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**Gordon Institute
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The effectiveness of a Critical Mass of female board members to expose and
resolve invisible dynamics in the boardroom

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A research proposal submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

06 November 2017

Abstract

Women still face invisible barriers that delay their upward mobility in organisations. These invisible barriers are poorly understood or ignored by organisations, as a result, gender transformation at the top is perpetually slow. Building from the (In)visibility theory, this study examined how invisible dynamics that underpin the shortage of women on boards can be addressed.

The feminist literature has gained increasing attention, yet solutions to invisible barriers faced by women are lacking. This paper pulled the (In)visibility and Critical Mass Theories together to examine whether the presence of a Critical Mass resolves the invisible gendered dynamics in the boardroom.

A qualitative method was used to collect and analyse data on sixteen women and their lived experiences of male-dominated boardrooms.

The findings supported the critics' argument that numeric representation is too simplistic to resolve invisible gendered dynamics.

The study established that four main forces can counter the invisible dynamics that women face in the boardroom. These include Self-awareness and Confidence; The Role of a Chairperson; Resilience and Purpose, as well as Competence and Experience. Contrary to the (In)visibility theory, participants in this study did not withdraw or conceal their gender when exposed to hostile boardroom dynamics. The reasons for this are explored.


Key words

Women on Boards, Critical Mass, Invisible Dynamics

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.

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Date: 06 November 2017

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Abbreviations

- NED Non-Executive Director
- CMT Critical Mass Theory
- CEO Chief Executive Officer
- CFO Chief Financial Officer
- SOE State Owned Entity
- IoDSA Institute of Directors South Africa
- ID Invisible Dynamics
- DLF Deep Level Forces
- BWASA Businesswomen's Association of South Africa

Terminology Use on the study

- Deeply Invisible Gendered Dynamics are interchangeably used as
 - Invisible Dynamics
 - Invisible Gendered Dynamics
 - Gendered Dynamics
 - Gendered Norms
- Female Directors is sometimes used to encompass all female board members including CEO's, CFOs and Company Secretaries.

Chapter 1:

1.1. Problem Formulation

Corporate boards remain a male-dominated territory, and the lack of women in the boardroom remains a significant problem (Elting, 2017). Globally, men hold 80.3% of board seats in Fortune 1000 companies (Twenty-Twenty Women on Boards, 2016). Female representation on corporate boards has stagnated in most countries, telling that boards have not yet evolved beyond a symbolic gender representation or “tokenism” (Kogut, Colomer, & Belinky, 2014). The situation is slightly worse for Africa. For every seven board seats in an African listed company, men occupy six. Only 7% of executive directors are women, and just 2.2 % of SA’s JSE listed company CEOs are women (Bain & Company, 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2016)

In 2016, 23 countries had imposed quotas for gender participation in corporate and state-owned entity boards and the initiative is increasingly embraced. (Navitidad, 2015). As a result, there has been noticeable progress compared to the 1980’s when Elgart protested that: “perhaps it will take a new generation of women, those who are determined to direct the production of soap as well as its use” (Elgart, 1983). Women representation on corporate boards is slightly improving. Large companies notably showed more progress with women holding up to 20% of board seats (Twenty-Twenty Women on Boards, 2016).

Despite the commendable improvements, female boardroom participation is still not adequate. Only 15% of South African women are represented on boards compared to 19% globally and 26% in the BRIC economies. This is not due to a lack of ambition but because the female talent is undervalued (Grant Thornton Business Report, 2013; Bain & Company, 2017).

Notwithstanding the plethora of research conducted on the subject, very little is understood as dynamics that shape experiences of minority female board members on male-dominated corporate boards (Stead, 2013).

One of the main reasons for this poor insight is because these dynamics are deeply invisible. They are subtle and function as an undercurrent to boardroom interactions (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). These dynamics are complicated because the gender topic is not limited to a narrow, descriptive or biological classification. To this fact, Holvino (2010) criticises feminist frameworks that narrowly look at the dominant liberal paradigms and fail to acknowledge the manifold impact of intersections of race, colour and class

amongst women of colour (Holvino, 2010). Holvino attributes this to findings in the 1980's that women of colour were rendered invisible and their invisibility experiences, therefore, disappeared in the feminist literature and knowledge orthodoxy (Holvino, 2010). Hewlett & Rashid (2010) refer to a triple whammy of bias, where women face prejudice from three dimensions, gender, ethnicity, and cultural attitudes (Hewlett & Rashid, 2010).

Additionally, structural forms of inequality, socio-political regimes, cultures as well as diverse geographic territories have been aspects that are underrepresented in the gender frameworks leaving organisations with a shallow understanding of gendered dynamics or completely ignoring them.

The multi-paradigmatic dynamics are not fully understood, and therefore they are not addressed appropriately. When these dynamics are resolved, the approach tends to be to 'fix the women' so that they could be assimilated into the masculinised culture (Metcalf & Woodhams, 2012).

The invisible barriers women face in the workplace are also poorly understood because organisations give considerably less recognition to them since they are intangible and difficult to articulate (McKinsey & Company, 2016). They are possibly more dangerous than visible barriers because they are so subtle, negatively impacting women's experience and performance and undermining the efforts of gender transformation in organisations. Lewis and Simpson (2010) argue that where there is a masculine culture that marginalises women, the culture is further protected and enforced by masculine models, norms and stereotypes. These norms are subtle in the way they lead to inequalities making it difficult to articulate them and challenge them (Munian, 2013).

The glass ceiling theory reveals that the obstacles that women face become more difficult as they move up in the organisation. A related phenomenon is what McKinsey refers to as "leakages" where companies manage to promote women into middle management roles but then encounter difficulties promoting and retaining them to senior management positions (McKinsey & Company, 2016). For this reason, this study examined the gendered obstacles at the very top of the organisation (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015).

Stichman, Hassell, and Archbold (2010) suggested that women leaders' experiences can be improved by increasing the participation rates of women in leadership (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010). Other literature criticises that this preoccupation with numbers gives false comfort while the elite cadre of male board members sustains their

grip on power and invisible gendered continue unchallenged (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Stichman et al., however, propose that women have better experiences in the workplace as their participation rates increase (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010).

This claim can also be evidenced in the Norway based study by Mathisen, Ogaard, & Marnburg (2002), proposing that, despite their minority status, Norwegian female directors do not experience boardroom dynamics more negatively than their male counterparts (Mathisen, Ogaard, & Marnburg, 2012). Supposedly, this can be attributed to Norway's presence of a Critical Mass of female board members in the boardroom.

Norway set a quota law enforcing a 40% women participation in the boardroom. By 2016, Norway had the highest world participation of women on boards of listed companies, with a 37% share of women on corporate boards (Navitidad, 2015). At more than thirty percent, Norway has a Critical Mass of women represented on their boards (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011). The CMT suggests that when the size of the subgroup reaches a certain threshold that the minority's degree of influence is substantial (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011). Norway is one such country where female directorship has been taken beyond tokenism to a Critical Mass (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011).

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Many CEOs are frustrated by their unfruitful efforts to build a robust pipeline of female leaders. They spend time, money and other resources to accelerate and enhance the development of female leader but then not much happens (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). This is because policies and programs established by organisations are designed to address Surface Level issues of development and progress, while the deep level, invisible barriers are left unresolved (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). This study aims to contribute to the resolution of these invisible barriers.

The aspiration for women to progress to leadership decreases as soon as they reach middle management (Bain & Company, 2017). An in-depth understanding of these dynamics helps develop an informed perspective that can help reduce the "leakages", and the resultant lack of women in boards.

To maximise competitiveness and development potential, each country should give women the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as men. Additionally, Perrault (2014) found that gender diversity matters for the fundamental reason that through real and symbolic representations, women enhance boards' legitimacy and trustworthiness,

fostering shareholders' trust in the firm and thus contributing to its market performance (Perrault, 2014). With rapidly diminishing levels of trust in South Africa, boards need to leverage this to improve how they are perceived. Another study of Fortune 500 companies within the top quartile for women's board membership reported 42% higher return on sales and 53% higher return on equity (Catalyst, 2007).

It was also critical to explore this subject because, for a country such as South Africa, women account for 50% of its potential talent base. Homophilous boards lead to the exclusion of relevant and qualified social groups. It also leads to a lack of representation of primary stakeholders, such as female employees in decision-making (Perrault, 2014). Therefore, for both moral and performance reasons, gender transformation and the quality of gender participation is critical for success in corporations.

There is a plethora of research on women in leadership, the challenges they face and the continued underrepresentation in leadership position. The challenges they face include invisible gendered dynamics. These invisible dynamics are however, not well understood and therefore not appropriately addressed, contributing to the perpetual lack of women in leadership and slow gender transformation.

The study aimed to contribute to a body of knowledge that improves inclusivity, equality and thereby the share of voice of women on corporate boards for the betterment of the corporation. The King Code of Corporate Governance (King III) sets out that the board must be cognizant of what factors make it effective. Boardroom dynamics can be one of those elements to observe and address to enhance board effectiveness. This study aimed to contribute to the work of understanding the deeply invisible gendered dynamics that play out in the boardroom to address them. It also seeks to assist organisations in the gender transformation efforts within organisations by deciphering and interpreting these deeply invisible gendered dynamics that may stifle these efforts if not addressed.

The study brought together two bodies of literature which have not been combined and assessed in this light. The Critical Mass Theory as well as the (In)visibility Theory. The study explored the theory that suggests that an increase in female representation in leadership reduces their negative experiences of gendered norms (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010). It reviewed whether the presence of a CM helps to expose and address deep level boardroom dynamics that are experienced by female board members. It aimed to assess the substantive (rather than descriptive) impact of numerical representation in the boardroom with regards to (In)visibility (Childs & Krook, 2008).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Literature Review

Many studies in the feminist literature have explored reasons and solutions for gender disparities in leadership. They have presented compelling cases of ethical, economic and reputational benefits gained from having more women in leadership. They argued that gender disparities on boards contribute to missed economic benefits and they lead to lower economic output per worker (Bandara, 2015). They have shown that companies with more female directors outperform those who do not (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011; Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012; Childs & Krook, 2008; Paxton, Kunovich, & Hughes, 2007). They also make a case for reputational benefits, suggesting that female representation enhances board legitimacy and “homophilous” boards compromise board trustworthiness (Perrault, 2014).

Specifically, the cases for numeric representation of women in leadership has been explored in the recent literature. The Critical Mass Theory puts forward an argument for a thirty percent numeric representation of minorities. It argues that the minority gains significant influence and the benefits of diversity are realised once they reach a thirty percent numeric representation (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011; Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012).

Despite all that, the lack of women at the top persists, and many reasons that underpin this have been discussed extensively in the feminist literature. The existing research has not offered compelling resolutions to the invisible barriers that underpin the lack of women in the boardroom. The main reasons cited in literature include the Tokenism Theory (Kanter, 1997); the Glass Ceiling Theory (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015), the Monoculture Theory (Murray & Syed, 2010; Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012) and the Queen Bee Syndrome by Staines, Jayaratne, & Tavis, (1973).

The (In)visibility body of literature and how it can be resolved, is less explored in the feminist literature. Rosabeth Kanter publicised the problems that women encounter by being highly visible in male-dominated contexts. Lewis and Simpson (2010) looked beneath the surface and explored the struggles experienced in the process of concealing and revealing gendered norms (Lewis & Simpson, 2012; Lewis & Simpson, 2010). Stead (2013) contributed to the topic by articulating how gender and power operate learning from experiences of (In)visibility.

In contemporary literature, a question that has not been studied is whether the Critical Mass is effective in addressing the (In)visibility problems established by Kanter (1997), Lewis and Simpson (2010). The Critical Mass Theory has not been assessed from the perspective of addressing the detrimental impact of (In)visibility; this study aims to combine these two bodies of literature and explore this.

Drawing from conceptual academic literature and models on Critical Mass and (In)visibility, this study reviewed the effectiveness of the Critical Mass in exposing and addressing deep level (In)visibility dynamics that may be underpinning the slow progress in gender transformation in the boardroom as stated in the previous chapter. This section explained the CMT and reviewed the arguments for and against the Critical Mass Theory in the context of corporations.

It is assumed by supporters of the Critical Mass Theory that numeric rebalancing of gender translates to equal power distribution, and a fair share of influence (Munian, 2013). In this respect, this study aimed to examine the validity of the CMT assumption. It examined whether and how does reaching a Critical Mass of female board members drive boardroom dynamics and thereby improving inclusivity and equality.

This section reviews the (In)visibility Theory as demonstrated by the (In)visibility Vortex. In this study, the Critical Mass theory was weaved into the (In)visibility Vortex to pool the two bodies of theory together and assess the extent of their interaction. The intention was to assess the CMT's substantive utility in exposing invisible gendered dynamics and slowing down the spiral motion that erupts when concealing and revealing gendered dynamics. The chapter closes with a review of some of the invisible gendered practices often found in feminist literature, well known but with little evidence of any improvement.

2.2 The Critical Mass Theory

Evidence on the glass ceiling theory showed that women's mere presence in leadership does not guarantee their impact or valued contribution in the firm's decision-making process (Songinil & Gnan, 2009). The Critical Mass theory adds that they might, have a chance to exert influence if they become a significant minority of at least thirty percent (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011). Joecks, Pull, & Vetter (2013) also found that the benefits of diversity are realised when a Critical Mass of women on the board is present. The argument for the Critical Mass theory puts for that women are not likely to have an impact on outcomes and decisions until they transform from token individuals to a

substantial minority (Childs & Krook, 2008).

They found that the thirty percent can be loosely translated to an absolute number of three women per board (Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012). The CMT suggests that when the size of the subgroup reaches a certain threshold, the subgroup's degree of influence increases (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011). It puts forward that when the number of women in the board reaches "the magic number", there will be a change in the nature of dynamics and interactions in the group (Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012). The dynamics and manner by which decisions are reached changes when there are more women on the board. (Omarjee, 2016).

It is this ambition that organisations such as the 30% Club and the 2020 women on boards pursue, whose mission is to bring numeric gender balance in the boardroom (Twenty-Two Women on Boards, 2016; 30% Club.org, 2015). On the premise that thirty percent is the proportion when Critical Mass is reached, a point where the minority has a voice that is heard and opinions that are recognised (30% Club.org, 2015)

2.2.1 Mixed Results and Criticism of the Critical Mass Theory

Some literature has erupted scepticism about the Critical Mass concept (Childs & Krook, 2008). There are also mixed findings of the Critical Mass theory and its impact on firm performance. While some studies find the relation between women on boards and firm performance to be positive, others provide evidence of a negative link. Others do not see a link at all (Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012). A related but different insight by McKinsey & Company also showed that numbers do not equal more power or strategic influence because women tend to look after non-strategic portfolio (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Torchia, Calabro & Huse's (2011) study showed that women board members' contribution to the level of firm innovation becomes evident when the critical is reached (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011). They found a positive relationship between firm innovation and the presence of a Critical Mass on corporate boards (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011).

Some studies prove that companies with more women in leadership positions are significantly more profitable, women have a better long-term outlook and better risk assessment abilities. Before that, many studies were inconclusive whether the Critical Mass of women in boards enhances firm performance (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011). Furthermore, critics of the numerical representation of female leaders challenge that the concept is too simplistic. They argue that the negative experiences of women minorities may merely be a function of society's inferiority perception towards women and not an

issue of numerical representation (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010).

Additionally, Lewis and Simpson queried whether the numbers game, particularly at senior level, is convincing enough as a solution to gender inequalities (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Their query was supported by Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes (2007) who found in their study that having more women occupy office does not necessarily make a difference (Paxton, Kunovich, & Hughes, 2007). Other opposing studies found that males in female-dominated groups did not negatively experience this gender imbalance, suggesting that it is not necessarily just a numbers game (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010).

The Critical Mass theory has been explored in the context of its impact on firm performance but very little has been examined in the context of exposing gendered dynamics in leadership. The Critical Mass theory has hardly been used to assess its effectiveness in uprooting and challenging invisible dynamics in the boardroom. Also very few have explored the Critical Mass theory and its impact in addressing the ills of deep level (In)visibility.

The invisible deeply invisible gendered dynamics to be explored in this study are found on the concept of Deep Level (In)visibility as termed by Kanter (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). The next session explains the concepts of (In)visibility. Thereafter, (In)visibility theory is connected to the Critical Mass theory to explore whether a Critical Mass can be useful to address (In)visibility problems.

2.3 The (In)visibility Theory

The concept of (In)visibility is a conjoined term which refers to both visibility and invisibility. These are therefore difficult to articulate and challenge and yet essential to address as women navigate the gendered practices in their careers (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

The (In)visibility theory articulates the often hidden gendered practices and spells out how these practices can be concealed within norms, practices and values (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). This concept can be linked to the second-generation bias which is a bias embedded in informal norms and subtle patterns of interactions in an organisation that exclude minority groups (Sturm, 2001). They are not tangible, but they create a certain unfavourable atmosphere, like something in the water as Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb (2011) refer to it. These biases are typically unintentional but still very detrimental, impeding women's advancement and adding stress to their lives (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013).

Hidden gendered dynamics and biases are deeply embedded in the organisation, and they remain one of the fundamental hindrances for women in leadership. Some practices are so deeply embedded at an unctuous level, taken for granted and hence very difficult to debate (Munian, 2013). Lewis and Simpson (2010) put forward that where there is a masculine culture that marginalises women, it is further protected and enforced by masculine models, norms and stereotypes. They are subtle in the way they lead to inequalities making it difficult to articulate and confront (Munian, 2013).

The (In)visibility concept is classified into two types, Surface-level (In)visibility and Deep level (In)visibility which is explained further below.

2.3.1 Surface-level (In)visibility

Visibility in this context refers to the noticeable physical differences that make one stand out compared to the rest of the group. These are related to as the first generation types of discrimination which are visible and easily identifiable, for example, the statistical underrepresentation by race, age or gender. This would be the case in the absence of a Critical Mass of the minority group. Surface-level (In)visibility occurs when a minority is being isolated or marginalised or labelled as different (Stead, 2013). In other words, Arthur Schopenhauer's quote "*Auf der Höhe muss es einsam sein*", rephrased as "it is lonely at the top", has a deeper resonance for women directors (Denison, 2016).

Surface-level (In)visibility speaks to women's negative experiences in male-dominated workplaces potentially due to the lack of a Critical Mass of women in leadership (Stead, 2013). Lewis and Simpson suggest that Surface Level visibility causes issues of exclusion and differences which can be overcome by increasing women's numerical participation (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). According to Lewis and Simpson, Kanter's (1997) tokenism theory suggests that once tokens reach a tipping point of fifteen percent representation, they begin to experience fewer workplace problems (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). They will feel less like "the odd one out" amongst their peers, which should reduce their feelings of exclusion (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010).

Based on the above, there are indications that the presence of a Critical Mass can be useful in overcoming Surface Level (In)visibility. The question remains whether it can also overcome deep level (In)visibility. Deep level (In)visibility is discussed next.

