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Using (in)visibility and self-efficacy to critically explore the gendered hierarchies that prevail in organisations

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Abstract

The study was prompted by the persistent paucity of women in the higher echelons of companies. Extant literature on meritocracy and choice did not offer a complete explanation for this. The study therefore set out to explore and challenge the underlying assumptions that have perpetuated the solidification of gendered hierarchies in organisations.

A qualitative research design approach was used. Information was gathered from 12 in-depth interviews with female managers who worked in the greater Johannesburg area. Through the tradition of phenomenological design, the essence of the women's career progression was analysed through the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants.

Structural barriers were identified in the organisations. The higher the visibility of the male dominated inner circles present, the more discernible the barriers were, the more the self-efficacy of the females diminished. The study makes a case for the invisibility of inner circles to be eliminated. When inner circles are more visible, prior assumptions can be challenged. The study also identified pioneering opportunities for women to entrench their own successful outcomes in organisations that can contribute to their sustainable career progression.

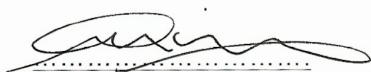
Keywords

(in)visibility; self-efficacy; gendered hierarchies; underlying assumptions; socialisation

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.

Veloshnee Munian



Signature

11 NOVEMBER 2013

Date

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Research on gender issues has made substantial progress over the years. It has successfully ignited legislative and educational reforms that have resulted in an increase in the female workforce participation rates (Tatli, Vassilopoulou & Ozbilgin, 2013). However the challenge that remains is that women still feel marginalised, silenced and (in)visible in their careers (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). They are not fully integrated into the decision-making ranks of organisations and hence cannot truly control their own career trajectories. Discourse is divided on whether the gender issues have now become redundant or on whether women are forced to make encumbered decisions due to the lack of equal opportunity (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

To say that the gender issues have been solved is a very seductive proposition. It gives women a sense of accomplishment and adds to their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). They feel that they are in control of their futures and are able to do so by competing on the same level as men (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). However caution is expressed that this position might be too simplistic (Kumra, 2010). Another school of thought suggests that hidden gendered processes are being ignored. It is purported that these are currently embedded in organisations and are contributing to the prevailing female disadvantage that currently exists (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Defending this position creates discomfort since it is difficult to articulate. It is characterised by the unconscious level at which these practices dwell such that they are taken for granted and hence difficult to debate (Schein, 1984). It speaks to the collective term of (in)visibility where women are highly visible and critically scrutinised in token senior positions while the gendered processes that perpetuate this continue to remain invisible and unchallenged (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

Evidence shows that supporters for gender issues being resolved are basing this on the assumption that equality is achieved through numerical balancing of gender. More women are included as part of the workforce and the disparities are so small statistically, that they are not actionable or harmful (Martell, Emrich & Robison-Cox, 2012). The question that is not really being addressed is why this numeric balancing

has not translated into an inclusion within the power base that enables women to influence their own work life.

Tatli et. al (2013) looked for evidence of inclusion in the fast emerging economies in the Asia Pacific region. They found that one of the greatest challenges facing the Chinese and Singaporean economies is a shortage of talented professionals and leaders due to the number of young adults decreasing in the future. Potential for organisations to capture and benefit from untapped female talent exists. However, despite the narrowing down of the gender education gap, women continue to significantly lag behind men in managerial ranks. Even in a knowledge-driven economy like Singapore, women are continually prevented from mobilising into the working world due to multiple cultural and societal barriers (Tatli et. al, 2013).

These observations translate into lost opportunities for organisations of those countries to leverage the available talent and leadership residing within the female populations. The lack of inclusion will result in certain professions experiencing significant brain drain as these countries battle with the lack of adequate skills and productivity. Findings such as this also highlight how women find themselves dwelling within the tensions of (in)visibility. There isn't a shortage of talented women, in general, but their talent remains less visible or undervalued (Acker, 2006).

In arguing for a business case for why women should be included, business will look for the augmenting of the bottom-line, which in itself reinforces the masculine culture. The standard business case can be seen to constrain rather than open up discussions of social inclusion and eventual competitive growth in the business world (Bevan & Learmonth, 2012).

In South Africa the number of women that have entered the workforce as well as managerial ranks has increased over time, which appears to be promising. Women make up 43.9% of the South African workforce (Genderlinks, January, 2013).

However women are still marginalised in the senior executive and board member positions. Disparities of gender representations were demonstrated in recent surveys conducted by Grant Thornton. The Grant Thornton International Business Report (2013) revealed that 28% of senior management positions in South Africa is occupied by women. This figure has remained stagnant since 2009. More concerning is that 21%

of the SA businesses surveyed have no women at all in senior management positions.

Research is still conducted to determine why women continue to leave organisations (Anderson, Vinnicombe & Singh, 2010). Women are still presented from a lack of fit perspective relative to the male model of success (Heilman, 2012). It has been posited that women have been given the same opportunities as men to mobilise into managerial positions based on the notion of meritocracy. However the same admission criteria is not congruent with the expectation placed on them as they execute their roles. The actual experiences of women suddenly become misaligned when the explicit focus on procedural fairness and merit gets replaced with kinship ties and other arbitrary criteria (Tatli et al, 2013). Consequently women leave organisations or opt out of senior positions. As the paucity of senior women in organisations increases, the situation is mediated by the fact that women are exercising their choice to leave (Sealy, 2010; Simpson, Ross-Smith & Lewis, 2010).

Those who oppose that gender is solved say that this is not convincing enough. The demonstrations of ambiguity and contradictions between beliefs and actual experiences are too many and too complex to be ignored (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013; Kark, Waismel-Manor & Shamir, 2012; Loughlin, Arnold & Crawford, 2012). They challenge that the choice of women is not unencumbered. They purport that a deeper understanding into the gendered practices and processes that remain hidden within norms, values and customs of organisations needs to be explored (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Kyriakidou, 2012; Lewis & Simpson, 2012; Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012). It has been posited that the disparities in gender representations continues to prevail because the dominant male privilege within organisations remains unchallenged and unproblematised (Lewis & Simpson, 2012; Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012).

In order to make sense of and to understand the complexity within the context of the culture of organisations, it would be necessary to elucidate how women interact with the underlying cultural elements during their daily organisational lives. Research has been conducted (Fernando & Cohen, 2011; Bevan & Learmonth, 2012; Purcell, 2012; Stead, 2013) in the form of in-depth interviews to try to understand how women make sense of their experiences in organisations and how they cope with the contradictions and tensions that manifest within gendered practices. The responses from the women in those studies were to find ways to cope and work around these practices. They did

not challenge the system which inadvertently contributed to their own marginalisation.

More needs to be explored here. Representations of more robust platforms are needed to cognitively align gender disparity and career progression to adequately bridge with the context of the organisation.

1.2 Problem statement

In order to make sense of perceptions and beliefs that manifest into embedded gendered processes that perpetuate female disadvantage, it is necessary to delve into the taken for granted underlying assumptions present in organisations as posited by Schein (1984).

The aim of this study was to add to the body of knowledge that exists to elucidate women's daily organisational experiences with emphasis being placed on unpacking and challenging pre-conceived assumptions that have served to entrench male privilege in organisations. Schein's (1984) analysis provides a robust platform from which to infer the complexity that women face in trying to cope with assimilation or violation of cultural norms while pursuing career progression. In order to deconstruct the complexity, this study used a set of concepts as a frame of reference to allow for empirical analysis.

Schein (1971) presented the career cone concept as a three-dimensional framework to understand how individuals interact with organisations as their careers transition. Lewis & Simpson (2010a; 2012) speak about how visibility and invisibility have collectively become pivotal concepts in the careers of women as they navigate through gendered hierarchies and practices. Women deploy them as coping mechanisms as well as strategically in order to make sense of their environment.

Bandura (1977) presented a theory that states that the way in which people process the information from their surroundings will determine the level of self-efficacy that they possess. He hypothesised that self-efficacy as a concept can be determined by the amount of effort and the length of time an individual dedicates to coping with obstacles and stressful situations. This determination pivots on the belief or expectation of an individual's own effectiveness. At high strengths of self-efficacy, threatening tasks are performed with virtually no apprehensiveness (Bandura 1982).

The use of the three concepts mentioned above aided in framing and explaining the interplay between women and organisations. Framing (in)visibility (Lewis & Simpson, 2010a; 2012) within the career cone (Schein, 1971), added a robust understanding of how women respond to gendered practices within a conceptual framework of an organisation. As women progress in their careers dominated by men, they are navigating contradictions and tensions of myriad demands that require fitting in and making sense of dichotomous roles simultaneously (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

The responses of women have been varied (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). Some have foregone marriage and family for career progression while others have left organisations for various reasons. Some women have chosen to approach their careers in a gender-neutral manner and have instead internalised their stunted progression as a personal reflection on their lack of the requisite skills or willingness to succeed in high-level positions. It is important to understand how these decisions and rationalisations have affected the self-efficacy of women (Bandura, 1982).

Considering these responses within the context of the organisation starts to springboard questions about the underlying assumptions that define the culture of South African organisations (Schein, 1984). This served as a lens to further understand how women are excluded from the central power base (Schein, 1971; Lewis & Simpson, 2012). In order to influence a different position for women in society and in organisations, it is important to first understand the underlying dimensions of gendered processes and practices that are present in organisations.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 female managers who work in organisations in the greater Johannesburg area. Discussions centered on mapping their entire career trajectory within and between various organisations. This provided a rich platform from which to gain insights into how they perceived their career progress relative to the organisational regimes.

It was found that women prefer to deny the salience of gender as a source of disadvantage to their careers. Some defended their organisations with an almost nervous sense of loyalty. By further excavating the espoused values held by the participants, this study has been able to challenge previously maintained drivers for concepts such as the queen bee syndrome (Staines, Travis & Jayerante, 1973), has

provided some insight into some of the inner circles that prevail in organisations, has provided a different perspective for why women leave organisations and consequently why they are sparsely represented in senior positions in organisations.

A glimpse of opportunities for women to establish their own cultural assumptions was also found to exist. A trend exists in the public sector where women are finding many gaps available to entrench successful outcomes in solving some of the country's structural and economic deficiencies. This is allowing women to make a difference and be counted for something meaningful in their careers. These opportunities, however, should not be considered as exhaustive or confined to just the public sector.

In summary, the implications of this study were to challenge the silences around inequality and gender based discrimination that prevails in organisations albeit unintentionally. This was prompted by the continued paucity of senior women in organisations. Existing constructions were critically examined to unpack how the current discourse that gender issues are solved came to be solidified. The study went further to challenge the assumptions that contribute to gendered hierarchies.

Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction to the debate

The economic empowerment of women was one of the most significant social transformations of our time (Lewis & Simpson, 2010b). Almost half the workforce today constitutes women. However much remains to be addressed. Numeric balances might present a position that gender disparities in organisations have been resolved. There remains, however, a paucity of senior women in top positions of organisations in many countries (Tatli et. al, 2013). This serves as an indicator that the issue of the lack of upward mobility and central inclusion of women still requires attention.

The prevailing question that needs to be addressed is whether women are in fact receiving equal opportunity and benefits to follow the career trajectory they wish to and consequently contribute and participate in the economy of the country in a meaningful way (Lewis & Simpson, 2010b). Two points of views were presented in the current research.

The younger generation of females believed that the gender issues were redundant. They preferred to believe that they have choice and freedom on an equal basis to men. They were confident that they have the independence to shape their own working lives and preferred to believe that the system was fair. This posed as a very seductive proposition and has hence gained significant traction. The lack of senior women in organisations was acknowledged but was justified and explained through the individual deficiency of women e.g. lack of ambition (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). The current situation was internalised and presented as women choosing to opt out from senior positions (Anderson et. al, 2010). Women were further negatively demonstrated as being ‘queen bees’ (Staines et. al, 1973) by holding each other back and not advocating for each other in the work place.

Another school of thought posited that women in fact did not have unencumbered choice (Broadbridge, 2010; Kumra, 2010). Women experienced limitations through structural and systemic elements that prevailed at an unconscious level in organisations. This position spoke to a second-generation discrimination that was present (Kumra, 2010). Defending this position was almost uncomfortable and demotivating since it was so difficult to articulate and demonstrate and hence was not

easily debatable. Proponents for this argument, however, pointed to the fact that the paucity of women in senior positions was in fact an indication of a more serious underlying discrimination that has been allowed to become entrenched in organisations to a point of being taken for granted (Kyriakidou, 2012; Lewis & Simpson, 2012; Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012).

2.2 Is the gender disparity debate now redundant?

In order to dissect the position that gender issues were resolved and were redundant and that women were in control of their own futures, the sameness versus difference debate was generated in response to the current situation (Sealy, 2010; Simpson, Ross-Smith & Lewis, 2010).

Gender stereotyping in terms of managerial roles was offered as the most common explanation for the limitation of the upward mobility of women in organisations (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Males were seen as agentic which was a characteristic that was defined by achievement, ambition, decisiveness, logic and dominance. Women were seen as communal which was defined by warmth, friendliness, collaboration and emotional sensitivity (Eagly, 1987; Heilman, 2012). Those descriptive stereotypes were demonstrated as widely accepted in organisational settings (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Vanderbroeck, 2010). They served as heuristics or energy-saving devices that allowed people to form impressions quickly and allowed for quick responses in highly complex environments (Heilman, 2012).

However as women broke through managerial barriers in organisations, the communal stereotypes became a source of disadvantage for women since agentic characteristics were more widely accepted as successful manager characteristics (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This led to the “think-manager-think-male” hypothesis (Schein, Mueller & Lituchy, 1996) which demonstrated women’s disadvantage. Both men and women in organisations held the perception that men possessed more suitable characteristics of managers as opposed to women. Support for this hypothesis was demonstrated even in recent times and across various cultures (Boysen & Nkomo, 2010; Elsaïd & Elsaïd, 2012; Fernando, 2012; Tienari, Meriläinen, Holgersson & Bendl, 2013). Despite support for the “think manager – think male” hypothesis, the salient point that prevailed

was that women have managed to bypass this and still became managers.

When they became managers however, they started off as token managers. Their heightened visibility left them open to scrutiny, so they were assigned stereotypical attributes and men ‘closed ranks’ against them through informal processes (Kanter, 1977). However Kanter (1977) denied the salience of gender in her analysis at the time and this denial was carried forward with increasing support by women and organisations (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

With the continuance of the women in management debate came the contradictions and tensions women experienced relative to the male model of success that was organised around competence and effectiveness as the norm. Women had to assimilate to this model in order to be accepted within managerial ranks. However assimilating to the male model of conducting work activities had entwined women within a double bind paradox (Eagly & Carli, 2007). When women were seen to display the traditional male characteristics of decisiveness and competitiveness, they were penalised (Kark et. al, 2012) or received negative evaluations (Loughlin et. al, 2012) from peers and colleagues. They were seen to be stepping outside their prescribed feminine behaviours. When they displayed “too feminine” or communal behaviours, they were perceived as not suitable for management positions. Those prescriptive stereotypes have led to the construction of invisible boundaries on what was considered “too feminine” or “too aggressive”. Women had to find ways to navigate this ambiguous terrain (Heilman, 2012).

In response, women’s differences were leveraged as special contributions to organisations and were offered up as a business case that would promote transformational leadership. This led to the observation that women had to display sameness relative to men in order to achieve the position but had to display difference in order to implement the job (Simpson et. al, 2010).

2.2.1 The contradictions of sameness and difference

2.2.1.1 Sameness supports meritocracy

Displaying sameness relative to men had increased in currency due to the concept of meritocracy. Meritocracy was judged based on the objective criteria of education and experience and skills. This implied that procedural fairness was present at work and suggested that women could compete for jobs and promotions on an equal footing to men (Sealy, 2010). Meritocracy had been presented as the discourse for equal opportunity. It gave women hope that they could get into managerial roles based on their own effort. By relying on this element to get there, women felt a sense of accomplishment (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

However it was demonstrated that ‘neutral’ criteria contained gender bias since they were set by those that were already controlling the power base and could consequently set the rules that would further support the positions they held. Career advancement depended not only on competence but also on social acceptance and approval. Men possessed the added advantage of having access to social networks and support systems that circumvented individualistic criteria characterised by merit (Kumra, 2010).

Following on the sameness debate, Vanderbroeck (2010) warned that organisations were measuring male and female leaders using the same outdated male-oriented instruments that have not been revised since its development forty years ago. Women consequently had the tendency to correct their behaviours accordingly. However this could have led to women developing leadership skills that could be less relevant going forward.

It was argued that meritocracy persisted under the guise of ‘contemporary patriarchy’ where the subordination of women was maintained within a framework of equality (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). This subordination was based on the concealment of unequal outcomes which was difficult to detect. A study by Tienari et. al. (2013) disrupted the merit discourse by demonstrating through interviews with executive search consultants in Austria, Finland and Sweden how male dominance in top management was reproduced. It was found that even at the preliminary stage of profiling, clients and consultants started with a gendered set of criteria. In some cases, it was explicitly stated if a woman was required and at other times, the criteria set out

by the client limited the number of women that qualified for the position. Women were filtered out at the subsequent stages of shortlisting according to their potential to become homemakers. If in fact women did make it into the final list, they were usually not considered for the position due to shifting criteria by the client or a suggestion that the female was reluctant to take up the challenge.

