised that if one is using purposive sampling methods, which was the researcher’s selected method, one need not be concerned whether or not the sample is big enough to be statistically representative of the total population. As such, the researcher is of the opinion that 13 qualitative interviews was a sufficient sample size. Further, as Blumberg *et al* (2008, p233) aptly stated “no sample will fully represent its population in all respect”.

4.5. Sampling Method

The sampling technique used was a non-probability purposive (purposeful) judgment technique. According to Blumberg *et al.* (2008), “a non-probability sample can be chosen when the researcher is not interested in the accurate size of the effect. Judgement sampling “occurs when a researcher selects sample members to conform to some criterion” (p253). The criteria used for the sample was employees at manager level, of all races, employed in the workplace. This was based on the assumption that most employees in the workplace have either experienced the stereotypes, or could be perpetrators of the stereotypes, and as such could offer insights into the causes.

4.6. Data Collection Method

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to collect data. These interviews were conducted in the workplace which is a real life setting. Marshall and Rossman (2006) argued that “human actions are significantly influenced by the setting in which they occur and one should therefore study that behaviour in those real-life situations. For qualitative studies, context matters” (p53). Qualitative in-depth interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The authors further argued that in-depth interviews are useful for uncovering participants’ perspectives. The exploratory method enabled the gathering of data that gave good insights into the causes of gender stereotypes.

4.7. Data Analysis Methods

According to Blumberg *et al.* (2008), data analysis involves reducing accumulated data to a manageable amount, developing summaries, looking for patterns and applying accumulated data to a manageable amount. The data was analysed using content analysis, narrative analysis and frequency analysis.

Content analysis is a technique based on the manual or automated coding of transcripts, documents or even audio and video material; the basic assumption of content analysis is that words that occur more frequently reflect a text's concern (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008). Narrative analysis is a qualitative research method allowing for in-depth investigations (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008). Frequency analysis describes a set of data that is organised by summarising the number of times a particular value or variable occurs (Zikmund, 2003).

4.8. Research Limitations

- Responding to in-depth interviews about one's experiences and insights in the workplace may require divulging sensitive information about certain people and situations. Considering that the topic was stereotypes and the participants were asked to provide examples, some participants may have been less open about real experiences. Concerns about identity being revealed were addressed at the beginning of the interviews and anonymity and confidentiality was kept throughout the process.
- The sample was limited to employees in the same industry and as such could not be generalised outside the sample frame used.
- Data analysis was conducted as part of qualitative research, which has an inherent limitation of introducing bias into the analysis and interpretation of the results of the study.
- The language used to conduct the interviews was English. Due to the diversity of the sample, some of the participants were not first language English speakers and as such a few of their examples were provided in African languages and had to be translated into English. Interpretation could have influenced the responses noted.
- Familiarity with the researcher may have led to participant's bias in that male participants may have withheld some information they could have found discomfoting to discuss with a female researcher whereas female participants may have provided answers they deemed pleasing to the researcher.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research design of the study which included the methods, measuring instruments, research procedures and data analysis methods used. This chapter describes the results of the analysis conducted on the data in order to provide answers to the questions that defined this research. The aim of the research was to explore the causes of gender stereotypes in the workplace.

5.2. Data collected

Thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule. The time period for the interviews ranged between 26 minutes to 58 minutes, with the shortest interview only lasting 26.03 minutes and longest interview lasting 58.01 minutes. The time variance of the interviews was determined by the length of the answers of each respondent. All participants were asked the same questions, although some participants elected not to respond to some questions.

5.3. Sample demographics

The sample interviewed is outlined in the table below. No changes to the initially selected sample were made, all were interviewed.

5.3.1. Participants' common characteristics

All 13 of the participants were employed on a full time basis in the financial services industry.

All participants were employed at management level, meaning they were responsible for subordinates and/or departments.

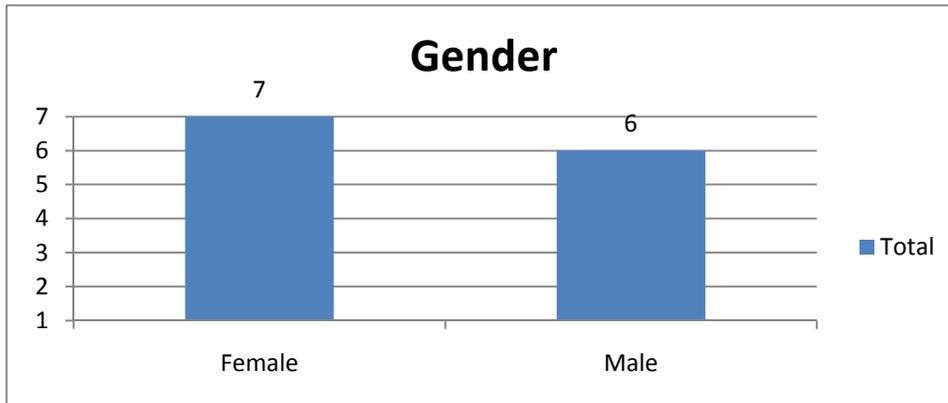
Table 1: Common characteristics of the participants

Participant	Gender	Race	Age	Years Employed
1	Male	Indian	37	19
2	Female	Black	30	8
3	Male	Indian	35	11
4	Male	White	64	44
5	Male	Indian	36	17
6	Female	White	44	24
7	Female	White	36	16
8	Female	Black	26	7
9	Female	White	33	15
10	Male	Black	33	8
11	Female	Colored	26	7
12	Female	Black	32	9
13	Male	Black	34	12

5.3.2. Gender

The gender split of the sample was equitable. Of the 13 participants, seven (54%) were male and six (46%) were female.

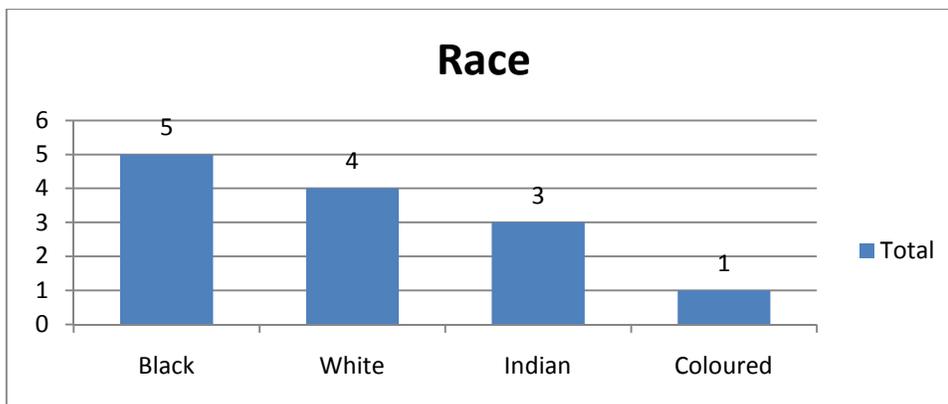
Figure 3: Gender graph



5.3.3. Race

The race split was also fairly distributed between all races, although Coloured representation was lower than other races. Of the 13 participants, 5 (38%) were Black, 4 (30%) were White, 3 (23%) were Indian, and 1 (7%) was Coloured.

Figure 4: Race graph



5.3.4. Age

The mean age of the participants was 35.8 years, with the two youngest participants being 26 years old and the oldest participant being 64 years old.