2.3.2 Deep level (In)visibility

Deep level (In)visibility looks at the hidden dynamics of deeply invisible gendered dynamics. (Stead, 2013). Deeply invisible gendered dynamics in a male-dominated space like corporate boards are a challenge to identify and address because they are entrenched and weaved in as the usual way of doing things (Stead, 2013). Deep level (In)visibility deals with unspoken dynamics such as hidden meanings, embedded norms and invisible power relations. It includes rituals and practices as are invisible levers and undercurrents that influence the functioning of a group.

Uprooting and challenging these invisible norms is particularly challenging in a male-dominated corporate board. This is because the classical members of the normative group are not labelled and thus invisible (Lewis & Simpson, 2010) Their privileged access in deeply invisible gendered norms and ways of working is also invisible making it difficult to point them out to be challenged (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). The dominant group or holders of a 'normative position' will endeavour to retain the invisibility of their favourable position while the minority will seek to challenge this imbalance. (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). This protection of deeply invisible gendered norms makes it the more difficult to articulate, challenge and change. Additionally, those who dare to question the deeply invisible gendered dynamics render themselves visible and exposed; they live the consequences of challenging the status quo (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). A deeper understanding of these deeply invisible gendered dynamics needs to be explored as they remain hidden, unchallenged and yet problematic (Metcalf & Woodhams, 2012).

The turmoil of concealing the privileges of deeply invisible gendered norms by the

normative group while the minority group attempts to expose them can be demonstrated using an (In)visibility Vortex which is discussed next.

2.3.3 The (In)visibility Vortex

With regards to deep level (In)visibility, Lewis and Simpson (2012) state that invisible gendered practices require tactics and manoeuvring by the normative group in order to preserve the norms and practices that favour them (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

However, these norms can be exposed and challenge the masculine domains through radical acts and rebellious stories (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

The (In)visibility Vortex consequently demonstrates, in a spiral motion, the turmoil and struggles that occur in the battle to expose invisible gendered practices (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). The Vortex captures the behaviours around gender power and the consequential disciplinary process when that power is tempered with (Munian, 2013). This paper enquired whether the presence of a Critical Mass is useful in any way to bring out the hidden deeply invisible gendered dynamics.

Lewis & Simpson's (2012) Vortex illustrates that when these dynamics and practices are challenged, there are altercations that move in the form of a Vortex (see Figure 1).

The inner circle of the Vortex represents those closest to the normative groups, experiencing first hand, the turmoil and struggles of concealing and revealing these deeply invisible gendered dynamics.

The centre is the power hub where the dominant normative group preserves the power. The speed of the spiral motion is accelerated at the centre and reduced as one draws away from the power hub. The boardroom which is a nominated space perfectly represents this centre and its power hubs.

The outer part of the Vortex represents the flow experienced by those who challenge and shed light to the hidden gendered dynamics. Within the outer circle, there are three phases of altercations:

- 1) The first phase is the Revelation of invisible gendered dynamics through radical acts, subversive stories and interpersonal relations (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). According to Stead (2013), the revelation phase is about drawing attention to gendered behaviours and challenging the status quo (Stead, 2013).

2) Revealing the deeply invisible gendered dynamics leads to “Exposure” and visibility of the one who challenges them or exposes the privileges enjoyed by the normative group. They render themselves open to the unpleasant consequences of high scrutiny. In other words, Exposure is about becoming the “odd one out”, differing in opinion from the consensus in a group. This visibility would lead to higher noticeability and may draw unwelcome attention and scrutiny (Stead, 2013). The person becomes exposed that they believe or see things differently than the normative group. Speaking up against deeply invisible gendered dynamics poses the risk of being labelled as difficult (Stead, 2013).

3) Exposure leads to vulnerability and isolation of the one who challenges. This will eventually lead one to withdraw, seeking cover into “Disappearance” (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Stead (2013) speaks about another form of Disappearance referring to concealing gender. This is gender Disappearance where women attempt to blend in with the normative group to avoid being isolated. They make sure they do not cross the line of acceptability by assimilating to the stereotypical roles and acting like “one of the boys” (Stead, 2013).

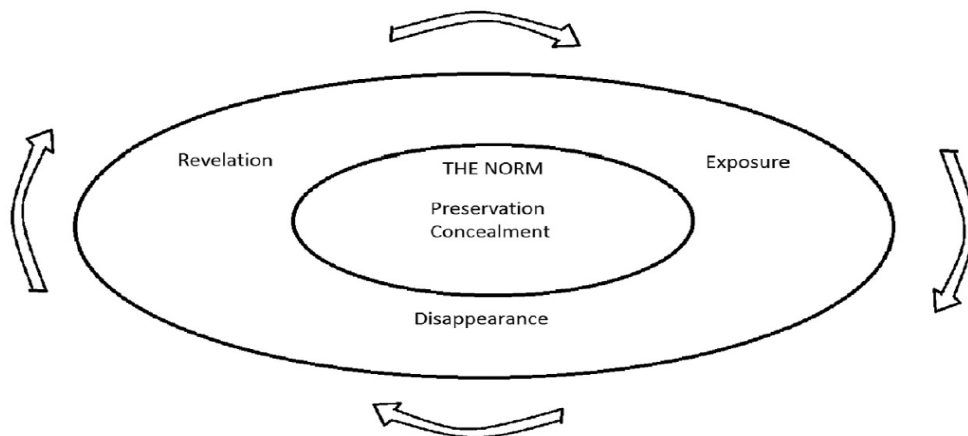


Figure 1. The (In)visibility Vortex

Source: Lewis & Simpson, *Kanter Revisited: Gender, Power and (In)visibility*, 2012.

The Vortex present a vicious cycle that perpetuates invisibility. It starts by portraying a token who attempts to make visible their discomfort; they reveal their disagreement with an unfavourable gendered norm. The action leads them to high scrutiny and isolation because they have voiced out disagreement with the norm. This brings the token to exposure and scrutiny which causes discomfort and shame. It leads them right back to silence, their voice/opinion/presence disappears as a coping mechanism. It leads them to “invisibilising” themselves, which perpetuates the invisibility problem (Stead, 2013). Ultimately, the study explored whether in the presence of the Critical Mass, the Vortex theory still holds, whether challenging the norms by a Critical Mass of women board

members yields more positive results than the vicious cycle of a Vortex suggests.

The Vortex also encompasses double standards and contradictions with regards to performance measures; this is discussed next.

2.3.4 The Paradox of (In)visibility

Gendered dynamics are characterised by a plethora of double standards. Women have to navigate contradictions where they must fit-in while making sense of dichotomous roles (Munian, 2013). The (In)visibility problem represents the paradox where women minorities in leadership are highly visible and therefore highly scrutinised yet the measure that is used for that scrutiny are invisible (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). It is also a paradox because the deeply invisible gendered dynamics that underpin this high scrutiny are, in fact, hidden. The heightened scrutiny refers to the fact that leadership for women is more than what she does or says, it is also how she looked when she said it, her executive presence, how she dresses and how she wears her hair.

Furthermore, women are taught to downplay their femininity but not to be aggressive as if she's trying to act like a man. She must strike a perfect balance between the two, not too feminine and also not too aggressive (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). Women who were seen to display male traits are perceived negatively, seen to be stepping out of their boundaries (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). When women put their hand up for significant positions, men accuse them of being aggressive, yet men receive praise for such an action or less (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Contradictions are experienced when one seeks belonging, validation and similarities with their group while attempting to maintain their uniqueness at the same time (Shore et al., 2011). Finding acceptance fulfils a human need for belonging; it provides a sense of connection and prevents isolation (Shore et al., 2011).

2.3.5 Deeply Invisible Gendered Dynamics

The departure point of the Vortex is that the deeply invisible gendered dynamics are invisible and therefore difficult to identify and confront. The invisible dynamics are not only unseen, but they are continually moving and changing (Stead, 2013). Organisational values, culture and norms act as signifying practices that result in concealment, constantly excluding and marginalising the female. The next session briefly discusses some gendered dynamics known in the modern literature. These typically include invisible power relations, second-generation bias, meritocracy, tokenism and homophily to mention a few.

This paper explored whether having more than thirty percent of women in the boardroom can neutralise these gendered phenomena so that boardrooms can be inclusive. These are some of the invisible gendered practices often found in the feminist literature. They are not new dynamics, but they are perpetually experienced by women with little evidence of any improvement. Some examples of these underlying gendered dynamics are discussed next.

i) The performance evaluation bias

This bias refers to how men tend to be evaluated strictly on results while women are evaluated based on potential (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Women are measured on what they have achieved to date while men are measured on future potential. Gender stereotyping literature also revealed that when there are fewer women than men in a group, women tend to receive lower performance ratings than men (Sackett, DuBois, & Noe, 1991). Women often report anecdotally that they have to be twice as good as the men, that a woman has to be twice as good as a man to go half as far (Singh, Terjesen, & Vinnicombe, 2008).

ii) Homophily and “The old boys Club.”

The homophily dynamic is an invisible gendered phenomenon where demographic characteristics are more inclined to act favourably towards each other (Gavin & College, 2014). With the boardroom being a male dominated space, the homophily dynamic will play out against the few female board members as males are more inclined to form niches. Similarity breeds connection, therefore, people tend to gravitate towards someone that is demographically more like them (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). This means people’s networks are homogeneous which can be detrimental for women who are statistically a minority in boardrooms. Board structures are typified by a “small world” topology in which board members belong to elite groups and social, local clubs that are networked into each other (Kogut, Colomer, & Belinky, 2014). Exclusion and isolation for token can be experienced as a result. These relations are normally invisible, taking place on the golf course, hunting trips or other social clubs.

Board appointments are typically informal; they are based on referrals from social circles and exclusive networks (Burgess & Tharenou, 2002). As a result, board members that have strong social ties also have enhanced provisions for consultation from outside directors (Gavin & College, 2014). In other words, the internal relations extend to beyond the boardroom impacting the attainment of consulting jobs and directorships.

iii) Monoculture

The notion of “think manager–think male” is a well-explored topic where a good or successful manager was described in masculine terms (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). It still holds that certain roles in the boardroom may be characterised to have a masculine gender while other roles are described as feminine. The monoculture in this context reflects a masculine ideology embodied in the nature of the work itself (Murray & Syed, 2010).

This embodiment of roles is a form of a tacit understanding and expectation. For example, a good leader must be strong, assertive and firm, which are typically masculine qualities. Women are encouraged to proactively take up leadership roles while organisations do nothing to address policies and norms that communicate a contradiction between how women are seen and the qualities that people tend to associate with leaders (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). As a result, women resort to ‘cloning’ of the male work model exists, institutionalising what is deemed acceptable behaviours while outlawing other behaviours (Murray & Syed, 2010). Consequently, if a woman was to ‘make it’ to the top, then she must adopt male-type characteristics and become ‘one of the boys’ (Murray & Syed, 2010).

These cultural barriers women have to tackle are very real, cultural barriers which indicate that there are roles women simply are not suited for. The C-suit and directorship roles are such roles (Elting, 2017).

iv) Tokenism

Corporate boards remain to display only a symbolic minority of women directors. Therefore female directors can be classified as tokens (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011). In group compositions, skewed groups are the most problematic (Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012). In an asymmetric group, one dominant gender controls the group dynamics, norms and group culture. The few are token representatives for their category, for example, females (Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012). This treatment can manifest as both surface and deep level (In)visibility. Tokens are highly visible and highly scrutinised; however, there may be less scrutiny as the minority group grows. (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010). In other words, the presence of a Critical Mass can be effective in resolving issues of visibility, isolation and desertion. While this may be true for resolving Surface Level or visibility problems, this study explores whether it is equally true for deep level invisibility problems.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Propositions and Research Questions

The focus of the study was to explore whether and how increased numeric representation, in the form of a Critical Mass, can be useful to deflect the impact of invisible gendered norms in the boardroom. It examined whether the Critical Mass changes how they norm with the dominant male counterparts in the boardroom.

Question 1: What invisible dynamics have you experienced in the boardroom? In other words, what have you experienced as subtle or tacit practices or norms in the boardroom as a male-dominated territory?

Deep level (In)visibility looks at the hidden dynamics of deeply invisible gendered dynamics. (Stead, 2013). Deeply invisible gendered dynamics in a male-dominated space like corporate boards are a challenge to identify and address because they are entrenched and weaved in as the normal way of doing things (Stead, 2013).

Question 2: How does having a Critical Mass of female board members enforce a change in the boardroom dynamics? If any, what else drives the invisible boardroom dynamics besides the Critical Mass.

The CMT puts forward that when the number of women in the board reaches “the magic number”, there will be a change in the nature of dynamics and interactions in the group (Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012). The paradox in the (In)visibility concept refers to the high visibility of a minority which can lead to higher scrutiny yet the measures used for that scrutiny are invisible (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

Question 3: How do you challenge or highlight deeply invisible gendered dynamics?

Revealing the invisible gendered norms leads to exposure of the one who challenges them. They show themselves as the “odd one out”, differing from the consensus rendering the risk of being labelled and isolated (Stead, 2013; Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

Question 4: To avoid isolation as a minority, how do they norm with the normative group? How does the norming differ when there are at least three women in the boardroom?

“Invisibilising” gender is mentioned as a tactic to deal with isolation by the minority. We use the term “invisibilising gender” to denote the process of making one’s gender “less different” from the normative gender to seamlessly fit in with the normative group. They attempt to blend in, making sure they do not cross the line of acceptability by acting like “one of the boys” (Stead, 2013; Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Choice of Methodology

This study was conducted as an exploratory study to understand the effectiveness of a Critical Mass of women board members in dealing with (In)visibility. It was conducted as a qualitative study. A qualitative study allows an insider perspective from the participants' point of view. It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. A qualitative research method is appropriate for this study to understand and interpret women director's lived experiences (Creswell, 1998). The qualitative approach starts with a theoretical framework that informs the study and allows for the topic to be explored in a new light and it allows for the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods to be obtained. The Critical Mass theory was assessed in a new light of its impact on invisible gendered boardroom dynamics, invisibility which is delicate and difficult to articulate and measure

i) Research philosophy

This study made use of the interpretivism design philosophy. Interpretivism is the study of social phenomena. To understand the phenomenon, its meanings and the particular set of circumstances, one must interpret them (Schwandt, 1998). Interpretivism was appropriate here in order to understand from women board members' point of view whether their Critical Mass makes an impact in addressing invisible deeply invisible gendered norms. The research aimed to capture the boardroom experiences and interpret the responses reflecting on the theoretical framework. The researcher endeavoured to maintain objectivity necessary to arrive at an impartial and accurate interpretation of events (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

ii) Approach

The study used both deductive and inductive approaches as many research projects tend to (Thomas, 2006). Firstly, the study looked to validate whether the presence of a Critical Mass changes the underlying dynamics and consequently the manner of interactions in a boardroom context. In this regard, the deductive approach was used to test whether data from the interviews are consistent with assumptions of the Critical Mass theory.

Additionally, the study inductively looked for emerging themes to ascertain what

dynamics participants face in the boardroom and how they respond to such dynamics? They were asked open-ended questions about their experiences with revealing gendered norms as well as how they norm themselves into the dominant group. This was the inductive approach used in line with the interpretivism philosophy which allowed the researcher to explore and seek frameworks and answers from the data (Thomas, 2006). The researcher allowed the theory to emerge from the data without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies, and eventually derived a model that interprets how the (In)visibility Vortex can be disrupted and slowed down. The appropriateness of this approach stems from the need to understand how the (In)visibility Vortex is slowed down and whether the numeric representation has anything to do with it.

iii) Strategy

In-depth interviews were used as a research strategy in this study. Interviews were suitable for this qualitative research as it allowed research questions to be answered and meet the research objectives. An interview also allows subtle and unspoken messages about the research subjects and topic to be discovered that would have otherwise been missed by more scientific methods of enquiries like surveys (Anderson, 2010). The interviews commenced with a short demographically oriented questions to establish the participant's context and background.

iv) Time horizon

The study was a cross-sectional study conducted between July and August 2017. Interviews conducted over a short period of time proved to be a useful cross-sectional approach to answer a qualitative research question. It is not expected that the concepts under study would vary vastly over time. Therefore a cross-sectional study is suitable for this study.

v) Technique

The data collection was via sixteen semi-structured interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate here to allow the researcher to vary the order of questions in line with the participant's narrative so not to be restricted by a rigid order of questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This provided richness in the responses. This interview type also allowed questions that become unfitting for a particular participant to be omitted. Interviews are appropriate for this study because they are not restricted to specific questions and can be guided or redirected (Anderson, 2010).

The interviews were approximately 45 minutes long, conducted mostly face to face. Face to face interviews ensure that not only what is said is captured but also how the participants structured their responses and how they talk about the topic being discussed (Anderson, 2010). A face to face interview captures the participant's emotions, tone and nonverbal cues (Anderson, 2010). Two interviews were conducted via Skype and one telephonically as a face to face interviews were not possible. Interview questions were prepared to contain both closed and open-ended questions allowing more probing and enriching the discussion. A maximum of four open-ended questions were prepared (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006)

Creswell recommended between five and twenty-five interviews as suitable to be able to articulate and answer the research questions (Creswell, 1998). Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006) recommended twelve (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). While the recommendations differ, the principal objective was to reach evidence of data saturation. Ultimately, fifteen participant interviews and one expert interview were conducted.

A pilot interview was conducted with a colleague who is also a director to test the length and appropriateness of the questions to help answer the research questions.

4.2 Population

The population is all female board members on large corporate boards that are typically dominated by males. The study in industries such as Mining, Banking, Construction and Information Technology where female representation is lowest (McKinsey & Company, 2016). The target population for this research is women board members in male-dominated boards, therefore, the sample was made up of representatives of this population.

4.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was women board members in South African corporate boards. They were based in Johannesburg, Gauteng. Gauteng has the highest percentage of women in the C-Suite in South Africa. Johannesburg is South Africa's commercial, financial, and industrial centre and it is therefore substantial for this study. It is home to Africa's largest stock exchange, the Johannesburg stock exchange. South Africa's largest Banks, Mining and Construction companies are also located in the city. The sample comprised of a mix of female board members, across industries, years of experience, number of boards served, and roles played in the boardroom. The sample included female board members from boards with and without a Critical Mass of female board members. The unit of

analysis was the opinion of these board members as they hold a representative voice of the population.

4.4 Sampling Method and Size

Ideally, all research should use probability sampling methodology, but in practice, this is very difficult. It is especially difficult for hard-to-reach, very few members who are scattered over a large area or exclusive populations like female board members in male-dominated companies (Bernard, 2006). Consequently, the snowball sampling method was used for this study. Women board members were requested to recommend or refer the researcher to other women board members that fit the participants' profile. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method used to reach a population that is not easy to reach by other methods of sampling. Because women board members in male-dominated industries are few and not easily accessible, referrals and networks were leveraged to gain access to them. The study needed to interview female board members in boards with both a Critical Mass of women and without a Critical Mass. Therefore a sample was selected with this purpose in mind.

The sample size was sixteen female board members and one subject expert. It is typically found that saturation occurs within the first twelve interviews although this depends on the topic and the questions asked (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The sample is defined regarding characteristics of the wider population rather than a target number (Creswell, 1998). The sample particularly comprised of women in large corporate boards that are classically male-dominated. These included banks, mines, construction and IT companies where male dominance in leadership is still prevalent. The women board members had between one to thirty years of experience and served up to fifteen boards in their careers, which helped to assess their experiences over time. The sample included both women who serve on boards with a critical mass of women and those who serve in boards without a critical mass to gauge whether the experiences differed. The interview schedule is attached as Appendix 1.