This demonstrated how assumptions about men and women served to perpetuate the dominance of a particular type of man in top management positions. Established practices created continuity in inclusion of men and exclusion of women at top management while accumulating considerable human and reputational capital, yet faith in the notion of meritocracy prevailed (Tienari et. al, 2013). Placing faith in meritocracy was criticised as re-interpreting gender disadvantage away from a structural, cultural or institutional issue toward a matter of personal choice (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

2.2.1.2 Difference supports transformational leadership

The discourse on difference was also leveraged as a way for women to influence their own careers. Difference was seen as a source of strength in females rather than a disadvantage, femininity was seen as an asset with potential advantage that organisations could leverage through transformational leadership (Simpson et. al, 2010).

Transformational leadership became the successful model of leadership in organisations. It involved treating employees with individual consideration, inspiring them through personal behavior and vision and encouraging them to intellectually challenge old assumptions (Vanderbroeck, 2010).

However there have been reservations about this since the paucity of senior women continued and there was a danger that women would be confined to the stereotypical ‘caring’ leadership roles. (Vanderbroeck, 2010; Billing, 2011; Vinkenburg, Van Engen, Eagly, Johannessen-Schmidt, 2011). Although women were rated as displaying this behavior more than men (Vinkenburg et al, 2011), they did not benefit from it. This could be attributed to the fact that the model of transformational leadership was built on the behaviours of excellent male leaders. The instrument, Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and its preceding theory were most frequently used to measure

this form of leadership. They were developed based on male participants in a male context of the US army (Loughlin, et. al, 2012).

Loughlin et. al (2012) conducted a study using the MLQ instrument to determine how directors from the Canadian Government would evaluate the simulated files of managers. It was found that men and women were penalised if they did not engage in individually considerate behavior but only men were strongly recommended for rewards and promotions if they did display the required behaviours. This finding was translated into a lost opportunity for organisations to leverage off the pool of potentially good leaders. This demonstrated that the same organisational behaviour did not necessarily lead to the same outcomes for male and female leaders.

This finding translated into a realisation that hidden dimensions of power were present and by virtue of their taken-for-granted status, have impressed upon our frames of understanding that they were acceptable and supportable. While women strongly held the belief that their relational skills were superior (Simpson et. al, 2010), the subsequent benefit to their career advancement was misaligned (Loughlin et. al, 2012).

2.2.1.3 Disparities are mediated by choice

Human beings have bounded rationality and therefore use heuristics to make sense of their environment. Women saw that they had been given the opportunity to step onto the economic ladder and while they acknowledged that certain organisational successes appeared out of their reach, they struggled to articulate it as an element of structural discrimination (Anderson et. al, 2010). Hence they internalised the responsibility and mediated the disparities as a manifestation of the choices made by women during the course of their career (Lewis & Simpson, 2010b; Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

When they became managers they were presented with the choice of motherhood or career. While the tradeoffs women made could be categorised as a lack of equal opportunities, the discourse of choice continued to receive attention. For choice to be the explanation for women's relegation to the lower ranks in organisations, would require a clear demonstration that the structures policies and procedures of organisations were neutral (Lewis & Simpson, 2010b).

Hakim (2000) presented her preference theory that purported that women chose between three lifestyles when presented with genuine choice viz. adaptive, home-centred and work-centred. Adaptive women showed no fixed priority between work and family while home-centred women showed a preference for family and home. Hakim (2000) presented the work-centred women as being successful in their careers as long as they prioritised their career over family.

Kumra (2010) and Broadbridge (2010) warned that the theory was too simplistic and could lead to trivial and misleading conclusions. They specifically criticised the work-centred typology in the theory. The assumption that women have genuine and unfettered choice was brought into question. Women in an international management consulting firm (Kumra, 2010) and retail executives (Broadbridge, 2010) were interviewed to obtain their position on the promotion to partnership process (Kumra, 2010) and the tradeoffs between family and career (Broadbridge, 2010). It was established that those women were work-centred according to Hakim's (2000) definition. The studies demonstrated that the choice of career advancement of women was not unfettered. It was suggested that the structural constraints within organisations such as the prevailing model of male success, the need for high-level sponsorship, and the need to network affected women's choices.

Choice was rationalised as the mediating construct that explained why women were not progressing in their careers. However it did not provide a complete explanation for the complexities and contradictions women faced (Lewis & Simpson, 2010b).

2.2.2 An ambiguous conclusion

Drawing together on all the positions, it was clearly demonstrated that the evidence present was not enough to explain the rather undeniable schism that prevailed. The gender issues did not appear to be resolved. There was an indication present that an alternative perspective still remained to be examined and challenged in order to more fully understand the complexity of the current situation (Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012).

The glass ceiling was eliminated but the subtlety that remained was more dangerous due to the difficulty of being able to articulate it. Sturm (2001) referred to this as second-generation discrimination issues. The first generation issues of obvious and visible forms of discrimination were diffused by the implementation of legislative

policies. The persistent paucity of senior women in organisations served as an indication that a more structural but invisible form of discrimination might be present. The discourses of meritocracy and women's opportunities to exercise choice have not provided convincing evidence. The possibility that hidden processes and practices existed to contribute to the embedded forms of discrimination that negatively affected the career advancement of women needed to be considered as well (Kyriakidou, 2012).

2.3 What of structural and systemic constraints?

Broadbridge & Simpson (2011) put forward a strong position that women have continued to feel silenced, ridiculed, seduced, inferior, infantilised by dominant men. This position was leveraged off the assertion that the organisation was an inequality regime (Acker, 2006). The early works of Kanter (1977) had already highlighted the power of organisational culture and its deleterious effects on women. Her observations were further dissected in a post-structural study by Lewis & Simpson (2012). It was revealed how the men defined an exclusionary and gendered culture within which women were marginalised. The status quo was maintained by enforcing masculine models, management symbols and stereotypes. Men in senior positions determined the career success of women through the process of hierarchy. Women were scrutinised in ways that men weren't as men activated the 'subordinating gaze' of women. Women were expected to accommodate masculine norms of management even though women could be seen as successfully adopting different norms.

2.3.1 The culture of gendered organisations

By virtue of hierarchies, the processes and practices within an organisation were unequal with influential decision-making taking place at the top hierarchies of organisations which were usually gendered. The image of a successful organisation and that of a successful leader have shared the same characteristics of strength, aggressiveness and competitiveness. Work was organised on the image of a white man who had no responsibilities for child or family demands other than earning a living. Hence while at work, he was totally committed and undistracted and willing to work longer hours if the need arose. This practice led to the development of successful organisations and healthy salaries and bonuses for the male employees. This served as a signal to men that this was the only way to conduct work successfully (Acker,

2006).

By considering the context described by Acker (2006) parallel to the myriad roles women navigated in their careers (Eagly & Carli, 2007), it was observed that women did not fit in (Heilman, 2012). However when the assumptions upon which a successful organisation was built were examined and challenged for present-day relevance, a different discussion emerged.

The visibility of gender inequality varied with organisations. People in dominant groups did not see their own privilege. The gendered practices were sometimes so subtle and so fleeting, that they became difficult to see (Acker, 2006). Women sometimes contributed to those practices since it was difficult to distinguish them from 'normal' professional practice that they interpreted as 'gender-neutral meritocracies' (Bevan & Learmonth, 2012). Laws and policies implemented by the countries brought inequalities under speculation. Certain organisations used diversity initiatives to attract and retain talented individuals. Organisational cultures, however, have been found to be resilient and hence equal opportunity initiatives have failed to deconstruct the inequalities (Sealy, 2010). Certain inequalities have remained entrenched due to them being naturally legitimised (Acker, 2006).

Employers saw women as more suited for child-care as opposed to the demanding careers that men were equipped for. Biological differences of women were seen as a source of inferiority as certain traits such as competitiveness were seen as masculine and hence superior. Those practices were accepted as correct and taken for granted and hence legitimate. As a result they remained unchallenged and invisible. Those with privilege failed to see the connection between the under representation of women and gendered practices. Instead it was believed that the low representation of women was due to the failure of individual women and not the system processes (Acker, 2006; Kulik & Olekalns, 2011).

(Martell et al, 2012) purported through the explanation of emergent phenomena that gender-segregation could be explained from a top-down perspective where a macro-level entity could exert a downward micro-level effect that affects the collective beliefs and behaviours of individuals. A parallel was drawn between this dynamic and Kanter's (1977) work where it was witnessed how a macro-level entity driven by an organisation's demographic composition exerted a downward influence on the beliefs

and behaviours of individuals to the extent that gender-segregation was perpetuated. This scenario is used as an example of how micro-level and macro-level forces have conspired unwittingly to produce segregation.

Martell et. al (2012) went further to describe how the existing structure of segregated hierarchy created biased attention that favoured men but disadvantaged women. The physical proximity that an incumbent has to the key decision makers increased the likelihood of promotion simply due to the heightened comfort level the senior manager felt toward the successful candidate. They posited that proximity, visibility and decision maker comfort served as causes and consequences of gender segregation.

The organising processes that created inequalities in subtle (Acker, 2006) and sometimes unintentional (Martell et. al, 2012) ways that made it difficult to document and confront could be explained through Schein's (1984) model of organisational culture. Schein (1984) posited that the culture of an organisation was learned, passed on and changed. This was underpinned by the degree to which the culture served as solutions to the problems presented by the environment which ran parallel to the explanation given by Acker (2006).

Organisational culture was analysed at three different levels. The visible level at which organisational architecture, office layout, visible and audible behavior patterns were discernible, was known as artifacts. At this level, the behavior of organisational actors was described but the underlying logic behind the behavior remained difficult to interpret (Schein, 1984). In order to understand further why people behaved in a certain manner, the values that govern their behavior was inferred or analysed. This was the second level of organisational culture where the values of organisational actors resided. However those could only be inferred by how people rationalised their behavior based on what they said was the reason for their behavior or what they ideally would have liked those reasons to be. The underlying reasons, however, still remained concealed or unconscious (Schein, 1984).

To be able to really understand how a group perceive, think and feel, it was necessary to probe within the underlying assumptions which resided at the third level of organisational culture. Underlying assumptions started out as espoused values but as the value led to behaviour and the behaviour solved a problem, the value translated into an assumption about how things were. As that assumption was taken for granted,

it fell out of awareness. An assumption that was taken for granted became so powerful that it became difficult to confront or debate (Schein, 1984).

In trying to understand how gendered practices became legitimised and accepted (Acker, 2006), Schein's (1984) explanation of culture shed some light. Human beings need cognitive order and consistency especially in complex environments. Therefore as certain behaviours were repeated, even homosocial reproduction (Tienari et. al, 2013), and they elicited successes, they were cognitively processed as the way to solve a problem at hand and hence became unconscious (Schein, 1984).

Culture is embedded in a group and therefore the original group must be clearly defined. The definition of such a group relies on (1) a set of people that have been together long enough to have shared significant problems (2) those that have the opportunity to solve the problems and have observed the effects of their solutions and (3) a group that has taken in new members (Schein, 1984). These criteria clearly described what could be a male dominated inner circle and provided insights into why it would remain stable and unchallenged (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

Based on Schein's (1984) analysis, similarities were drawn with Acker's (2006) position on gendered organisations. To understand why prescriptive beliefs and stereotypes about females prevailed, Schein's (1984) analysis of how culture was embedded in a group became relevant. Hierarchies and characteristics such as aggressiveness and competitiveness have prevailed (Acker, 2006) because men as a group deployed those behaviours as solutions to organisational problems in the past and have jointly shared in the successes and benefits from those behaviours in the form of increased market share and profits (Schein, 1984).

These agentic behaviours (Eagly & Carli, 2007) have resulted in repeated successes in the business world (Acker, 2006) and have thus been taken for granted and have become embedded in the underlying cultural assumptions of organisations to a point where these assumptions became undebatable. For a culture to serve its function, it must be perceived as correct and valid (Schein 1984). Acker (2006) spoke about inequalities remaining in organisations due to their increased legitimacy and low visibility. Anderson et. al (2010) found in their study that women in partner roles in international management firms chose to leave when a financial incentive was offered. Their explanation for leaving was characterised by a choice they made. No critique

was leveled against the organisations for any constraints or barriers that might have prevented women from managing home and work responsibilities. By internalising the responsibility for their situations, the broader organisational and social context remained unexamined. Similarities could be inferred here to shed some light on why the dominant male privilege remained unchallenged and perceived as legitimate while the choices that women made were highlighted as contributing to their increased paucity in the higher echelons of organisations.

2.4 Conceptualising the study

The context outlined above placed the current ambiguities and paradoxes that women face in a different light. Instead of considering women from a 'lack of fit' perspective (Heilman, 2012) relative to the embedded male norm (Lewis & Simpson, 2012), the context considered the origins of certain norms and values (Schein, 1984) and opened up a discussion to challenging the relevance of certain underlying assumptions in our present constantly changing business context.

In order to discuss and create a platform to further challenge present gendered practices, this study used three concepts to explore and glean insights from women's experiences in organisations. The three concepts included the career cone concept (Schein, 1971) that considered the organisation as a three dimensional entity; the (in)visibility (Lewis & Simpson, 2010a; 2012) concept that encapsulated the contradictions and tensions that women experienced in their careers and the self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) concept that provided a perspective on how women responded to the context and issues around them. These concepts were operationalised, in order to add further meaning to the resultant study.

2.4.1 The career cone concept

The career cone concept was presented by Schein (1971) in order to describe, articulate and analyse the career experiences and encounters of an individual within an organisation. There were two types of processes that described the dynamic relationship between the individual and the organisation. The first was the influence that the organisation had on the individual which was considered as socialisation. The second was the influence an individual had on an organisation which was called innovation. A career was considered as a process over time that encapsulated many

different kinds of relationships.

2.4.1.1 The organisation

Schein (1971) described the organisation as a model which involved the movement of people through it. He proposed that an organisation be conceived as a three dimensional entity like a cone or cylinder. The external vertical surface would be round and a core or inner centre could be identified within. A figure depicting what this would look like is attached in Appendix 2.1.

Based on the proposed shape (Schein, 1971), movement within an organisation occurred in three ways. The first movement was vertical based on an increase in rank within an organisation. The second movement was radial based on an increase in centrality in an organisation. In other words it described the degree to which an individual was “on the inside”. The third movement was circumferential which corresponded to changing functions or divisions within an organisation. Those movements happened independently but there was a possibility that some amount of radial movement took place with the vertical movement unless the shape of the organisation was more like a cylinder. Demonstrations in research show a contrast between what Schein (1971) posited above and the actual experiences of women. Women have struggled to navigate a favourable outcome in attaining the radial movement together with an increase in rank (Fernando & Cohen, 2011; Bevan & Learmonth, 2012; Nemoto 2013).

Three types of boundaries that characterised the organisational structure corresponded with the movements. The first was hierarchical boundaries that separated the hierarchical levels. The second was inclusion boundaries that separated individuals or groups who possessed different degrees of centrality or acceptance. The third was functional or departmental boundaries that separated different functions, divisions or departments. Boundaries differed according to number of, degree of permeability and type of filtering properties (Schein, 1971).

This was refined further by considering the type of filters that characterised the different boundaries. Hierarchical boundaries depended on education levels and skill. Inclusion boundaries were more difficult to characterise since criteria changed as a person got closer to the centre. Filter properties were formally stated as requirements for

admission or they were characterised by highly informal norms shared by a particular group (Schein, 1971).

The findings of Purcell (2012) were used to draw some comparisons with the filtering properties of the hierarchical and inclusion boundaries in gendered organisations. At the upper ranks of management evaluative criteria became subjective and informal depending largely on the successful activation of cultural capital. At a retail fashion corporation that Purcell (2012) studied, it was found that this activation included increased visibility to key managers and decision-makers, increased work-related social capital and opportunities for mentorship, access to insider company knowledge and further opportunities to demonstrate personality and background outside the workplace. Some of these points translated into opportunities that women missed out on due to family obligations or lack of proximity and level of comfort with the key decision makers (Martell et. al, 2012). This highlights the gendered nature of organisations and how it has resulted in unequal outcomes for women (Purcell, 2012).

Careers could thus be described by an analysis of an organisation by the number of boundaries present, the permeability of each type of boundary and the filtering system that characterise them (Schein, 1971).

2.4.1.2 The individual

An individual can be thought as an integrated set of social selves that determine a self-image. Schein (1971) posited that individuals construct different selves for the various situations and performance roles that were expected of them. The process of socialisation within organisations taught individuals through norms, rules of conduct and values how to behave in organisational settings while fulfilling their obligations.