5.3.5. Period employed

On average, the participants had been employed for a period of 15.1 years, with the longest period employed being 44 years and the shortest period employed being seven years. Other than the two employees who were employed for seven years and another two for eight years, the rest of the participants' total period employed varied.

5.4. Results and themes from Research Question 1

The purpose of this research question was to test understanding of gender stereotypes.

5.4.1. Understanding stereotypes

All participants understood the term stereotyping and provided definitions that consisted of common themes. Most participants defined stereotyping using words such as generalising people and groups. Of the 13 respondents, five defined stereotyping using generalising as a concept. Some of the comments made included:

- Participant 11: *“I associate stereotyping with generalising. I will make an example, like females are weak. You can stereotype a person based on their age; gender; on their sex anything”.*
- Participant 10: *“It’s mostly generalising, or perceiving certain people, certain things or groups in a certain way. Groups refer to Indians being viewed in a certain way or Africans in a certain way. Certain people would be, for example gender such as women would be perceived in a certain way as opposed to males. Not forgetting gay people as well”.*

The next common theme that emerged was ‘putting people in boxes’, which was used by three of the participants to describe stereotyping. Comments included:

- Participant 7: *“It is boxing people in different categories depending on race or gender; it can be anything that is variable between people so smokers/non-smokers; drinkers/non-drinkers. So it is anything that makes you different from that person*

Other themes that emerged included ‘grouping people’, discriminating against certain people, classifying people, one way thinking and following people. Amongst all the responses, the most common theme was a linking between stereotyping and race, gender, age, language and culture.

Comments made regarding stereotyping to grouping people include:

- Participant 5: *“My understanding is, it is when you have common consensus on how people behave; their likes and dislikes or preferences based on a group that they either belong to or one you create in your own mind for them”.*

5.4.2. Understanding gender stereotypes

With regards to understanding gender stereotypes, participants understood the concept but mostly used similar words to describe gender stereotypes as those used to describe stereotypes. Generalising and classifying people according to gender was the most commonly used description of gender stereotyping - these concepts were used by six of the participants.

Comments included:

- Participant 13: *“Gender stereotyping would go back to the first example I used where you classify or see females in a certain light than what you see males even if they work in the same environment. Even if their circumstances in society are the same. Seeing females in a lesser light than what you see males. It’s almost putting more value for males than females”.*
- Participant 1: *“Classifying whether a person can or cannot do the job? Are they more suitable for the job? If they are, are they male or female? The classification on whether a person can or cannot do job based on being male or female. In our case it’s on different levels. Whether it is a new*

recruit we employ as an advisor or even promoting from advisor to team management. We see whether this person can take the stress in our environment? Or is it a mother especially a single mother? Will it impact her commitment levels with being here on time because she is a single mother? So is she committed? Does she have a support structure in place now that will not negatively impact her work scenario?"

The next commonly used description was 'putting people/females in a box', which was used by three participants. The rest of the participants described gender stereotyping using terms such as "how we view men/women", "discriminating based on gender" and "society's thinking of how males dominate women". Participant four did not describe gender stereotyping but rather alluded to the decrease of gender stereotyping over the years, from the time he started working, to now.

Some of the comments made include:

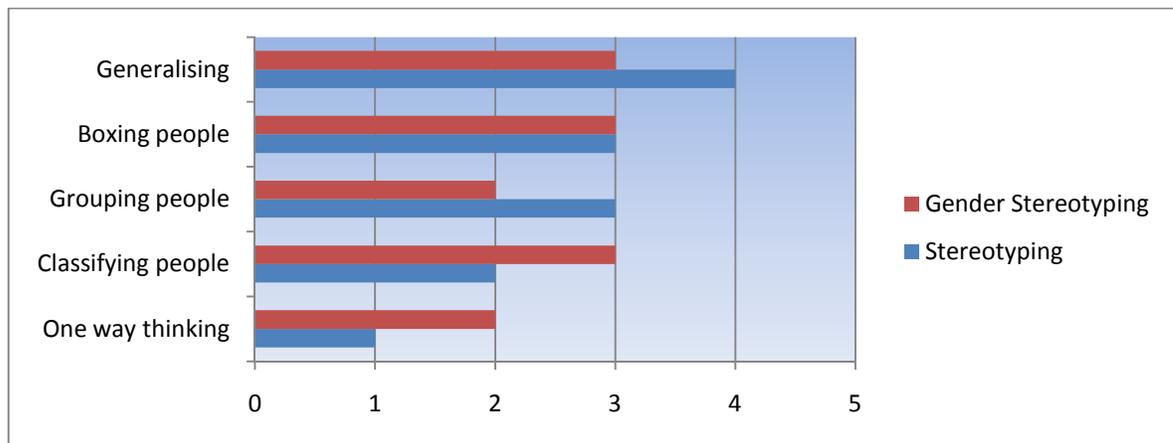
- Participant 3: *"Discriminating or having judgments based on gender-male or female their abilities and generally what a man should do and what a woman should do".*

It was noted that most participants used the terms 'stereotypes' and 'gender stereotypes' interchangeably and offered mainly gender based examples to illustrate their understanding of these terms.

Figure 5 below illustrates the frequency of the adjectives used by the participants to describe gender and gender stereotyping. Generalising was the most frequently used adjective followed by putting people into boxes, then grouping people and classifying people. It should be evident that the frequency of the adjectives used for stereotyping is similar to that used for gender stereotyping.

Figure 5: Frequency of adjectives used by participants to describe stereotyping and gender stereotyping