4.5 Measurement Instrument

A measurement instrument is a research measurement device such as tests, questionnaires or surveys and it is important to ensure the measurement instrument is consistent and reliable as changing words in questions effectively change the measurement instrument, compromising reliability (Bernard, 2006). The measurement instrument used in this study was a researcher completed interview schedule. An

interview schedule was developed including an interview question list. The questions were designed to answer the research questions highlighted above. According to Kimberlin & Winterstein (2008), validating a measurement instrument is key to reducing error in the measurement process, therefore the interview schedule was well prepared and validated via mock interviews (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008).

4.6 Data Gathering Process

Interviews were conducted between July and August 2017. Participants were sensitised to the purpose and objects of the interview as well as the likely duration of the interview. A written application for consent to conduct the interview was prepared and presented to the participant before commencing with the interview (see Appendix 2). Interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Permission for audio recording was requested before the interviews. An interview guide was prepared to contain the list of topics to be discussed. As interviews were predominantly, face to face, the researcher was able to observe not only what is said but also how it said, how the participants structured their responses, their emotions, tone and nonverbal communication (Anderson, 2010). The descriptive data about the participants, their professional background, years of experience and roles they play in the boardroom are presented below (see Table 1). A summary of how many people were interviewed, how long it took to interview them, how many pages of transcripts came out of each interview as well as how many codes from each transcript is also presented (Anderson, 2010) (see Table 2). Data saturation was noticed by interview thirteen when very few new codes emerged thereafter. A summary of how new codes emerged as interviews progressed is also provided (see Figure 3).

4.7 Ethics Consideration

Confidentiality and protection of participants were of vital concern during the study. All participants were enlisted voluntarily and participated out of their free will. Protection of participants was prioritised, and as such, written consent was secured from all participants to granting permission to partake in the study. Any names mentioned during the interviews were kept confidential in the research report, and pseudo names were used for participants. All research information was kept privately, ensuring that no unauthorised persons may access it.

4.8 Analysis Approach

Interview audio records were transcribed and coded in Atlas–ti. Coding is a process of searching the data for evidence that there are emerging themes in the conversations

(Braun & Clarke, 2016). Coding is not only labelling, but it is also an interpretation, attaching some higher order meaning to the text.

Interview outcomes were coded and grouped into code categories. These categories were further developed into themes. Themes are entities that are constructed from codes that harmonise different pieces of data. Themes capture the essence recurring concepts and ideas across data-sets. Themes were collected in the analytic process through engagement with data throughout the interview process (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the themes that emerged from the interviews. The analysis focused on extracting summaries of the responses, combining a wide range of, outcomes scattered around the questions discussed with participants (Braun & Clarke, 2016).

An account of how new codes emerged from the interview data is presented (see Figure 2). The analysis evaluated how well does this interview outcomes explain why gendered dynamics play out the way they do and how well does the explanation resonate with the existing literature on Critical Mass and (In)visibility (Anderson, 2010).

4.9 Research Limitations

The research was conducted with a sample largely sourced from Johannesburg using snowballing sampling. While Johannesburg is representative of the population under study, skewness on the outcomes may emerge. The snowballing sampling method may also mean that participants are sourced from similar social circles or networks and therefore have similar experiences which could skew the research outcomes.

The researcher strived to remain impartial and objective, and the engagement of a subject expert assisted to bring a real-life perspective of the observations. The researcher took into account and reflected on their influence and biases that might have slanted the data and the results presented (Anderson, 2010). The researcher closely observed their influence on the end-to-end construction, analysis and interpretation of the research. The researcher was aware of their need to immerse in the data and still maintain a balance between objectivity and accurate interpretation of events (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher also declared their potential biases and sought assistance from supervisor and proof-reader to highlight if these emerge in the data and analysis (Anderson, 2010).

Chapter 5: Discussion of Results

5.1 Outline of Results Presentation

This study set out to examine whether the presence of a Critical Mass of female board members is effective in resolving the invisible boardroom dynamics.

The study used both deductive and inductive approaches. Firstly, the study looked to validate whether the presence of a Critical Mass changes the boardroom dynamics. In this regard, the deductive approach was used to test whether women's experiences based on the interviews, are consistent with assumptions of the Critical Mass theory.

Additionally, the inductive approach was used, looking for emerging themes to ascertain what dynamics participants face in the boardroom and how they respond to such dynamics? They were asked open-ended questions about their experiences with addressing gendered dynamics and finally, how they blend in with the dominant group.

The research questions (RQ) outlined in Chapter 3, and the essence of the findings is summarised as follows:

Question 1: What invisible dynamics have you experienced in the boardroom? In other words, what have you experienced as subtle or tacit practices or norms in the boardroom as a male-dominated territory? To answer this questions, the emerging boardroom dynamics experienced by participants are discussed. Five themes emerged concerning deep level dynamics experienced in the boardroom.

Question 2: How does having a Critical Mass of female board members enforce a change in the invisible boardroom dynamics?

To answer this question, responses based on the effectiveness of the Critical Mass and other attributes that truly influence the invisible boardroom dynamics are discussed.

Question 3: How do you challenge or highlight deeply invisible gendered dynamics?

Question three is answered with a review of what strategies were used to challenge invisible gendered dynamics in the boardroom.

Question 4: To avoid isolation as a minority, how do they norm and build rapport with the normative group? How does the norming differ when there are at least three women in the boardroom?

Lastly, question four is answered with a review of how participants approach integrating themselves into the normative group.

5.2 Summary of the Interviews and Participants' Boardroom Backgrounds

Sixteen interviews were conducted to understand the female board members' experiences with regards to boardroom dynamics and the impact of a Critical Mass within those dynamics. The sample comprised of fifteen female board members with diverse backgrounds in terms of industries, years of experience, boardroom role, number of women in boards served as well as the number of boards served. In addition, one expert interview was conducted with an expert on gender diversity in the boardroom. In total, there were fifteen interviews with sixteen participants as two board members were interviewed together.

The industries were predominately male-dominated industries such as Mining, Banking, Construction and Information Technology. The years of experience ranged from one year to thirty years, and the average was twelve years. Participants served between one and fifteen boards in the duration of their career and the average number of boards served was five years. Participants held both Executive and NED roles. Two participants were CEO's; two Chairpersons, one CFO, one Company Secretary and one HR Director. Other participants held either a business portfolio or they were NDEs.

Sixteen interviews were conducted with fifteen board members and a subject expert. Participants two and three were interviewed together at a restaurant. These participants happened to be old friends who have known each other for seventeen years. Eleven interviews took place at the participants' offices, and two took place at coffee shops. One participant could not be reached physically or telephonically due to her demanding international travels; she sent her responses to the interview questions via email. The sixteen interviews include one subject-matter expert who is a Global Gender Diversity Director for a large multinational corporation based in Switzerland. The objective was to bring expert insights and experiences with invisible gendered dynamics and Critical Mass. The interview with the subject expert was via Skype as she works in Switzerland.

The average time for each interview was 41 minutes, the longest was approximately 56 minutes, and the shortest was approximately 26 minutes. A profile of the interview participants is presented below (see Table 1), as well as a summary of the interview duration, pages of transcripts and codes per transcript are presented below (Tables 2).

The interviews were initiated with participants' professional background and leadership journey. The experiences relayed were relating to their historic, and current boards served, narrating how they have evolved personally and how the dynamics themselves have evolved. To preserve anonymity, participants were given pseudonyms.

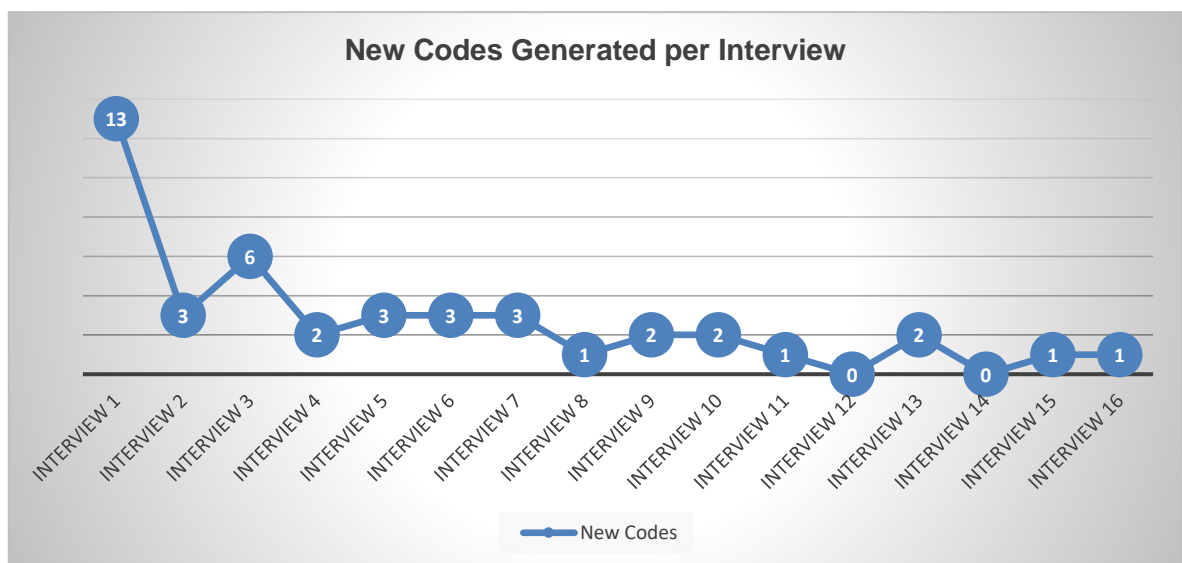
Table 1: Profile of all the Participants

Interview Sequence	Participant (Pseudonyms)	Boardroom Roles	Industries Served	Presence of a Critical Mass	Number of Boards Served	Year of Board Experience
0	Angela Smith	Angela Smith	Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)	N/A	N/A	N/A
1	Dawn Everton	Non-Executive Director	Banking	No	4	30
14	Amanda King	Chair, Non-Executive Director Executive Director	Sports, State Owned Entity, Finance, Telecommunications, Automotive, Social Development	Yes	15	25
15	Hope Winters	Chair, Non-Executive Director Executive Director	Sports, State Owned Entity, Finance, Telecommunications, Automotive, Social Development	Yes	15	25
2	Lizelle Roberts	CEO	State Owned Entity, Banking, Retail, Forestry	No	6	20
9	Kimberly Dorr	Business Unit Executive	Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)	No	2	16
8	Zoe Mannic	Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	Infrastructure, Entertainment, Oil, Gas, Construction, Property, Telecommunications,	No	10	15
6	Liza Collins	Company Secretary	Construction	Yes	5	10
11	Elle Louw	Non-Executive Director	Construction, Hospitality, Academic Institutions, Insurance, Agriculture	Yes	4	9
12	Fiona Chugh	Non-Executive Director	Finance and Insurance	No	3	9
3	Mandi Modise	Non-Executive Director	State Owned Entity (SOE)	Yes	3	5
4	Pam Just	HR Director	Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)	Yes	1	5
13	Hanna Vungu	Non-Executive Director, Chairperson	IT, Mining Trust, Charitable Trusts	Yes	4	4
7	Enza Xulu	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Media	Yes	9	3
5	Lusanda Koors	PR & Communications	Information Technology	Yes	1	1
10	Ayanda Phaleng	Marketing Director	Electronics, Consulting, Media, IT	No	1	1

Table 2. Descriptive Data about the Interviews

Interview Sequence	Participant (Pseudo name)	Interview Duration (Minutes)	Number of pages transcribed	Number of Codes Used
0	Angela Smith	45:30	15	21
1	Dawn Everton	45:45	11	38
14	Amanda King	Not available	Not available	12
15	Hope Winters	34:02	16	22
2	Lizelle Roberts	47:12	14	30
9	Kimberly Dorr	39:48	16	34
8	Zoe Mannic	39:46	15	31
6	Liza Collins	39:58	16	31
11	Elle Louw	55:08	17	27
12	Fiona Chugh	40:25	11	21
3	Mandi Modise	26:25	6	24
4	Pam Just	29:21	12	26
13	Hanna Vungu	38:35	15	28
7	Enza Xulu	42:31	16	18
5	Lusanda Koors	40:25	11	22
10	Ayanda Phaleng	56:51	17	14
Average		41:31	14	25

Figure 2: Emergence of New Codes over the Course of Interviews



Interviews were transcribed and coded using Atlas-ti. Forty-three new codes were generated from the interviews (see Table 8), and these codes were summarised into seven code families (see Table 3). Fewer codes emerged as the interviews progressed with 82% of the codes generated in the first eight interviews. The researcher perceived that data saturation was reached by interview thirteen when no more than two codes were emerging. The count of new codes generated per interview is presented (see Figure 3).

5.3 RQ1- Questions Relating to Experienced Invisible Boardroom Dynamics

“When you go into a board, and you find that there’s an imbalance from a gender perspective, it brings forth its own dynamics, because my perspective about boards is that the boy’s club scenario still exists, subtle as it may be.” Elle Louw

Fourteen codes relating to experienced gendered dynamics were generated in Atlas-ti. These codes were merged into five major themes. The biggest theme was “Inferior perceptions towards feminine traits” with a total of thirty-six appearances (see Table 4). These dynamics were experienced by both women with and without a Critical Mass of women on their boards. The five themes are discussed below.

Table 4: Codes Summary: Experienced Invisible Dynamics

Research Question	Theme (count)	Codes	Occurrence in Transcripts
Question 1: What invisible dynamics have you experienced in the boardroom? In other words, what have you experienced as subtle or tacit practices or norms in the boardroom as a male dominated territory?	Inferior perceptions towards feminine traits (36)	You must Earn their Respect	7
		Observed Masculine and Feminine Traits	6
		The Unheard, Soft voice	5
		Superiority of masculine traits	6
		Positive comments about Feminine traits	5
		Feminine traits are a sign of weakness	3
		Undermining & Put down of women	4
	High Standards High Scrutiny (25)	High visibility, Higher Scrutiny,	9
		Negative visibility	16
	Are women their own worst enemy? (19)	Self-disservice	19
	The Old Boys “Decision making” Club (18)	Social exclusion	12
		Elitism and exclusion in decision making	6
	Paradoxes and Contradictions (5)	The paradox with masculine and feminine traits	3
		The double standards	2

Participants shared five commonly experienced dynamics. Most of them are common to contemporary literature, the value-add was on how they address them and overcome them. The solutions they narrated are discussed in research question 2. The five invisible dynamics are discussed below in the order of popularity.

5.3.1 Feminine Traits are Perceived as Inferior to Masculine Traits

Female board members experienced that their feminine traits contradicted what is associated with good leadership in the boardroom. Feminine traits were often associated with weakness, indecisiveness or lack of ambition.

The subject matter expert, Angela, explained that this is because company values are often expressed and associated with masculine traits, for example, competitiveness,

physical strength, assertiveness and dominance.

“Women generally who have masculine traits make it through the boardroom dynamics probably a little bit easier than women who have no masculine traits or very little masculine traits. Why is that? It is because our traits drive our behaviours and our traits can also be referred to values” Angela Smith.

Several participants observed that feminine traits in leadership are perceived as inferior. Particularly, collaboration, speaking in a soft voice and emotional sensitivity are perceived as signs of weakness while decisiveness and assertiveness are praised.

“Sometimes even our voices, these soft voices can be a disadvantage. Even your idea is taken as a soft idea. Man will come with his booming voice, and then everybody is listening to this voice like the voice of authority” Dawn Everton.

“I remember in her response she was like, you know, the problem is that women are not like men, men know what they want, and men ask for what they want.” Kimberly Dorr.

“Another dynamic I’ve heard is the tone of the voice, I have heard my female board members say that I need to be loud, to be heard because this male person is so loud, it is authoritative” Mandi Modise.

Participants explained that as a new board member, “temporary incompetence” is normal. However, they feel their leadership and competence is constantly, but subtly undermined and put down.

“There’s always this subtle put-down, and you must always be aware of it, and you must always be that men tend to adopt this put down” Dawn Everton.

“I remember, there used to be people in a meeting, some white boys...so someone asked a question, and they whispered, she does not know, she doesn’t know. So people do not expect you to know” Kimberly Dorr.

Feminine traits are perceived as inferior to masculine traits and female board members experienced that this made their leadership a mismatch to the expected male model of a leader.

5.3.2 Higher standards, Higher Scrutiny

“I think it is just that you've got to work much harder, you've got to do back flips, you've got to show them that you are almost a magician and yet it doesn't apply to men” Liza Collins.

Participants relayed that it is a common expectation that women have to work much harder than men work to be rated competent. Participants perceive that they are held to a higher standard than men are. Interestingly, there was general acceptance for this dynamic. Participants expressed it as a reality they have accepted although grossly unfair.

“It is entrenched in the corporate environment that as a black woman you have to work ten times harder than anybody to prove your point. Stop fighting it, stop complaining about it, just know it is what it is, not because it cannot be changed. ...So for me, it is just accepting that as a Black female, in particular, you always have to work even harder than a white woman, that's just the way it is.” Lizelle Roberts.

“I agree that the playing field levels are not hundred percent equal? Absolutely not! Is that going to change immediately? It is going to be a journey...Do I need to work ten times harder than a man when playing this? Probably, you probably do, let's not lie, you probably do, but the question is, are you going to seize the day, seize the opportunity or not” Ayanda Phaleng.

The acceptance of these higher standards could be attributed to participants' strong self-efficacy and confidence to deliver despite disproportionately higher standards.

Pam Just experienced a similar dynamic. She said sarcastically:

“Defiantly, they hold you to higher standards. Is it fair? Mmh, I think my school of thought is that I would rather that than a lower standard. The way I justify it, we get to go on maternity leave, so it balances out (laughs aloud), that is a joke” Pam Just.

Hope did not find the double standards as humorous. She pointed out a societal issue where women are often held to a higher moral standard than man. Hope was referring to how aggression seems acceptable from men but earns a stigma for women.

“Why is it an issue when women do it? Men also do it, they can be mean”. Hope.

Some participants expressed some frustration about the heightened scrutiny compared to their male counterparts. Enza concurred:

“Oh, completely, like he didn't even care what the figures were like before. Now, every month he wants to check figures, what am I doing to fix it; he has other people asking me the same thing. So yes, there definitely is a lot of scrutinies, definitely, there is no doubt” Enza Xulu.

Respect came up to be a critical value for female board members to earn in the boardroom to be effective. This was important because without it, they will not be heard and they will not be able to convey the value they know they bring to the boardroom. They actively pursue to be respected as an equal member of the board. However, they have to work twice as hard to earn it.

Hope shuffled for words to explain how women start on the back footing. Contrary to heightened visibility, as a new board member and a minority, she is completely unrecognised, she has to earn visibility. She explained that one needs to make the normative group conscious that she exists, that “she is in the room”.

“They are just not used to....they're just seeing this young, black woman on the board; their mind is not there...it is just not there. It is like we are people who are not alive... it is not deliberate which means they just need to be made conscious” Hope Winters.