One of the ways in which socialisation can be seen to work was in processing information asymmetry within the heightened ambiguity of managerial work. By internalising and basing their actions on the espoused values of a firm, incumbents can attempt to decrease information asymmetry (Martell et. al, 2012). However when the presented self did not fit the situation, failure to get confirmation for the social self posed a threat to the actor who found ways to re-equilibrate the situation. The nature and integration of a person's social selves change over the course of a career due to socialisation. New roles brought new demands and a person constructed and re-

constructed attributes and skills to meet these demands.

Trying to fit in an organisation that already had gendered leadership beliefs have led to women constructing preferred self-views in an effort to cope with the environment. Women responded in different ways. The response with the most deleterious effect was to deny membership with their own gender in an effort to avoid being categorised with negatively perceived feminine stereotypes (Vanderbroeck, 2010; Ellemers, Rink, Derkx & Ryan, 2012).

It was through behaviours such as these that the concept of the queen bee syndrome (Staines et. al, 1973) gained popularity. The term was adopted in reference to women who have been successful in a male-dominated organisation, who have behaved in ways that hindered rather than advanced the progress of other women. There was an expectation that like men who engaged in homosocial activities (Kanter, 1977), women in management would participate in addressing gendered practices in the organisation and display solidarity with other women. However the underlying processes that thwarted this phenomenon and the subsequent intentions of women were not self-evident and thus added to the negative outcomes of women (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Mavin & Grandy, 2012).

The added danger presented was that the motivation for the constructed self-view might limit women from participating in activities that could have yielded positive outcomes for them. They also ran the risk of neglecting to develop more relevant leadership styles that would have benefitted their career (Ellemers et. al, 2012).

A person can possess labile social selves where beliefs and attitudes can be adjusted to relate comfortably with others and express membership with a particular group. On the other hand there are parts of an individual made up of more stable social selves that will demonstrate rigidity in belief and attitude. The degree to which individuals adapted their social selves to an organisation through socialisation and how centred they were in their stable social selves determined if they would be capable of innovating as described by (Schein, 1971) above.

2.4.1.3 The career

The dynamics of a career could be thought of as a sequence of boundary passages. It was possible to move inward without moving upward. It was also possible to move upward without moving inward. It was not necessary that boundaries were crossed in a set sequence (Schein, 1971).

Schein (1971) used these concepts and descriptions to hypothesise the following: The degree of organisational socialisation was the highest when an individual was passing through hierarchical and inclusion boundaries. A person was vulnerable to socialisation pressures just before and after boundary passage. Innovation occurred in the middle of a given stage of a career. A person would need to be relatively stable in a career; which means that a certain amount of acceptance and centrality must be present in order to innovate. Socialisation influenced the more labile social selves and innovation was influenced by the stable social selves. A change in the stable social selves as a result of socialisation probably occurred under conditions of coercive persuasion such as a tight labour market, an obligatory employment contract or a reward system that entraps an individual.

Bartol (1978) had suggested a framework using Schein's (1971) career cone to analyse the sex structuring of organisations. However her framework concentrated mostly on the filter properties that prevented women from gaining entry into organisations. This was mostly characterised by the gender education gap and was written during a time when first generation gender issues (Sturm, 2001) were still being addressed. The framework used in this study successfully used Schein (1971) as a lens to consider present day issues.

2.4.2 The (in)visibility concept

(In)visibility was adopted as a collective term for experiences of visibility and invisibility of individuals or groups in an organisation (Stead, 2013). Visibility played a pivotal role in the progression of women's careers. Kanter (1977) first articulated the heightened visibility of the token woman as a source of disadvantage for women. Token women experienced the dynamics of asymmetric power relations and were forced to conform to stereotypic roles. They were marginalised and excluded from the dominant male group. Heightened visibility also subjected women to increased performance

pressures. A desire to avoid conflict and a fear of success caused them to seek out invisibility by assimilating to the stereotypic roles they were assigned. Visibility was associated with difference and a state of exclusion (Simpson & Lewis, 2005). Evidence suggested that there was always the risk that speaking out against gendered practices would cause females to be labeled as difficult (Stead, 2013) and consequently compel them to leave an organisation (Fernando & Cohen, 2011).

Invisibility served as a form of disadvantage for women as they remained unheard and inferior within organisations (Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012). The invisible boundaries that conflicted with their characteristics and restricted their actions had negative consequence for their careers (Acker, 2006, Heilman, 2012). Women were made to disappear when they were assessed and evaluated and consequently targeted for improvement and correction (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013). They sometimes preferred to curtail complaining about discrimination and instead assimilated and worked harder in the hope that their managers would be persuaded of their abilities. However being cooperative and doing what was expected of them did not translate into a valued currency in career terms. This was especially prevalent in the traditionally male-dominated industries such as science and engineering (Bevan & Learmonth, 2012).

Women have used (in)visibility strategically by “blending in” or “operating behind the scenes” by not drawing attention to their social standing and choosing when to become visible. Through (in)visibility women have become very aware of the consequences their gendered behaviours have had on their careers (Stead, 2013). However, as it was pointed out by Fernando & Cohen (2011) and Bevan & Learmonth (2012), deploying (in)visibility did not help the overall work condition of women since they have not used this to challenge the gendered systems that prevailed.

Invisibility was also seen as a source of power for the dominant group. Male privilege continued to be constructed and re-constructed as long as it remained taken for granted and out of the awareness of organisational actors (Acker, 2006; Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Schein (1984) described the nature and origin of underlying assumptions and how they became unchallenged and unseen.

Lewis & Simpson (2012) presented a framework of the (In)visibility Vortex (Lewis & Simpson, 2010a) to demonstrate the gendered processes of visibility, invisibility and power relations. They described a vortex as a spiral motion or flow around a centre.

The most amount of turbulence took place around this centre which dissipated as it moved toward the margins. Taken in the context of organisations, the unstable, insecure centre was the site where gendered power was preserved and concealed within a dominant masculine centre. Women countered with strategies from the margins to reveal the privileges of the norm and were exposed as contravening normative behaviours and consequently became erased or sought to disappear. A figure of what the vortex looks like can be seen in Appendix 2.2.

The vortex encapsulated the nature of gendered power relations and the disciplinary techniques that underpinned them. The complexity of practices of visibility and invisibility was highlighted through the vortex as posited by Lewis & Simpson (2012). The contradictions and tensions were too complex and subject to many interpretations and permutations. By finding ways to cope, women were typically reinforcing their subordination and the invisibility of the unfair subtle practices that were present (Bevan & Learmonth, 2012).

2.4.3 The self-efficacy concept

Self-efficacy was described as the processing and feedback of information by an individual. Individuals set rewards for themselves as an outcome expectation in order to persist in their efforts to achieve a performance standard that matches their self-prescribed standards. Consequences served as an indicator for the types of behaviours that must be adopted in order to gain beneficial outcomes and to avoid punishing ones. The cognitive processing of the outcomes-based information served as a means of creating and strengthening expectations of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura (1977) posited that there are two types of expectancies. An outcome expectation can be described as a person's estimate that a given behavior would lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation was a conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior that was required to produce the outcome. Efficacy expectations determined the amount of effort people would expend and how long they would persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. Those who persisted would have gained corrective experience and reinforced their sense of efficacy and eventually reduced their defensive behavior. Those who curtailed their coping efforts prematurely would retain self-debilitating expectations for a long time (Bandura, 1977).

Research showed that some women have reached the executive suite in their careers. While this aligned with their efficacy expectations, eventually they realised that the power associated with their position was significantly diminished compared to their male counterparts (Ragins & Winkel, 2011). This departure from the true definition of self-efficacy led to the motivation to probe further into the processes that prevent women from realising their true self-effectiveness.

Besides direct evidence of an individual's own experiences, the evaluation of threatening activities was achieved by watching the adverse consequences experienced by others. This was known as vicarious experiences. These observations generated expectations for the individual's own efforts (Bandura, 1977).

In order for individuals to be convinced of their personal competence, they must achieve the set task unaided or under inconspicuously arranged influences. Expectations of personal efficacy cannot operate independently of contextual factors. Non-congruence between efficacy expectations and performance would likely occur under conditions in which the contextual and task factors were ambiguous (Bandura, 1977).

Work-family conflicts were considered one of the most significant barriers for professional and managerial women. Women internalised the trade-off they made between the conflicting roles and displayed low expectations of their organisations to provide women-friendly policies. This translated into a resultant acceptance of the trade-off imposed on them. This internalisation of coping strategies (Tatli et. al., 2013) puts pressure on their self-effectiveness while completely absolving the organisation of any responsibility.

2.4.4 Summary and implications

Women had a strong affinity toward promoting the merit discourse. It was a notion that was based on the principle of 'sameness' where essentially women and men were given the same considerations. This was underpinned by the acceptance that practices of equal opportunity and procedural fairness were present (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). Women also saw themselves as possessing more than adequate relational skills in leadership (Simpson et. al, 2010). Expressing a commitment to being both the

same and different had, however, resulted in women experiencing tensions within their situations. They ultimately found themselves entwined in a 'lack of fit' scenario (Heilman, 2012) which resulted in less than favourable performance assessments as opposed to men. To add further to the ambivalence, their actual experiences ended up being misaligned to their beliefs of equality and fairness (Sealy, 2010).

Hakim (2000) absolved the organisation from the responsibility of providing equality of access to career advancement opportunities and made it the responsibility of women as individuals. This was supported by the participants in Anderson et. al's (2010) study. However, this view was also criticised as being very restricted as it did not provide a complete explanation. The choices of women alone could not account for the differential outcomes that were seen in the labour market (Broadbridge, 2010; Kumra, 2010).

When the organisation was viewed as an inequality regime (Acker, 2006), issues such as prescriptive stereotypes (Eagly & Carli, 2007) and a requirement to network or work long hours unhindered (Bevan & Learmonth, 2012) started to take on a new meaning. Practices and processes were present in organisations that could be considered gendered since they contributed to differential outcomes for women as opposed to men (Anderson et. al, 2010; Tienari et. al, 2013). Their origins and possible reasons for why they remain solidified were explained through Schein's (1984) three levels of culture, most especially the third level of underlying assumptions.

The issue that remained was how this could be moved forward from here. The underlying assumptions underpinning the gendered practices needed to be examined and their relevance and validity challenged in a business context that is constantly changing. The study used a framework that merged three concepts to gain a deeper understanding for the complex issues presented.

Similarities were inferred from the masculine norm presented by Lewis & Simpson (2012) in the (in)visibility vortex and the centrality of the career cone (Schein, 1971). The processes of (in)visibility (Lewis & Simpson, 2012) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) as adopted by women in coping with the gendered organisation (Acker, 2006); were used to describe how the social selves of females were subject to socialisation pressures as they passed through the boundaries of an organisation. Women's ability to innovate was also assessed by examining their self-efficacy. The filter properties of

the inclusion boundaries were characterised by the required behaviours of women as they attempted to gain access to the central domain of an organisation.

Together these concepts served as a robust framework in exploring the experiences of women as they have transitioned through and between organisations. The implications of using this framework was that the experiences were described in ways that brought understanding to the complexities of gendered practices present in organisations. This enabled a platform from which to challenge past assumptions and argue for a new positioning of women as they progressed through their careers.

Chapter 3

3.1 Research questions

3.1.1 Overview of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the pre-conceived assumptions that solidify gendered practices in organisations by drawing on the perceptions of female managers relative to their organisational regimes. This study was prompted by the continued paucity of women in high-ranking positions in organisations. It was believed that an exploration will add a deeper understanding into the complexities that contribute to this position thus aiding in developing an informed but alternate perspective to the current popular discourse.

In seeking to understand these assumptions and complexities the study addressed the following three research questions stated below.

- (1)** How have women experienced the socialisation (Schein, 1971) of gendered organisations while progressing in their careers?

By using the career cone concept (Schein, 1971) the study set the context for identifying gendered practices through the process of socialisation in some of the South African organisations by mapping the career trajectories of the 12 female managers.

- (2)** How has (in)visibility (Lewis & Simpson, 2012) affected how women move through and between boundaries (Schein, 1971)?

The collective term of (in)visibility played a pivotal and ambiguous role in the careers of women. By unpacking this construct, more insights were revealed about the gendered practices of organisations and the common discourses used to explain them.

- (3)** What effects have efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1977) and gendered organisations had on women's labile and stable social selves (Schein, 1971) and their ability to innovate (Schein, 1971)?

The construct of self-efficacy served to challenge the common discourses and offered compelling alternate perspectives.

Chapter 4

4.1 Overview of study

Following on from the discussion on the purpose of the study and the research questions that were addressed, this chapter describes the methodology that was adopted in seeking to answer those questions.

4.2 Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research was centred on understanding how the complexities of an environment were experienced, interpreted and understood relative to the context at a point in time. The intent of qualitative research was to achieve a holistic understanding by exploring the world from the perspectives of other people (Patton, 2001; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Qualitative methodology generally focussed on discovery and description. The intention was to extract and interpret meaning from the experiences of others (Merriam, 2009; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

The objectives were compared to quantitative research where hypotheses are tested to establish causal relationships between variables. In seeking to unravel the complexities mentioned in the previous chapter, quantitative methods would not have produced the rich data necessary to achieve this.

The assumptions that characterise a qualitative research methodology were better suited to this study. Some of those assumptions included: (1) understanding the processes by which events took place, (2) developing contextual understanding, (3) facilitating interaction between researcher and participants, (4) adopting an interpretive stance and (5) remaining flexible with the research design (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Within the framework of a qualitative approach, the study was most suited for a phenomenological research design. As a form of research methodology, phenomenology focussed on understanding the essence of the underlying meaning of another's experience through in-depth inquiry (Patton, 2001; Creswell 2007). This design was ideal for this study in understanding and interpreting the perceptions and shared experiences of the research participants relative to their organisational interactions.

4.3 The research sample

The population for this research was female managers working for organisations in South Africa. Since a sampling frame of this population was not present, non-probability sampling was conducted. The study sought to locate individuals from a variety of industries. Thus a snowball sampling strategy was employed whereby participants were asked to refer other individuals whom they knew to occupy management positions in organisations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The criteria for selection were as follows:

- All participants had to hold at least a middle management position so that they would have had enough experience to map a career journey that demonstrated movement through various boundaries as defined by Schein (1971).
- All participants worked in the greater Johannesburg area. Due to time constraints and work obligations on the part of the researcher, this proximity allowed more flexible access to the participants.

The research sample included 12 individuals. The sample comprised of individuals from industries such as telecommunications, logistics, management consulting, banking, architecture, law, media and some of these industries overlapped with the public sector. The sample displayed variations among characteristics such as race, age, academic qualifications and occupations.

4.4 Overview of Research design

Listed below are the steps that were used to carry out this research study. Each will be discussed in more detail.

1. Prior to data collection, a selected literature review was conducted to study the contributions of other researchers in the field of gender in management.
2. Following the proposal defense, approval was obtained from the university's ethics committee to proceed with the study. Procedures and processes were outlined with regards to protecting the participants' confidentiality and obtaining informed consent.
3. Potential research participants were contacted via email. An attachment outlining the purpose of the study and procedures that would be followed during the interview were sent to them. If they agreed, an appointment was set up to

- meet face to face.
4. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 female managers who worked in the greater Johannesburg area.
 5. Interview data responses were analysed and interpreted for meaning.

4.4.1 Literature review

An ongoing and selective literature review informed this study. Schein's (1971) concept of a career within an organisation was used as an instructive lens that set the context for further inquiry. Two constructs were used to gain deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions of their career progress and organisational lives. These were the collective term of (in)visibility (Lewis & Simpson, 2012) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

4.4.2 Ethics approval

In order to obtain approval, a proposal outlining purpose of the study, literature review, research questions and proposed methodology was submitted to the ethics committee. In addition, an interview guide of open-ended questions as well as a copy of a written consent form were also drafted and submitted.

4.4.3 Data collection method

In-depth interviews were used as the method for data collection in this study. Interviews were thought to be most appropriate since it would elicit rich and meaningful descriptions and would also allow for an opportunity to probe further and gain clarity on individual statements. This added support for the phenomenological design that was chosen. Patton (2001) posited that the purpose of interviewing specifically was "to find out what was in and on someone else's mind", and that was exactly what the target of the phenomenological study focussed on, i.e. the perception of the lived experience.

4.4.3.1 Interview schedule design

The interview schedule was guided by the research questions stipulated in the previous chapter. The design of the schedule started off with a list of topics that served as the domain of inquiry which basically centred on how the participants cognitively processed their work environments and careers (Seidman, 2006). A draft was sent to

the supervisor for comment. The schedule that was developed asked a few demographic questions and a series of open-ended questions. The questions were drafted as broad as possible to allow for participants to take the discussion in new directions thereby allowing emerging themes to develop. The final interview protocol and schedule is included in Appendix 4.1.