Source: Author's own

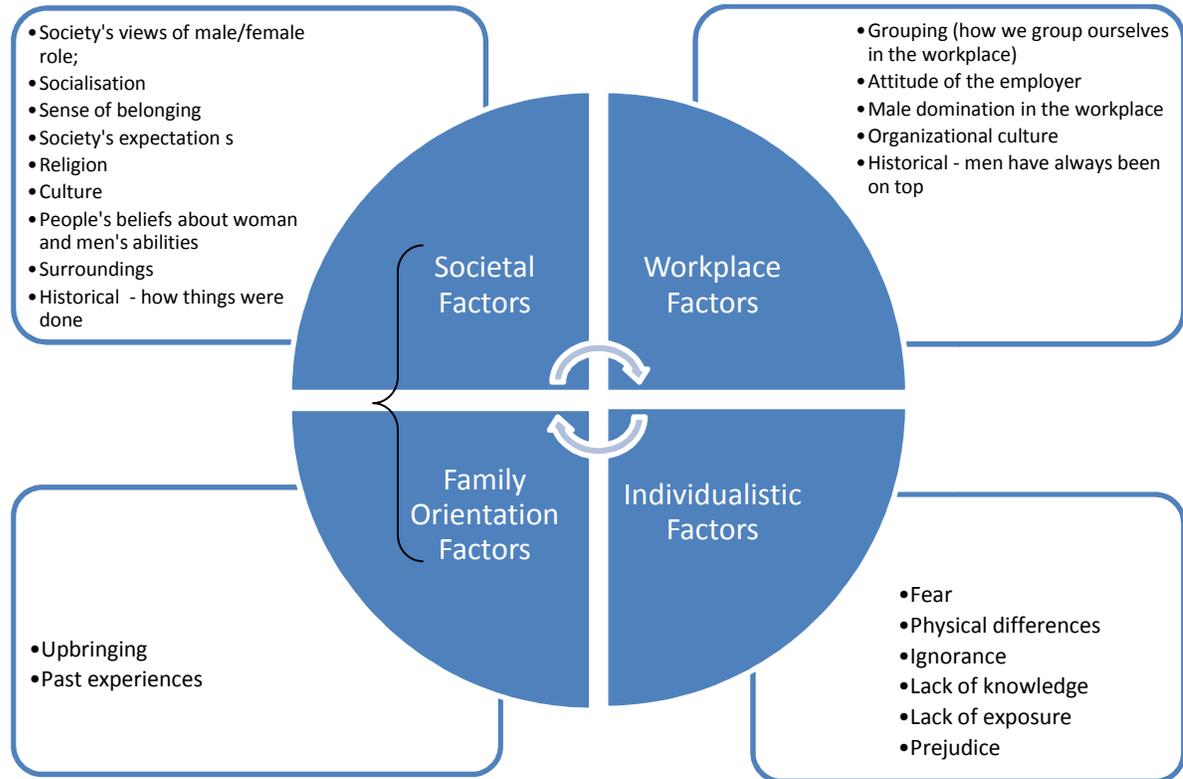


5.5. Results and themes from Research Question 2: What are the factors that cause stereotypes in the workplace?

The key themes emerging from causes of stereotypes can be grouped into four main emergent themes – Societal, Family Orientation, Individualistic and Workplace causal factors. The factors are figuratively presented in figure 6, and thereafter the most prominent themes are discussed in detail below that.

Figure 6: Factors causing stereotypes

Source: Author's own



5.5.1. Theme 1: Societal and Family Orientation Causal Factors

Societal factors are factors that have their origins in society and are influenced mainly by social interactions. Family is a facet of society, thus societal factors and family orientation factors are grouped together as a theme. The responses provided by the participants included terms like socialisation, upbringing, historical experiences, society's views on the roles of the male and the female, socially acceptable expectations and culture. Each participant offered more than one causal factor.

Upbringing was offered as a cause for stereotypes by five participants. Some of the comments included:

- Participant 9: *“I think it is based on a person’s upbringing; religion and their past experiences. For instance if you grew up in a very conservative home where the mother stayed at home and the religious belief that a woman should be subservient, then you are more likely to believe that women should not be in a position you are in.”*
- Participant 3: *“...and the way you were raised and brought up. If you were brought up with a narrow focus, you would always have that. If you as child you were allowed to be free and think for yourself you would not think of these issues. You wouldn’t confine things into certain categories.”*

Socialisation and culture was also a prominent cause offered by four participants. The commonly used words and descriptive phrases in this question were ‘socialisation’, ‘socially acceptable expectations’, and ‘society’s views on men and women roles’. Some of the comments included:

- Participant 10: *“They are caused by society’s beliefs on what girl children should do and what boy children should do. When it is a girl, they are encouraged to do more administrative functions and when it is a boy the opportunities are endless. The last thing you want is for a boy to be a male nurse, rather be the doctor. Society believes that the highest levels are suitable for male children, and that is how we raise our children.”*

- Participant 3: *“Society's views of what function a women and man plays.”*
- Participant 7: *“..... socially acceptable expectations. For example, I have a son so I think differently about boys/males”*

History or past experiences emerged strongly as a theme in terms of causes of stereotypes. Four participants explained that it is a person's past experiences that causes them to use stereotypes. Some of the comments included:

- Participant 8: *“In a work environment predominately in the past, most corporates or institutions had white males in leadership and management positions, it is a history thing. Historically it was expected that women would stay at home and look after the children and men would work and therefore men would do better in the workplace.”*
- Participant 10: *“People's beliefs and past experiences. For past experience it tells us that if you give a child to a woman the child grows up to be a better person than just having the father there and the mother not there.”*
- Participant 13: *“I think it goes with the history, the different cultures and if you look at our history I mean men were the ones that had to work. So that's where it stems from. How we did things because that's the role that women played then. The fact that we have evolved in terms of technology and cultures to being more modern doesn't mean that things have changed. That's where it comes from and I think it's a slow process, it will take a while because even females themselves at some point viewed themselves as lesser than equals because of that background”*

Other causal factors include sense of belonging, surroundings, religion, and ‘boxing’ people.

Comments made include those made by participant 6 about a sense of belonging:

- *“Human beings like to belong, they like to feel comfortable. It comes from our ancestors in villages. They wanted to feel comfortable with people they knew who were around so the easiest way of doing that is to find differences with other people, then you feel comfortable with your own people. For me to feel good about myself I must find something wrong with someone else”*

And those made about surroundings by participant 11:

- *“...I think a person’s upbringing or surroundings because we learn from our parents from our teachers; our educators; our trainers....”*

5.5.2. Theme 2: Individualistic Causal Factors

The results show that factors that are individualistic by nature can cause stereotypes. Factors such as physical differences, fear, lack of knowledge, and lack of exposure were quoted as causes by various participants.

Two participants explained that physical differences cause people to stereotype.

Participant 5 offered this explanation:

- *“We are different, that is the first thing that differentiates you from the other person. It is physical differences that cause the placing in the box”.*

Participant 7 on the other hand explained:

- *“Obviously our physical differences that the one thing for me in my mind”*

One participant argued that stereotypes are caused by fear. Participant 2 said:

- *“Fear is a big one for me. People fear what they don’t know, they really do, especially because of the times in South Africa we live in at the moment because of the age group of management and stuff, there is a general fear of how to approach things and creates a huge gap in terms of communication. The fear thing for me is not getting done but we need to do it. Things like how do I ask that? They will think I am a stirrer. So let me just do my corner thing, work and get out of here”*

Finally, Participant 11 further commented about lack of knowledge and lack of exposure as follows:

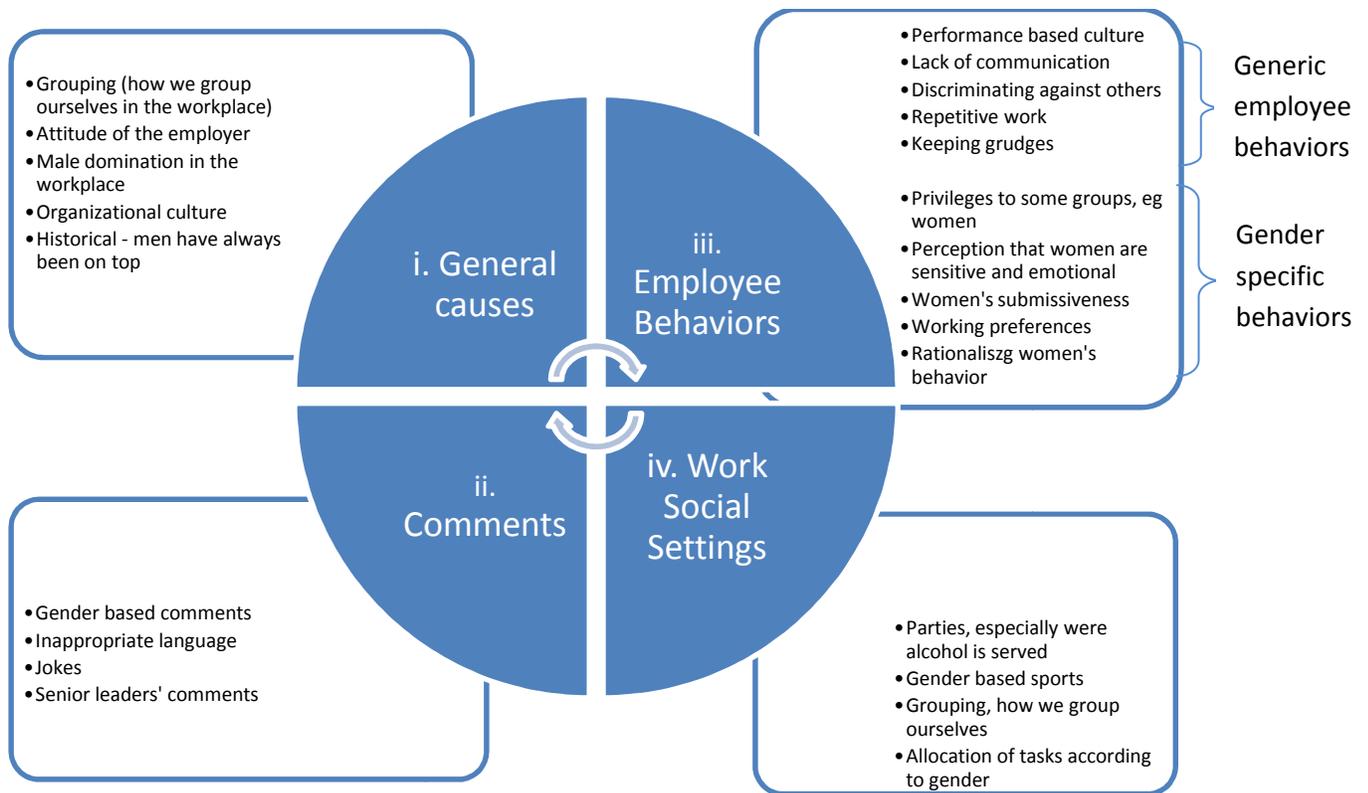
- *“.....There is a lot of stuff you pick up along the way. But I think a lot of it is lack of knowledge and lack of exposure.....”*

5.5.3. Theme 3: Workplace Causal Factors

Workplace causes can be grouped further into four emergent sub-themes: general causes, comments, employee behaviours and work social settings. Figure 7 below illustrates the grouping of the key sub-themes under workplace causal factors:

Figure 7: Workplace causes of stereotypes

Source: Author's own



5.5.3.1. Comments made in the workplace as a cause of gender stereotypes

A sub-theme that emerged around the question on the causes of gender stereotypes in the workplace was comments made in the workplace. Participants were asked if comments made in the workplace cause stereotypes. They were also requested to provide examples. Two participants did not respond to this question.

Six participants responded positively that comments made in the workplace cause stereotypes. These participants provided specific examples to illustrate the use of these comments, including those relating to leadership:

- Participant 3: *“Yes. If I have to hear my boss say something negative about females I think it carries through. It conditions you to think in a certain way as well.”*
- Participant 6: *“Yes, definitely because when something is embedded in you from childhood, it becomes a part of you; so when you innocently say something with no malice intent because that’s how people around you spoke, and that’s what they spoke about, you may influence a more impressionable junior person who starts thinking it is acceptable to speak like this and to have these opinions - because I had them too but thought it was politically incorrect so you keep quiet. If I see my executives and my seniors talking openly about it, I will too.”*

Other examples used which were related directly to gender based stereotyping, included:

- Participant 7: *“On cleavage day in particular, you hear comments such as - nice top or did you get a boob job? Or you would get men say to me you should wear more tops like that, or I didn’t know you have such nice... They now look at you differently.”*
- Participant 9: *“I have heard comments where I heard someone say I like your breasts. If you say to someone you shouldn’t be looking at my breasts, we work together, and they say you are overreacting. So you can’t stand up for yourself, when you are uncomfortable because you are actually being over sensitive. Likewise the P word, that makes me very cross and I say use your own damn anatomy, so that part is stereotyping too.”*
- Participant 13: *“.....there are comments such as “I thought you were making that point because you are pregnant again - when you are pregnant you are difficult.”*

Two participants could not think of any comments made, even after subtle probing by the interviewer.

Another two responded negatively to the question of comments in the workplace. They remarked that these comments used to be made in the past but not anymore due to current labour legislation.

- Participant 5: *“I think people are very careful nowadays in what they say because of legislation which says you need to be careful. Things like sexual harassment and those types of things are more legislated than in previous years”*
- Participant 10: *“Perhaps back in the day because now a person has to be careful of what you say. I will make an example there was an instance once although this is more race than gender, where a manager in business used the K word when referring to an individual, and that person is no longer here. So there are certain comments even when it comes to gender. You can’t just say women are.... and generalise”.*

5.5.3.2. Employee behaviours as a cause of gender stereotypes in the workplace

Continuing on the questioning stream aimed at isolating the causes of stereotypes in the workplace, the participants were asked which employee behaviours caused gender stereotypes. All participants responded to this question.

Various examples of behaviours were quoted by participants as causes of gender stereotypes. Amongst those mentioned were competitiveness, lack of communication, discrimination against each other, and conflict.

Communication was mentioned by two participants who used examples as below:

- Participant 2: *“I would say the lack of communication between each other. The perception-you think therefore it is.....”*
- Participant 12: *“In interaction, it boils down to communication - it might not be physical things. On physical things when we need to move the pool table, we will call guys versus the women. I think the language we use and the way we communicate. I think it’s verbal when I address my male staff I might address them differently to the women, with the women I will tend to be sensitive because in my mind I will be saying I don’t want to hurt her feelings.”*

Though the responses were relatively varied, a closer look at the responses reveals a common trend that is biased towards gender based stereotyping. Five participants offered specific gender biased examples, including:

- Participant 7: *“It’s the kind of privileges we give to women. For example, giving all the women parking in the building. Also lift access, for only women and pregnant women. I think it creates a complete divide, as much as women are just as competent and are equally skilled, and you can put them on the same level but all of a sudden when it comes to parking we can’t walk 10 steps further than a man. So it’s all of a sudden the women should get access first. They are capable but not capable....”*

- Participant 13: *“Females have a way of presenting themselves, your hair is done or you look in a certain way and males around you respond to that a lot. If I had to walk in a room full of females looking the same way I wouldn’t get the same looks. Also when there are any disagreements or you seem to be down or had a bad night, there’s some element of it’s her again. Or are you moody now..... So I think whatever you do that goes against the mold that you must fit into. Judgment only comes in when you are going against it-your femaleness and they rationalise it and for themselves. Then they completely miss the point.”*
- Participant 10: *“I think more administratively. I think female employees for instance when it comes to administration, they tend to be a lot more neater; a lot more thorough; a lot more detailed, they are not rushed so to speak. They take pride in their work .Whereas with males for instance; we are more interested in the bottom line. For us it’s the number of actions, with females it is more quality orientated-attention to detail.”*

One participant argued that employee behaviours do not cause stereotypes, that they are already present at the time the employee enters the workplace.

Participant 6: *“In my mind the stereotyping already happened. So I don’t think an employee can cause stereotyping. It would probably bring out what you already knew or had inherited from your community and family.*

5.5.3.3. Work social settings as a cause of gender stereotypes

Finally on the causes of stereotypes in the workplace, the participants were asked whether work social settings outside the workplace caused gender stereotypes. Two participants did not respond to this question.