Dawn, however, has experienced that it may take time, but once you win some respect, she was recognised and accepted as an equal member of the board.

“Once you have attained that respect... they see you as an equal at the same level. Once that happens then you know that ok so I've been accepted as an equal” Dawn Everton.

Despite her extensive experience proven success, Enza still struggles to get the same level of respect as her male predecessor.

“The person I report to in the UK, he is male, and I think he's been in quite a male-dominated environment his whole life in the organisation, and the way he spoke to and treated the previous CEO who wasn't delivering, he was overly respectful of him, he almost tiptoed around him, and he wasn't delivering. It was the most bizarre thing to watch, and then I came in, and I am delivering, and he does not show me the same respect” Enza Xulu.

Participants, with a strong sense of frustration and emotion, expressed how they repeatedly experience the dynamic of double standards. The acceptance of this dynamic was surprising. Participants largely expressed acceptance of this dynamic although it was expressed with either great frustration or with subtle sarcasm.

5.3.3 Are Women Their Own Worst Enemy?

“We are our own worst enemy”.

It was a prominent perception that women play a big role in their own negative experiences. Most participants expressed how most of the issues that women have are self-inflicted. This brought a complexity and ambiguity about gendered dynamics. The complexity that both genders contribute to the gendered dynamics.

Participants explained how sometimes women invite issues to themselves.

“It could be that you are over the feminine, your voice is too soft, you are tentative. Because women tend to be tentative- sometimes before you ask a question I'm sorry to ask this question but...you're already apologetic, and once you do that, you are shooting down that idea already you are making it less effective” Dawn Everton.

Enza Xulu contrasted with how men are never tentative in making their point.

“A guy would say something, and if it is wrong, it is wrong! Whereas women might go, I cannot say that because if it is wrong, then they are going to think this, that and the next thing. So I think there is the part that we play in just owning ourselves fully and believing in what we have to deliver” Enza Xulu.

Enza and Hanna highlighted the lack of support and lobbying amongst women.

“I think females, we are our own enemies; we do not support each other” Enza

Queen-Bee Syndrome was recounted by Hanna as she reflected on her experiences.

“I've been in very difficult situations where I've been treated worse by women than men” Hanna Vungu.

Hope supported that there is a divide and Queen-Bee Syndrome amongst women.

“I'd like to believe that as women we generally want to support one another, but

we also cannot run away from the fact that having been deprived for so long to be in these spaces, we've moved with the mentality of lack. So you always want to be the one, now that there's someone else it is almost like they're coming to take away everything" Hope Winters.

Fiona strongly opposed the Queen Bee Syndrome, challenging that it is just not true.

"I just get irritated about this story and to use South Africa's language, the narrative that women and black women, in particular, do not support one another; it is just not true" Fiona Chugh.

Participants also spoke about how women put themselves under unnecessary pressure. Women tend to hold themselves to higher standard than necessary. Because the boardroom is not their terrain, they believe they need to work harder to earn their place.

"We do this to ourselves; we put pressure, unnecessary pressure on ourselves, maybe more than men will do. So maybe also that goes into the boardroom. Because the boardroom is traditionally a male terrain, you feel like you've got to blow their minds with brilliance. We feel that we have to tick all the boxes before whereas men, even in the boardroom, some of the things that people say, I'm like, really?" Fiona Chugh.

"And I also think just generally women put more pressure on themselves than men, so we do tend to think that the invisible line was only with us when in fact it is with both parties, in my opinion. They're just not the same pressures" Pam Just.

Liza Collins's perception about what is expected, reflective exactly Pa and Fiona's point.

"So that's one of the things that you've got to show, that you are available all the time. You're ready to work; work is everything in your life, it is the most important thing, you love the company, you sleep it, you eat it, you live it" Liza Collins.

Consequently, Fiona Chugh offers some comfort and appeals to women to be easy on themselves.

"Show a little bit of compassion to yourself, cut yourself a little bit of slack because you're going to, as I said, make mistakes and people are going to doubt you and this, that or the other" Fiona Chugh.

5.3.4 The Old Boys “Decision making” Club

Participants relayed that their issue with the “old boys club” is that it is, in truth, the boys club is actually the “decision-making club” from which they are invariably excluded. The Old boys club is a not a problem until it is a form of exclusion from board processed and decision making. This is an invisible dynamic because while the old boys club itself is visible, the decisions and canvassing for certain decisions are invisible.

“Most of the time these gatherings are where decisions are made. You can tell there has been a pre-decision. I come in on Monday, and they’re talking. And I’m like, when did this happen? How did I miss this decision or this discussion? They would agree to meet in a bar or pub or something and then they would say something like sorry Pam; you cannot join us so we will brief you on Monday” Pam Just.

They also highlighted the perception and expectation that one needs to play golf because this is where decisions are made.

“So they normally, when they come to meetings they’ve caucused, they’ve done everything, you know, to show that this is ... you know” Mandi Modise.

“So it is not just a meeting that happens at a board meeting. But you could clearly see when there’s a deliberation that’s taking place, and people are in agreement, and a discussion point is being swayed in a particular direction” Elle Louw.

In addition to the decision making, the clubs also propels networking and career opportunities. Taking up golf was mentioned to be crucial as people build networks and rapport to move up the organisation, otherwise they might miss career opportunities.

“Let me tell you they are managed by what everybody says are boys clubs. So there’s a lady that was second in charge at one of our big competitors, and she was completely side-lined, and a young, young guy took over the role of MD when the previous guy left. It is a complete boys club; there’s no doubt in my mind about it. If you are a female, you just do not get anywhere there” Enza Xulu.

The Club is exclusive to men, and they create a wealth of networks that further determine who they bring in as board members in the boardroom.

“Because now it is just men’s club, they decide who they bring in, the people who decide are men, so they always bring other men because they engage better

there... they decide who they bring in” Dawn Everton.

Hope has experienced feeling like an inconvenient, unwelcome guest to the boys club.

“So you have this disruption, you’ve come to spoil the fun here, we’re an all-boys club, so some of them will do it deliberately just because it is their natural space of saying actually we honestly do not know what you’re doing here” Hope Winters.

5.3.5 Paradoxes and Contradictions

Angela Smith, the subject expert, was interviewed as the first participant in the study to gain expert’s perspective on some of the boardroom dynamics and how they change as more women are introduced in the boardroom. The paradox and double standards were some of the first dynamics she explained as experienced by female board members. Several participants confirmed this experience during the study. The expert said:

“One thing that’s interesting about women who demonstrate masculine traits is that they will not be understood by the men. It is a double bind because she will be demonstrating masculine traits and so people will probably say ok she’s aggressive and then she will be considered by the women as out of the group because she’s acting like a guy, so it is a truly double bind. It is not easy definitely regarding dynamics and interactions” Angela Smith.

Amongst others, Pam, Enza and Liza relayed their experiences with the “double bind” or they paradox. They juggle to find some balance, to manage the balance between being assertive without being perceived as aggressive.

“I think you need to be assertive; you do not need to be loud, just be assertive. At the same time, do not cry and be angry, be normal. Really, do not be emotional about things”. Pam Just

“Because when you get aggressive, it doesn’t help. When you shrink away, it does not help. Just trying to keep that like (making a balancing hand signal)... you know” Enza Xulu.

“I cannot be like so nice and talking so girly; I have to become like this assertive and very ... almost bordering on being aggressive” Liza Collins.

This paradox requires participants to be themselves but still fit the contradictory male personality that describes their job for them to be recognised and accepted as an equal.

Fiona relays her experience of the monoculture dynamic where a fellow board member accepted her but had to "negate" her gender for them to recognise her as a team member.

"He was like, lady, you're one of the boys, and I was like, no, I'm not. Therefore, it is almost like saying it as if it is a compliment, to say you should actually be so happy that we see you as one of the boys, and I was, but, no, I'm not. So the dynamics are actually quite interesting, even when you're accepted " Fiona Chugh.

Angela Smith, the subject expert, explained the paradox of expression emotions for women compared to men. She explained that emotions are perceived as a sign of weakness for women, which can be a career-limiting move. On the other hand, for men, it almost has no consequence on their career.

"She's got some family issues she's, she's a little bit emotional at the moment. You do not very often hear that men are emotional. There can be the unconscious bias here, which is the decision that you make because you heard that she is a bit emotional at the moment. Now that also meant that she was disregarded from any promotion or any succession profile they are in anything like that. While for the one time it was an emotional male, they just did not know what to do with him" Angela Smith.

In addition to the contradictions, this dynamics is more complex when it includes invisibility. It is an (In)visibility paradox where the standards that participants were scrutinised against were not visible or known by the participants themselves.

Firstly, it emerged that the basis of scrutiny is not essentially referring to scrutiny on hard performance measures, neither was it on softer measures like leadership behaviours and upholding company values.

Enza and Zoe told how the evaluation and scrutiny is not even about the actual results and performance but scrutiny about other trivial things they did not quite understand. They were not quite sure what exactly those trivial measures were, which reflects a different dynamic of (In)visibility where the attributes they are measured on are not actually visible or known. Even when they are known, they are completely irrational and disconnected to the job purpose.

"I think maybe women are judged on your looks, so maybe if you look too good

or if you're too feminine in the way you dress, they could judge you on that and then they treat you like too fluffy, you know, a little bit too nice" Zoe Mannic.

Kimberly Dorr referred to her experience of being the first female in a senior position coming from an outside company. She explained how people did not care about her experience but were bothered that she's a woman.

"A lot of people didn't like that because they didn't understand why I didn't start as a grade eight (middle management) and they didn't even know where I came from because I already had a lot of experience" Kimberly Dorr.

Pam and Hope also experienced negative dynamics when they were perceived as tokens and not respected for their competence and value-add.

"What matters for them is how pretty you look. Should you not be here? So they'll then do that deliberately because you know what, you're not welcome here. We know that the Chair has appointed you but we really do not think we need you here. That's why I'm saying some of it is deliberate" Hope Winters.

"When I was in the plant I used to wear pants; I made the decision I'm not going to allow myself to be judged because of the way I look...It has to be based on what comes out of my mouth, So I try to find the right balance" Pam Just.

The above question was answered and summarised to five themes of dynamics experienced by women. These dynamics are largely underpinned by societal structures and cultures. For example, how other roles are considered suited for women and others for females. How women are held to higher moral and performance standards and how the standards are constantly moving and changing. These are difficult dynamics to navigate and resolve. The next section discusses how participants explained to deal with these dynamics, to expose and address them.

5.4 RQ2- Questions Relating to Impact of a Critical Mass

To establish whether a Critical Mass drives a change in the boardroom dynamics, participants were asked how the presence of three or more female directors drive a change in the boardroom dynamics.

Based on the responses, four codes relating to Critical Mass were generated initially and these were summarised into three code families (see Table 5). In addition to the CM, other drivers of dynamics emerged and subsequently, five other codes were created under the code family “Other Effective Forces” (see Table 5).

Table 5: Codes Summary: Forces that Drive Dynamics

Research Question	Themes	Categories	Codes	Occurrence in Transcripts
Question 2: How does having a Critical Mass of female board members enforce a change in the boardroom dynamics? If any, what else drives the invisible boardroom dynamics besides the Critical Mass.	Surface Level Forces	CM is effective for invisible dynamics (11)	Changes to dynamics due to critical mass	6
			Critical mass has some impact on dynamics	5
		CM has no impact on deep dynamics (19)	CM has no impact	19
		CM is effective for different reasons(10)	Impact of Critical mass for different reasons	10
	Deep Level Forces	Other Effective Forces (91)	Mentorship and Role Models	13
			The Chairperson Drives the dynamics	15
			Self-Worth and Confidence	13
			Competence, Value add, Experience	20
			Purpose, Drive, Resilience	16

When these codes and code families were analysed, themes started to emerge. Firstly, the code family “Other Effective Forces” comprised of codes with a total appearance of 91 times in the transcripts. The code family for the CM had a total of 40 mentions of which 19 were opposing the CM as a drive of invisible dynamics. This demonstrated that there are other factors, more effective that the CM in influencing deep level boardroom dynamics. These factors were deductively themed as Deep Level Forces (DLF) as they were capable of addressing deep level dynamics introduced in 2.3.2. In other words, instead of the Critical Mass, other forces were frequently mentioned for their impact on boardroom dynamics.

Secondly, it emerged that the CM is essential, but not for influencing invisible dynamics. The CM was identified as one of the Surface Level Force (SLF) effective to influence surface level dynamics introduced in 2.3.1. Mentorship was the weakest code stated as

a force that drives invisible dynamic. This was also largely because participants perceived Mentorship as an earlier enabler in their career. It was less useful in the boardroom itself to actively address invisible dynamics. As such, Mentorship was perceived as a Surface Level Force.

Essentially, two themes emerged out of research question two. Forces that have limited ability to address deeper dynamics were categories as Surface Level Forces. Forces that penetrate below the surface to address deep level dynamics, dynamics that are invisible and hard to articulate, were categorised as Deep Level Forces.

5.4.1 Forces that Address Surface Level Boardroom Dynamics

The Surface Level Forces refer to forces that address the surface level, visible issues with gendered dynamics. They typically come from the female board members' ability to influence the visible, pronounced dynamics. The Surface Level Forces include the Critical Mass as well as the role of mentors and role models. These are physically identifiable, evident forces.

5.4.1.1 The Critical Mass

Participants unanimously supported the view of a fair representation of women in the boardroom. However, they strongly perceived that numbers on their own are not enough to change gendered dynamics in the boardroom. The numbers were a good start, but they were other fundamental conditions were added by participants.

Angela Smith, the subject matter expert also supported the importance of a Critical Mass. It is however, interesting that she considers the Critical Mass a support group than a power-hub that can lobby, influences and drives decisions as the "Old Boys Club" does.

"It is difficult for her (female director) because she is clearly outnumbered. She is clearly not with any reference points or behaviours she can relate to. I believe that when you have more than three women in the boardroom, it does make a difference because you are not the token. You are not alone, and you can interact with other women, and you can actually form a type of Support Group" Angela.

Most participants portrayed a sentiment that a Critical Mass is useful for lobbying for decision-making or at least to influence and bring diversity in the ways of thinking but they soon added some preconditions.

"So I think Critical Mass is very important if the women who are there are

conscious about it and are going to use it positively” Hope Winters.

Zoe Mannic sits on a board where there is a Critical Mass of women board members, she said:

“I do not ever feel that I'm invisible, no....Yes, because there are other powerful females in the boardroom as well” Zoe Mannic.

The CM has some impact, on the decision making and thinking.

“You know, I would say anything above thirty percent because when you are below thirty percent, you clearly cannot pass a resolution. Depending on the kind of resolution, but you would need a fifty-one percent or if it is a special resolution, then you need much more than that. But if you've got over thirty percent and then you can also be able then to mobilise the rest of your board members in getting a particular resolution passed” Fiona Chugh.

Mandi Modise explained its benefits as diversity in the thinking and a much more comprehensive discussion focusing on both hard and soft factors like social dynamics.

“I think if you have males in the boardroom it probably is more of a financial discussion or an operational discussion but it doesn't bring social dynamics into the discussion and I think females tend to be a lot more pragmatic in solutions, and very solutions focused. So I think that's the different dynamic that females do bring into the boardroom” Mandi Modise.

Participants were asked if, and how the CM changes the boardroom, dynamics and their responses were referring to the CM as a change agent for visible, Surface Level driver of dynamics but not necessarily sufficient to change invisible dynamics.

“I think if you can get to a 40 to 50% balance that will definitely help. Practices change of course, yes the norms change when we talk about meeting outside of the office and small groups and being more structured!” Elle Louw.

Participant perceived the role of a CM to be of help but not sufficient on its own:

“So for me, if you had a thirty percent that did not have the ability to express their views or to make that difference, you know, they've almost got to be like a catalyst in the boardroom, then I do not think that thirty percent is going to be significant enough. It is all about quality” Zoe Mannic.

Hope attempted to rank the top three drivers of invisible dynamics, but she found it very difficult to decide.

“I would rank the Critical Mass maybe last in the sense that – no, it is difficult. Because if you had a Chair that was not effective and driving women issues, if there were a team of you. In fact, I know right now one of the state-owned entities; they have a woman Chair who is just not cutting. There are four other black women who are getting together, and they are dealing with her. So Critical Mass is important. I would rank that maybe just as important as the self-management.
Hope Winters

She changed her mind about the ranking a few times and eventually she conceded.

“Somehow, I think the Critical Mass... I am busy playing it out as I am unpacking it. For the risk of appearing not to want to make a decision, I think they all rank equally” Hope Winters.

The relative strength and importance of the four forces in address invisible dynamics were not particularly tested. It was an unfair question thrown at Hope, and it proved difficult to for her to rank. This ranking needs to be statistically tested to ascertain the strength of the various forces.

5.4.1.2 Mentorship and Role Models

In line with the inductive approach, codes relating to drivers of boardroom dynamics were analysed and grouped into themes. Participants highlighted Mentorship and Role models as essentials factors that assist them to cope with dynamics that emerge in the boardroom.

Mentorship emerged as a force that address Surface Level Force rather than a Deep Level force. This is because Mentorship is an enabler to build Deep Level Forces such as Self-confidence, Inspiration and Resilience. It is a means to breed DLFs but it is not a DLF itself. Participants mentioned Mentorship as an enabler in to build tenacity and courage. Similar to the Critical Mass, it plays an essential but elementary role to enable the development of deeper level capabilities.

Mentors can provide encouragement and support to their protégées, that their aspirations are valid and conceivable. Participants perceived that women draw inspiration and courage from those who have successfully walked the walk. Role models serve as physical evidence of success by a person who typically holds similar

demographics, instilling hope and confidence for the mentee to achieve their own goals.

“So there were some powerful, sort of iconic females that were on the board but I think in itself one draws inspiration” Zoe Mannic.

Mentorship helps to focus on what matters and helps to overcome one’s internal fears and inferiority complex.

“Personally I’ve done a fair amount of course and life coaching and what have you that’s helped me with that... it is about getting rid of the stuff that gets in the way, and just be cleaner in your own being” Enza Xulu.

Mentorships also help to corroborate one’s thinking and use someone as a soundboard for ideas and opinions.

“That’s why I think it comes to sponsorship, that when you know that you are facing an uphill battle, take a step out or back to an expert. I chat often to very strong mentor... It comes back to mentorship and sponsorship and understanding that we do have our bases covered if you have access to the right people, and for me, it is not just having access to females, I’ve got a large contingent of male and female who I reach out to regularly” Hanna Vungu.

Some participants use a diverse array of mentors, both male and female from different industries to enhance her thinking and broaden her perspective. This helps her to be more confident and diverse in her thinking.

“So the affirmations that you get, and I think in life, generally, you want somebody who’s a role model. I call them unofficial mentors. Some of them are guys; I mingle with both guys and ladies because guys have been in business for a long time. They’re billionaires, they’re millionaires, and how did they get there, what is it that I can learn from them? What is their take on life and what makes them keep on pushing forward, sometimes against all odds?” Elle Louw.

Elle Louw perceives that the self-worth that is discussed above can be learnt from mentors so that women can be confident to take their place in the boardroom.