4.4.3.2 Interview process

The interviews took place between August and September 2013. Before each interview commenced the participants were asked to sign a written consent form (see Appendix 4.1). The duration of the interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes depending on the cooperation and comfort levels of the participants. All interviews were tape-recorded and field notes were also taken to allow the researcher a platform from which to ask more probing questions as the interview progressed.

The interviews started by asking the participants some demographic information such as age and academic qualifications. They were then asked to map their career journey from inception to present. This allowed for participants to activate their memory about their careers and by allowing them to deliver this in their own words, the researcher was able to pick up on themes that were salient to the participants.

The audiotapes were consequently transcribed verbatim.

4.5 Data analysis

The challenge throughout the data collection and analysis phase was to make sense of large amounts of data, reduce the volume of information and identify significant patterns (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). As a result, Merriam (2009) suggested that researchers conduct data analysis and collection simultaneously to avoid the risk of repetitious and overwhelming data.

The formal process of data analysis was informed by the phenomenological tradition chosen for this study. Phenomenological research made use of significant statements, the generation of meaning units and the development of “essence” description. The aim was to achieve an analytic description of the phenomena not affected by prior assumptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

The analysis started with coding. Categories and descriptors were developed and assigned according to the study's conceptual framework. The unit of analysis used was the statements of the participants that were considered according to clusters of meaning, textural descriptions of what was experienced and structural descriptions of how they were experienced (Creswell, 2007).

Narratives or memos were prepared for each of the categories as they were developed to make sure that consistency was being applied and the origins of the categories' meanings remained intact. These narratives also helped with cross-analysis of categories and served as a secondary analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

The coding process dissected the interviews into various categories, leading to a detailed view, whereas synthesis involved piecing all the categories together to reconstruct a holistic and integrated explanation. The overall approach was to come up with a number of clusters, patterns or themes that have linked together similarly or divergently. The basic thinking process that was followed was three-layered. First, the patterns and themes were compared within the categories. Second, they were compared across the categories. Third, the core categories that were selected were compared and contrasted with the issues that have been raised in the broader literature (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). This process was conducted simultaneously and iteratively until two broad themes were developed.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were of vital concern during the research study when it came to protecting the participants. It must be noted that participants were enlisted through voluntary cooperation. The main concern with protecting the participants was the way in which the information was treated. The following steps were taken to safeguard the participants (Merriam, 2009).

Written consent was obtained from each participant to voluntarily proceed with the study. Any names mentioned during the interview and significant identity characteristics of the sample organisations were kept confidential in the research report. The research information was stored such that only the researcher had access to the material.

4.7 Assumptions and limitations

According to Patton (2001), the basic philosophical assumption of qualitative research was that “we can only know what we experience”, therefore the inquiry was not based in the science of facts where a causal relationship was found between variables. Following from this, the assumption was made that the perspective of others was meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Some of the limitations of this study that need to be considered were:

- This study was exploratory in nature since the complexities of gendered practices were not completely known. The study was based on a small research sample due to time constraints. Consequently this study cannot be considered as representative of all female managers' experiences in South Africa. Generalisations about women or South African organisations should not be drawn from this study. It will need to be supplemented with further studies in this field.
- Snowball sampling can lead to participants recommending people similar to themselves which could lead to a homogenous sample. This was mitigated against by trying to access participants from as many different industries as possible. The composition of different races was also kept as equally distributed as possible. However this was only achieved with Indian, Black and White participants. Unfortunately the researcher was unable to access any Coloured female participants.
- The study was also limited by the subjectivity of the researcher. It was impossible to detach personal interpretations from issues that were personally interesting. Therefore the researcher had to be mindful of the way in which the interview questions were asked. To avoid leading the direction of the discussions with the participants, the questions remained very open-ended and the researcher spoke minimally and always asked for clarity to determine the participants' perception (Seidman, 2006).
- A related limitation to consider was that the participants would not always be equally cooperative, articulate or interactive. In this respect, the researcher made a conscious attempt to create an environment that was conducive to open and honest dialogue.

Chapter 5

5.1 Outline of findings

The intention of the study was to challenge the validity of current underlying assumptions in organisations by unpacking emerging themes through in-depth discussions with female managers in organisations in South Africa.

The study was conducted with a research sample of 12 female managers who work in the greater Johannesburg area. The sample had differing characteristics across race, age, academic qualifications and industries within which the participants worked. In terms of race, the sample comprised 42% white, 33% Indian and 25% black participants. Unfortunately no coloured participants were accessed for this study. The majority (58%) of the sample fell within the age group range of 30 – 39 years. Twenty five per cent was between 40 – 49 years which left 17 % who were between the ages of 50 – 59.

Participants were asked to begin the interviews by providing a detailed account of their career journey from inception to present. By mapping their entire journeys, some of the participants listed working for more than 4 firms. In the discussions that ensue examples of their experiences were mostly quoted from their most recent tenures. This is due to their ability to successfully activate memories of their more recent experiences and their level of exposure in terms of seniority in the companies. A table describing their demographic information and recent company history is attached as Appendix 5.1. For the purposes of confidentiality, the participants and companies are referred to in the text as they are labeled in the table.

The interviews centred on how they perceived their relationship with the organisations they worked at. More probing questions were directed toward understanding how they perceived any disadvantage in their career progression as a result of being female.

Generally all participants acknowledged a paucity of senior women in their previous and present organisations. Most could not however explicitly articulate the reason for this occurrence. Their instinctual reaction was to express denial of the presence of gender issues and consequently they absolved organisations from any responsibility

for the glaring disparity. Instead they internalised the responsibility and became very critical of other women.

In seeking to disseminate this within the context of the research questions stated in Chapter 3, the work of Schein (1971) became instructive. Unpacking the socialisation process that the participants experienced revealed some themes and patterns that started to elucidate how the practices of some of the organisations have and still are negatively affecting the career progression of the participants.

The discussion will be outlined as such. Two broad themes were identified from the transcripts and will be discussed. These were ‘structural barriers’ and ‘pioneering opportunities’.

The one broad theme of ‘structural barriers’ was broken down further into three categories: ‘parallel ladder’, ‘coercive persuasion’ and ‘the perpetual manager’. An understanding of these categories was gained through the facilitation of the research questions stated in Chapter 3. Each question enabled a deeper level of analysis that produced additional properties for each of the categories. These categories eventually became forged into two clearly observable patterns that will be labeled as ‘discernible barriers and ‘ambiguous progression’.

The other broad theme of ‘pioneering opportunities’ was moulded by Schein’s (1971) definition of innovation, Schein’s (1984) definition of underlying assumptions and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). At that conceptual level which ran concurrent with research question 3 a glimpse of opportunities for women to entrench some of their values as assumptions became apparent. Evidence of these opportunities appeared to activate the stable selves of the women involved and allowed them to innovate.

5.2 Structural Barriers

The lens of the career cone concept (Schein, 1971) provided a robust platform from which to construct two observably different patterns. First the categories of ‘parallel ladder’, ‘coercive persuasion’ and ‘the perpetual manager’ were identified and populated within the context of the organisation. Through this process it became apparent that ‘parallel ladder’ and ‘coercive persuasion’ demonstrated patterns of clearly discernible structural barriers. ‘The perpetual manager’ on the other hand,

demonstrated patterns where the barriers were not immediately apparent to an observer.

5.2.1 Socialisation categories

Looking at how women experience the socialisation process through the lens of the career cone concept (Schein, 1971) addresses the first research question in Chapter 3. As stated, three categories were developed under the broad theme of ‘structural barriers’. The essence of each of these is discussed below.

5.2.1.1 Parallel Ladder

Participants who reflected this category received high salaries, frequent promotions and impressive titles but were unable to move in or toward the center of the organisation where an increase in power and access to information would have enabled them to influence their own career destiny. So the parallel ladder provided rank but denied the participant power and a sense of influence associated with centrality. The experiences of the participants that follow encapsulate the essence of this category.

Participant 2 explained how a position was created for her at her current logistics organisation.

“My financial director is probably fifty-two, and they believe he is too old to be part of the business. So they are looking for a replacement for him. He needs to, over 2 or 3 years, replace himself. He will probably be put in another part of the business. So they hired me to come and take over his position.” [Participant 2]

When asked how she was being groomed for the future position, the following were her responses:

“Unfortunately nothing right now. Everything that I know about the business I have learned on my own. He is never at his desk, he is too busy, so I haven’t had any time with him.”

“It is something I need to learn to do is to sit down with him and say, what is it I need to get this done? Because for instance he does not want to let go of the work, not

because of me but because he, as an individual, has given himself too much, because it is his way of holding on to the department.”

“I do like him, I respect him, he is brilliant and I think from the dynamics of the company it is not his fault that he does not get to sit down with me. Because it is really high paced.”

When asked if she was being exposed to the strategy and mandate of the company, the following were her responses:

“Not yet, I have been to the last couple of finance meetings that they had, everything is very hush, hush and secretive here”.

“No I think it is because we are at a turning point and have reached a very high revenue base, and there are certain customers that we cannot afford to lose, so even if I run revenue I do not even see that contract. I bill the client and I’m only allowed to see the rates. I don’t see the rest of the stuff. This company is very unique and that is why I enjoy working here and there is very little trust in the organization. They do not trust their staff. Why would you not let someone see your contract? Because you do not trust them.”

Participant 9 is a director in an architectural company that has recently merged with a UK based company.

“How the company is structured is that, even though I am a director, we still have a board of directors or exec board that makes decisions. In my view I need to be an essential part of that executive board because South Africa is such a big part of the business plan. They tend to sideline me and not inform me and there has been talk that they are going to try and rectify it that I actually have shares in the main company as well and not just in the South African bit.”

When asked to explain the sidelining, the following was her response:

“We focused on that entirely because that was the instruction from the executive board. Then all of a sudden they turned around and said why don’t we get more South African work, despite the earlier instruction they had given me. If that makes sense of what is happening, they want to tell me what to do and when I try to do it they then go against you and say why aren’t you thinking for yourself?”

When asked what the plan for her to become part of the executive board was, the following were her responses:

"Yes there is a guy that is already talking about it and he has voiced it to the rest of the executive board that I need to be part of it but it's a slow process, I don't think anything is going to happen in the next two or three years, in that regard."

"It might just be red tape as well. Their response is: 'We'll talk about it later on, it's not that urgent.' Its difficult to say why but the company has a tendency, especially the UK side, to not make decisions fast."

Participant 10 was a company secretary at an organisation in the automobile industry and the following was her experience:

"And [Company B] was all title but no job, so I was head of legal and company secretary of [Company B] South Africa which was just a phenomenal job title. But [Company B] had put the legal department at the lowest rung of management so I had absolutely no power to do anything."

"And so when you're heading up the legal department and you find yourself being second guessed and bulldozed and people overriding your advice and packaging it as their own. The CEO would edit my presentations to the board and there I just managed to salvage my reputation. I just thought I can't take responsibility for decisions that I didn't make."

"The biggest risk for me was that [Company B] had to become a public company and I was not going to be the company secretary to a public company that did not subscribe to King, so one of the things that he would be editing out of my presentation to the board was King, because King was not law. I said I will have to salvage my reputation with colleagues here as being the company secretary, being the person who led the organisation through transition and have bonds listed on the JSE and we don't even know how to apply King."

"She sits on the King committee, she then referred me to someone who leads up legal at [Company A] and when we were talking he said to me: 'Oh my word you are facing huge personal liability issues in your current role', and that's how I got interviewed at [Company A]."

5.2.1.2 Coercive Persuasion

When participants found that their stable selves were incompatible with the organisational procedures and norms, they found it difficult to contribute effectively to the firm. However, they remained in the organisation as long as possible. They seemed physically or psychologically unable to leave.

Participant 4 stayed at her previous media company for 25 years before she was forced to leave.

"I mean I sat there forever and there are lots of other people who did that. But they sit there and they hate it, they love what they do, they hate who they work for. I mean that's definitely something that's pervasive there, I mean you can speak to 90% of staff and they'll tell you that."

Participant 10 witnessed this at Company B with another female incumbent.

"So the reason I say it will be a cold day in hell before they appoint a woman, white or black, when we were looking at the BEE stats and what not, they appointed this girl, this poor girl and she wasn't ready to take on a senior management role. So they made her MD of a division but wanted to leave her as a level 4, which is where I was sitting, yes, and she fought that and they kept drafting her contract in a way that made it look like she was a level 3 but only had level 4 powers and ideally as an MD she should have been a level 2."

"She is still a level 3 with level 4 powers, they plan strategy sessions about her division without her and come in to present, they call and she sees the strategy and she sees the organogram change in her own division without her input, she will see it for the first time in front of everybody."

"So she is sitting it out, she is waiting for 2 years to pass, and she doesn't want to be a job hopping black."

5.2.1.3. The perpetual manager

This category reflects movement around without movement in or up in the organization. This circumferential movement is a way in which incumbents were given a title which presented an illusion of progression but sometimes with no real accountability or

adequate gravitas. Incumbents found themselves trying to seek membership with various groups through social adjustment. At times they felt like they were stagnant.

Participants 4 and 8 provided reasons for how such a category emerges and especially in organisations where the structure is quite flat.

"If you are ambitious you have to move from a writing position to an editing or a managing position. Often the people that want to do that are not good at being managers. They are good writers. So it is an industry where a lot of people who move up are not necessarily the right people to move up, they move up because they are great writers." [Participant 4]

"The whole environment is extremely flat, so you would be a manager pretty soon. So everyone was a manager except for the directors and that was advantageous and disadvantageous at the same time. So it was kind of difficult to see where you fitted into the team as well as your progression during those ten years that you would be in that kind of environment because you would still be called a manager. You do get the sense that you are in charge of a transaction or a team but not formally since everyone wasn't reporting to you, not even all the directors have people reporting to them." [Participant 8]

"I find that the entire industry lacks proper policies, there is a group policy for the bank around things like leave, performance reviews but when it comes to implementation no one has ever, in my experience, received a written warning or has been fired. You will however not progress or get bonuses and increments, and then you must somehow get the message that it's time to go." [Participant 8]

5.2.2 (In)visibility of Centrality

By moving on to unravel the second research question, the construct of (in)visibility was observed to change within the context two observably different patterns. The categories of 'parallel ladder' and 'coercive persuasion' were found to demonstrate similar patterns that were consequently merged into 'discernible barriers'. The critical difference that was demonstrated between the two was the propensity for attrition to occur. Attrition seemed more likely with "parallel ladder" as opposed to 'coercive persuasion' 'The perpetual manager' remained as is.

Where structural barriers were easily discernible within the categories of the ‘parallel ladder’ and ‘coercive persuasion’, it was found that male dominated inner circles at those organisations were highly visible to the participants. However the presence and characteristics of such a central power base were taken for granted by the members themselves and hence remained invisible to their consciousness.

The presence of inner circles present within the context of ‘the perpetual manager’, on the other hand, remained invisible to the participants who worked in those environments. They were unable to identify or to clearly articulate the characteristics of the power base. These organisations, however, have a large composition of female employees at the lower ranks. The high visibility of females appears to display an illusion of inclusiveness and thus renders the male dominated power base invisible.

This interchangability of (in)visibility is discussed further through the experiences of the participants.

5.2.2.1 Discernible barriers

It was found that in those organisations where the structural barriers of the ‘parallel ladder’ and ‘coercive persuasion’ were present, the inner circles that prevailed were highly visible to the participants. They were able to describe what the filter properties required for membership were. However they also expressed that membership into the circle would have required them to change a stable part of themselves and hence the inclusion boundaries remained impermeable to them. The following are their experiences.

“I think it is mostly a trust factor, you need to get into their group of trust, and then they let you in, a lot of people need to know that they can trust you and do what is best for their inner circle and not the best for the company, but they have to allow you into their little group.” [Participant 2]

She was very clear about what she was not prepared to do in order get into their group.

“I am very careful in what I do and the way I manage my department and my rule is if this was my company, would I do it. There has been many times where I have said no.

I refused to fudge numbers. I refused to do something to their tax. I will do everything that is legal, but I will not cross the boundary.” [Participant 2]

“It’s about the politics of the company that I worked for most of my life because there is a group of very powerful people who sat in management and it was very much a case of whether you were friends with them, whether you went to the CEO’s house for lunch on Sundays, it’s very pervasive. He managed to bring in a group, not only males but largely males of his friends and a lot of yes men who could do what he wanted.” [Participant 4]

Participant 4 had clear ideas on her position relative to the inner circle.