An overwhelming nine out of 13 participants agreed that work social settings outside the workplace cause gender stereotypes. They offered various examples that backed their sentiments. Sports and parties emerged strongly as work settings that cause gender stereotypes. The examples used by participants focused on the different roles played by males and females at these events. Comments made include:

- Participant 8: *“Yes, yet again the males would do the tougher things like make a fire, the women in the kitchen making the salads; that reinforces the stereotypes. At a social gathering where there are drinks the men will have more beer but a woman seen carrying more beers is seen as not a lady. So the males still do the more challenging things like make a fire.”*
- Participant 3: *“When we have lunches or socials within the department, we expect the females to arrange the lunches or arrange things. We had a case on Friday where the females were braaing and everyone thought the men should be braaing. But why can't the female braai and the men sit?”* The word braai is Afrikaans for "barbecue" or "grill" and is a social custom in

South Africa. It is also used to refer to a social gathering or a party where the menu is grilled meat (braai)).

- Participant 7: *“If you just look at the sports played, if its cricket or soccer it’s mostly men, and if its netball it’s mostly females. It goes hand in hand with the type of sport event that is elected. Social events that I went to was gender balanced. Let’s take one of the social events at my house what ended happening was all the girls came with their partners and the all the men ended up standing around the braai. The girls were in the kitchen getting the salads ready, looking after the kids even though it was a work thing. The men didn’t know each other, and they were of different cultures, ages and race. Also just thinking about it, when we pray at home it is the men that pray and not the women. If you go to an Afrikaans wedding the groom stands up and makes the speeches and not the bride. It’s not that you are not allowed to, it’s just not done.”*
- Participant 11: *“To a certain degree yes, they do cause gender stereotypes because you will find the ladies have netball, and netball is associated with only females. You would hardly find the guys there except for support. On the other hand guys playing soccer or football, you will find ladies there supporting them.”*

Two participants responded negatively to the role of work social settings in causing stereotypes. Their responses included these explanations:

- Participant 5: *“I don’t think they cause stereotyping; they just promote what already is there”*
- Participant 12: *“To me they don’t because that environment is more about fun, unless if we had to play games but again we play with women. We play soccer, we play volleyball, and it’s integrated.”*

5.6. Results and themes from Research Question 3: What role does the workplace play in forming stereotypes?

To determine if the workplace plays a role in forming stereotypes, participants were asked if they were aware of stereotypes in the workplace.

5.6.1. Awareness of stereotypes in the workplace

Eight participants confirmed that they were aware of stereotypes in their workplace and used department specific examples to illustrate. For example, participant 11 used the Sales department that she works in to illustrate the existence of stereotypes – *“Yes I am aware of stereotypes, for example, in the Sales department there is a stereotype that is commonly used that males make better salespeople, because guys are less admin [orientated]”*.

Another participant (participant 6) used his department, the Investigations department, as an example – *“In the investigations environment, perception exists that females cannot investigate certain cases as they are perceived to be unsafe”*.

Four participants said they were not aware of stereotypes, while one participant alluded to the presence of stereotypes only in the past.

Participant 3: *“I am not aware of any. I hope to think that with my team and me we don’t think along those lines. I guess when it comes to more senior levels you see that coming through where there is a bias towards male managers heads as opposed to females”*

Participant 5: *“I must tell you it was very difficult starting in the workplace 24 years ago compared to now. At that stage there was a lot of things that were different which immediately put you in a box. For instance married females got different tax certificates than single ones”*

5.6.2. Awareness of stereotypes – timing

In order to isolate the role the workplace plays in stereotyping, it was prudent to first determine at what stage of the participant’s lives stereotypes were formed. As such, participants were asked to recall the first time they became aware of stereotypes. Seven participants responded that they first became aware of stereotypes when they entered the workplace.

Some of the comments that were noted included:

- Participant 4: *“It was when I first started working.”*
- Participant 13: *“I was not aware of, or bothered by stereotypes until I entered the workplace.”*

- Participant 11: *“In the workplace, I noticed that people grouped themselves according to their various groups.”*
- Participant 8: *“When I started working I realised that males were dominant, I was brought up by my mom and aunts and as such had never observed this male dominance before.”*
- Participant 3: *“When I started working. When I first started working, I could see the bias for males against females, especially in the Operations Trucking division.”*
- Participant 1: *“When I became a team manager, when recruiting others.”*

Two participants responded that they first became aware of stereotypes at primary school and high school.

- Participant 7: *“At primary school, where the boys get to do one thing and the boys do something else - boys were taught to wait for the girls, open doors for them, girls didn't get a hiding but boys did.”*
- Participant 10: *“In high school, particularly in sports - when boys were expected to only play soccer and girls were expected to only play netball.”*

Two other respondents first became aware of stereotypes in the home or family environment.

- Participant 5: *“Home environment (my mom was a women's rights fighter). Then in the work environment, also noticed the stereotypes.”*
- Participant 6: *“From being a kid. Family environment, mom was housewife but got her driver’s license before dad and I saw how that unsettled my dad.”*

Overall the theme emerging from stereotype awareness is that most participants are aware of stereotypes in the workplace, however most are not aware of stereotypes until they enter the workplace.

5.6.3. Role of the organisation in stereotype development

Finally, the role the organisation plays in stereotype development was explored with the participants. Participants were asked what role they believe the organisation plays in the formation of stereotypes. Except for two participants, all participants (11 in total) confirmed that the organisation plays a role in forming stereotypes and used various examples to illustrate this. Key themes that emerged related to how organisations promote certain genders to senior roles, how people work, behavioural issues, language, and jokes.

Some of the comments made include:

- Participant 6: *“Promotional opportunities, career progression. How companies promote certain people over others. Also how organisations pay people plays a role.”*
- Participant 8: *“When organisations (intentionally or unintentionally) constantly promote men to leadership positions, it perpetuates the stereotype that men are superior and therefore should be in leadership positions.”*
- Participant 13: *“Organisations play a huge role, almost unknowingly - but the intention is not always to stereotype. The culture of the organisation makes it worse, it perpetuates it. The August quarterly meeting was a case in point, it was given to females to arrange because it was women’s month. And when I questioned this, I was frowned upon.”*
- Participant 10: *“Appointments - we appoint male managers in roles such as IT, I still can’t wait to see a female IT Head of Department. Males bond together (old boys club), and females hardly do. Also through projects such as "Take a girl child to work" - we form the stereotypes that girls need more help.”*
- Participant 12: *“Organisations play an important role in creating stereotypes. Others observe certain behaviours from other employees and copy those behaviours and as such learn the behaviour which can be a stereotype”*

- Participant 11: *“The organisation perpetuates stereotypes because we entertain it. Because most of the people in senior roles are males, they joke about it and we then take it as acceptable because they are senior.”*
- Participant 7: *“It is the leader of the organisation that influences stereotypes, not the organisation itself - what they do on a daily basis. The job (duties) we have and assign to gender plays a part in stereotyping. Sometimes their duties are very physical and some genders (women) can’t do them, for example, lifting a concrete block. Education/skill level/competence level also influences - depending on our competence level, some jobs are streamlined for women/men.”*

Two of the participants acknowledged the role organisations play in developing stereotypes, but negated its role in perpetuating them. In fact these participants believed that the current labour relations legislation helps lessen stereotyping, unlike in the past when legislation was not very stringent. Some of the comments made regarding this included:

- Participant 5: *“It’s different now from how it was in the past, companies are now more careful in how they communicate issues. I will give you an example from another company I used to work for - where all women were invited to a Woman’s day event and on the same day a meeting was held where very important decisions were made. Legislation helps lessen the stereotypes.”*

- Participant 9: *“In the past the organisations caused the stereotypes, its slowly changing, for example no women were present in the boardroom, except those bringing in the tea. These days you can’t do that.”*

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses in detail the research results as presented in Chapter 5. In addition, the aim of this chapter is to answer the research questions in Chapter 3, in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The research questions and the semi-structured in-depth interviews were informed by existing literature on gender stereotypes in the workplace. An analysis of the responses from the interviews provided further insights about gender stereotyping in the workplace, and will as such contribute to an improved understanding of the causes of gender stereotypes in the workplace.