“We need a lot more women coming to the fore, and I think we just need a lot more women believing in themselves, in their self-worth. I think they have to learn some of it from somebody else who is supposed to be a role model” Elle Louw.

5.4.2 Forces that Deal with Deep Level Boardroom Dynamics

To assess the usefulness of numeric gender representation in changing gendered dynamics, four broad forces emerged. These were forces identified to be effective to address dynamics that are under the surface, those that are not seen or easily articulable. These Deep Level Forces include

- 1) Self-awareness and Confidence;
- 2) The Role of a Chairperson;
- 3) Resilience and Purpose, as well as
- 4) Competence and Experience

The essence of each of these dynamics is discussed below.

5.4.2.1 Self-worth and Confidence

Female board members acknowledged that a Critical Mass is required, but they immediately added conditions to this. The conditions included the level of one's self-confidence and self-worth. Self-worth and self-confidence are attributes that deflect the dynamic of inferior perceptions about female leaders.

"I know I'm capable. Like I said, I have a presence; I wear purple hair, I do not worry, I know I represent, I articulate, I'm intelligent" Ayanda Phaleng.

"I think for me all of these things come back to one thing, which is your self-worth. If you know what you're worth you do not really have to try hard" Elle Louw.

Participants expressed that the dynamics will change the more women believe in themselves and their self-worth. They perceive that the thirty percent will not effectively address the dynamics if you are not confident and knowledgeable.

The thirty percent has to be women that are confident and experienced. When women are in the boardroom, is also about being confident in their ability to add value in expressing their views. They expressed that women need to believe in themselves, that they can be excellent and excel in that area you have chosen.

Self-awareness and self-acceptance were highlighted as important. Knowing what one is good at, and what they are not good at.

"I know where some of my gaps are and how I continuously work to improve the knowledge, gap or the human interaction gap that I'm not great at. I have a lot of

self-awareness” Ayanda Phaleng.

Kimberly Dorr explained that the level and impact of negative boardroom dynamics is overstated because it really depends on one’s confidence.

“I’ve always been the first women in most things. It is overstated. I find that people are not confident in their own skills, people who are not confident about who they are, they are always trying to please. Nevertheless, do not judge yourself by other people’s opinions. Why should you care what people think about you? You really have to be comfortable in your own skin, people’s opinions about you, that is their problem” Kimberly Dorr.

“I do think that that level of unfairness still exists. But I think having said that I have gotten lighter in going back to the natural me through the level of confidence I’ve had in what I’m offering, in what I’m bringing here” Hope Winters.

5.4.2.2 Role of the Chairperson

The participants regarded the role of a Chairperson as one of the first drivers of boardroom dynamics. The maturity and experience of the Chairperson, as well as the homogeneity with the token led to more positive boardroom dynamics. The Old boys club is a problem when it is a form of exclusion from board interactions decisions. The role of the chairperson is to addresses any forms substantive exclusions. The chairperson ensure open and fair discussions, eliminating any dominance or side discussions that undermine board cohesion.

“They(chairpersons) actually control the dynamic of the boardroom” Zoe Mannic.

Hope emphasised the big role played by the chair. She was asked what role does the chairman play with boardroom dynamics

“A very big role...because a Chair is the one that can actually manage the dynamics by saying ‘so-and-so, can we first allow Hope to finish that point because I think she was coming up with that point, let’s just stay with her until we understand where she was driving it. So there is a very big role that the Chair plays. Hence if there is a woman Chair, it is very important because I think the tone at the top gets set” Hope Winters.

Amanda King explained the benefits of diversity and ways of thinking once you have more women, but she added that this has to be driven by the chairperson,

“Yes it does, it (the Critical Mass) changes the way that decisions are made and introduces a greater degree of questioning and discussion before decisions are made. This change, however, has to be championed by the Chair of the board”
Amanda King.

In addition to chairperson influence on the dynamics, it was also noted how the experiences were particularly different with when female board members had some demographic similarities with the chairperson.

Lusanda Koors explained her different experiences with a female Chairperson.

“Our managing director is female, she’s very deliberate about including females and previously disadvantaged individuals, and she’s very deliberate about that. She is a woman of colour woman who is strong, very strong-willed, and she likes to break barriers, so she is very particular, and she does it with intent. So it is different, my experience is different. She encourages conversation; she encourages input. I also find, from my male counterparts from the company, within the board itself, they are also quite liberal, if I may call it that, and it also largely has to do with their level of respect for you. So I find that they respect me”
Lusanda Koors.

Hope Winters explained the role of the chairperson and how she changes her approach depending on who the chair is. If the chairperson is driving inclusivity, then she does not have to work as hard.

“What is important for us is to be able to assess what it is required here. In this day and age, I’m not going to walk into a board which is chaired by one of my mentors, where I know how she operates. She is feminist, and she’s proven herself, so I’m not going to come on that board and then bring in these things (meaning tactics to manage dynamics). But there are boards that maybe, you probably have to” Hope Winters.

5.4.2.3 Purpose and Resilience

Participants explained how you have to rise above the dynamics and focus on your purpose in the boardroom. They demonstrated that they are purpose driven and that purpose is what keeps them going despite the dynamics. Female board members face a dynamic where performance standards are constantly moving, changing and often hidden

Resilience is an attribute that deflects this dynamic; it helps them then to silence the noise and pursues the bigger purpose.

“So I just had to put my head down and say, what do we need to do, put the teams together, get the job done. Whether they praise me... I am not particularly interested in human praise” Lizelle Roberts.

Liza Collins described the tenacity of the other three female board members on her board and how they stand for what is right.

“Our ladies are like tigers, forceful. They’re happy to object, they’ve got no intimidation!” Liza Collins.

Participants expressed the importance of your purpose in the boardroom as you will often have to defend your point. The purpose has to be so important that it supersedes any fear or intimidation. Elle and Hanna expressed this conviction s follows.

“Without fear or favour, so if you have no fear and you do not owe anybody a favour, then it is easier to be able to stand your ground” Elle Louw.

“I take governance very seriously, so regardless of who’s seated around me, or how many males or females, levels are on the board, I’m always going to speak up for what’s right” Hanna Vungu.

5.4.2.4 Competence and Experience

Participants perceived that competence is critical in the boardroom. Not only to overcome the tokenism assumptions but also to earn respect to be treated as an equal member of the board. Competence disarms the high scrutiny and the high standards that are typically imposed on female minorities.

Dawn Everton advised that professionalism and competence earn you respect.

“You’re there as an individual, as a professional. Once they know they cannot mess around with you, you gain that respect because the most important thing is for us to be accepted by the men and for them to respect you. Once you have attained that respect so whatever you say now they are listening they are quoting you, they see you as an equal at the same level. Once that happens then you know that ok so I’ve been accepted as an equal”. Dawn Everton

Pam Just had a similar view that the thirty percent will actually not have any effectiveness

in resolving the dynamics if you're not competent.

“First and foremost, you need to earn your seat at the table....Look you do not want to be there just because of a quota system...You need to be able to show that I deserve to be here as much as you do. You need to bring your expertise to the table. I think it is very important to earn respect”. Pam Just

Lizelle Roberts also expressed that competence overcomes all dynamics.

“You need to know your stuff. I cannot emphasise that enough. If you're knowledgeable, once you put the facts, nobody will actually challenge you, because that person is challenging because of being a male, then you come with facts, and they'll give up” Lizelle Roberts.

Lusanda Koors explained that she thrives in the boardroom and does not experience any negative dynamics. She largely attributes this to her competence and value-add to her company.

“You need to be very relevant to your company, extremely relevant, to the point where when they're making the decision they're thinking, gosh, where is she, is she in a meeting, why hasn't she been invited to this meeting, who hasn't called her, who set up this meeting without her? You need to be so relevant to your company. So I'm saying you need to be reading, you need to be up to date on your current affairs, you need to know how your business links up to the company business and be able to link that up to shareholders and why you are valued to shareholders. Because if you cannot do that, why are they calling you, why are you part of meetings, why are you part of the boardroom?” Lusanda Koors.

Ayanda Phaleng added that self-awareness is critical, but you need to be competent and add value in the boardroom, to prove that she has earned her seat.

“I know when I speak, people look up and listen. I know that about myself. Knowing that does not mean I've done the job. Those are just some advantages that I have been blessed with, but it does not mean I have done the job.... In my view, it is a game. By whom is it dominated? By men. Does that mean I have less chance of being a winner and beating them? No, I have an equal chance if I prove myself” Ayanda Phaleng.

Liza Collins explained how men on her boardroom would undermine female NEDs because they are highly competent and experienced.

“So of all our non-execs, it is not a situation where they can actually even consider it, it is a matter of you’re here with your expertise, your knowledge, what value add you have to the business, and that’s it, and you’re considered to be in the same light as any of our other non-executive directors” Liza Collins.

Participants believed that excellence and competence overcome all dynamics. Participants’ perceived that competence is critical in the boardroom. Not only to overcome the tokenism assumptions but also to earn respect. Competence disarms the high scrutiny and the high standards that are typically imposed on female minorities.

“So by achieving that I was able to say, to prove what I say, that, you know, excellence and mediocrity know no colour or gender. So then I was able to achieve that and do that, coming from the rural areas, not having been to the flashy private schools, English speaking, having gone through Bantu education and still achieve that, it is really how you take the challenges that are put in front of you and what you make of those challenges” Kimberly Dorr.

Responses to this question took an unexpected angle. Surface Level forces address surface level dynamics and deep level forces address deep level forces discussed in RQ1. The four Deep Level Forces are effective for addressing hidden dynamics while the CM addressed the visible, surface level dynamics. It could be argued that Mentorship is a DLF and this would be true for general leadership in an organization. In the boardroom itself, it was found to be an elementary requirement insufficient to address the dynamics on its own.

5.5 RQ3- Questions Relating to Exposing Gendered Dynamics

Participants were asked about the approaches they use to challenge or highlight invisible gendered dynamics if any.

The objective of this question was to establish the tactics and methods employed to challenge invisible gendered dynamics. It was to establish whether challenging these leads to isolation and high scrutiny when there is a Critical Mass of female board members. Women board members were therefore asked whether and how they challenge or highlight deeply invisible gendered dynamics. Whether having more than three women makes leads to a more positive, constructive discussion about addressing the concern rather than the high scrutiny and exposure received in the case of a minority, as explained in chapter 3.

The analysis of these codes relating to exposing gendered dynamics resulted in two key themes, the acceptance and refusal of deeply invisible gendered norms.

Table 6: Codes Summary: Exposing Gendered Norms

Research Question	Theme (count)	Codes	Occurrence in Transcripts
<u>Question 3:</u> How do you challenge or highlight deeply invisible gendered dynamics?	Accepting not challenging (13)	Accepting Norms	7
		Ignoring Norms	6
	Refusal of Norms(12)	Radical Acts to exposing/addressing gendered norms	7
		Responses to exposing/addressing gendered norm	5

Exposing deeply invisible gendered norms refers to the attempt to raise awareness about gendered practices by voicing them out and highlighting their negative impact on the minority gender. The approaches to expose these dynamics can be explained by further breaking down the strategies to radical acts to create awareness about unacceptable gendered practices as well as “refusing to conceal” their femininity.

5.5.1 Exposure of Deeply Invisible Gendered Dynamics Though Radical acts

Radical acts refer to women’s attempts to expose gendered practices by acting out or putting on a show somewhat creating an urgency and a challenge to stop the behaviours.

Hope added that sometimes, the tactic to exposing hidden issues is throwing a tantrum.

“So we need to be smart in how we approach it. By the way, sometimes the smartness might mean throwing a tantrum now and again” Hope Winters.

Lizelle Roberts relayed a case where industry leaders undermined her, so she pulled a radical act to regain control.

“I had CEOs of a particular industry refusing to come to my meetings. I phoned the Minister, I said, listen, I do not want you to react; this is what I am going to do to fix these people. We are going to write a statement, and the statement is going to be on the front page of a business newspaper as follows – CEOs of a particular Industry refuse to be involved in transformation in South Africa. The following morning when everybody picked up the paper, all their board members phoned all the CEOs and said, what are you doing, you are embarrassing us! The next meeting, they were at the meeting before I was at the meeting“. Lizelle Roberts

Kimberly Dorr furiously relayed a story where the CEO of her company was not respecting the board during a board meeting and how she addressed him.

“I called him, I said, what you did there was so disrespectful if I were a non-executive director I would never come to your meetings again. You have people coming from outside, dropping everything, they are here to give you two hours....And he was like, no there was an email I was expecting. I said I was sitting next to you; you were on Facebook! I was being disturbed because each time you take this thing, my eye can ... you know. So he wrote to the board members and apologised and actually told them, you know, that I brought this to his attention. So I raise issues immediately” Kimberly Dorr.

Lizelle Roberts relayed a story from her days as a CEO of an SOE. She pushed back on traditional leaders who were undermining her, accusing that she is not doing her job well while she was precisely implementing as per legislation directs her to.

“If you want to change the law of the land, it is quite simple. One-you need to go and win elections and then change the laws, and then I will implement the laws that you have changed. So until you have become the government of the day, I am doing an excellent job in doing my job” Lizelle Roberts.

Amanda King explained that leaving gendered practices and comments unaddressed compromises your position, one way to address them is retaliation.

“If inappropriate remarks are made, take a stand! That is how men get educated if we leave inappropriate behaviour unaddressed, it compromises one’s power. For example, a fellow board member once called me “my girl” and I immediately responded and said yes daddy!” Amanda King.

5.5.2 Acceptance and Coping with of Deeply Invisible Gendered Dynamics

The acceptance of invisible gendered norms refers to the view that the invisible gendered norms cannot be changed and women need to find ways to cope with them or embrace them and perhaps even participate in them.

As discussed in 5.1.1, some participants expressed that they accept some dynamics because that is just the way things are. Dawn confessed that she accepts that women have to work twice as hard to earn respect.

“I know it is more hard work for you but so what? You are there so” Dawn Everton.

Pam Just concurred that it is the way it is.

“Defiantly, they hold you to higher standards. Is it fair? Mmh, I think my school of thought is that I would rather that than a lower standard. That is where I am. I had rather that. You always have to be ahead of the game” Said Pam Just.

Some participants also accepted that they have to operate the way things work and not resist the current rules of the game. The acceptance of things the way things are can be attributed to having tried and given up as well as to uncertainty avoidance. Hope found one female director serving on the board without challenging a very uncomfortable dynamic. She later discovered it was not for the lack of trying on her part.

“In fact, there’s one board where I’ve got a much senior woman; when I got there, I was impatient, thinking that she hasn’t dealt with the issues. But the truth is she has been, but it has been difficult sitting there on her own and also for her to make the switch took a long time, I almost got despondent” Hope Winters.

Avoiding the unknown reception and consequence of exposing invisible, gendered dynamics also seems to lead one to accept the status quo. The risks associated with exposing invisible gendered dynamics included being patronised and isolated. Dawn Everton explains this risk.

“Men are not going to argue and fight with you. They will just nod, they will just say sorry, and they will not defend, they will say we will make sure it does not happen again. So by not defending and they are not even giving me a chance elaborate or explain what I mean, and they, therefore, do not engage. So they are still shooting down that idea before it even takes root, they are disarming you without you even knowing. They will quickly just agree and say ok, we make sure

it doesn't happen again but it will continue to happen" Dawn Everton.

Other participants who have experienced this are tactical about how they think of bringing these up without upsetting the dynamics. They explained how these invisible dynamics need to be approached carefully with caution and with wisdom.

"It depends on how they are raised. If they are raised in a confrontational manner, then it will actually be counter-productive" Amanda King.

"The approach is very important for us because those softer issues have been engraved. By saying it is the softer issues, the unconscious bias, the unsaid things. The roots are very muddy; you cannot see where they come from, so it means it needs very careful untangling" Hope winters.

Invisible dynamics are either addressed or ignored by female board members. When they are addressed, strategies and tactics are applied. These tactics include radical acts to draw attention. They also include active expression and display of femininity as opposed to concealing it.

5.6 RQ4 - Questions relating to Blending In

Participants were asked about their approaches to integrating themselves, gaining inclusion and avoiding isolation as a minority.

The objective of this question was to establish how women board members deal with isolation and exclusion as a minority. It aimed to explore whether, as demonstrated in the Vortex, they disappear in their attempt to blend in as one of the normative group and how that Disappearance applies when there is a Critical Mass. To establish this, women board members we asked whether and how they approach inclusion as a minority to avoid isolation and to build rapport with colleagues.

Six codes were initially identified from the data, the analysis of these codes resulted in three key themes, the Clones, the Originals, and those who refuse to conceal gender. Each of these themes is discussed below. The strongest theme that emerged was that participants refused to change their behaviour or personalities in order to fit in with the normative group, they stayed as “Originals”.

Table 7: Codes Summary: Fitting-in with the Normative Group

Research Question	Theme (count)	Codes	Occurrence in Transcripts
Question 4: How does the female minority attempt to avoid isolation in the group and how does this differ when there are at least three women in the boardroom.	The Originals (28)	Other Strategies to remain unblended	8
		Refusing to blend in	12
		The Old Girls Club	8
	The Clones (20)	Playing the boardroom game	8
		Some do change in order to blending in	12
	Refusing to "invisibilise gender (8)	Refusing to "invisibilise gender	8

5.6.1 The Clone

The clone refers to those who adopt the male persona to be accepted and fit in as one of the boys. The cloning strategies comprise of those who assimilate the masculine traits. When the question about blending in was asked, participants tended to shift from a personal and direct involvement manner to a more passive, observer role relaying their observations of others. None of the participants identified to have adopted this cloning strategy. However, a number of them know someone who assimilate the masculine ideal.

The Angela Smith, the subject expert, has gathered an observation of how female board members unconsciously adopt the male persona as it is the expected in the boardroom.

“They have to survive so they actually without even noticing sometimes they

adopt those traits they adopt this way of speaking, they adopt to try and fit in and sometimes it is not even something that they notice” Angela Smith.

Most of the participants relayed examples of women they know and observed how other women adopt the masculine traits to be taken seriously

“Sometimes women and trying to be relevant in trying to be taken seriously they're adopted this cold demeanour” Dawn Everton.

Fiona Chugh also added.

“You know the story of some of our colleagues who are on the board, women; I'm not talking about those who take the male tendencies because you do have that. I'm very comfortable being a woman, I have no desire to be a man, at all”
Fiona Chugh.

Pam Just explained used the example of women wear their short hair to adopt the male outlook

“Teresa May-they always have short hair. There's a reason they always have short hair Because they do not want to look like a bimbo or blonde, Margaret Thatcher, they always make an effort to blend in, if you call it that. Because they think that they will be treated seriously. It is also because some males go about of their way to make them feel like a bimbo. But personally, I do not think that's the way to be...because at the end of the day you're pretending” Pam Just.

Kimberly Dorr also mentioned a female she knew that adopted the macho attitude to demonstrate her authority.

“There's a lady now who was the MD, UK, and she was given the speech during a CEO's farewell. She was so (demonstrating a strong, male posture)...it felt so ... and I'm like, oh my gosh, this is all so unnecessary, you know” Kimberly Dorr.