“That was a choice, I don’t know if I would have been invited, you know I’m not sure if I’m his cup of tea or whatever but it was a choice. I refused to do that and I refused to play those games and I still have this naive belief that you should be recognised for what you do.” [Participant 4]

“There is the perception that if you are white, male and you speak quite fluently and you have got a clean face and a certain mindset, then you will be spotted by the powers that be and you will have a smooth upward journey to success. There are quite a few examples within the company, I know that many of my colleagues find it very frustrating because you are sitting round your desk doing all the hard work and the lazy guy who fits the profile has an easy smooth ride because he has the leadership skills because he is white and male. You also have to be charming and you also do not have to ask too many difficult questions, meaning that you have to be intelligent but not critical of the system.” [Participant 6]

“Yes it exists, in this case it’s a question of if your personality is different from theirs. They don’t take that into account, you sort of get shoved onto the sideline because your personality is different, your culture is different and you are not seen as being in the same group even though you are on the same level, but because of where I am located, personality wise, I need to become part of that group but it’s difficult.”

“They want you to be the total outgoing, make decisions fast without properly thinking it through, basically being that bouncy, bouncy all over the show type of person. That’s what they want.” [Participant 9]

The ideal profile mentioned above seemed to clash with Participant 9's stable self.

"No because I approach life differently, I am not that sort of person. I never make a decision without knowing everything. I need to have assessed all the risks properly before making a decision. On that aspect it's still difficult for me to fit in that circle because I am totally different from them." [Participant 9]

"I think the wasp [white Anglo-Saxon Protestant] term I first heard from her, she said I'm wasp and I'm proud of it, unapologetic and we are a very waspy firm and, you know, it's like minded people, so for her [Company E] was really going back to home ground and they were not going to be forced into any transformation figures, they were going to stay as a firm that had no more than 10 partners and if everybody was white, they were content with that." [Participant 10]

"The inner circle [at Company B] was a fluid thing, it was a moving target. The obvious power base is the CEO and CFO and your head, but all of those were ex-pats. So if you are short sighted, that is the circle that you pander to. And so the power base actually sat with the locals. Very male, it's white male. At the core it's white Afrikaner male, but then there is the mass base of Indians from Lodium, so the white Afrikaner males are not in the majority, but they have power." [Participant 10]

While very visible to the participants who were on the outside looking in, the power and dynamics of these inner circles seemed invisible to the members themselves. Participant 10 summarised how this membership was taken for granted.

"They lost themselves, they were like Oranje, they were being true to their Anglo-Saxon roots, they understood their snobbishness, they could relate, so they didn't feel they had to justify or explain their snobbishness, they just understood it."

5.2.2.2 The perpetual manager

At those organisations where the ‘perpetual manager’ existed, it seemed a bit more difficult for the participants to identify or articulate how access to the inside track prevailed and what characterized it. Participant 8 tried to give her view.

“I certainly felt that there was favouritism but there wasn’t a specific clique or group that you had to be a part of. You would know that this person likes working with this person or this director likes working with this one.” [Participant 8]

The participants who work at these organisations acknowledge that there is a paucity of senior women in the upper echelons. However they deny that gender discrimination is the resultant issue, since women are highly visible in the lower ranks. Instead their first reaction is to internalise the paucity as a negative reflection on how women conduct themselves. It was found that as the interviews progressed, the participants would contradict their earlier statements without even realising it.

Participants 2 and 5 describe the numeric patterns that have emerged, despite the high visibility of women in these organisations.

“No in a finance structure, so you get your lower level people, which are mostly women, and if you get to middle management it is mostly women in a finance structure and as you go to the top you might be the only female. It is rare to find a female in senior management.” [Participant 2]

“Yes, but what is the fact is that in management there are more men than us. I will give you a simple example, in my department like I told you there’s only one man, the rest are women. And in my colleague’s department there are how many men, I think about three men. The rest are women. And I don’t think it is only in these departments, I think even in other departments there is that imbalance. But if you go to our committee meetings, which are the meetings of managers, you will see that there are more men than women. So I don’t know what happens when they get management positions.” [Participant 5]

Participants were asked what they saw as the reason for this. Participants 2 and 12 summarise the common answers given.

"No men lift each other up but women don't, men are harder on you, but once you prove yourself to them you will be fine. Women don't like to help each other up in the workplace." [Participant 2]

"So I don't know why, I ask myself sometimes and some of the businesses why you just find people, you know, shying away, not maybe having confidence, I don't know whether it's a confidence thing or what, I've also always asked myself that question, I would like to get an answer to that, because I think also sometimes as ladies we are also shooting ourselves in the foot. We go sometimes, and we even obtain all these qualifications and we go and we do the job, because we will buckle down and do a job, but come the time to head up "no, no I'm not... I don't want to do the whole people thing, or no I can't have so many people reporting to me, oh no, and you know what, I just know, that position... I'm good where I am." [Participant 12]

When asked to unpack the negative feeling toward women further, Participant 2 altered her earlier statement slightly:

"There have been previous experiences where it is easier to deal with a man than it is to deal with a female and probably because it is more competitive, I do not know. Probably because most of the companies I have worked for I did not have to compete with a female. I have never been in that position where I had to stand around and fight with each other to get to the top, so maybe I haven't experienced that for myself, where I feel that people do not pick each other up enough, maybe it is just my perception of the situation." [Participant 2]

When asked what her future plans were, Participant 12 said she would not stay at her present company and move up even though she earlier criticised other incumbents of not taking the opportunity to do so. When this was highlighted to her, the following was her comment:

"No I'm not interested in that, unless it happens through my qualifications and my knowledge somebody somewhere says you know what, we need you, I'll be glad to assist, but I think now the next level after the PhD is really owning my own thing where I can stretch this thing as far as I can stretch it. Because fine, as much as [Company A] is a very good innovation culture and its very, very conducive to allow you to be who

you are, remember it's still an organisation, so there are still parameters." [Participant 12]

5.2.3 The mediating effect of self-efficacy

The construct of self-efficacy was examined through the third research question and performed as an informative lens in understanding the behaviours of the participants relative to the patterns depicted. Bandura (1977) analysed self-efficacy by demonstrating how the cognitive processing of individuals can be explained by two types of expectations. Outcome expectancy is defined as an individual's assessment that a particular behaviour will result in a certain outcome. Efficacy expectation is an assurance one has that one can execute the requisite behaviour to achieve a desired outcome.

Efficacy expectations will determine the amount of effort an individual will expend and the amount of time they will persevere in the face of obstacles or stressful situations. Those who persist might gain corrective experiences and reinforce their sense of efficacy. This will reduce their defensive behaviour. Those who cease to cope prematurely will retain their self-debilitating expectations for a long time (Bandura, 1977).

5.2.3.1 Discernible barriers

Experiences of the 'parallel ladder' and the 'coercive persuasion' produced some debilitating effects and defensive behaviour in the participants through direct performance or vicarious experiences. The efficacy expectations and performance of the participants were assessed when they spoke about the stressful situations that they experienced.

Participant 9 became very emotional at this juncture and the following was her response:

"Not very good. I had to take a week's leave, it's the end of the year and you just think you are not going to get through this year. I tend to think I can deal with all sorts of personalities. I don't get upset very easily or shout and I can take a lot but I am

reaching the point where I am going to start shouting. I need to get in more work so that I can address it to prevent myself from shouting.” [Participant 9]

“It was really hard for me, having been just admitted to be a professional who was out of work, and I was out of work because I had done my job very well. So that was hard, I became nearly suicidal and my sister got me to therapy, it was really, it was a dark period.” [Participant 10]

“Look I mean she doesn't like me, she doesn't like what I do, there's nothing I can do about that, I think that I mean everybody at the [Company B] would it's not just me saying oh I worked so, I put heart and soul into my job, I was productive, I had a great team, I mean there was nothing that she could have done except say I don't like you and I don't want to work with you.” [Participant 4]

“So she is a director, she has no powers, she has absolutely, but it is a soul-destroying thing. She has become numb and I actually went to her at some point and I said you need to leave because you are actually destroying what little credibility lies behind your name, by sitting here.” [Participant 10 describing one of her ex-colleagues]

5.2.3.2 The perpetual manager

There is a distinction between information contained in the environment and the information processed by the individual. A strong expectation of personal efficacy might be diffused by a number of contextual factors. Successes have a higher probability of enhancing self-efficacy if they are perceived as resulting from skill as opposed to fortuitous or situational circumstances (Bandura, 1982).

Those who work in the environments where the pattern of ‘ambiguous progression’ has emerged espouse beliefs about their organisations such as “the sky is the limit” [Participant 12] and gender discrimination is not present, but cannot explicitly explain the reasons for the imbalances of senior women and their first reaction is to internalize responsibility and effort.

“I can say that the organisation has really forced that culture where you can be free to innovate, where you can be free to be who you are, where you can move around in the

organisation. [...] We would rather have you moving around within the group obviously than have you leave the organisation all together.” [Participant 12]

“You have to work harder than men do, you have to do your research far much more than men do, so that when you talk, you know people can listen to you. And you have to, I learned that women have to be very assertive and very confident in what you say. And the tendency then was that when you first entered this body of senior managers you will be viewed with skepticism. And people would undermine you and they would not even want to listen to you. “[Participant 5]

“None of them at the time were mining engineers, none of them were involved in the deep level mining that the company was involved in so the ladies I’m thinking about were either in finance or tax, IT, HR and communication, so again maybe we weren’t a threat to people who held the technical skills but maybe it was also just that we were good at what we did, we were respected for the work that we did and the people that we worked with had confidence in our ability to do what we promised. I believe that we all delivered as well and I think that also makes a difference and I think we worked with a lot of very professional and very competent men who were also very secure in what they did and so I really can hand on heart say that I was never discriminated against.”
[Participant 11]

5.3. Pioneering Opportunities

The other broad theme to develop was that of ‘pioneering opportunities’. This theme demonstrates a glimpse into how women can accomplish successful outcomes that can be translated into taken for granted assumptions (Schein, 1984). Two experiences have stood out as striking in this regard. They are those of Participant 10 and Participant 4.

5.3.1 Participant 10’s experience

When Participant 10 worked at a public sector Company C, she experienced how successful outcomes were established, by her female CEO at the time, such that it developed into an underlying assumption of the organisation’s culture (Schein, 1984).

"And that was also quite an interesting turning point because [...] we got to a space where we were never going to be friends and we actually ended up being friends, but we respected each other's commitment to the job. She was tough, she was rude, she had ego problems, but she was focused on the output and for the first time in [Company C's] history we got an unqualified audit, we kind of changed the way we worked and we weren't so government and we became quite corporate." [Participant 10]

The fact that the CEO was considered to be rude and aggressive did not work against her in leading and influencing her staff. Instead of being isolated or marginalized for acting outside the prescriptive feminine stereotypes (Eagly & Carli, 2007), the team found a way to work around her tirades.

"I didn't feel it at Company C, that male female, the gender dynamic, and the reason I didn't feel it, I think it was thanks to [female CEO], [female CEO] was an equal opportunity offender. [female CEO] would dress down males, females, where she blew her gasket, she didn't care who was in the room, or who was getting the dressing down, so we witnessed the CFO being ripped to shreds, so she was bad in that sense, but what it did is that it united all of us, at some point one of us is going to receive it, it may not be you today, so don't rain on the pain of somebody else's downfall, because she was an equal opportunity offender which I think worked as a uniting force, we all just feared her." [Participant 10]

Even though Participant 10 started out early in her interview by saying that females have contributed to the negative experiences in her career, when she spoke about this particular female, Participant 10 unconsciously spoke of her in very high esteem.

"She took up the big roles because her ambition was that big, but she always doubted her ability to be there or that she belonged in that space and so when she got into her insecurity space she would lash out, also because she is tiny, she is a short girl, she is tiny, (...) but when I got to spend time with her, so when we would do exec lunches and she would let her guard down, you realise that actually it's a lot of work being who she is, it's a tough role for her."

"But that was also something [female CEO] gave to me, but I don't think she was aware of it. So when [female CEO] would say to me go and argue your issue before the board, she was giving me a platform, but I would walk away from that and be

thinking would I be getting a fair hearing, I had board members engaged with the issue, we looked at the financial impact, legislation and some of the things I won and some of the things I walked away and there was a lot of loss, I have now learned a new thing about the business that I didn't know going in there, and that is how I have grown.”

[Participant 10]

Participant 10 displayed evidence of innovating (Schein, 1984) in this environment. She had activated her stable self (Schein, 1971) and was performing at her optimal potential. She even labeled this work experience as the highlight of her career. It can also be noted that Participant 10 was a member of the inner circle whose filter properties were not confined to homosocial reproduction (Tienari et. al, 2013).

“Because for once, so I started out being recognised for my output, but then I became, I was known, I became the CEO’s go to girl in terms of big problems, any decision I was called, we need to produce a report in 24 hours. And so some people viewed me as teachers pet, but others knew that actually if we are going to face the auditor general, that’s somebody we need to have on our team, and so I knew I was part of the inner circle because I was getting bigger projects, I was getting bigger decision making power, I was also running projects that were outside of legal, so I would manage the CFO, I would manage a subsidiary CEO, and they would happily listen and kind of go on my advice, but because I was being acknowledged for the work I was doing, and I was being recognised, so [female CEO] was really good, I mean she’d send out emails to the organisation about things that we had done and achieved, but I felt myself being, so the teacher’s pet label essentially confirmed that you were in the circle. In the circle that was management, that was making decisions.”

[Participant 10]

5.3.2 Participant 4's experience

Participant 4 has identified certain elements of an existing culture at her new company. She has intentions of changing it since it is proving to be dysfunctional to the success of the company. She is currently in the middle of this change and her experience is different from Participant 10 but the opportunity is present. The success of her actions still remains to be seen.

“Yes I believe that I've entered into, so I've entered into very specific cultures at all the different [departments] and I believe that I have a big responsibility to change that.”

"Yes but I think it's very noticeable on the Afrikaans side because the [departments] of the Afrikaans side have really operated as physically and mentally as an island and I think they have been left to their own devices and I think that they haven't really moved with the times and so what you see in the main [departments] is quite a big change in thinking of the many years and here I sometimes walk in here and I think I'm in 1980 so there is a lot that needs to be changed and part of that is sort of this loyalty to people above them, working according to a plan and this is how we do things and we don't change and we don't do this and we don't do that and so I've put in a lot of those things already but change is slow, change does not happen overnight so I have to keep on reminding them, we work through it all the time to try and get them to change and to think differently and to be brave, there is not brave [work] going on here." [Participant 4]

Due to the fact that this culture has been shared and has been stable for a very long time, she is experiencing resistance and anxiety from the members.

"Yes absolutely and it's a big problem now because there is [a senior employee] who is leaving who is in his 60's, there is a huge loyalty towards him, when we had the workshop and I said this is how things are going to be, he stood up and he said this is how we do things and they will never change and the whole staff got up and clapped, even though I'm the new boss. Yes so everything kind of gets sabotaged in a way, every intent to change, I don't mean that in a terrible sabotage, I mean he just thinks it's wrong, they have not believed that you should be critical of the companies that you speak to so I have to tell them that it's fine to say bad things about anyone, it's fine you know, that's what we here to do and a lot of those things don't come easily to them so yes it's hard." [Participant 4]

5.4 Summary

An analysis of the transcripts of this study has led to the development of some interesting themes and patterns. By answering the three research questions, this study was able to identify that structural barriers do exist in organisations that have deleterious effects on the careers of women. The ability to articulate their properties and challenge their assumptions is closely related to their degree of visibility.

Where the barriers are more discernible, a white male dominated inner circle of power is visibly prevalent. However the assumptions upon which these were constructed remain inaccessible to female managers. This has debilitating effects on their sense of self-efficacy as they try to make sense of the contradictions between their efficacy expectations and the actual outcomes they are experiencing.

A central power base is not so clearly observable at those organisations where a pattern of ‘the perpetual manager’ was observed. There is a high visibility of women in the lower ranks of these organisations but the numbers decrease dramatically higher up in the organisations. Reasons for this phenomenon cannot be clearly articulated. There does however appear to be micro-level competitive tension present among the females. This has resulted in females being highly critical of each other. The salience of gender as a form of discrimination is denied by the females. This could be due to their high levels of efficacy expectations. They need to believe that their own efforts are leading to their career successes. To accept the notion of discrimination or gendered processes would unsettle these expectations and lead to defensive actions. This could be contributing to the central power base remaining invisible and unchallenged in these organisations.

A glimpse of an opportunity for women to find environments where they can innovate has also been found in this study. By successfully entrenching their own successful outcomes and assumptions they can find ways to activate their stable selves without expending effort to defend prescriptive stereotypes or fit a male model of success.

The theoretical and literary underpinnings of these findings will be discussed in more detail in the chapter to follow.

Chapter 6

6.1 Outline of discussion

This research set out to gain a deeper understanding of the existing constructions of gendered hierarchies in organisations that have continued to remain solidified. The study set out to further identify and challenge some of the assumptions that support these hierarchies and how they inadvertently contribute to the negative effects on women's career paths.

This was accomplished by using the career cone (Schein, 1971) as a lens which served as a useful heuristic from which to critically map the career path of the participants. Within the cone concept, the organisation is considered as a three-dimensional entity. Movements within the organisation are controlled by the number and types of boundaries present and the filter properties that determine the degree of permeability through certain boundaries. These movements and boundaries were used as a basis for analysis while unpacking the socialisation process that the participants experienced in their various organisations.