6.2. Research Question 1 - Testing and confirming understanding of stereotypes

Research question one sought to test and confirm each participant's understanding of stereotypes. It was a crucial requirement for participants to have a good understanding of stereotyping and gender stereotyping as the interviews were designed to solicit their opinions. Participants who did not know what stereotyping is would have been excluded from the research. As such, two questions were asked to qualify participants and to ascertain their understanding of the concepts. The most prominent themes that emerged are discussed below.

6.2.1. Understanding stereotypes and gender stereotypes

The results revealed similarities in the responses offered by the participants when defining stereotypes and gender stereotypes. Of the 13 participants, 11 defined both terms using the same words, although qualified gender stereotypes using male and female as descriptors. Participant three defined stereotypes as *discriminating people based on the group they belong to*, and then defined gender stereotyping as *discriminating people based on their gender*. Another participant - participant nine - also used exactly the same words to define stereotypes and gender stereotypes. The participant defined stereotypes as *putting people into boxes*, and then defined gender stereotyping as *putting women in boxes*. Participant 11 defined stereotypes as *generalising groups according to race, age or gender* and then continued to define gender stereotyping as *generalising according to groups*.

This highlights the automatic association of stereotypes to gender as highlighted by Dietert and Dentice (2009, p122). The authors acknowledged society's adherence to a male/female binary that identifies people as either male or female". This adherence was consistent to the participant's conformity to using male and/or female in defining both stereotypes and gender stereotypes. Reference to male and/or female was made by almost all participants in more times than any other construct, for example race and age, thereby confirming Dietert and Dentice's (2009) theory of society's adherence. Examples that were offered by participants

were also consistently based on gender, even when the topic was stereotypes in general.

Nine participants consistently selected similar descriptive terms to define stereotypes and gender stereotypes and continued to use the terms interchangeably throughout the interviews. The descriptive terms used most frequently include ‘generalising people’, ‘grouping people’, ‘classifying people’, ‘discriminating against others on the basis of race or gender’, ‘assigning value to race and gender’ and ‘placing people into boxes’ thereby judging others. It was noted that most participants used the terms ‘classifying’, ‘grouping’ and ‘generalising’ interchangeably. The descriptive terms used by the participants were consistent with the definitions found in the literature review. Bell (2007, p85) defined stereotyping as “overgeneralizations of characteristics to large human groups”. This definition is consistent with the way the participants described stereotypes. Most participants viewed stereotyping as using generalisations (see Figure 5) to group people according to some characteristics, for example race, age, or gender.

Further, Robbins and Judge (2007, p152) defined stereotyping as “judging someone on the basis of one’s perception of the group to which that person belongs”. This is consistent with how the participants regarded stereotypes - grouping or classifying people according to the groups to which they belong to.

Finally Devine (1989) argued that stereotypes have a consistent association with prejudice; the concepts have long been viewed as interrelated. “The basic argument of the inevitability of prejudice is that as long as stereotypes exist, prejudice will follow. In essence, knowledge of a stereotype is equated with prejudice toward the group” (p5). The participants described stereotypes as “discriminating or judging others” (participant three), “placing a higher value on certain gender” (participant 13) and “one way thinking” (participant 12). These terms are synonymous with prejudice.

A synonymic relationship exists amongst the adjectives frequently used by the participants to define stereotypes and gender stereotypes. Table 4 below reveals that the top four frequently used adjectives (generalisation, grouping, classifying, discriminating) are synonymous amongst themselves and with categorising. This confirms unity in the participants’ definitions of stereotypes and gender stereotypes.

Table 2: Synonymic relationship across the frequently used adjectives in defining stereotypes and gender stereotypes

Adjective	Synonyms
Generalise	Simplify, Oversimplify, Take a broad view, etc
Group	Combine, Cluster, etc
Classify	Categorising, Pigeon hole, Sort, etc
Discriminate	Distinguish, Differentiate, Separate, Categorise, Classify, Single Out, etc

In Chapter 2, it was deduced that stereotyping occurs when an individual or group forms perceptions and beliefs about another individual or group and generally assigns those beliefs to an individual or group, whilst selectively forgetting facts that prove those stereotypes wrong. The descriptive terms and the examples used by the respondents as quoted in Chapter 5, confirm the accuracy of this conclusion. The similarity of the descriptive terms used by the different authors in Chapter 2 and those used by the participants, confirm that the participants understand what stereotypes and gender stereotypes are. This answers research question one, which was aimed at testing the participants understanding.

6.3. Research Question 2: What are the factors that cause stereotypes in the workplace?

The participants' responses to the causes of stereotypes were grouped into four main emergent themes – Societal, Family Orientation, Individualistic and Workplace causal factors. The factors are figuratively presented in figure 6., Societal and Family Orientation factors were grouped further due to their similarities.

6.3.1.1. Theme 1: Societal and Family Orientation Causal Factors

Upbringing: How we were brought up” emerged as the strongest causal factor under societal and family orientation factors. The majority of the participants were of the opinion that the way individuals are brought up (upbringing) causes stereotypes. Most participants also alluded to the difficulty of changing these stereotypical mindsets as they are embedded in childhood.

Socialisation and culture: The next strongest emerging theme under societal factors was socialisation and culture. These are factors that have their origins in society and are influenced mainly by the societal interactions. Views around ‘society’s views of men and women’s roles’ as well as ‘people’s beliefs about men and women’s roles’ were also prominent. These relate to societal expectations placed on specific genders, which is congruent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Johnson and Redmond (2000, p123) argued that “stereotypes arise

when we assume that an individual will have particular norms, values and modes of behaviour because of some feature such as colour, race, nationality, education or upbringing”. These norms, values and modes of behaviour are a function of society and socialisation.

Kliuchko (2011, p17) defined gender stereotypes as “socially constructed categories of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ that are confirmed by different behavior depending on sex, different distribution of men and women within social roles and statuses, and are supported by a person’s psychological needs to behave in a socially acceptable manner and to feel integral and not discrepant”. This definition aptly attests to the societal origins of stereotypes which is also consistent with the participants’ views.

History or Past experiences: The participants’ responses relating to ‘that is how things have always been done’, beliefs, sense of belonging, and culture, resonate with the system justification theory by Stapel and Noordewier (2001). This theory posits that people stereotype to justify the social system - the social structure they are a part of. According to this theory, people use stereotypes to maintain their belief in a just world and to rationalise the status quo. This could be seen clearly in the examples offered by the participants regarding their stereotypes against members of other groups, for example males versus females. Sense of belonging speaks to the theory of complexity extremity theory as explained by Jussim *et al.*, (1987), which holds that people have different levels of contact with other groups

and as such there is a tendency to evaluate them along fewer dimensions, which leads to more extreme evaluations as either very favourable or unfavourable.

Factors such as religion, surroundings, and sense of belonging were frequently mentioned by the participants in responding to the question relating to the causes of stereotypes.

6.3.1.2. Theme 2: Individualistic Causal Factors

The emergent frequent theme was ‘physical differences’. Participants were of the opinion that human beings’ physical differences, for example, race and gender, cause stereotypes. Fear, ignorance, and prejudice were also offered as causes by participants.

6.3.1.3. Theme 3: Workplace Causal Factors

Workplace causes were grouped further into four emergent sub-themes: general causes, comments, employee behaviours and work social settings. These sub-themes were illustrated in Figure 7.

6.3.1.3.1. Comments made in the workplace as a cause of gender stereotypes

Inappropriate comments came through strongly as an emergent theme on the causes of stereotypes. More than six participants acknowledged the use of comments in creating and perpetuating stereotypes in the workplace. Interestingly, participants offered examples that were gender based to illustrate their points, despite being asked an open ended question regarding stereotypes, which indicates that the stereotypical comments made in the workplace are mainly gender biased. Also frequently mentioned was the use of jokes in causing stereotypes. Participants related their concerns over the use of jokes which have become acceptable in the workplace, though unwelcome by many. Jokes, by their nature, are meant to be light-hearted, and as such those offended by them, may be labelled as over-sensitive – thereby confirming the stereotype about females being over-sensitive.

Participant 13 explained: *“.....At my level, when someone does or says something uncomfortable and I am the sensitive one, and then I will always be the sensitive one because this happens every day of the week and I am exposed to it..... There has to be understanding on a formal and informal level. You will be left to work in your own corner and I can't because I am the only one in my group of General Managers, so I must adapt and fit in.”*

This concern for being over-sensitive is consistent with the behavioural confirmation (self-fulfilling prophecy) literature discussed in Chapter 2, whereby perceivers cause others to confirm their preconceived biases. Perceivers who believe that a group possesses certain attributes treat members of that group accordingly. When targets reciprocate the treatment they receive, perceivers then view their preconceptions as valid (Operario & Fiske, 2001). In this case, those whom jokes are levelled at are concerned about being seen as sensitive by the perceivers.

Also frequently mentioned were the comments made by senior leaders in the workplace and how those comments were accepted and adopted by junior employees, thereby further causing stereotypes.

Some participants cited legislation as a remedial factor to the workplace comments that cause stereotypes. The legislation referred to by the participants, is the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, introduced in Chapter 1, which aims to achieve equity in the workplace by 'promoting fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination, amongst others. Inappropriate comments against employees are prohibited by the Act.

6.3.1.3.2. Employee behaviours as a cause of gender stereotypes in the workplace

A complete list of employee behaviours was figuratively presented in Figure 7. These behaviours can be further grouped into:

- Generic employee behaviours.

Performance based culture, lack of communication, discriminating against others, repetitive work, and keeping grudges were highlighted as employee behaviours that cause stereotypes. Performance based culture was frequently mentioned as a cause. Most respondents explained that the competitiveness of the financial services industry causes people to create stereotypes about who can sell and who cannot, for example *“Indians can sell better than anyone else”* (participant 1) and *“employ more guys (males) as they are less admin”*, implying that males have less emotional issues.

- Gender specific behaviours

Privileges to some groups (in this case, mainly women), perceptions that women are sensitive and emotional, women's submissiveness, working preferences of women and men, and rationalising women's behaviour, were the behaviours identified as causing stereotypes. The participants argued that workplace behaviours such as offering privileges to certain groups only caused stereotypes. Privileges that were used as examples include allocated the closest parking spaces to females and the furthest to males. This created the stereotype that females had to be treated differently, as participant 7 explained: *“I think it creates a*

complete divide, as much as women are just as competent and are equally skilled, and you can put them on the same level but all of a sudden when it comes to parking we can't walk 10 steps further than a man".

6.3.1.3.3. Work social settings that cause stereotypes in the workplace

Parties, particularly those whereby alcohol is served, were regarded as problematic by participants. Most respondents felt that at the parties, males and females grouped themselves by gender and also allocated tasks to different groups based on their perceived abilities. Men, for example, were allocated tasks that were viewed as challenging such as 'making fire for a braai', while females were allocated tasks that were viewed as menial tasks, for example making salads. This is consistent with the 'division of labour' according to gender discussed in Chapter 2. According to Schmitt and Wirth (2009, p431), "the division of labour according to gender leads to stereotypes that rationalize the division of labour". Alcohol was noted as an exacerbating factor, in that when employees had consumed alcohol at these parties, they tended to relate to the opposite gender in an unacceptable manner.

Sports events were also highlighted as a cause of stereotyping as the sport codes played are gender-specific, e.g. soccer for males and netball for females. Most respondents believed that gender-based sport is very divisive as it doesn't allow for

employees to relate as equals on the sports field. It was interesting to note that participants that argued that sports was more integrated, were male participants, whereas mainly female participants found sports divisive.

Interestingly common between parties and sports events, was the link that some participants made between what happens at the parties and on the sports field to workplace relations – that these social events were an extension of the workplace. Some participants argued that because males and females do not play the same sports, the abilities of some groups (females) in the sports field were linked back to their abilities in the workplace.

Participant 9 argued that because females are seen as cheerleaders on the soccer field, they continue to be seen as cheerleaders (supporters) and not the main ‘players’ in the workplace. She argued: *“that’s the mentality you will bring back to the workplace from the sports field and the girls are seen just as the cheerleaders. I have seen it. When you are back at work, you are expected to be cheerleader here as well.”*

6.3.1.3.4. General causes of stereotypes in the workplace

Under the workplace factors, the themes that emerged frequently included organisational culture, lack of communication, male domination, and historical factors – relating to the historically favourable position of males in the workplace.

6.4. Research Question 3 – What role does the workplace play in forming stereotypes?

The purpose of this research question was to determine the role played by the workplace in the formation of stereotypes, mainly whether they are formed in the workplace or employees join the workplace with already established stereotypes.

6.4.1. Awareness of stereotypes in the workplace

Do stereotypes exist? This question was asked with the objective of confirming the existence of stereotypes in the workplace. Awareness of stereotypes in the workplace was confirmed by eight participants. They used examples that confirmed their awareness as most of the examples used were either personal (the participants had experienced them personally) or had been observed in their immediate department or in the company in which they worked. Interestingly, the examples used were mainly gender-based, even though the question was about stereotypes in general. This suggests that participants associate stereotypes with gender stereotypes. Four of the respondents were not aware of stereotypes in their workplace, while one participant alluded to stereotype presence in the past. When

probed further, the participant that had only observed stereotypes in the past commented that legislation has made the presence of stereotypes less conspicuous.

When did you become aware of stereotypes? The majority of the participants responded that they first became aware of stereotypes when they entered the workplace. This means that they had not observed or they had not experienced stereotypes prior to working. This is consistent with the literature that suggests that the workplace is the harbouring ground for stereotypes. As Operario and Fiske (2001, p45) explained: “Despite increasing contact between nations and ethnic groups, stereotypes continue to haunt communities and institutions, and the effects are particularly conspicuous in the organizational context”. Therefore most respondents were not aware of stereotypes until they entered the workplace. Those that had been aware of stereotypes attributed their awareness to their childhood, either in the home environment or in school.

6.4.2. Role of the organisation in stereotype development

Understanding when stereotypes are formed was a crucial part of the study in that to determine the causes of stereotypes in the workplace, the study had to confirm whether the workplace is responsible for the formation of these stereotypes or employees enter the organisation with them already formed. Over 60% of the participants believed that stereotypes were formed in childhood, particularly in

school and in the home environment. This finding is consistent with the literature on the causes of stereotypes in Chapter 2, particularly that of Johnson and Redmond (2000) who argued that stereotypes arise when we assume that individuals will possess specific norms, values and modes of behaviour due to various factors, including upbringing. Participants who attributed the formation of stereotypes to the workplace made an association between stereotyping with leadership and decision making, which is a core function of leadership.

6.4.3. Role of the organisation in stereotype development

Again, to determine the causes of stereotypes in the workplace, the study had to confirm whether the workplace is responsible for the formation of these stereotypes or employees enter the organisation with them already formed. The confirmation of the role the organisation plays was overwhelming (11 participants). This is consistent with the responses participants gave on the 'awareness of stereotypes' question. In both questions, the participants consistently associate stereotypes with the organisation. This is also consistent with various literature that acknowledges the role of the organisation in stereotyping as discussed in Chapter 2, for example: Operario and Fiske; 2001) "Stereotypes are responsive to human intent, so they can be held in check with personal motivation and social norms created in organizations" (p46). It is clear that the participants believe the organisation has a role to play in the development of stereotypes.

CHAPTER 7 : CONCLUSION

7.1. Introduction

This chapter summarises the main findings of the research and assesses if the research objectives have been met. The chapter closes the loop in terms of the questions asked in Chapter 3. To that end, the chapter starts with the summary of findings and conclusions that may be drawn from the research findings. The chapter then concludes with recommendations for stakeholders and recommendations for future research.

7.2. Summary of key findings and conclusions from the research

It can be concluded from the study that stereotypes and gender stereotypes are well understood concepts which are used synonymously by most people. Consistent with literature on stereotypes, terms that share a synonymic relationship with categorising, such as generalising, grouping, classifying and discriminating are most commonly used in defining stereotypes. Consequently, stereotypes can therefore be defined as *'categorising people in an oversimplified manner according to gender and race'*.

Interestingly, an automatic association of stereotypes to gender stereotypes occurs when people are asked about stereotypes in open ended question format. More people offer gender based stereotype examples more voluntarily than any other

type of stereotype. This is a phenomenon, best termed as: *'think stereotypes, think gender stereotypes'*, which attests to the prominence of gender stereotypes in the workplace over most other stereotypes.

Awareness of stereotypes in the workplace by employees can be confirmed, particularly gender biased stereotypes. Furthermore, stereotypes are observed for the first time in the workplace. It cannot be concluded whether this initial awareness of stereotypes in the workplace is as a result of the workplace introducing the stereotypes or simply highlighting its existence. Emerging much more clearly though, was that remedial factors, such as legislation, lessened overt stereotypical behaviours in the workplace. Future work in this field would need to focus on the role of legislation in mitigating or aggravating stereotypes in the workplace.

The study found that stereotypes are formed in childhood, particularly in early childhood and through primary schooling. The workplace does not form stereotypes however plays a role in developing them, through practices such as recruitment, promotions and the culture of the organisation. Therefore by the time employees enter the workplace they have formed stereotypes but may not be aware of them until they enter the workplace.

Stereotypes are mainly caused by societal and workplace factors. Societal factors such as culture, religion, and men and women's views of each other are regarded as causal factors. Family orientation, in particular upbringing (how children are raised), which can also be regarded as a societal factor as it speaks to socialisation, is also a prominent cause of stereotypes. Workplace factors that cause stereotypes include comments, employee behaviours and work social settings. Comments cause stereotypes, particularly gender stereotypes. This is through the use of jokes and comments made by senior leaders in the organisation, whose comments are then emulated by the junior employees. Employee behaviours, the things that employees do, can have an impact on stereotypes. Interestingly, even behaviors that are intended to be positive, such as awarding special privileges, (for example, better parking spaces to female staff), cause negative stereotypes. Sport events and parties, especially where alcohol is served, contribute significantly to cause stereotypes. Interestingly the behaviors in the sports field and at parties are transferred to the workplace and even though they may be appropriate for those settings, they become troublesome in the workplace. The segregation caused by the nature of the sporting codes, for example, soccer for males and netball for females, is a leading factor in stereotype causes.

7.3. Recommendations

Recommendations for employers:

- Programs, including training programmes, to educate employees about the use of inappropriate comments and their impact on some employees. This should be done with the aim of eradicating inappropriate comments. Senior leadership in particular must be sensitised on how their comments may be emulated by junior employees, using legislation as a basis. Continued use of inappropriate comments must be dealt with harshly through internal disciplinary processes.
- Monitoring the permeation of stereotypes in the organisational culture will be beneficial. Organisations should periodically conduct, through objective external parties, culture surveys to assess whether overt or covert stereotyping occurs.
- It would be beneficial for employers to include gender diversity in the key performance areas of senior managers and executives. This should align to the balanced score card and should include, amongst others: females' recruitment, promotions, training, turnover, remuneration and overall satisfaction levels. This will elevate the importance of gender diversity in the workplace. A balanced score card is a measurement tool used in organizations to measure the performance of either individuals or departments holistically or in a balanced manner.
- "One of the greatest challenges that stereotypes pose to organisations is that they simply go unchallenged" Operario & Fiske (2001, p56). Stereotypical

employee behaviours must be guarded against and challenged when they surface. All employees must be treated equally in the workplace. Organisations can achieve this through diversity policies, forums and programmes. Exception should only be made for Affirmative Action and Employment Equity recruitment and promotional opportunities for designated groups.

- In a South African context, where race is dealt with more preventatively due to the history of the country, employers should highlight the importance of gender equity more prominently and highlight gender stereotypical behaviors in the diversity programmes run in companies

7.4. Future research

For future research, it is recommended that the following concepts are investigated further:

- A further exploration of childhood incidents that cause stereotypes may be beneficial in understanding the development of stereotypes, with the view of curbing those occurrences.
- The introduction of primary school programmes aimed at teaching children about the effects and dangers of stereotypes while they are still young, so that they become aware of and hopefully avoid stereotypical behaviours.
- The specific role played by the organisation, with special reference to prejudice intolerance and application of legislation to curbing stereotypes should be explored further.
- The impact of gender biased sports and social gatherings on employee relations in the workplace should also be investigated

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

1. What is your gender?
2. What racial group are you classified under?
3. Please state your age.
4. Please confirm your employment status?
5. Which industry are you employed in?
6. How long have you been employed?
7. What is your employment level?
8. What is your understanding of what stereotyping is?
9. What is your understanding of what gender stereotyping is?
10. When did you first become aware of gender stereotypes?
11. When are gender stereotypes formed? Why do you say that?
12. What causes stereotypes?
13. Are you aware of stereotypes that exist in your workplace? Please give some examples
14. What role, if any, do you believe the organization plays in stereotyping? Why do you say that?
15. In your opinion, do comments made in the workplace cause gender stereotypes? Please provide examples of such comments.

16. What employee behaviors cause the stereotypes? Please provide examples of such behaviors.
17. In your opinion, do work social settings outside of the workplace (e.g. parties, get-togethers, sporting events, etc) cause stereotypes? Please provide examples of these events.
18. What other insights would you like to share with me regarding stereotypes?