The distant observations relayed by participants in this section of the interviewed led to an interesting question. Participants unanimously denied that they adopt cloning as a coping mechanism to fit into the monoculture and stereotypical roles in the boardroom. However, they relayed stories of someone they know who clones the male persona.

Hope Winters was the outlier who tended to confess her “cloning” of the male persona to be taken seriously.

“I was very young back then and also held an executive position as a financial director of a very large organisation back then. So I felt being young and being a woman I needed to come across such that I’m taken seriously. So whether it was a mistake or not, the truth of the matter is that there are times when I was trying to act like them. I can also attribute that to say there are not many of us on the board, so I had little confidence in embracing who I am. Because I’m thinking the people who sit here are the people who look like this” Hope Winters.

This contradictions and nuances with the cloning dynamic are discussed further in 6.5.4, and the possible underlying reasons are explored in section 6.5.5.

5.6.2 The Originals

“I’m very comfortable being a woman, I have no desire to be a man, at all. I interacted in my womanhood” Fiona Chugh.

The group of originals represents those women board members who refuse to change their preferences, styles and behaviours to fit in. They insist on maintaining who they are even if it leads to isolation. This group largely relates to those who strongly expressed the value of self-worth and confidence in 5.3.3. Liza Collins was one of the women who has made a conscious choice not to integrate because it would mean compromising herself and her values.

“I’m talking about myself, I do not want to be exactly like the boys, I do not want to talk like them, they’re very ... they have their own language and I wouldn’t like to be part of that language. I wouldn’t want to be part of that behaviour. When they have braais and that, they would be fine to have a braai and then be quite social until the next morning. Now, I wouldn’t be part of that. I still like to say that I like to have soft things, they know that I love having my flowers and pretty things and this and that, and they know that that is what it is ” Liza Collins.

Zoe Mannic explained that one does not have to change who they are to build relationships but they must attempt to find some common ground and leverage those common interest to start conversations and build relationships.

“Of course, I didn’t know what happened in the last rugby match or I do not smoke cigars, but I do not think that one should focus too much on that. I think you’ve got to focus on issues that are common, because if you’re going to look for the differences, then you’re going to find many” Zoe Mannic.

Several participants emphasised the importance of knowing who you are, why you are in the boardroom and to what extent you are willing to socialise with the normative group. They also emphasised the importance of being a team player without the pressure to be doing what everybody is doing. They emphasised that one has to draw the line and never compromise who they are.

“I remember being invited by a friend of mine who was working for a conglomerate. They were going to go away, and in the evening they were going to have a dress change, so the men were going to wear dresses and the women. When I heard that, I said, listen, it has been nice to be with you guys, I do not do that. Got into my car, left. I just said, no, I do not do that, I am not interested. So some of those decisions are hard, but you need to express yourself. “ Lizelle Roberts

Kimberly Dorr argues that trying to be like everyone else, in fact, compromises the very value of diversity that is of high value in the boardroom.

“If for me to move up the organisation, I have to try and fit in, I am unique for a reason, and if we were supposed to be clones and be similar, how do you then bring diversity? I was never part of those, and I've never, ever been interested because I do not need them, to progress” Kimberly Dorr.

5.6.3 Refusing to Conceal Gender

Refusing to conceal gender refers to women who refuse to keep their gender a low profile, refusing to camouflage their femininity in their minority status in order not to stand out as the odd one out. Furthermore, it refers to resisting acknowledging one's uniqueness to avoid being isolated. Participants explain how they refuse to act like a man to be fit the norms and culture of the normative group.

Related to 5.1.1 about not being too feminine, Pam just recited some examples of famous female leaders who attempt to conceal their femininity to be taken seriously.

“If you look at the female world leaders or people that have been up for elections. “If you look at Hillary Clinton or Markel, if you look at Teresa May-they always have short hair. There is a reason they always have short hair. It is because they do not want to look like a bimbo or blonde, Margaret Thatcher, they always make an effort to blend in, if you call it that. Because they think they'll be treated seriously. It is also because some males go out of their way to make them feel

like a bimbo. But personally, I do not think that's the way to be...because at the end of the day you're pretending" Pam Just.

Participants referred to embracing the feminine traits as a source of their competitive advantage instead of playing to the strengths they do not possess as a gender.

"I absolutely think you need to remain...your feminine qualities need to remain because they actually give you power" Lusanda Koors.

Lusanda Koors added that she, in fact, has to make a statement to ensure the female voice is heard where, in the past, it normally would not even feature. She, therefore, refuses to remain invisible and the voice unheard.

"So regardless of what the male felt like or whether I was the only female in the room and to top it, only black female in the room, for me, that is a positive challenge, that means I have to speak and we're a global company, I also feel challenged to speak for Africa. So in a meeting, I am the only one from Africa on the call, I speak because of that. I actually thrive, I find that to be quite a challenge, to make sure that a female voice, females are represented" Lusanda Koors.

Liza Collins who is a director at a construction company expressed how she refused to be excluded from site visits by male colleagues. She has to speak up to break the normal practices of excluding her from planned site visits because she's a woman.

"I've had to bring it up – you know what -I'm part of the executive team, so I need to be at these places, I need to, and I have to, I have to insist on it. You are part of it so you shouldn't actually be apologetic about it. You had to force them to think about it and force the situation to be different" Liza Collins.

Hope finds that the presence of Critical Mass has helped her to be comfortable in her femininity.

"If there's a Critical Mass, the behaviours are endorsing the femininity and the uniqueness in our diversity in what we bring, and I become more comfortable in wearing a pink skirt, in doing whatever; and saying I'm stepping out to wear my lipstick or to go and do my hair. I've got a hair appointment, I've got a spa appointment, I've got a nail appointment. I say that more often now" Hope winters.

5.7 Summary of Results

The overall answers to the three research questions can be summarised as follows

Research Question 1: What dynamics have you experienced in the boardroom that were deep surface dynamics, in other words, they were not immediately on the surface.

The five most experienced invisible boardroom dynamics are discussed they included

1. Higher standards, higher scrutiny
2. Paradoxes and Contradictions
3. Are women their own worst enemy?
4. Inferior perceptions towards female traits
5. The Old Boys “Decision making” Club

Research Question 2: How does having a Critical Mass of female board members enforce a change in the boardroom dynamics?

There are forces that impact only Surface Level dynamics that are visible and easy to observe and articulate. The Critical Mass is such a force. It was, however, discovered that the Critical Mass on its own does not address the hidden dynamics. There are four Deep Level Forces that address the invisible gendered dynamics, and they are:

1. Self-worth and Confidence
2. The Role of a chairperson,
3. Resilience and Purpose
4. Competence and Experience

Research question 3: How do you challenge or highlight unfavourable, deeply invisible gendered dynamics?

In challenging unfavourable dynamics, the Revelation phase was experienced by participants as participants use radical acts and resistance to challenge deep level invisible dynamics. The Exposure was also evidenced as women experience high levels of scrutiny where often the criteria for scrutiny and contradictions.

Research question 4: How does the female minority attempt to avoid isolation in the group and how does this differ when there are at least three women in the boardroom.

The *Disappearance* phase was met with oppositions and contradictions. Participants rejected having experienced the *Disappearance* phase.

Of the four questions asked, the most discussed theme related to “Other Effective Forces” with a total of 91 codes mentioned in transcripts (see Table 3). Participants also spoke very strongly against blending in with the normative group, 66 codes related to this discussion. The impact of the critical mass on Invisible dynamics was the list used codes across transcripts.

Table 3: Frequency Code Families in Transcripts

Popularity of Code Families in Transcripts	
Code Family	Count
Other Drivers of Dynamics	91
Against Blending in	66
Exposing Gendered Dynamics	58
Experienced Gendered Dynamics	49
Critical Mass is good but for surface impact	40
The (In)visibility Paradox	20
Impact of Critical Mass on Invisible Dynamics	14

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1 Outline of Discussion

It emerged from the data that participants mainly experience five Deeply Invisible Dynamics in the boardroom. The study also found that female board members support the critics of the CMT that, the numeric rebalancing is too simplistic to address invisible boardroom dynamics. This weakness of the CMT led to the realisation of other forces that are adequate to address the invisible dynamics that the CM fails to address. Through the constructs of the (In)visibility Vortex, these themes were analysed and revealed four Deep level Forces that are effective to address Deeply Invisible Dynamics. It was also found that there are contradictions and nuances with the (In)visibility Vortex.

The next section discusses the theoretical and literary bases for the findings of the study. The analysis and discussions of this section were guided by the research questions set out in Chapter 3. Firstly, the five deeply invisible dynamics that were experienced by participants as queried by question one is discussed. Thereafter, findings from research questions two are discussed where Surface Level Forces (SLF) and Deep Level Forces (DLF) were established. A revised model is presented which encapsulates how the original (In)visibility Vortex model can be disrupted by DLFs. This is followed by a detailed discussion of how the (In)visibility Vortex was experienced by participants (research questions three and four). The chapter closes with a discussion of the nuances and contradictions found in the study.

6.2 RQ1 Finding: Five Deeply Invisible Dynamics Experienced in the Boardroom

RQ1 aimed to contribute to the literature by responding to a gap highlighted by Stead (2013). Stead (2013) asserted that very little is understood as to what dynamics shape the experiences, participation and effectiveness of minority female directors (Stead, 2013).

One of the reasons for this poor insight is because these dynamics are deeply invisible, they are subtle and function as an undercurrent. It is also possible that because the assumption is that numerical balances will fix all gendered problems, current literature is missing insights about invisible boardroom dynamics and practical strategies to resolve them. Five main themes of invisible dynamics emerged from the interviews.

6.2.1 Invisible Dynamic 1: Invisibility Paradox

“It is a double bind because she will be demonstrating masculine traits and so people will probably say ok she's really aggressive and then she will be considered by the women as out of the group because she's acting like a guy so it is a truly double bind” Angela Smith

Women have to navigate contradictions where they must fit-in while making sense of dichotomous roles (Munian, 2013). Women are taught to downplay their femininity, at the same time they must not be too aggressive and act like a man. She must strike a perfect balance between the two (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). Women who were seen to display male traits are perceived negatively, seen to be stepping out of their boundaries (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). When women put their hand up for big positions, men accuse them of being aggressive, yet men receive praise for the same action (McKinsey & Company, 2016).

The standard is always changing and shifting, making it difficult to capture and articulate as a problem (Stead, 2013). This paradox was strongly experienced by participants and was also well observed by the subject expert, Angela and. She explained how women who demonstrate masculine traits would be labelled as being aggressive by men while she will be labelled by other women as “out of the group because she's acting like a guy”. This is found to be experienced as a reality despite the presence of a Critical Mass.

The current literature does not articulate resolutions for the (In)visibility paradox. The monoculture stereotype expects women leaders to fit the male persona in to be accepted as fitting leaders. This is one invisible dynamic where the presence of a Critical Mass

can contribute to a change in this mind-set. An increase in numbers of female board members can demonstrate that leadership has no gender. Women will not have to be the best of both genders to be perceived as good leaders.

6.2.2 Invisible Dynamic 2: Higher standards, higher scrutiny

“You’ve got to do back flips; you’ve got to show them that you are almost a magician and yet it doesn’t apply to men. They do not need to show anybody”.

Liza Collins

The performance bias refers to how women tend to be evaluated strictly on the delivery of results while men are evaluated based on potential (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Women are measured on what they have achieved to date while men are measured on their future potential. Gender stereotyping literature also revealed that when there are fewer women than men in a group, women tend to receive lower performance ratings than men (Sackett, DuBois, & Noe, 1991). Women often report anecdotally that they have to be twice as good as the men, that a woman has to be twice as good as a man to go half as far (Singh, Terjesen, & Vinnicombe, 2008).

Key performance measures and targets agreed and printed on paper look the same for male and female colleges making it difficult to empirically prove that, in reality, the assessment approach is not the same. Participants of the study, however, did not mind being held to higher standard. Possibly because they have established DLF like self-efficacy and competence, enabling them to deliver and against these higher standards

Historically, society has always held women to higher standards in behaviour, morals and evidently professionally as well. Feminist literature has also repeatedly highlighted this, but it does not sufficiently address the invisible dynamics. It does not outline what can assist women to deal with them

6.2.3 Invisible Dynamic 3: Are Women Their Own Worst Enemy?

Patriarchy and historic discrimination against women still play a big role in society and corporate environments. Unfortunately, because of its engraved nature into ways of working, women tend to also (unconsciously) participate in the discrimination. Gendered practices are so engraved into the culture of the organization that even women tend to contribute to them, interpreting them as gender-neutral meritocracies (Munian, 2013). Reviewing the statement below, let us say it was made by John Hamilton, CEO of a large

South African construction company.

“It could be that you are overly feminine, your voice is too soft, you are tentative. Because women tend to be tentative”.

The above statement was in fact, made by Dawn Everton, a participant in this study. This demonstrates that women do engage in gendered dynamics on themselves or towards each other without actually realising. The currently literature does not sufficiently admit that heightened scrutiny is not exclusively imposed by the normative gender, both gendered tend to participate in the second generation bias.

The literature also showed that women are often anticipated to make it their responsibility to increase the numeric representation of women in leadership. On the other hand, research has shown that women prefer to be recognised for their individual contribution. Consequently, they do not take up the solidarity approach but rather distance themselves from other female colleagues (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Participants did not rate the role of a Critical Mass highly. However, they also did not display an attitude of distancing themselves from other women. Fiona Chugh, in fact, rejected the narrative that women do not support other women. It is possible that the expectation that women must form solidarity (when they are a minority) is detrimental to perceptions about women leaders as it perpetuates notions such as the Queen Bee Syndrome.

Participants have observed that women tend to think that because the boardroom is not their terrain, they need to work harder to earn their place. It also raised an additional question of the extent that this dynamic is driven by the normative group and the extent is self-imposed.

Feminist literature is typically positioned to project that gendered dynamics are perpetrated only by the male counterparts. Without undermining the reality of high scrutiny placed on tokens, the impact of self-imposed high scrutiny is not sufficiently explored in the feminist literature. Self-prejudice in the context of female leaders is not sufficiently explored and examined how it can be unlearned and overcome.

6.2.4 Invisible Dynamic 4: Inferior Perceptions Towards Feminine Traits

“Sometimes women, in trying to be relevant, in trying to be taken seriously they're adopted this cold demeanour” Dawn Everton.

Feminine traits such as collaboration and empathy are typically associated with weakness and lack of ambition. Angela Smith, the subject expert explained that this is

mainly because company core values are sometimes, in fact, masculine. For example, competitiveness, firmness, strength. Angela Smith asserts that it is important to distinguish that feminine and male traits do not necessarily mean exclusive and complete possession by the corresponding gender. Some females can comfortably display masculine traits even better than man and vice versa.

There are studies that assert that negative experiences of women minorities may simply be a function of society's inferiority perception towards women (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010). Deeply embedded societal norms continue to actively discourage and hinder women who aspire to ascend to senior management levels from reaching their full potential (Bain & Company, 2017).

Meanwhile, recent studies have shown that women tend to intrinsically have characteristics of transformational leaders that breed success and therefore feminine traits should be upheld (Bass, 1999). Additional evidence has shown that companies with more women in leadership positions are significantly more profitable than those who do not. However, in corporate leadership positions and boards, the monoculture still exists and masculine traits are still promoted as leadership traits. These include firmness, decisiveness and competitiveness and sometimes even aggression.

This inferior perception of feminine traits can be attributed from the patriarchal culture that asserts that there are some roles women simply aren't suited for. The C-suit and directorship roles are such roles (Elting, 2017). The monoculture then promotes masculine traits and women who demonstrate them fit the stereotype and therefore tend to be rated as better leaders. Angela Smith also observed that women who generally have masculine traits make it through the boardroom dynamics a little bit easier than women who have little or no masculine traits.

This relates to the notion of "think manager–think male" where a good or successful manager is described in masculine terms (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). The monoculture model in this context reflects a masculine ideology embodied in the nature of the work itself (Murray & Syed, 2010). This embodiment of roles is a form of a tacit understanding and expectation. For example, a good leader must be strong, assertive and firm, which are typically masculine qualities. On the other hand, participants recited how they found softness, which is a feminine trait, has a negative association to it. They expressed how they've experienced that their soft voices can be a disadvantage because even the idea you put forward is taken as a soft idea. They also alluded to feminine traits being perceived as inferior in the boardroom, particularly the soft voice and the

expression of emotions. On the other hand, directness, strength and assertiveness are praised.

There is a mismatch between natural feminine traits and the qualities that people tend to associate with leaders (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). Because of this, women tend to adopt the male work model, institutionalising what is deemed acceptable behaviours while outlawing other behaviours (Murray & Syed, 2010). Consequently, if a woman wants to succeed, then she must adopt a male-type characteristics (Murray & Syed, 2010).

Angela concurred to this when she observed that in an attempt to survive in the boardroom, female board members, unconsciously adopt certain traits and new ways way of speaking, they adapt to try and fit in without even noticing themselves doing it.

In making a case for increased women participation, masculine benefits are emphasized which perpetuates the stereotype of the monoculture (Munian, 2013). This largely explains the cloning and blending in behaviours presented in section 5.6, research question four. The monoculture is an old *bête noire* in feminist literature. It is, however, clear that if women are still cloning the male figure in order to be seen as good leaders, this old problem is far from being resolved.

6.2.5 Invisible Dynamic 5: The Old Boys “Decision making” Club

“ So it is not just a meeting that happens at a board meeting. But you could clearly see when there’s a deliberation that’s taken place, and people are in agreement, and a discussion point is being swayed in a particular direction. Elle Louw

Board structures are typified by a “small world” topology in which board members belong to elite groups and social clubs that are networked into each other (Kogut, Colomer, & Belinky, 2014). These relations are normally invisible, taking place on the golf course or social clubs. In other words, the internal relations extend to beyond the boardroom impacting the alignment on issues and lobbying for decision making.

Despite a numeric representation, women continue to be excluded from the power base (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Participants relayed that their difficulty with the boys club is not the purely social aspect, but that in truth, the boys club is actually the “decision-making club” from which they are invariably excluded.

In addition to the decision making, the clubs also propels networking and career opportunities without which women may struggle to make progress in their careers.

Taking up golf was mentioned to be crucial as people build networks and build rapport to move up the organisation. Without access to this club, one may miss some career opportunities.

The club is exclusive to men, and they create a wealth of networks that further determine who they bring in as board members. Studies in boardroom culture found that board members that have strong social ties also have enhanced provisions for consultation from outside directors (Gavin & College, 2014). In other words, the internal relations extend to beyond the boardroom impacting the attainment of consulting jobs and directorships in other firms.

One expectation of the CMT is that the presence of three women or more enables women to equally collaborate and form their own old girl's club. However, effective leadership should not be able of sexes but a meeting of minds and a rallying behind a common purpose. In any case, the presence of a Critical Mass could not compete with an established network of the old boys club, but it should not have to compete.

By exposing these dynamics, the intention is to educate others how they impact the minority group, the effectiveness of the group at large and what can be done to address the issue. The next sections discuss forces that were observed to be useful to expose boardroom dynamics, both Surface Level and deep level dynamics.