Two main themes were extracted from the interview transcripts. These were 'structural barriers' and 'pioneering opportunities'. Through the process of socialisation, the theme of 'structural barriers' was further broken down into three categories: 'parallel ladder', 'coercive persuasion' and 'perpetual manager'. Through the constructs of (in)visibility (Lewis & Simpson, 2010a; 2012) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), these themes were further analysed to reveal emerging patterns.

This has led to the identification of structural barriers present in organisations that slow down the career trajectories of women. It has also offered a glimpse into the pioneering opportunities that women can leverage into successful career endeavours. These opportunities do not require women to sacrifice a stable part of themselves in order to fit (Heilman, 2012) into a situation. It rather requires a different perspective (Schein, 2004) and hence a different approach in re-engineering their futures.

The findings of this study cannot be used as a generalisation for all South African organisations. The study consists of information gathered from a small sample of the females working only in the Johannesburg area. This cannot be considered

representative of the South African working population of female managers. It must be further noted that some of the participants were nervous about the fact that the interviews were being taped and they showed concern that confidentiality would be observed even though this was explained to them before they consented to be interviewed. This led to some participants displaying reluctance at times to speak candidly about their organisations and experiences. When participants displayed discomfort, the more probing questions were curtailed. While this could bring into question the validity or richness of some of the information gathered, it also provides deeper insights into understanding and questioning the motivating drivers behind this type of response from the participants which will be examined later in this chapter.

All the participants were highly qualified, extremely motivated individuals who were formidable in their own right. Most of them refused to acknowledge that gender disparities were present due to the visibly large female contingent of the workforce. They further absolved the organisations from any responsibility in this regard. This espoused belief reiterates what was found by Anderson et. al (2010).

In beginning a presentation of the findings, it is useful to contextualise the three levels of culture present in organisations as presented by Schein (1984). A large number of women present in organisations can be interpreted as symbolic and hence can be seen as an artefact. Schein (1984) warned that such symbols can be difficult to decipher since they could be interpreted in ambiguous ways. Women hold on to their espoused beliefs that their current perceived successes are based purely on merit and the amount of effort they are willing to expend to get ahead which runs concurrently with Bandura's (1977) definition of self-efficacy. In analysing values or beliefs, it is important to determine which ones are congruent with underlying assumptions and which are just rationalisations or aspirations (Schein, 2004). The process of questioning the underlying assumptions while analysing the transcripts resulted in the manifestation of the themes and patterns to follow. The resultant analysis provides the context from which to further excavate emerging trends.

The analytic process was guided by the research questions set out in Chapter 3. The broader theme of 'structural barriers' will be addressed through all three research questions and the theme of 'pioneering opportunities' is crystallised at the end of the chapter as it encapsulates the essence of all three levels of analysis discussed.

6.2 First broad theme: Structural barriers

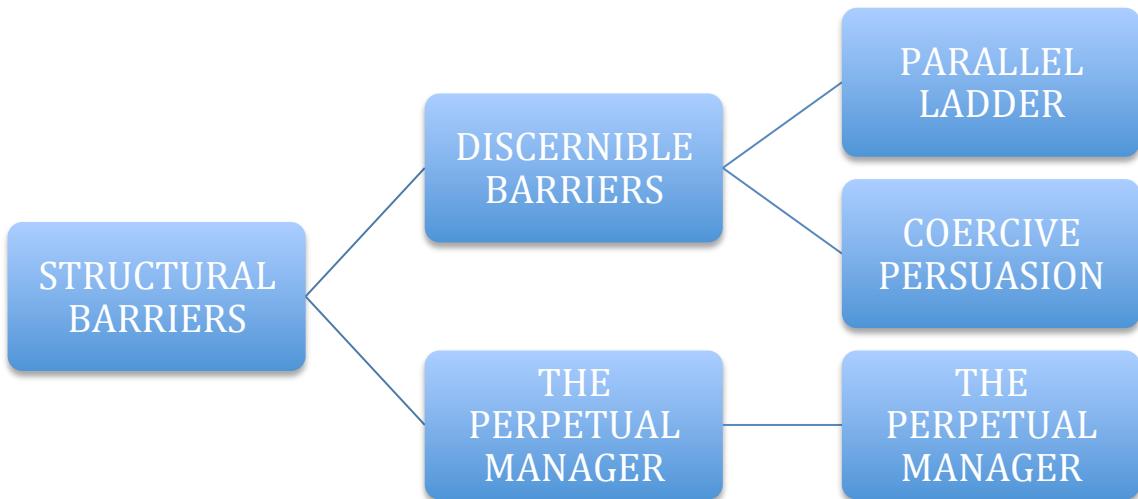


Figure 6.1 Hierarchy of analysis for the theme of 'structural barriers'

The discussion of this theme will start at the granular level of the socialisation categories.

6.2.1 Socialisation categories

The first research question was addressed by contextualising the socialisation process through the career cone concept (Schein, 1971). Three categories emerged from this. They are 'parallel ladder', 'coercive persuasion' and 'the perpetual manager'. A discussion on these is presented below.

6.2.1.1 Parallel ladder

The theme of the parallel ladder provides a context that summarises those organisations that employed women in high positions. However due to a lack of membership within the inclusion boundary (Schein, 1971), they have struggled with gaining credibility in various ways. This is discussed by drawing from the participants' word from the previous chapter.

Participant 2 spoke about currently occupying a position at the logistics company that was created for her so that her financial director could train her as his successor. However, she is presently forced to learn the business on her own since there is no dissemination of information between her and her superior. There is evidence that he is guarding his workload closely, to the point that she is not allowed to see the contracts of the clients she is billing. She has internalised the responsibility of learning the business and has defended him in his lack of responsibility toward preparing her for the position she was employed to eventually fill. She earlier spoke admirably of the efforts the CEO and COO had made in grooming their successors.

“So what has happened is the MD has now become the CEO, so he has replaced himself, he has trained someone else in the business. So he has become the MD over the last two months, he is probably mid-thirties at most, a very young guy. He was the sales director. For a MD it is very high profile, it is an over a billion rand a year company, so he is training him up which is really amazing. So to take him eventually out of the MD position and take the CEO position. So the CEO himself is creating a successor, same with the COO he has employed a new operations director who is taking over his position. So the current operations has only been there a year and [COO] has someone he is training up in his position.” [Participant 2]

She was unable to see the contradictions in her situation relative to how the males were prepared for management in the organisation. This type of behavior supports what Heilman (2012) refers to as a lack of fit perspective. Participant 2 is so preoccupied with thwarting the expectation that she might be ill-equipped for the male gender-typed task that she has taken on the responsibility for performance expectation onto herself and consequently absolved her director of any responsibility (Fernando & Cohen, 2011; Bevan & Learmonth, 2012). As a new comer, the socialisation process appears to be implicit and unsystematic, hence Participant 2 finds herself experimenting with different kinds of behavior (Schein, 1984).

Participant 9 is a director of the South African portion of an architectural firm but is excluded from the decision-making at the executive board level. As a result she feels sidelined. However more concerning to her, is that there appears to be a misalignment between the instructions she receives from the board and the expectations they have of her. She is working on getting included into the board but is confident that it will be

a slow process. She says that the UK leg has a tendency to make decisions slowly even though she goes on to say later that this a business that values quick thinking and instantaneous decisions. This scenario shows how Participant 9 is trying to make sense of the information asymmetry (Martell et al, 2012) that is present at this level and she is grabbing onto the espoused value that getting more South African work would re-equilibrate away from the threat to her social self (Schein, 1971). It seems she would benefit from an activation of cultural capital (Purcell, 2012) where her visibility to the key decision makers could ignite a sense of trust in her abilities. However adequate advocating for her position on the board does not appear to be strong at this point.

Participant 10 believed she had a phenomenal job title at the automobile manufacturing organisation but no authority to act within the realms of her contracted position. All her work was questioned and re-worked and decisions were taken on her behalf without her input. Her biggest concern was maintaining her reputation especially since the company was going to list on the stock exchange without subscribing to King III. This would have incurred personal liability for her as a legal representative working in South Africa. Participant 10 also felt she was being sidelined and that her reputation and credibility were being compromised. Participant 10's experience starts to show how the construction of her self-views is being challenged (Ellemers et al, 2012) as she feels silenced, ridiculed and inferior (Briadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

The participants described above have traversed vertical boundaries in their organisations, since they have increased in rank however the inclusion or central boundaries remain impermeable to them. All participants have been excluded from the central decision making process (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). There is no dissemination of information between Participant 2 and her director and she is excluded from viewing client contracts. Participant 9 is not allowed to sit on the board even though she is tasked with running the South African leg of the firm. Participant 10 was holding a position with no real authority to act. This difficulty with fitting in and activating the necessary cultural capital (Purcell, 2012) becomes more clearly elucidated as the study continues to unpack the patterns that emerge.

6.2.1.2 Coercive persuasion

Those participants who experienced or witnessed the theme of coercive persuasion were staying in organisations in opposition to a stable part of themselves (Schein,

1971). They displayed unhappiness and discontent and seemed to remain in the organisations under emotional and mental duress.

Participant 4 worked in the printed media industry and she stayed at her previous company for 25 years even though she was extremely unhappy. She described it as a problem that was pervasive there. This could be attributed to the fact that people remain behind in those industries that require specialised skills since their skills might be irrelevant elsewhere in the labour market (Schein, 1971).

Participant 10 witnessed a woman more senior to her in the automobile organisation losing credibility in the highly visible token position (Kanter, 1977) of managing director. Even though her position appeared to be a form of window dressing, she still stayed in the company because she was fighting against another stereotype (Eagly & Carli, 2007) of being labeled a ‘job-hopping black’.

The category of ‘parallel ladder’ differs from ‘coercive persuasion’ based on the propensity of organisational actors to leave their firms. Attrition seems more plausible with the ‘parallel ladder’. As evidence suggests later, actors leave organisations in the ‘coercive persuasion’ category when they experience a shock in their careers.

6.2.1.3 The Perpetual Manager

The flat structure of some organisations seem to present a trend for gendered hierarchies to prevail. Participants in this category seem to display behavior that is almost paradoxical to what they are saying. This will be explored further on in the discussion. Martell et. al (2012) describe this as an effect of a macro level entity influencing the beliefs and behaviours of individuals at the micro-level.

The essence of this category suggests that managers can remain stagnant in their positions with no accountability for long periods of time. The danger of this is that the security of their positions could become unstable (Kanter, 1977). This is as a result of the macro level entity of a flat organisational structure.

6.2.1.4 Summary

The participants feel they need to do more to be better, internalising the responsibility to stand out and be noticed (Sealy, 2010; Fernando & Cohen, 2011). There is a lack of influential advocating for women in organisations by the men who hold the power to influence, albeit unintentional. The repercussions are that women remain invisible at the top (Martell et al, 2012). These types of scenarios will lead and have led to attrition. Participants felt unable to contribute optimally in their roles and felt like they were being underutilised for the experience and knowledge they possessed (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Schein (2004) purports that the socialisation process taught to incumbents depends on how much of the deeper assumptions are revealed to them during this process. This is revealed to members as they gain permanent status or are allowed in the inner circles. Irrespective of the length of tenure, the participants in this study have not experienced such an inclusive process.

Token positions allocated to women in order to fulfill a certain quota still seem to be present. This lends itself to another layer of analysis in this complex situation. The issue of gender cannot be considered without including the element of race dynamics especially within South Africa. The concept of intersectionality first brought to light by Crenshaw (1991) described the multiple ways in which discrimination can be experienced. Black women therefore face multiple forms of discrimination – as women, as black, as black and women (Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012). This closely resembles what Participant 10 witnessed with her ex-colleague. While this falls out of the scope of this study, it is something that can be flagged for future further study.

Structural barriers appear to be identifiable within the emerging categories. It can be noted that the categories of ‘parallel ladder’ and ‘coercive persuasion’ demonstrate more clearly discernible barriers for women. However the barriers within the context of ‘perpetual manager’ remain subtle and appear almost intangible. This has rendered it difficult for participants to acknowledge the salience of gender as being a source of disadvantage to women. It is difficult to ignore that a large number of women are employed in these organisations albeit at the lower ranks.

Another trend to emerge from the socialisation analysis is that the categories of ‘parallel ladder’ and ‘coercive persuasion’ appear to occur in industries that are traditionally labeled as male dominated industries. From the transcripts these include

logistics, automobile, architecture, law and media. The theme of 'perpetual manager' is present in industries such as banking, consulting and to some degree public sector.

6.2.2 (In)visibility of centrality

By considering the socialisation experience of the participants, structural barriers have started to become discernible with different degrees of visibility. The identification of the categories from above have laid the foundation to further analyse emerging trends within the construct of (in)visibility (Lewis & Simpson, 2010a; 2012) which addresses the second research question. The degree of visibility of structural barriers seemed to correspond with the participants' ability to identify and describe the central power base that was present in their organisations. Through observing this pattern, the analysis has merged the categories of 'parallel ladder' and 'coercive persuasion' into an inclusive category of 'discernible barriers' for discussion going forward (see also figure 6.1 above).

6.2.2.1 Discernible barriers

Within these categories, the central power base was highly visible to the participants. The central power base or inner circles were characterised by the dominant composition of white males (Acker, 2006). The participants were also highly aware of the fact that they did not possess the required characteristics to be admitted as members of these circles. This aligns to the literature on homosocial reproduction where the particular type of candidate is reproduced based on similar characteristics of the dominant centre (Kanter, 1977; Tienari et. al, 2013). This can be conceived of as a gendered practice since men and women are treated differently. It is a practice that is characterised by asymmetric power dynamics where men are privileged while women are excluded (Sealy, 2010).

The existence and properties of these circles seem to dwell at a subconscious level for the members themselves and hence remain invisible (Acker, 2006; Lewis & Simpson, 2012). They seem to base it on elements of trust (Participant 2), a level of comfort as to who they invite to their houses (Participant 4). There is a level of cultural identity and ability to assimilate that is present (Martell et al, 2012; Purcell, 2012). This runs parallel to Acker's (2006) position when she said that practices such as these are driven by low visibility and high legitimacy.

The solidification of the power base becomes magnified when considered within Schein's (1984) definition of underlying assumptions. The critical defining characteristic would be that the groups or circles have a shared history or certain things in common. The strength of the culture that has evolved depends on the length of its existence, the stability of the group's membership and the emotional intensity of the historical experience that they have shared. In light of this, it can be inferred that the shared history among the members of the inner circles witnessed by the participants dates back to when the apartheid regime was present in South Africa.

There also appears to be some cause for concern in terms of the lack of ethical behavior in certain management ranks e.g. fudging numbers (Participant 2) or window dressing to fit a quota (Participant 10). Subscribing to King III is not legislated but it does bring into question, the ethical nature of the business (Participant 10). Exclusion based on homosocial reproduction (Tienari et. al, 2013) does indicate a level of collusion and anti-competitive behaviour which is prevalent within South African industries at the moment. Presented here are some underlying assumptions that would need to be challenged for validity.

6.2.2.2 The Perpetual Manager

Participants were unable to observe a central power base within the context of this category. While the central power base remained invisible, the presence of women at the lower ranks was highly visible to the participants. The dominant trend, however, that eventually surfaced was that the large number of women visible at the lower ranks significantly dwindled at the higher positions in the organisations. Upon reflection, participants provided reasons that support the popular discourse in extant literature (Sealy, 2010; Simpson et. al, 2010) for why women are scarce in senior positions. Women were critically evaluated as not advocating for each other (Participant 1), not having enough confidence to step up to the senior positions (Participants 12), not being assertive enough (Participant 5) and not activating enough cultural capital (Participant 3).

However when probed further, these arguments were not adequately convincing and the participants started to waiver in their resolve. The large number of women in lower ranks compared to the significant reduction in management brings into question tensions that are present among women as they all compete for the limited positions

available. In her afterword to the 1993 edition Kanter (1977) speaks of the challenges associated with this micro level tension. She says that while flatter organisational structures provide new opportunities and power sources for women, they also create new anxieties. The new context brings with it uncertainty of careers and the likelihood of involuntary displacement. Evidence of this has been seen in South African banks recently, with many retrenchments taking place. Men are not accustomed to the lack of security and will therefore be less welcoming of competition for fewer, less secure positions (Kanter, 1997; Martell et. al, 2012). Women therefore find themselves competing for the approving gaze of the male manager (Lewis & Simpson, 2012) and hence turn against each other and accuse women of not pulling each other up.

It is usually at this juncture that the queen bee syndrome (Staines et al, 1973) would be mentioned. If viewed from a larger perspective, the current explanation for the queen bee can be challenged as providing an inadequate position. Rather the observations of this study and others (Mavin & Grandy, 2012) purport that gendered processes have forced women to compete with each other for limited positions with already pre-filtered criteria that disfavour women before the interview process (Tienari et al, 2013).

The solitary woman who does get the senior position is the most highly qualified woman in the building (Participant 5) but she does not have adequate gravitas to advocate for other women because she is outnumbered and fielding her own self-constructed views as she struggles to be heard among all the other men in the room. In addition she carries the burden of representing her gender group in all matters pertaining to their career development (Ellemers et al, 2012). This is an indication that gendered practices do exist in organisations that contribute to a micro level competitive tension among women that eventually emerges into queen bee effects.

6.2.2.3 Summary

The high visibility of women in both categories has contributed toward their disadvantage (Simpson & Lewis, 2005). The heightened visibility of token women where structural barriers are discernible places them in the spotlight. Their inability to influence the conditions of their position negatively affects their credibility as managers and re-ignites the stereotype arguments (Eagly, 1987).

Bevan & Learmonth (2012) observed that when judgements are based on subjective

criteria, it becomes salient to women that they lack the power to make claims against discrimination. What is often observed is that men get promoted for their confidence rather than work-related abilities. To say that women do not possess enough confidence can be used as a default argument, irrespective of the situation.

The high visibility of women being employed in organisations with flat structures makes it difficult to articulate that gender disadvantage is salient. However the numeric representations need to be further explored. The visible presence of women in the lower ranks of the perpetual manager category creates negative intra-relations between women and can constrain and undermine the scope for further growth in management. Individual senior women come under the spotlight for disturbing the gendered order in management and then they have pressure placed on them to display solidarity with other women and to effect social change (Staines et. al, 1973). However the outcomes are not self-evident. Consequently the stark contrast between the socialisation of men and women in terms of competition, cooperation and friendship becomes apparent. These tensions are underpinned and perpetuated by gendered stereotypes, hierarchies and cultures (Mavin & Grandy, 2012). This scenario starts to highlight difficult to detect and concealed gendered processes that have been contributing to the exclusion of women in the higher echelons of organisations.

6.2.3 Efficacy expectations

Each level of analysis of the study has added richness to the construction of the categories within the broad theme of 'structural barriers'. Varied perspectives start to manifest and provide a platform for alternate discussions to challenge popularly held beliefs.

By using the heuristic of self-efficacy, many of the rationalisations of the participants can be critically examined. Bandura (1977) explains how individuals process information by demonstrating two types of expectations that are disbursed. Outcome expectancies are based on an individual's assessment that a certain behavior will result in a particular outcome. An efficacy expectation is an assurance displayed by an individual that the behaviour required for a desired outcome can be executed.

Efficacy expectations determine the amount of energy and time that will be expended to achieve the result in the face of obstacles and stressful situations. Those who persist might gain corrective experiences and reinforce their sense of self-efficacy. Those who cease with the activity prematurely retain self-debilitating experiences for a long time. Part of the coping mechanism is to display defensive behaviour (Bandura, 1977).

6.2.3.1 Discernible barriers

Within this category evidence of self-debilitating experiences and defensive behavior are present in the participants.

Participant 9 is still with her company. Before her interview, she was on leave for a week to try and re-group and gain stability from the stress she is experiencing at work. Her emotional state seemed fragile when she spoke about the situation. She expressed a desire to leave the company if the issues, as she saw them, were not resolved soon. This is an example of how her efficacy expectations have become non-congruent with her actual experience and this is leading to defensive behaviour bordering on a self-debilitating experience. The threat to the equilibrium of her stable social self has taken her beyond social adaptation (Schein, 1971). The ambiguity between the contextual and task factors has led to non-congruence between her efficacy expectations and her ability to field the stressful situation (Bandura, 1977). This situation starts to add a different perspective to the reasons why women opt out of senior management positions and leave organisations.

Participants 4 and 10 experienced shocks during their experiences when they were forced to leave their organisations due to being sidelined during highly confrontational situations that led to their resignations. In both cases the confrontation occurred with other women. While on the face of it, this might add support to the queen bee syndrome argument, further probing during the interviews revealed that the women in both the scenarios belonged to the inner circles in those organisations. It can be argued that the women who carried out the confrontational dismissals were executing the wish of the inner circle in an effort to assimilate with the membership requirements (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Through the framework of the (in)visibility vortex, Lewis & Simpson (2012) purport that one of the ways that women navigate at the margins of the dominant male centre is to deploy 'disappearance' (see Appendix 2.2). This was

explained as an incorporation of women into the invisible norm at the expense of their gender group membership.

What participant 10 witnessed of her ex-colleague can be considered one of the most powerful deterrents for women to progress to senior positions. It is what Bandura (1977) describes as cognitive reasoning through vicarious experiences. Women are processing information by watching and assessing the experiences of other women in senior positions. The heightened visibility of women in these scenarios draws attention to the their lack of influence and authority and their credibility disappears in the eyes of others. This has the power to create a trap where women are expending energy to climb higher and persevere in the face of stressful situations but their exclusion from the inner circle renders them powerless and without influence. Other women witness this and start to develop an outcome expectancy that for them to hold a senior position in a company could possibly compromise too many parts of their stable selves. Women then start evaluating whether the highly imposing amount of effort they need to expend, in the face of highly stressful and ambiguous situations, equates to the same worth as the expected outcome, which in itself is not guaranteed. This can posited as another reason why a scarcity of women in senior positions of these companies prevails.

6.2.3.2 The Perpetual Manager

The participants who dwell within the context of the perpetual manager still seem to have strong efficacy expectations. This can be drawn from a previous observation that was made in the discussion where participants instinctually denied gender discrimination as an issue and were very defensive of their organisations. This was observed in the literature when Tatli et al (2013) demonstrated how women display low expectations of organisations to provide women-friendly policies that will enable them to pursue their careers unhindered. Metcalfe & Woodhams (2012) summarise this succinctly by pointing out that the façade of gender-inclusiveness is used increasingly by both women and organisations within a discourse of gender neutrality. However it is behind a mask such as this that behaviours and norms that entrench male privilege remain unchallenged.

When successes are perceived as resulting from skill as opposed to situational circumstances, there is a higher probability of enhancing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

The participants have to deny gender as an issue in order to believe that they are responsible for expending the necessary effort to succeed. If discrimination is exposed or the organisation's processes are questioned then this starts to unsettle their efficacy expectations of past, present and future successes.

Participants have espoused that within their work environments 'the sky is the limit' (Participant 12) and their organisations are breeding grounds for innovation and growth. However they were unable to explicitly explain the imbalance in representations of women in senior positions. In the presence of information asymmetry, organisational actors will espouse the values of the firm in order to make sense of their environment (Martell et. al, 2012). Failure to get confirmation will result in the actor doing what is necessary to re-equilibrate the situation (Schein, 1971). Women's first reaction is to internalise the lack of progress as a lack of ambition on the part of women and organisations are absolved of any responsibility. They absolve organisations in an effort to protect their efficacy expectations but at the same time reduce the collective efficacy of women by being critical of each other. This ambiguous observation offers a glimpse into the presence of underlying processes that are not congruent with the espoused value of 'the sky is the limit' (Schein, 2004). Heilman (2012) discussed the detrimental effects ambiguity can have on the expectations of women. She purports that ambiguity is heightened when information available is inconsistent or irrelevant, when evaluative criteria are poorly defined, when the evaluation process lacks specificity and the source of performance outcomes are easily confused.

Participants who advocate for the position that 'the sky is the limit' in their organisations, cannot substantiate this with convincing examples. Nor are they able to completely explain why women are their own worst enemies. They are planning to leave their organisations in the future and explore other endeavours despite being critical of other women for not stepping up to the task of management positions.

The cognitive evaluation of women's efficacy expectations relative to the ambiguous environments they find themselves in could be seen to contribute to the increasing paucity of senior women in organisations (Bandura, 1977; Heilman, 2012) more so because it is representative of the gendered practices and processes present in organisations.

6.3. Second broad theme: Pioneering opportunities

Schein (1984) posits that the culture of a group is characterised by those elements that are most stable and least malleable. In order to understand these elements he suggests that the underlying assumptions of the group be examined. An underlying assumption is something that has been introduced to the group by a new leader that could be based on their own assumptions or beliefs. It becomes accepted when those actions lead to successful outcomes. If it works, it does not need to be debated and hence becomes an underlying assumption that this is now the ‘correct’ way to think, feel and act.

6.3.1 Participant 10’s experience

Participant 10 witnessed an action transforming into an underlying assumption at the public sector Company C. The female CEO put into place processes and actions that led them to achieve the first unqualified audit in the history of the company. The group was able to accomplish a difficult to achieve task and the members consequently felt good about themselves. The CEO’s beliefs were confirmed, reinforced and most importantly shared (Schein, 2004).

With continued reinforcement, the group would have become less and less conscious of these beliefs and values which would have evolved into non-negotiable assumptions. As the process continued, these assumptions would have dropped out of awareness and come to be taken for granted (Schein, 1984). Unfortunately Company C was closed down by the MEC and so not enough information is present to know if that would have happened.

This scenario, however, definitely offers a glimpse into how beliefs and actions can turn into successful outcomes that become reinforced and taken for granted when they are seen to work and become accepted as shared by the group. Mostly important to note was that this was accomplished by a female CEO. Even though she was described as rude and aggressive, her beliefs and consequently her leadership were accepted and shared. This translates into a pioneering opportunity for females to leverage their skills and experience in realising their leadership potential.

This opportunity can be augmented by additional observations. The context within which to exercise an introduction to new beliefs and values holds some importance. Schein (2004) said that situations that were characterised by conflict and ambiguity would have insufficient stability. This could be due to insufficient shared history or that many subgroups are present with different kinds of shared experiences. Similarities can be drawn with how some companies in the public sector are experiencing instability at the moment. When minimal shared assumptions exist, the interaction then becomes a more creative process (Schein, 1984). This relates closely with what Participant 10 witnessed at Company C. The opportunity for establishing new assumptions that are not gendered in nature exists since there is always a human need to stabilise and create consistency and meaning out of ambiguous situations (Schein, 2004).

In the scenario described by Participant 10, it was also observed that both the CEO and Participant 10 were able to innovate by activating their stable selves (Schein, 1971). They were not pre-occupied with fitting in to a male model of success (Heilman, 2012) or fighting against a prescriptive stereotype (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Their efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1977) were congruent with the outcomes of their output. Concerns with navigating gender, emotion and power (Ragins & Winkel, 2011) and fielding unencumbered choice (Sealy, 2010; Simpson et. al, 2010) were circumvented as their performance currency over the norms of gendered practices and processes.

This demonstrates the possibility of females leveraging innovation (Schein, 1971) when gendered practices are not influential as opposed to denying the salience of gender (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011) as an issue when gendered hierarchies do in fact exist and exert negative effects. A position so subtle and ambiguous, that it warrants further examination.

6.3.2 Participant 4's experience

Participant 4 is facing a slightly different situation where she has identified an existing culture that is not working for the company. Schein (2004) described an act of leadership as being able to destroy an existing culture when it is dysfunctional. Leadership creates and changes culture, while management and administration act within the culture.

The leadership role that lies ahead for her is quite challenging since evidence suggests that she is dealing with a culture that has a very stable shared history. She has already been met with resistance from the group and she admits that this will be a lengthy process. The success of this endeavor rests in her ability to translate her actions into positive outcomes that can be shared by the group and make them feel good about themselves (Schein, 1984).

Participant 4 shows that opportunities are present even in stable cultures. Females need to assess these carefully before choosing which cultures they want to unsettle or re-engineer.

6.4 Summary of findings

The discussion of findings was facilitated by the research questions set out by this study. A conceptual framework consisting of the career cone concept (Schein, 1971), the (in)visibility concept (Lewis & Simpson, 2010a; 2012) and the self-efficacy concept (Bandura, 1977) was used to analyse the study underpinned by Schein's (1984; 2004) definition of organisational culture.

In an attempt to elucidate and subsequently challenge the presence of gendered practices present in organisations, the study has revealed that structural barriers do exist and they do exert negative effects on the career progression of women. These barriers were more discernible when the presence of inner circles at their organisations were highly visible to the participants. These inner circles were described as being dominated by white males. In those organisations where it was found that the inner circles were invisible to the participants, they denied that gendered practices were present in their organisations.

The constructs of (in)visibility and self-efficacy aided in unpacking this position further to find that gendered practices did in fact exist. Through this analysis, alternative explanations were developed for the queen bee syndrome, the reasons why women leave organisations and the reasons for the subsequent paucity of senior women in organisations.

Opportunities were also found for women to entrench their own values and beliefs in organisations by initiating successful outcomes that can become shared by the group and hence translate into taken for granted assumptions. These opportunities do not require women to sacrifice a stable part of themselves or fight against prescriptive stereotypes.

The findings articulated above will be crystalised further with a presentation of a framework in the following chapter.

Chapter 7

7.1 Conclusions

Following on from the previous chapter, the following is a summary of this study's major findings.

7.1.1 The effects of (in)visibility

The heightened visibility of women in their careers works to their disadvantage if not considered in tandem with the context of gendered hierarchies that currently remain invisible in organisations.

This study found that in organisations where structural barriers were discernible and the male dominated inner circles were clearly visible, women were presented as highly visible token managers. Due to their lack of inclusion in the central decision making process, they were seen to lack adequate influence, power or credibility.

One of the deleterious effects of this finding is that those women eventually realised that their efficacy expectations do not align with their outcome expectancies (Bandura, 1977). They began to lose equilibrium and tried to find ways to re-affirm their stable social selves (Schein, 1971). The presence of gendered processes such as the asymmetric dissemination of information (Participant 2), the inadequate advocating for their positions (Participant 9) and the blatant attempt to fill a demographic quota requirement (Participant 10) contributed to maintaining the disequilibrium. This eventually led to defensive behavior or attrition and then subsequent self-debilitating experiences (Bandura, 1977) for the women. The consequence of the resultant finding is that the prescriptive stereotypes (Eagly & Carli, 2007) that women have fought so hard to avoid become re-ignited and women consequently feel silenced, ridiculed and inferior (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

The other deleterious effect is that other women witness these outward experiences and with a minimal amount of information form their own outcome expectancy of the token senior woman (Bandura, 1977). They observe that holding a senior position in a firm could possibly compromise too many parts of their stable selves (Schein, 1971). They start evaluating whether the extreme amount of effort required holds the same

worth as their outcome expectancy (Bandura, 1977), which evidence suggests might not even be guaranteed.

In organisations where structural barriers are not so easily discernible, heightened visibility of women in the lower ranks is clearly apparent. In these organisations women espouse that 'the sky is the limit' and they deny the presence of gendered processes.

The women who work here have high efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1977). Their environment is ambiguous. Their beliefs cannot fully explain why a paucity of senior women prevails in their organisations. Consequently they become defensive and in an effort to protect their efficacy expectations, they become critical of other women. Unfortunately what they don't realise is that they are collectively reducing the self-efficacy of their entire gender group.

Another consequence of having a large amount of women in the lower ranks without this translating to the more senior positions, is that a heightened micro-level tension has evolved. Women have become highly competitive with each other at the lower ranks in an effort to attain the approving gaze of the male manager (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). These negative intra – relations highlight the stark contrast between the socialisation of men and women in terms of competition, cooperation and friendship and is actually harmful to furthering the growth of women. Attention is consequently diverted from the gendered processes and central power base that contributed to this.

Together these findings and effects translate into alternate and more compelling reasons why women leave organisations or why they remain scarce in senior positions as opposed to those reasons that are simply mediated by choice (Anderson et. al, 2010).

7.1.2 Alternate explanations for the 'queen bee effects'

The findings demonstrated above that describe the experiences of the heightened token senior woman and the effects of heightened competition among women in the lower ranks display some dynamics that could be compared with queen bee effects (Staines et. al, 1973).

While competing with each other for the approving gaze of the male manager for the limited senior positions, women turn on each other and accuse each other of misogyny and not picking each other up. The one woman who does get promoted then carries the burden of her entire gender group to advocate for their inclusion and progress. She is expected to do this while struggling to develop a self-view that will allow her to be heard and acknowledged in the roomful of men. The woman is eventually seen to be inadequate in performing both expectations and she gets labeled as a queen bee. This collectively indicates that gendered practices do exist in organisations that contribute to a micro level competitive tension among women that eventually emerges into queen bee effects.

Some of the participants experienced shocks at a stage in their career where they were forced to leave a firm. Other female employees in more senior positions were found to be instrumental in delivering those particular shocks. The participants naturally felt negatively towards these women and were expectedly quite verbal about it. While this could be construed as a queen bee effects, further questioning revealed that those women were members of the inner circles in those firms. By inferring from the (in)visibility vortex (Lewis & Simpson, 2012), it can be argued that those women were the face of the confrontational dismissal for the participants as a result of choosing to seek membership with the dominant male centre in exchange for their membership with their gender group. It can be argued that they were deploying this behavior as coping or survival techniques.

When viewed in a different context, additional dimensions become visible that start to challenge the original assumptions of the queen bee syndrome (Staines et. al, 1973).

7.1.3 Pioneering opportunities

This study found that opportunities are present for women to entrench their own values in the culture of an organisation if they activated successful outcomes that could become shared among the group (Schein, 2004). Being able to share in the outcome and being able to feel good about themselves, makes the group accept the action as accepted and eventually taken for granted. Evidence of this was presented in the findings. It was also observed that women do not have to sacrifice a stable part of themselves or to defend prescriptive stereotypes to do this. This suggests that possibilities occur for women to progress in their careers and make a difference in a

manner that could be sustainable.

This trend seems to occur in the public sector at the moment where shared histories are not so stable (Schein, 2004) but evidence also suggests that it could be possible in other more stable sectors. This glimpse at an opportunity should not be viewed as exhaustive, instead it should be viewed as an avenue that needs further exploration.

7.1.4 Presentation of a framework

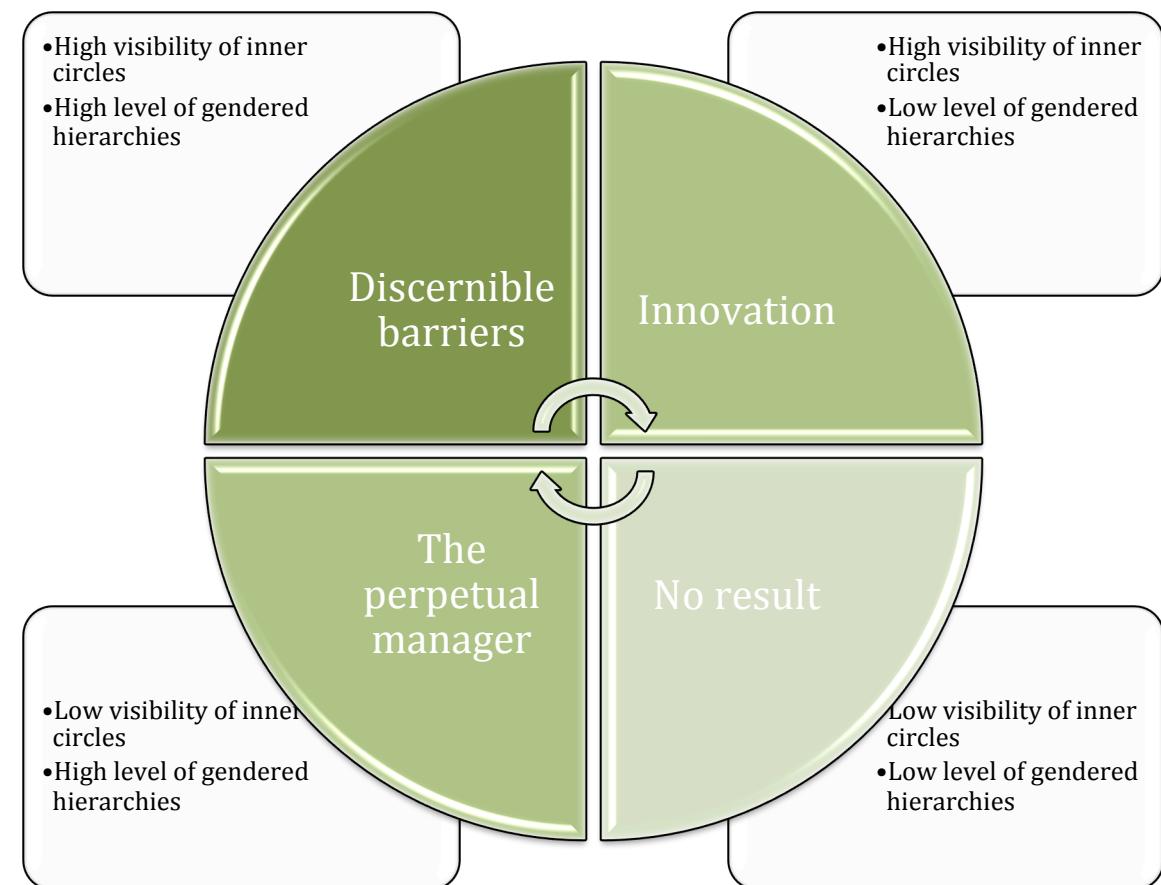


Figure 7.1 Elimination of invisibility

The framework shown above was developed to further crystallise the findings of this study. The framework is put forward as a suggestion to eliminate the invisibility of inner circles. The quadrants in the figure are characterised by the level of visibility of the inner circles and the extent of the presence of gendered hierarchies in organisations. The labeling of the quadrants correspond with the categories developed in the study. The circular shape of the figure suggests that this is a fluid process which will be subject to changes due to the ambiguity of the current situation.

The perpetual manager in the lower left quadrant represents organisations that have a low visibility of the inner circles but a high level of gendered hierarchies. Although participants who represented this category espoused that gendered hierarchies did not exist, further analysis revealed the opposite. These organisations are characterised by stagnant growth and lack of accountability.

Discernible barriers depict organisations that have high visibility of inner circles and a high level of gendered hierarchies. They are characterised by token senior women and high levels of attrition by women.

Innovation is represented by organisations that have a high visibility of inner circles and low levels of gendered hierarchies. Organisations should try to aspire to be in this quadrant. It is here that women will activate their stable selves and perform optimally in their careers.

The quadrant that depicts 'no result' is characterised by a low visibility of inner circles and low levels of gendered hierarchies. This study did not find a category for this description.

The circular arrows shown in the figure suggest sequential movement. It is suggested that the perpetual manager move to discernible barriers as a way of evolution. Even though discernible barriers presented debilitating experiences for the participants, this move is suggested. The inner circles need to be made visible in order to understand and challenge their assumptions. It is only after this process that an organisation can move to the innovation quadrant.

Pioneering opportunities was deliberately not assigned a quadrant. This was done in an effort not to limit its reach. It is believed that this can be demonstrated in any of the quadrants.

7.2 Recommendations

It is a recommendation for the managers of organisations and for females working in these organisations to deeply consider the underlying assumptions that drive certain behaviours and actions in themselves and the groups around them. Managers need to understand how the current processes are negatively affecting the careers of women in order to move forward. Women must be mindful of the assumptions they wish to unsettle or re-engineer. The dynamics and implications must be carefully considered.

It is believed that in order to move forward the elimination of the invisibility of inner circles of organisations needs to happen. It will be uncomfortable. However it is the only way that the validity of some the assumptions that forged these circles can be amended or made better. This is depicted in the framework above.

7.3 Future study

This study highlighted another layer of analysis that needs to be applied to a study such as this. Race dynamics also need to be taken into account. As demonstrated, a black woman experiences different layers of discrimination compared to a white woman. Crenshaw (1991) described this as intersectionality. It is suggested that race should also be added as a dimension for analysis in continuing a study such as this.

More needs to be examined with regards to the underlying assumptions that drive inner circles and gendered hierarchies. This could possible lead to the population of the fourth quadrant in the framework above. It is also hoped that more studies directed at understanding the dynamics of underlying assumptions can provide evidence and recommendations of sustainable pioneering opportunities for women in their careers.

7.4 Concluding remarks

The gender disparities are far from being resolved in the near future. Understanding and challenging underlying assumptions is complex and time consuming. It must be asserted that this study is by no means representative of all South African organisations.

This study was prompted by the scarcity of women in the highest levels of organisations and consequently led to asking deeper questions about what underpins this. It is hoped that the findings here serve as a catalyst for making visible the (in)visibility of gendered processes and practices that perpetuates a still male-dominated central power base in some of the South African organisations.

Chapter 8

8.1 References

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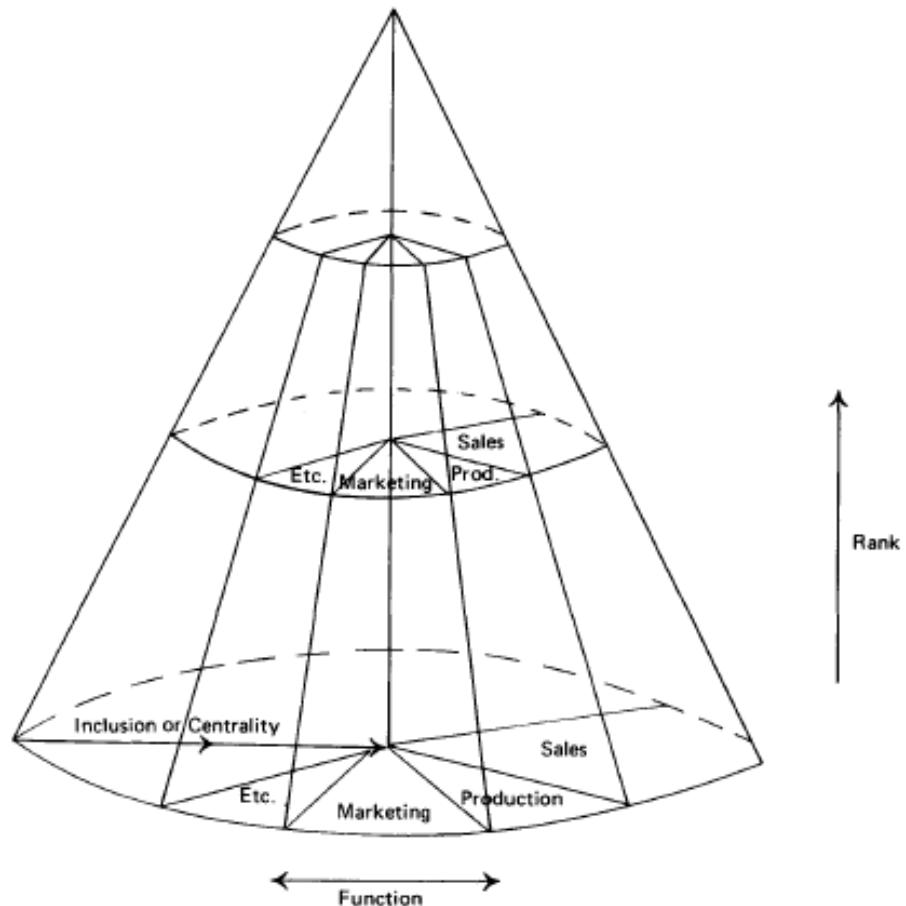
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Appendices

Appendix 2.1 The career cone (Schein, 1971)

FIG. 1. *A Three-Dimensional Model of an Organization*



Appendix 2.2 The (in)visibility vortex (Lewis & Simpson, 2012)

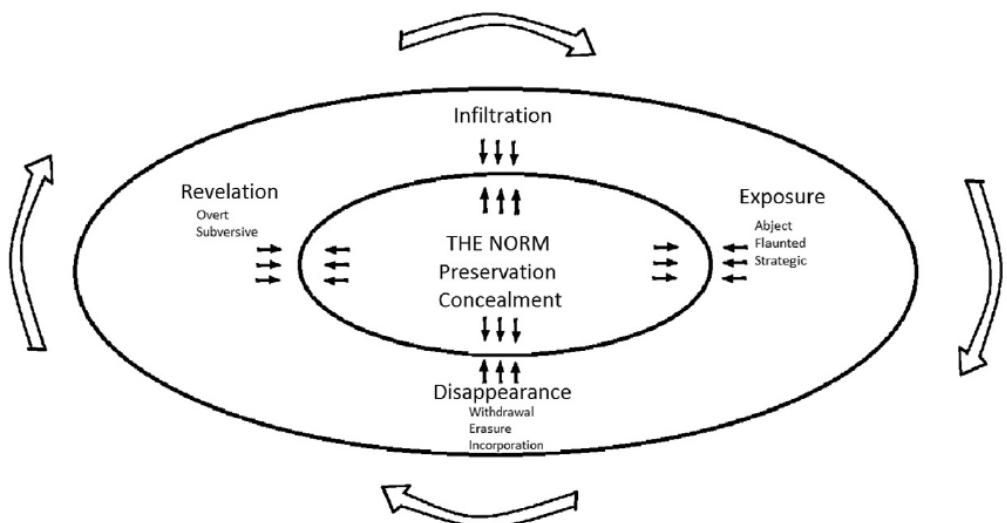


Figure 2. The revised (In)visibility Vortex

Appendix 4.1: Interview protocol and guide

Interview Protocol

1. This serves as a set of rules that will guide the administration and implementation of the interview. The protocol will consist of the purpose of the study and the process that will be followed in implementing it.

1.1 Introduce myself. Inform participant that I am conducting GIBS MBA Research.

1.2 Inform participant of **purpose of study** – to gain an in depth understanding into the ‘lived experiences’ that have shaped the careers of women in SA. The specific focus is on women’s perceptions of their organisational environments and their subsequent interactions with them. The intention is to unpack themes that will challenge the validity of current underlying assumptions in organisations.

1.3 The participant will be assured that her identity will be kept anonymous and that she will be free to decline to continue with the interview without penalty at any time if she feels uncomfortable.

1.4 The participant will be informed of the process:

- 1.4.1 Before conducting the interview the participant will be asked to sign a consent form.
- 1.4.2 The interview will be tape recorded since I will not be able to capture everything she says by just taking notes
- 1.4.3 I will be taking some notes as well just to align myself with the context
- 1.4.4 After the interview the tape recording will be transcribed and analysed for themes
- 1.4.5 Whatever parts of the recording that are used will be done so anonymously of the source.
- 1.4.6 It is hoped that through your lived experience that I will be able to contribute to a discussion that will bring about change for women in their professional lives.

Informed consent form

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Veloshnee Munian and I am conducting research with GIBS as part of the completion toward my MBA.

I am conducting research on the 'lived experiences' of women in their careers. I am trying to find out more about the underlying assumptions that govern organisational environments and how women interact with them.

Our interview is expected to last about an hour, and will help me to understand how South African women navigate their organisational life. **Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** I will be recording this interview on tape. Of course, all data will be kept confidential which means that your identity will not be shared with anyone at any time.

This form serves as your consent to participate in the interview given all that is explained here.

If you have any concerns, please contact me or my supervisor. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name: Veloshnee Munian
Email: munianv@gmail.com
Phone: 083 309 2700

Research Supervisor Name: Mandla Adonisi
Email: adonisim@gibs.co.za
Phone: (011) 771 4155

Signature of participant: _____
Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____
Date: _____

Interview Guide

Below is a list of open-ended questions that will be used as a guide during the interview with participants.

The interview will begin by first gathering some demographic information:

2. Demographic information

2.1 Name

2.2 Life stage information (e.g. age , marital status, children)

2.3 Race

2.4 Career history

2.5 Academic qualifications

3. Open-ended questions

3.1 Can you talk about your professional journey so far in getting to this place in your life, specifically talking about significant events before and after promotions or career changes?

3.2 Are there any significant experiences that have shaped your career choices?

3.3 Were any of your behaviours brought into question by yourself?

3.4 Were any of your behaviours brought into question by others?

3.5 What were the consequences?

3.6 Has the fact that you are female presented any challenges/ disadvantages for you professionally?

3.7 How have you handled this?

3.8 Are there significant events when your “femaleness” was most salient?

3.9 How has your career affected your personal life choices?

3.10 Describe your experiences with other women (men) professionally.

3.11 How would you describe the culture of your current organisation/ department?

3.12 Do you feel included in the central decision-making process in your organisation/
department?

3.13 How do you respond?

3.14 Can you share some of your positive and negative experiences of your career?

3.15 What are your future career plans?

Appendix 5.1: Participant information

Detailed information of participants						
Participants	Age	Race	Marital status	No. of children	Academic qualifications	No. of companies worked
Participant 1	30	Indian	Single	None	Bachelor of business science and finance (Honours); Bachelor of comm science	4
Participant 2	32	Indian	Married	None	CA; BCom honours BSc in computer science; Honours in information systems and technology	7
Participant 3	30	Indian	Single	None	BA; H Diploma higher diploma in journalism Economics; Masters in Environmental - Agricultural Economics; PHD in agricultural economics	1
Participant 4	51	White	Married	Two	BA in politics, philosophy, economics; Honours in Afrikaans; busy with Masters in literature	2
Participant 5	45	Black	Married	Two	BA in banking (public sector) Research Institute Higher education	3
Participant 6	30	White	Single	None	A- Media B- Media in London C- Media	3

Detailed information of participants						
Participants	Age	Race	Marital status	No. of children	Academic qualifications	No. of companies worked
Participant 7	35	Indian	Married	One	Matric	1
Participant 8	33	White	Married	One	BCom account and honours	3
Participant 9	35	White	Married	None	B Arch degree	2
Participant 10	40	Black	Separated	One	BA; LLB; MAP; MBA	10
Participant 11	57	White	Divorced	None	BA in Communication, English and History; MBL from UNISA	5
Participant 12	41	Black	Married	Two	Law degree; BA law; postgrad dip in compliance mangt;post grad cert in fin crime control; Masters in enterprise risk mngt & international law; currently pursuing PhD in ethics risk	2
						A- Banking B- Regulatory Board