6.3 RQ2 Finding 1: Forces that Address Surface Level Dynamics

The previous section, 6.2, discussed the top five invisible dynamics that participants experience in the boardroom. The next sections discuss the forces that are useful to challenge and address these dynamics.

The Surface Level Forces are those that address the surface level, visible dynamics. These are referred to as the first generation biases which are identifiable. Surface Level Forces are necessary to address the “elephant in the room”, for example, race and gender numeric underrepresentation. They play a limited role in impacting the (In)visibility Vortex as they address issues that are known and visible. These forces are weaker forces, which are necessary but not sufficient on their own to slow down the (In)visibility Vortex and calm the storm. The Surface Level Forces are discussed in 6.3 and they consist of:

- 1) Critical Mass which was found to be a weak force and
- 2) Mentorships and Role models which is discussed later in this chapter.

6.3.1 Surface Level Force #1: Critical Mass

“If you had a thirty percent that did not have the ability to express their views or to make that difference, then I do not think that thirty percent is going to be significant enough. It is all about quality” Zoe Mannic.

The Critical Mass theory suggests that when the number of women in the board reaches thirty percent, there will be a change in the nature of dynamics and interactions in the group (Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012). This study found that the Critical Mass is essential but its impact is limited to surface level. It is insufficient on its own to address deeply invisible dynamics.

Surface-level (In)visibility speaks to women’s negative experiences in male-dominated workplaces potentially due to numeric, gender imbalances (Stead, 2013). Lewis and Simpson suggest that Surface Level visibility causes issues of exclusion and differences which can be overcome by increasing women’s numerical participation (Lewis & Simpson, 2010).

Critics of the numerical representation of female leaders challenge that the numbers concept is too simplistic. Paxton et al. found in their study that having more women in office does not necessarily change the dynamics (Paxton, Kunovich, & Hughes, 2007). The study found substantial evidence that supports the critics’ opposing view.

Participants showed strong evidence that the Critical Mass on its own is not sufficient to address deep level (In)visibility. Their responses indicated that numeric representation is too simplistic to address issues that are deeply invisible in the boardroom. They were aligned to Childs & Krook's (2008) view that the impact of a Critical Mass is less substantive and more descriptive (Childs & Krook, 2008). A strong theme that emerged was that the CM was recognised as essential to bring diversity in thinking and decision-making, but it does not penetrate deep level boardroom dynamics. The CM was well supported, but the support was always followed by disclaimers and conditions.

“So I think Critical Mass is very important if the women who are there are conscious about it and are going to use it positively” Hope Winter.

These findings support Stead (2013) as well as Lewis and Simpson's theories that presence of a Critical Mass can be useful in overcoming Surface Level (in) visibility. However, it was found wanting on its ability to penetrate to deeper dynamics.

6.3.2 Surface Level Force #2: Mentorships and Role Models

Mentorship allows one to learn from role models and mentors how to establish Self-worth and Confidence.

“We need a lot more women coming to the fore, and I think we just need a lot more women believing in themselves and believing in their self-worth. I think they have to learn some of it from somebody else who is supposed to be a role model” Elle Louw.

Participants perceived that women draw inspiration and courage from those they view to be successful. Mentorship has gained increasing attention as an effective tool to enhance one's career development. It has been observed that Mentoring is key to a successful career. It helps to increase job satisfaction and higher commitment (Scandura & Williams, 2001). Participants found that mentors enabled them to face their challenges with perspective and clarity. They gave them context and perspective which helped them build Resilience to face the challenges they may encounter in the boardroom.

6.4 RQ2 Finding 2: Forces that Address Deep Level Invisible Dynamics

Forces that disrupt the (In)visibility Vortex are those that address deeply invisible dynamics described in 6.2. These are the dynamics that are intangible, invisible; they function underneath the surface.

Deeply invisible gendered norms in a male-dominated boardrooms are a challenge to identify and address because they are entrenched and weaved in as the normal way of doing things (Stead, 2013).

The Deep Level Forces address the hidden dynamics of deeply invisible gendered norms. Deep level dynamics include hidden meanings, embedded norms and invisible power relations which are subtle and not easy to articulate. They are deeply entrenched and weaved in as the normal way of doing things. Therefore, they are not easy to debate (Munian, 2013). These deep dynamics, therefore, need forces that are equally deep to counter them, bring them to the surface and address them. These forces are equally subtle, and they take time to establish and strengthen. These four Deep Level Forces are discussed next.

6.4.1 Deep Level Force #1: Self-Awareness and Confidence

“I know I'm capable. As I said, I have a presence, I wear purple hair, I do not worry, I know I represent, I articulate myself well, I'm intelligent” Ayanda Phaleng.

Self-awareness and confidence are critical internal capacities for women to be able to weather the storm of deeply invisible boardroom dynamics. Participants expressed that their strong sense of self-efficacy is what helps them sifter through the invisible dynamics and focus on their role in the boardroom.

It was also evident that the self-confidence is a trait they have built over time and through experience. Women who persevere in these unfavourable environments overtime build resilience and build self-efficacy while those who quit too soon end up with a lower esteem (Bandura, 1977). Success breeds self-belief while failure undermines it, particularly failures that are experienced before a sense of efficacy is firmly established (McKinsey & Company, 2016; Bandura, 1977). The high levels of “leakages” seen in middle management females (up to 18% in South Africa) indicate there is a disproportional amount of those who give up too soon, potentially remaining with a lower self-efficacy.

Authentic address of gendered issues by organization means going below the surface in

on gendered issues. Training and development approaches must address the level of complexities and contradictions that women have to deal with. Stereotypes and contradictions conflict and confuse women, causing them to doubt their fit for leadership roles. At a personal level, therefore, capability building programmes for female leaders must pay attention to and support the establishment of their self-efficacy. Participants highlighted that women tend to be too hard on themselves. Women therefore also face internal conflicts and turmoil, doubting their own capabilities. Women need to take personal responsibility to address these internal turmoil making use of mentorship, coaching and programmes that help to build self-awareness and confidence.

On a broader organisational level, the culture and environment needs to be addressed to remove norms and processes that undermine women and their leadership capabilities. The sources of these issues are typically culture deep and weaved in societal and family structures. This means the education needs to be directed to both genders to be able to appreciate and address organisational norms that undermine women and their leadership capabilities.

6.4.2 Deep Level Force # 2: Role of a Chairperson

“On the board which I sit on, specifically, our managing director is female; she’s very deliberate about including females and previously disadvantaged individuals. She’s a woman of colour woman who’s strong, very strong-willed, and she likes to break barriers, so she’s very particular, and she does it with intent. So it is different, my experience is different. She encourages conversation; she encourages input” Lusanda Koors.

Deeply invisible gendered norms are normally protected and defended by the normative group that benefits from them. Dominant male privileges remain unchallenged and “problematized”, they are accepted as a norm (Munian, 2013). This makes it more difficult to articulate, challenge and change those dynamics. Additionally, those who dare to challenge the deeply invisible gendered norms render themselves exposed, and they live the consequences of challenging the status quo (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

The role of a chairperson (who is often male) is therefore critical. The Chairperson should allow and encourage the status quo to be challenged and questioned. The chairperson must drive invisible dynamics to the surface by pointing them out and encouraging constructive conversations about them.

The (In)visibility Vortex is a vicious cycle of struggles and exchanges as the normative

group attempts to preserve and conceal its privileges and the minority attempts to expose them. The chairperson must display intolerance for protectionism of norms that benefit one particular group while compromising the other.

Deep level dynamics are subtle in the way they lead to inequalities making it difficult to articulate and confront (Munian, 2013). The chairperson is better positioned to independently observe the dynamics and articulate them without partiality or favour.

In organizations, change is effective when driven from the top. The role of the chairperson is therefore crucial to changing and improving the gendered dynamics of organizations.

6.4.3 Deep Level Force # 3: Competence and Experience

“You need to know your stuff. I cannot emphasise that enough. If you’re knowledgeable, once you put the facts, nobody will actually challenge you, because that person is challenging because of being a male, then you come with facts, and they’ll give up” Lizelle Roberts.

Participants expressed how competence is a non-negotiable requirement for women but not so much for their male colleagues. Participants found that their competence and experience earns them the respect.

Participants also expressed however that they are not looking for special empathy or treatment, they only seek meritocracy. They want the share of voice and boardroom appointments to be based on competence and merit. They want to be respected for their professional value-add and contribution and nothing else. Today, however, women and men are not measured on equal merit, women have to be more competent, more qualified and more profound to have a share of chairs in the boardroom.

Liza and Enza reiterated the sentiment that they have to be twice as good as the men to go half as far (Singh, Terjesen, & Vinnicombe, 2008). They narrated how they started as personal assistants to their board members and over the years, they have studied and worked their way up to the boardroom. However, they still need to continuously prove that they have earned their worth and had merit to be in the boardroom.

Building boardroom experience and boardroom competence are difficult for women if they aren’t given a chance to board appointments, to begin with, or when the handful that does is scrutinised continuously for faults and failures. Women must find ways to gain exposure to boards to build their experience and competencies about board

operations and roles. They can also make use of boardroom training programmes and seminars targeted at building boardroom competence.

6.4.4 Deep Level Force # 4: Resilience and Purpose

“Without fear or favour, so if you have no fear and you do not owe anybody a favour, then it is easier to be able to stand your ground. “.Elle Louw

People with a strong a strong sense of purpose and value driven goals stand up for them despite the impediments. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the target challenges people set for themselves and the firmer is their commitment to them. (Bandura, 1977)

Participants emphasised the need for resilience in an environment where you have to prove yourself constantly and the value you bring to the table. Participants expressed that if the matter is important enough, they will stand up for matter despite the impediments, they will and ensure they are heard even the risk of repeating oneself

Participants explained how they have to continually look beyond the noise and seeking approval of others but rather focus on what’s important

Transformational leaders focus on the bigger purpose and are not fazed by adversity and opposition. They are driven by the bigger purpose to do the right thing for the right reasons. Participants alluded that women need to be this type of leader to be an effective, respected leader.

6.5 RQ3 Finding: Revealing and Exposing Dynamics on the Vortex

Figure 1 below shows the original (In)visibility Vortex by Lewis & Simpson (2012). It summarises the clockwise motion of turmoil and struggles experienced when the minority group challenges invisible gendered norms. The arrows move clockwise showing a cycle of the minority's experiences from Revelation to Exposure and eventually to Disappearance.

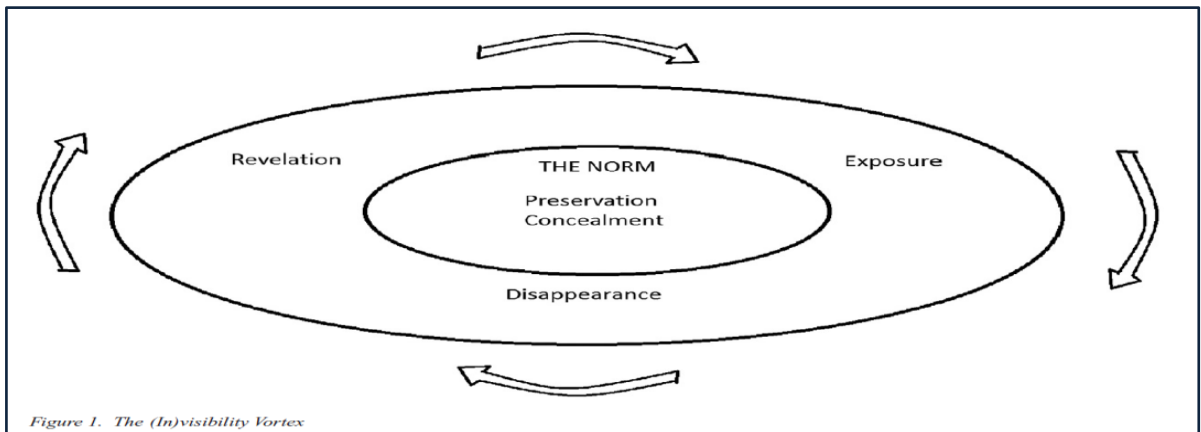


Figure 1. The (In)visibility Vortex

Source: Lewis & Simpson, *Kanter Revisited: Gender, Power and (In)visibility*, 2012.

6.5.1 Model Presentation: Slowing Down the (In)visibility Vortex

In contrast, Figure 2 below depicts how the original (In)visibility Vortex above can be slowed down. It shows that the Deep Level Forces discussed in 6.4 counter the invisible dynamics and the Surface Level Forces counter the Surface Level dynamics. Overall, the counter effects slow down the Vortex. The arrows from the forces move in the direction opposite to that of the original Vortex. This demonstrates a counter-clockwise motion which decelerates the turmoil, calming the storm to a stable environment.

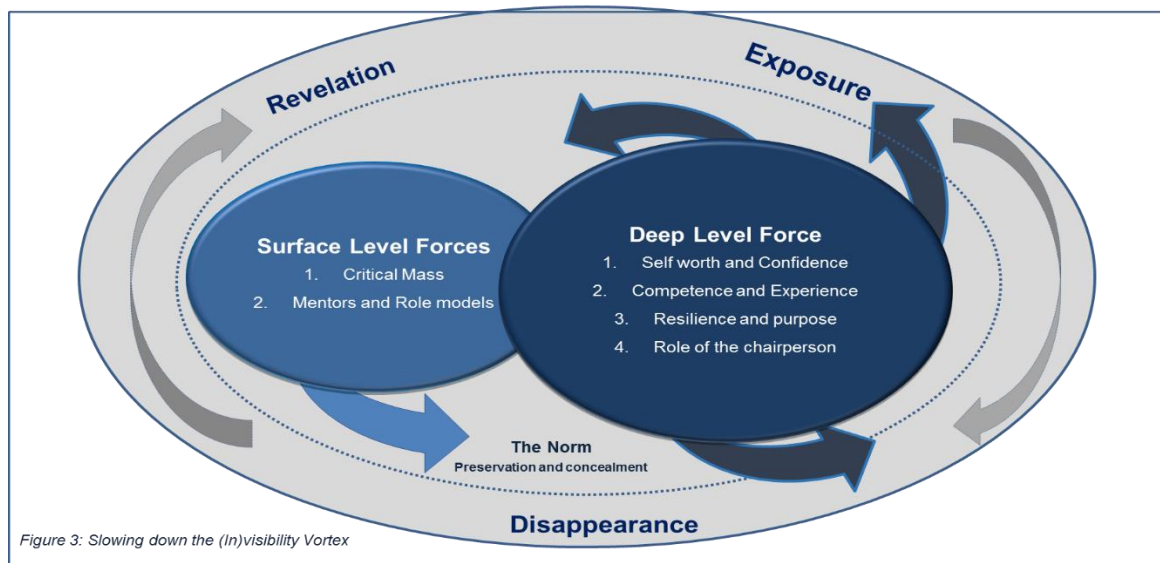


Figure 3: Slowing down the (In)visibility Vortex

Source: Based on the insights raised in section 6.4

The model below (see Figure 4) elaborates from the crystallised diagram in Figure 3. The below model narrates how the Deep Level Forces (DLF) emerge to counter the experienced dynamics as discussed in section 5.1. These dynamics are below the surface. They are preserved and concealed as articulated in the (In)visibility Vortex. The Deep Level Forces respond to these dynamics by a counter movement which deflects the impact of the invisible dynamic.

6.5.2 How Deep Level Forces Counter the Experienced Dynamics

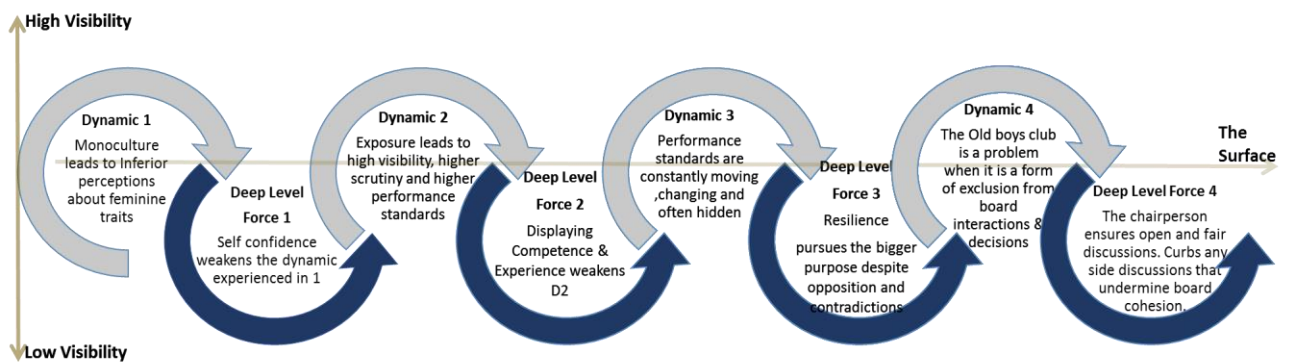


Figure 4. How Deep Level Forces Counter the Experienced Dynamics

Source: Based on insights discussed in 6.2 and 6.4

The above diagram demonstrates the counteractions between invisible dynamics and invisible forces. It depicts how the different forces either resist the power of invisible dynamics, deflect their impact or drive them to the surface so they can be challenged and resolved.

1) Dynamic 1: The Monoculture leads to the dynamic of inferior perceptions about feminine traits. The dynamic of Inferior perceptions can be grouped with the dynamic of Women being their Worst enemies. These are both deflected by the same deep level force.

Force 1: Self-worth and self-confidence is a force that deflects the impact of a monoculture. It weakens the impact of dynamic 1 where both genders second guess feminine traits and women's their capabilities in leadership.

2) Dynamic 2: Exposure (as articulated in the Vortex) leads to high visibility, higher scrutiny and performance biases.

Force 2 Competence & Experience is a force that deflects the performance biases. It weakens dynamic 2 by demonstrating skills and expertise.

3) Dynamic 3: Performance standards are constantly moving, changing and often hidden.

Force 3: Resilience & Drive is a force that deflects the invisibility pursues the bigger

purpose even if it means isolation and exclusion

Dynamic 4: The Old boys club is a problem when it is a form of exclusion from board interactions decisions

Force 4: The role of a chairperson is a force that exposes hidden privileges of the normative group. The chairperson addresses any forms of exclusions or side discussions that undermine board cohesion. The Chairperson drives open and fair discussions.

6.6 RQ4 Finding: There are Nuances Within The (In)visibility Vortex

Concealing gender is mentioned as a tactic to deal with isolation by the minority. The term “invisibilising gender” is used to denote the process of making one’s gender “less different” from the normative gender to seamlessly fit in with the normative group. They attempt to blend in, making sure they do not cross the line of acceptability by acting like “one of the boys” (Stead, 2013; Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

“I do not want to be exactly like the boys, I do not want to talk like them, they have their own language, and I wouldn’t like to be part of that language. I wouldn’t want to be part of that behaviour” Liza Collins.

It emerged from the interviews that participants had different experiences than what is articulated in the (In)visibility Vortex. Participants experienced the first two phases of the Vortex, the Revelation and Exposure phases. However, participants did not experience the Disappearance phase.

Stead (2013) speaks about another form of Disappearance, which was also not experienced by participants. Stead (2013) refers to “Concealing Gender” as a coping tactic where women attempt to “downplay” their femininity. They make sure they do not cross the line of acceptability by assimilating to the stereotypical roles and acting like “one of the boys” (Stead, 2013). There was strong pushback on Murray and Syed’s (2010) observation that if a woman was to ‘make it’ to the top, then she must adopt male-type characteristics and become “one of the boys” (Murray & Syed, 2010).

The Disappearance concept was met with oppositions. Participants insisted that they always stay true to themselves; they do not hide femininity or assimilate the male persona. These participants are termed, “The Originals” as discussed in 5.6.2. They refuse to change their individual styles and behaviours to fit in. They insist on maintaining who they are even if it leads to isolation.

On the other hand, almost all participants relayed examples of a female director they know who has cloned the male stereotype. Hope Winters was the only participant who admitted that she used to assimilate a male persona. She acknowledged it as something she used to do to be taken seriously. This was in her distant past, and because of that distance, she can present her story with more perspective. It is possible that she would not have this distance and perspective if the interview was conducted during her cloning years.

6.6.1 Possible Reasons for Nuances with Disappearance

Firstly, corporates still promote masculine traits as good leadership traits. As such, women who demonstrate fit the male stereotype tend to be rated as good leaders (Munian, 2013). Angela Smith, an expert on the subject, believes that masculine traits are not exclusive to men. Nor are feminine traits exclusive to women. Some females have masculine traits that they use comfortably, and the opposite is true for men and feminine traits.

Therefore, women who naturally possess masculine traits display them as needed. For example, they are assertive or competitive if they need to be. They are acting naturally and not copying a male persona. It is therefore possible that displaying masculine traits can be misinterpreted as emulating a male charter or cloning. It is also possible that participants who mentioned women they have observed as cloning were in fact, naturally displaying their masculine traits.

Nonetheless, the study strongly showed that women who display masculine traits are not received positively. They are viewed as unauthentic and pretentious.

Another possible reason why participants did not experience Disappearance is that cloning can happen subconsciously. Because it is subconscious, they do not recognise themselves doing it. Therefore, they do not realise they do it. It is possible that women board members do not notice themselves norming into the male persona, they do not experience themselves cloning. However, someone observing from a distance can see the transition into a man-like behaviour. Angela relayed how she has observed this in female board members.

Lastly, participants did not experience Disappearance because they simply did not. Participants interviewed had a high sense of self-confidence. Is it possible that they have a high sense of self-efficacy that they do not copy personas or allow themselves to show up as someone they are not?

6.7 Summary of Discussion

The Critical Mass is essential to bring diversity and break the negative impacts of groupthink. It presents the opportunity for diversity of thought, the opportunity to question and deliberation over strategic issues. However, board members must be articulate, competent and have the opportunity to be equally heard before the benefits of the Critical Mass can be realised.

The presence of a Critical Mass, is, however, not sufficient on its own to resolve complex gender dynamics that female leaders face today. Numeric rebalancing of gender does not necessarily translate to equal power distribution or equitable share of influence (Munian, 2013). It cannot be taken for granted that having at least three women, will resolve invisible, gendered dynamics in the boardroom.

The invisible barriers women face in the workplace are poorly understood because organisations give considerably less recognition to them since they are invisible and difficult to articulate (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Four main forces are effective to address deeply invisible gendered dynamics. These forces counteract and weaken the power of invisible dynamics thereby stabilising the (In)visibility Vortex. There are also forces that address Surface Level dynamics. This is necessary but elementary, not effective enough to expose invisible gendered dynamics.

Surface Level Forces are necessary to address the “elephant in the room”, for example, race and gender underrepresentation. A Critical Mass is one such force. It deals with visible imbalance and stereotypes. Surface Level Forces are primary forces which are necessary but not sufficient on their own to influence invisible norms.

On the other hand, the Deep Level Forces confront the hidden dynamics. They disrupt the Vortex. They are capable of countering the impact of unseen gendered norms. Deep Level Forces tend to be internal, inherent to the female director’s internal capacity. The role of the Chairperson is the is the only exception to this intrinsic nature.

A revised model was developed suggesting how the original (In)visibility Vortex model can be slowed down. It showed that Surface Level Forces counter Surface Level dynamics while Deep Level Forces counter deep level dynamics. Another model was developed to elaborate on how the negative impact of invisible dynamics model can be countered by the Deep Level Forces.

These four forces are disrupters of the on-going cycle of negative boardroom dynamics.

Their development and nurturing enable female board members to contribute effectively as leaders thereby enhancing board performance and organisational performance. The role of a Critical Mass is essential but too basic on its own.

With regards to the (In)visibility Vortex, nuances were found. Participants supported the Revelation and Exposure phases. They used radical acts to challenge and “Reveal” invisible dynamics. They also experienced Exposure as they were highly scrutinised.

However, the Disappearance phase of the Vortex was experienced differently. In fact, participants expressed that they did not experience the Disappearance phase. They denied any experiences with cloning male traits nor having downplayed their femininity. Reasons for these nuances were briefly discussed, but they need to be further explored in a separate study. Ultimately, these nuances from the theory suggest that the “Originals” somehow exit the (In)Visibility Vortex, while the “Clones” remain in the Vortex, falling into “Disappearance”.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

For every seven board seats in an African listed company, men occupy six. Only 7% of executive directors are women, and just 2.2 % of SA's JSE listed company CEOs are women (Bain & Company, 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2016). Female representation on boards is perpetually low because women still face poorly understood, invisible that delay their upward mobility in organisations.

The purpose of the study was to examine the factors that address these invisible dynamics. It set out with the intention to extend the theory and build on the body of knowledge of (In)visibility by Lewis & Simpson (2012) and the invisible barriers that women face and how they can be resolved.

Historically, women were rendered invisible and their invisibility experiences, therefore, disappeared in the feminist literature and knowledge orthodoxy (Holvino, 2010). Stichman, Hassell, and Archbold (2010) suggested that women leaders' experiences can be improved by increasing the participation rates of women in leadership (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010). Other literature criticises that this preoccupation with numbers gives false comfort while the elite cadre of male board members sustains their grip on power and invisible gendered continue unchallenged (Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010). There was strong evidence that supports the critics' view.

7.1 Extension of Theory

There is a plethora of research on the barriers faced by women in leadership. However, the solutions offered by current feminist literature needs to be extended to gain better insights and fill the gaps that still exist in contemporary theory.

This study found gaps and nuances in the existing theory. The three major findings can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, the presence of a Critical Mass does not address invisible gendered norms in the boardroom. Joecks et al. put forward that when the number of women in the board reaches "the magic number", there will be a change in the nature of dynamics and interactions in the group (Joecks, Pull, & Karin, 2012). This study revealed that the Critical Mass only has an impact on Surface Level dynamics and fails to address deep level dynamics.

Secondly, the four forces identified are effective in addressing deep-level invisible

dynamics. They are capable of addressing these dynamics because they counter their impact. They cause a counter-clockwise movement that eventually slows down the (In)visibility Vortex.

Lastly, the participants on the study did not experience the Disappearance phase as expected in the Vortex. They relayed experiences of the first two phases, Revelation and Exposure. However, they did not withdraw, seek cover or conceal their gender when exposed to high levels of scrutiny; therefore they did not experience Disappearance (Lewis & Simpson, 2012; Stead, 2013). It is possible that the reason they are not experiencing the full impact of the Vortex is that they have established the four forces that address the invisible dynamics. The reason for this missing phase needs to be further explored.

7.2 Implications for Practitioners

Organizations that wish to develop its female leaders must be well aware that the invisible barriers still exist. The gendered dynamics described by participants in this study demonstrate that gender issues are not yet fixed. The body of knowledge that informs solutions to such barriers is increasingly recognized but the implementation of solutions is shallow and remains a “tick box” exercise. Practitioners that wish to develop female leaders need to penetrate below the surface to appreciate the undercurrents and address them at that level. Implications and learnings for organisations, in and outside the boardroom, are summarised next.

i. Implications for Business Oriented Feminist Organizations

Organizations such as BWASA, the 30% Club and IoDSA (although not feminist organisation) in corporate South Africa, need to be aware that numerical rebalancing alone will not substantively resolve the invisible gender dynamics that reinforce the shortage of women in leadership. Therefore, their efforts must go beyond Surface Level Forces such as the Critical Mass and Mentorship. They need to extend to developing Deep Level Forces (DLF), specifically DLF4, the role of the Chairperson as they can effectively influence this. The scale and nature of such organisations position them well to communicate and influence Chairpersons. They can promote the role Chairpersons can play to expose and counteract discriminatory practices in the boardroom. They must influence Chairpersons to be more deliberate and proactive to refute side discussions that undermine board cohesion.

ii. Implications for Corporate Organisations

Many CEOs are frustrated by their unfruitful efforts to build a robust pipeline of female leaders. They spend time, money and other resources to accelerate and enhance the development of female leader but then not much happens (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013).

Corporates need to shift from surface level solutions and go below the surface to address the invisible barriers. These invisible barriers poorly understood because organisations give considerably less recognition to them since they are intangible and difficult to articulate (McKinsey & Company, 2016). They are possibly more dangerous than visible barriers because they are so subtle, negatively impacting women's experience and performance and undermining CEO's efforts of gender transformation in organisations

Organizations therefore need to address these invisible dynamics in three levels, at organisational level, through processes/systems and at an individual level.

Firstly, corporates need to pay attention to subtle cultural and societal norms and how they affect dynamics in the workplace. Additionally, structural forms of inequality, socio-political regimes, cultures as well as diverse geographic territories have been aspects that are underrepresented in the gender frameworks leaving organisations with a shallow understanding of gendered dynamics or completely ignoring them.

Women who were seen to display male traits are perceived negatively, seen to be stepping out of their boundaries (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). Organizations need to be aware of such cultural contradictions and paradoxes that women face and evaluate their leadership capabilities within this context. Educating the broader organisation about such biases is also crucial. It reduces their blind spots and challenges the stereotypes.

Secondly, policies and systems established by organisations are designed to address Surface Level issues of development and progress, while the deep level, invisible barriers are left unresolved (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). Corporate processes and systems must support the necessary mind-set shift, and expose the biases that exist in an organization. For example, Performance Management Systems used are effective to detect and eradicate performance biases. Women believe they are thirty percent less likely to gain opportunities to advance on the same timeline as men. There must be processes in place to monitor and decipher whether such beliefs are true or not .

Thirdly, organisations must invest in developing Deep Level Forces for future female

leaders individually, in line with their aspirations. Competence and experience is a Deep Level Force that organisations need to drive and nature in future female leaders. Organizations can drive this by opening up opportunities that accelerate women's competence and broaden their exposure. Senior leaders of the organisation must own these plans, supporting them with other Surface Level Forces like mentorships and coaching.

The CEO must spearhead all three level of eradicating invisible gendered dynamics. Similar to the role of the Chairperson established as a Deep Level Force, the role of the leader of the organisation is pivotal to addressing invisible dynamics that are detrimental to female minorities. The CEO must assume the same role in the organization, calling out the invisible norms, practices and biased that undermine women and their progress.

iii. Implications for Women

Women in this study say that women are their own worst enemy. Women also anecdotally report how other women have unfairly treated them. Women Leaders must take an active role to change this narrative. Women Leaders unashamedly advocating for policies that uplift and support women in their careers can change the narrative. These policies can include maternity leave, childcare services and facilities for breastfeeding moms returning to work.

Women Leaders must also take part to educate their organisations about their second-generation biases and stereotypes. Inappropriate and gendered comments must be timeously corrected, respectfully but on the spot, to actively terminate gender discrimination and stereotypes.

Women who aspire to be in leadership roles must leverage the plethora of resources available to establish their deep level forces. Mentorship and coaching is an effective tool to build deep level forces such as Self-Confidence and Perseverance. Women must leverage an array of mentors across genders and across industries to broaden their perspective and frame of thinning. Women who persevere in hostile environments overtime build resilience and build self-efficacy while those who quit too soon end up with a lower esteem (Bandura, 1977). Within reason, women must preserve through the organisational paradoxes and contradictions, focusing on the superordinate goal.

In a VUCA world, success is increasingly dependent on versatile and transformational leaders. A decade ago, studies already showed empirical evidence that women are more transformational in their leadership styles than their male colleagues (Bass, 1999).

Women leaders must take advantage of this opportunity and trust in themselves and their intrinsic leadership capabilities.

7.3 Recommendations for Future Study

The current study can be taken further to better understand whether and why participants did not experience “Disappearance”. Whether the absence of the Disappearance phase correlates with the presence of the Deep Level Forces.

Women who display masculine traits are labelled as cloning the male persona. However, participants rejected this assumption. They do not experience themselves as cloning, although they had observed other women who do. The reason for this contradiction is not empirically explored in the current literature. A further study would be useful to establish whether and how minorities experience themselves norming into the dominant group.

Women have been accused of cloning the male persona to fit the stereotype. It is essential to assess the validity of this claim in considering the reality of intrinsic vis vies adopted masculine traits.

The four Deep Level Forces were ranked according to their relative effectiveness in addressing invisible dynamics. It would be valuable to statistically establish the relative strength of each of the four forces. This would enable prioritisation in the development and nurture of the four Deep Level Forces.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

Gender as a classification itself is evolving and dissolving and the gender imbalances are slowly shifting. This makes a compelling case for leaders to make consented efforts to promote a meeting of minds that looks beyond the divides of gender, sexual orientation, colour or creed. In the areas of organisational leadership, however, gender imbalances are still far from equalising. This is largely because organizations shy away from conversations about hidden norms and unspoken issues. In the long run, this ignorance is costly and even unethical.

Organisations that will excel in the future are those that embrace the complex and sensitive topic of gender, approaching the issues authentically, respectfully, tactfully and courageously. Organisations that are willing to learn and unlearn redundant practices that hinder cohesion, equality and inclusion are the ones that breed successful leaders.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview Schedule

Today's Date:

Place:

Time:

Interviewer's Name:

a) Questions relating to occupation and experience:

Nationality & Race:

Total years boardroom experience:

Number of boards served:

Average number of women on the board:

Industries served:

Current Boardroom Role.....Duration.....No. of women.....

Other Boardroom Role.....Duration.....No. of women.....

Other Boardroom Role.....Duration.....No. of women.....

b) Questions relating to invisible boardroom dynamics experienced:

- i. What invisible dynamics have you experienced in the boardroom? In other words, what have you experienced as subtle or tacit practices or norms in the boardroom as a male dominated territory?

c) Questions relating to Critical Mass and Boardroom Dynamics

- i. How does an increase of women in the boardroom impact or change the manner and style of group interactions?
- ii. As the number of women increases, do the group norms and gendered practices change?

- iii. At what point (at how many women) do the norms and practices change and how do they change?
- iv. If any, what else drives the invisible boardroom dynamics besides the Critical Mass?

i) Questions relating to invisible measures and Critical Mass

- i. Are there any other unspoken performance measures by which directors are evaluated?
- ii. Are the unspoken measures any different for female directors, if so, how?
- iii. Are the levels of performance scrutiny any different for female directors compared to their male colleagues in the boardroom? If so, in what manner?
- iv. When there are more than three women directors, how do the unspoken performance measures change?

ii) Questions relating to identifying and revealing invisible gendered group norms

- i. What is the likely response or consequences for highlighting and challenging deeply invisible gendered norms?
- ii. When the number of female board members increases, is it any easy to point out discriminatory group norms

iii) Questions relating to “blending in” and invisibility

- i. When there is few than three females directors, how do you integrate yourself into the group as a minority?
- ii. How is the integration established differently with more than three female directors?
- iii. How does one attempt to blend in with their male counterparts?
- iv. When there is few than three females, is blending in or not blending in distinct choices for female directors?
- v. How does the need to blend in change when there are more than three women in the boardroom?
- vi. Does gender remain a differentiating factor when women hold thirty percent or more of the board seats?

APPENDIX 2: Informed Consent Letter

I am conducting a study on women in leadership focusing on boardroom dynamics in male dominated industries. The subject of gender balance in leadership and related concepts like the Critical Mass and invisibility have been hot topics in many transformation and leadership conversations. The study seeks to understand how the presence of a Critical Mass impacts the deeply invisible gendered norms and practices that occur in the boardroom. **Your participation in this interview is voluntary. Please note that the interview will be recorded, should you wish to withdraw, you can do so at any time without penalty.** All data will be reported without identifiers. The interview will take approximately an hour. If you have any concerns, please contact me or my supervisor, our *details are provided below*.

Participant Consent:**Signature**

Researcher

Name: Ziphozihle Zajiji

Email: 23173336@mygibs.co.za

Mobile: 0798850176

Work: 011547529

Signature.....

Supervisor

Name: Anthony Wilson-Prangle

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Work:

Signature.....

APPENDIX 3: TABLE 8 SUMMARY OF CODES

Research Question	Theme (count)	Codes	# in Transcripts
Question 1: What invisible dynamics have you experienced in the boardroom, in other words, dynamics or norms that are not seen or visible but function as an undercurrent?	High Standards High Scrutiny (25)	High visibility, Higher Scrutiny,	9
		Negative visibility	16
	Paradoxes and Contradictions (5)	The paradox with masculine and feminine traits	3
		The double standards	2
	Are women their own worst enemy? (19)	Self disservice	19
	Inferior perceptions towards feminine traits (36)	You must Earn their Respect	7
		Observed Masculine and Feminine Traits	6
		The Unheard, Soft voice	5
		Superiority of masculine traits	6
		Positive comments about Feminine traits	5
		Feminine traits are a sign of weakness	3
	The Old Boys "Decision making" Club (18)	Social exclusion	12
		Elitism and exclusion in decision making	6
Question 2: How does having a Critical Mass of female directors enforce a change in the boardroom dynamics? If any, what else drives the invisible boardroom dynamics besides the Critical Mass.	CM is effective for invisible dynamics (11)	Changes to dynamics due to critical mass	6
		Critical mass has some impact on dynamics	5
	CM has no impact on deep dynamics (19)	CM has no impact	19
	CM is effective for different reasons(10)	Impact of Critical mass for different reasons	10
	Other Effective Forces (91)	Self-Worth and Confidence	27
		The Chairperson Drives the dynamics_1	15
		Mentorship/ role Models	13
		Competence, Value add, Experience	20
Purpose, Drive, Resilience	16		
Question 3: How do you challenge or highlight deeply invisible gendered dynamics?	Accepting not challenging Gendered Norms (13)	Accepting/not dealing with gendered norm	7
		Ignoring Norms	6
	Refusing gendered Norms(12)	Radical Acts to exposing/addressing gendered norms	7
		Responses to exposing/addressing gendered norm	5
Question 4: How does the female minority attempt to avoid isolation in the group and how does this differ when there are at least three women in the boardroom.	The originals (28)	Other Strategies to remain unblended	8
		Refusing to blend in	12
		The Old Girls Club	8
	The Clones (20)	Playing the boardroom game	8
		Some do change in order to blending in	12
	Refusing to "invisibilise gender	Refusing to "invisibilise gender	8

APPENDIX 4: ETHICS CLEARANCE FORM

**Gordon
Institute
of Business
Science**
University
of Pretoria

14 June 2017

Ziphozihle Zajiji

Dear Ziphozihle Zajiji,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee