

**An exploratory study of the leadership experiences of senior  
African female executives in the private sector.**

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A research project 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.

7 November 2018

**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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**Signature**

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**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018

## **Abstract**

The last twenty-four years has seen the representation of women in top and senior management positions improve. However, black female professionals remain under represented in senior and top management positions in the private sector in South Africa. This study explores the leadership journeys of black female executives who have successfully climbed the corporate ladder in the private sector. Utilising a qualitative approach, data was collected through thirteen semi structured interviews. This study found that black female professionals encounter a number of external and internal barriers on their leadership journeys and adopt a number of coping strategies in order to overcome these challenges. Furthermore, these experiences play a role in shaping their personal and professional identities, often equipping them to be better and more effective leaders in their organisations. Finally, for most fitting in with the majority of the social groups with their organisations was a challenge. However being different and not fitting in had positive impact on their leadership effectiveness. Moreover, this required the participants to adopt alternative strategies to gain the respect of their peers and subordinates which, once again made them better leaders. This study achieves its objective of building on the literature documenting black African female's leadership journey however; given the homogenous nature of the sample, the transferability of the learnings across markets, races and genders is limited.

**Keywords**

Black Female Professionals, Barriers, Identity, Fitting In, Leadership Effectiveness.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Twenty-four years into democracy, black female professionals remain under represented in senior and top management positions in South Africa within the private sector 2017 (Department of Labour, 2018). Through an exploratory study, the aim of this research is to understand the unique leadership journeys of black female professionals who have reached the upper echelons on management. This chapter will begin with a statistical and theoretical overview of the current status quo. It will then explore the African and South African context and conclude with business and theoretical rationale for this study.

### **1.2 Background**

Since the start of the Women's Movement in 1848 and the mass entry of women into the workplace in the 1960's, a significant amount of progress has been made in advancing women's rights in the workplace. Today, globally women make up 39.3% of the labour force (World Bank Group, 2018). Additionally, compared to nineties, today there are more women in management positions (International Labour Organization, 2016). Furthermore, according to study conducted by Grant Thornton in 2008, 75% of all organisations globally have at least one woman occupying a senior management role (Grant Thornton, 2018). On the surface this statistical evidence seems to validate the belief that more women are progressing up the corporate ladder. However, little progress has been made in regards to the proportion of women who hold senior management roles within organisations (Grant Thornton, 2018). According to the 2018 Women in Business global study, only 24% of senior management roles are held by women (Grant Thornton, 2018). This result is a decline from 2017 where women held 25% of senior management roles (Grant Thornton, 2018).

The statistical evidence above corroborates the findings of recent academic research. According to Ryan, Haslam, Morgenroth, Floor, Stoker and Peters (2016) whilst the last few decades have seen female representation in middle management both in the public and private sector improve significantly, representation in senior leadership positions particularly those with power and influence remains a challenge. Furthermore, research from academic studies indicates that women continue lag behind men concerning

promotion to senior management roles (Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo, & Michel, 2016). Worst still, the trend concerning the number of women advancing upwards within organisations seems to be slowing down (Hoobler et al., 2016). In spite of numerous interventions, legislations and women rights movements, on average women still hold less than 25% of all senior leadership positions (Lagerberg, 2016).

Of particular concern is that the number of women in senior management positions which has only increased by 3% over the last five years (Lagerberg, 2016). Given that women produce 37% of the global GDP, this continued inequality represents and lack of progress not only reflects an ethical issue within society but also within business (McKinsey&Company, 2017; Schuh et al., 2014).

### **1.3 An African and South African Perspective**

Closer to home relative to the worldwide average, Africa has a greater number of women in senior and executive management positions (Moodley, Holt, Leke, & Desvaux, 2016). In fact, at 30% Africa has the second highest percentage of senior management roles occupied by women (Grant Thornton, 2018). A key driver of this result has been the introduction of legislation and targets introduced by political parties within the region (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). For instance at 64% Rwanda has the highest representation of women in parliament (Moodley et al., 2016). However, although improving and better than the global average, only 5% of CEO roles are occupied by women in Africa (McKinsey&Company, 2017). Furthermore, whilst the number of women in senior roles is increasing, the majority, are roles with limited influence and power (Moodley et al., 2016). Finally, in their study conducted in 2016, Moodley, Holt, Leke and Desvaux found that within the private sector only one in three organisations mentioned gender diversity as a priority (Moodley et al., 2016). This is an indicator of two key issues. Firstly, gender inequality remains challenge and secondly whilst there is progress females remain under represented at every level within organisations (McKinsey&Company, 2017).

It is important to understand that whilst the symptoms of this inequality manifest themselves within the business sector, the root cause lies in the cultural and societal gender norms (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). This is particularly relevant for the African context, where historical and traditional gender roles have played a significant role in shaping the current gender relations (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Ahead of the African average of 30%, South Africa reached a new high with 38% of senior management roles being occupied by women in 2017 (Department of Labour, 2018). This represents a

significant improvement versus 2001, where female representation in these roles was at 20% (Department of Labour, 2018). Although smaller, a 990 basis point improvement has been observed within the top management with, 22.9% of top management roles being occupied by women (Department of Labour, 2018). At 32.3% female representation in senior management roles is lower in the private sector relative to the public sector at 39.3% see chart below (Department of Labour, 2018). Furthermore, at top management with the private sector, female representations at 21.6% if 1000 basis points lower than the public sector (see figure 1 and figure 2) (Department of Labour, 2018).

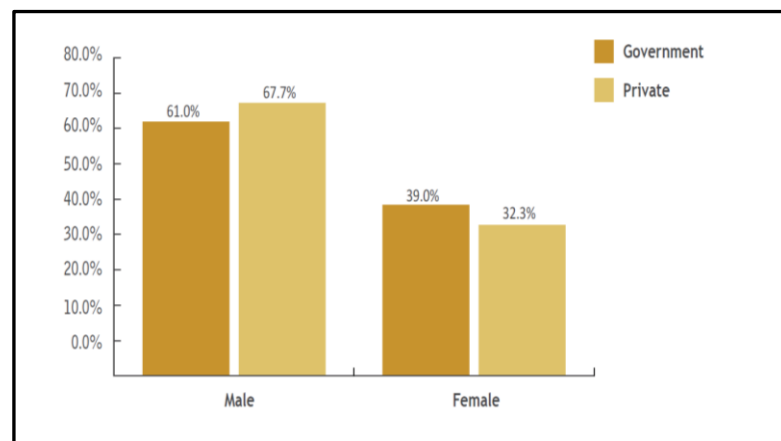


Figure 1 – Senior management gender representation in private and public sector (Department of Labour, 2018).

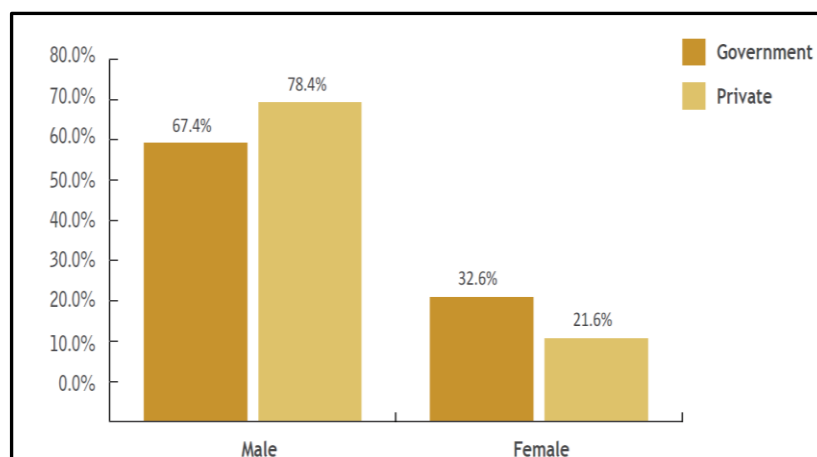


Figure 2 – Top management gender representation (Department of Labour, 2018).

South Africa's Apartheid legacy resulted in racial and gender discrimination that limited access and opportunities for certain groups with the population primarily blacks and women (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012). And, despite the introduction of the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and a number of affirmative action labour laws, black

professionals remain underrepresented in South Africa (Shrivastava, Selvarajah, Meyer, & Dorasamy, 2014). Recent statistics confirm this and highlight the substantial discrepancy between the private and public sectors. Given that black Africans make up 78.5% of South Africa's population, it is concerning that black African professionals account for 15.7% of senior management roles in the private sector relative to the public sector at 69.1% the public sector (see figure 3) (Department of Labour, 2018). Worse still within top management, black African professionals account 10.9% of roles (Department of Labour, 2018).

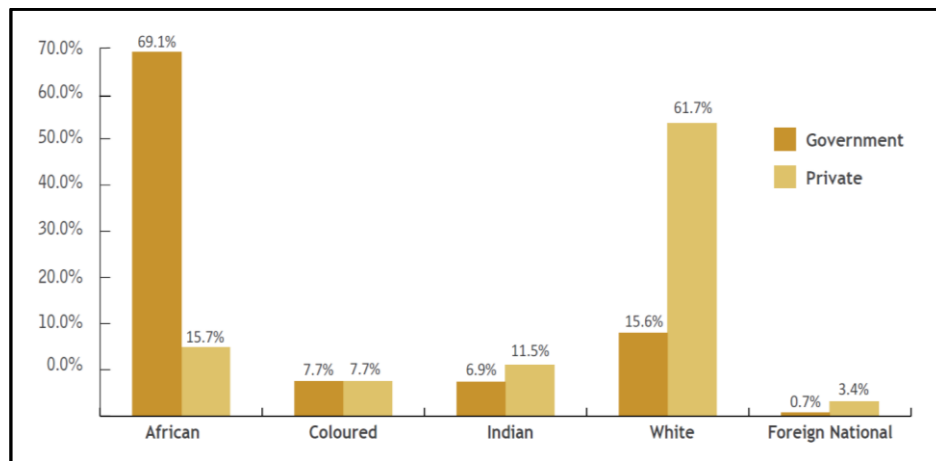


Figure 3– Race group representation within senior management (Department of Labour, 2018).

On the surface, the recent Employment Equity results suggest that overall, there has been some progress in driving gender equality at senior and top management. In fact relative to Africa, at 33.8% South Africa has better female representation in senior management roles (Department of Labour, 2018; Grant Thornton, 2018). However, a combined analysis of race, gender and the private sector paints an troubling picture. Despite representing 35.8% of South Africa's economically active population, black women only occupy 8.1% of these roles (Department of Labour, 2018). Even more concerning, in the private sector black women only make up 5.4% of senior management positions (versus white women at 19.4%) and 3.3% of top management positions (versus white women at 13.3%) (Department of Labour, 2018). Finally, after analysing workplace movement and skills development statistics at top and senior management levels, it is evident that whites, particularly white males continue to be afforded greater opportunities when it comes to promotion, recruitment and skills development (see annexure a) (Department of Labour, 2018). Twenty-four years into democracy, the statistics above paint a disturbing picture in regards to pace of transformation at senior and top management level within South Africa.

## **1.4 Significance of the Research**

### **1.4.1 Theoretical Need**

Leadership remains one of the most researched topics within organisational studies (Shrivastava et al., 2014). However, it is predominately centered around the United States (Shrivastava et al., 2014). Unfortunately, due to the political, social and economic reforms currently occurring in South Africa, there are some limitations to the relevance of these studies (Shrivastava et al., 2014). Furthermore, most of the research has focused on specific topics for instance gender or race (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). As a result, it does not provide a holistic understanding of an individual's career journey (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015).

Whilst increasing significantly since 2000, research on African women and leadership remains limited and relies heavily on western theoretical foundations (Fourie, van der Merwe, & van der Merwe, 2017). Moreover, African studies on leadership in the private sector remain limited (Fourie et al., 2017). According to Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas and Harrison (2008), it is important to explore the unique journeys of black women within the workplace in the workplace. Furthermore, Ngunjiri, states that in order to gain a deeper and wider understanding on women and their leadership journeys, further studies within local environments must be conducted (Ngunjiri, 2016). This is also in line with the findings of Wyatt and Silvester (2015) who found a small number of research reports on the experiences of black and minority employees who have made it to the top (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015).

Recently, research has focused on how women succeed despite these challenges (Bowles, 2012). However, overall within the field of gender and leadership, there is a strong theoretical understanding regarding why women do not make it to the top but a weak understanding of why some do (Bowles, 2012). A similar view is shared by Fritz and Knippenberg (Fritz, et al., 2017). In their 2017 study, they identified a gap in understanding how business environments can inspire women to succeed (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017). According to Bowles (2012), it is important to explore these stories of success as they provide inspiration to other women and have the potential to break open their career paths. Evidence that supports this includes a study conducted by KPMG in 2016, which found that 67% of women stated that their most crucial lessons on leadership came from other women (KPMG, 2016). Furthermore, the 18% loss in the

middle management pipeline confirms the need to better understand the challenges and strategies of success (Moodley et al., 2016).

#### **1.4.2 The business case of diversity**

The reality of globalization has meant that the workforce profiles within organisations have become more diverse (Haile, Emmanuel, & Dzathor, 2016). As a result, there is an increased need to understand the impact of increased diversity on organisational performance (Schneid, Isidor, Li, & Kabst, 2015). On the surface, some studies have suggested that organisations that build and effectively manage diversity outperform their competitors (Hoobler et al., 2016).

Research on the impact of women within organisations is inconclusive (Schneid et al., 2015). Some studies suggest that greater innovation, profitability, corporate social responsibility and consumer reach are linked with female leadership (Glass & Cook, 2016). Whilst others that examined gender diversity and performance were inconclusive (Schneid et al., 2015). In their 2016 study, utilising a number of theoretical frameworks, Hobbler, Masterson, Nkomo and Michel (2016) identified a number of advantages that women can bring to organisations. These include but not limited to: improved decision making; increased legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders, diverse viewpoints and capabilities that enhance the organisation, competitive advantage and reduced reliance on external resources (Hoobler, et al., 2016). This is supported by a study conducted by Mckinsey in 2016 that showed that companies with a greater proportion of women in top management positions performed better financially (Moodley et al., 2016). This trend is replicated Africa. Organisation with a 25% or more females in top management composition, achieved earnings that were on average 20% higher than the industry (Moodley et al., 2016).

#### **1.5 Scope of the Research**

Due to their under representation in senior and top management positions, this research will focus on the black female leader as an individual within the private sector in South Africa.

## **1.6 Research Rationale**

The last few decades have seen female representation in middle management both in the public and private sector improve significantly however, representation in senior leadership positions particularly those with power and influence remains a challenge (Ryan et al., 2016). In South Africa within the private sector, black female professionals represent only 7.8% of senior and top management positions (Department of Labour, 2018). Through an exploratory study, the aim of this research is to understand the unique leadership journeys of black female professionals who have reached the upper echelons on management. This

## **1.7 Research Purpose**

The objective of this research is to build on the limited literature on the African black female's leadership journey (Odhiambo, 2011). According to Odhiambo (2011), given the fundamental cultural and ideological differences between African and Western societies it is important to explore African women leaders' stories within certain contexts. This is further supported by Haslam and Ryan (2008), who state that it is important to understand female leadership narratives as it may give insight behind the reasons why more women tend to occupy lower and middle rank management positions, whilst men continue to dominate more powerful positions (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). Secondly, a more holistic understanding of the social contexts of African women will assist organisations in understanding some of the causes that result in the leaky pipeline to the top (Johnson & Thomas, 2012).

## **1.8 Conclusion**

An introduction to this study was presented in chapter one. This study will focus on black female professionals who occupy senior or top management roles in the private sector. Through an analysis of statistical data, business need and a brief overview of academic literature, this chapter has established the rationale for this study. By building on the limited literature on female African leaders, this research hopes to understand why black women remain underrepresented in top management (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Odhiambo, 2011).



## **Chapter 2**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical overview of this study by reviewing the literature concerning black female professionals and their rise to top leadership positions. To start with, a brief overview of the challenges women face as they climb the corporate ladder will be presented. This will be followed by an analysis of these barriers within an African context. According to Hogg (2001), social identity is the process by which an individual's identity is shaped by the groups they belong to. Furthermore, social identity plays an important influencing and guiding role which, is important for effective leadership (Van Knippenberg, 2011). Therefore, this chapter will also explore social identity and its implication on leadership.

### **2.2 Glass Ceilings and Labyrinths**

Globally, the last thirty years has seen a significant amount of legislation, new business policies and practices and feminist movements, all aimed at advancing gender equality within the workplace (Clarke, 2011). However, whilst progress has been made at lower and middle management levels, women remain under represented in top management positions within organisations (Clarke, 2011). The South African context is no different. A study conducted by Naidoo and Perumal found that despite a number of legislative interventions such as The Employment Equity Act and other Affirmative Action policies aimed at addressing the imbalances of the past, females remain under represented at senior and top levels with the education sector (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). Unfortunately this narrative is consistent within the private sector. Evidence of this can be seen in the latest employment equity results where women make up only 32.3% of senior management and only 21.6% of top management positions (Department of Labour, 2018). Add a racial perspective to these numbers and the state of affairs is significantly worse as evident in the statistics mentioned in the previous chapter.

A substantial amount of research has been conducted concerning women and the challenges they face as they climb the corporate ladder (Cook & Glass, 2014b). These challenges or barriers "can be grouped into individual, interpersonal, organisational and societal factors" (Peus, Braun, & Knipfer, 2015, p. 56). Scholars have utilised a number of images to illustrate these barriers. These include glass ceilings, sticky floors, glass

escalators and maternal walls (Carli & Eagly, 2016). Glass ceilings and sticky floors refer to the invisible barriers that have stopped women from moving up within organisations (Sabharwal, 2015). The key distinction between the two is that sticky floors refer to the challenges that women experience at the beginning of their careers. Examples include the lack of career progression plans and inflexible work policies (Carli & Eagly, 2016).

Glass escalators on the other hand refer to the advantages that men receive over women that assist in their progression. Maternal walls refer to the work life challenges and penalties that are experienced by mothers (Carli & Eagly, 2016). Finally glass cliffs refer to the appointment of women into risky or difficult positions or during times of a crisis (Carli & Eagly, 2016). On the other hand, Eagly and Carly have used the metaphor of a labyrinth to describe the professional journey to leadership undertaken by women (Carli & Eagly, 2016). Unlike sticky floors and glass ceilings, the metaphor of a labyrinth indicates that women face challenges throughout their careers and not at specific points in time (Carli & Eagly, 2016). This description captures the uneven and complex path women navigate on their way the top and also suggests that whilst the barriers are a challenge they can be beaten (Carli & Eagly, 2016).

### **2.3 Concrete Ceiling**

If the glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing upwards within organisations, the concrete ceiling is described as denser and more difficult barrier for black professionals to break through (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). In comparison to their white and male counterparts, black women encounter challenges associated with both race and gender throughout their careers (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Some have referred to this phenomenon, as double jeopardy where women of colour experience negative stereotypes because they are neither white nor male (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). This form of double jeopardy is known as gendered racism (Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009). Consequently, they are likely to experience a double outsider status as they are neither share gender nor colour with the majority of their colleagues (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Sanchez and Davis (2010) developed this topic further when they included the negative impact of ethnicity known as triple jeopardy. However, it these negative experiences of race and gender that have contributed in building their capability to understand, manage and negotiate challenges within diverse communities (Bass, 2009). Similar to their white female counterparts, their professional journeys are filled with experiences of isolation, methodical discrimination, challenges to their competence

and authority, limited power and exclusion from informal networks (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Finally, today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, female professionals of colour are likely to experience a subtle and often not punished form of bias that produces a variety of emotions that range from indifference, anger and frustration (Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

The dual identity of being both black and female, often results in black female professionals being invisible within organisation (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012). As result, black female professionals often have to work out their identities and leadership styles in an environment that does not see them (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). However, some have argued that this may not necessarily be negative factor as some have argued that this invisibility can act as a buffer against the negative stereotypes associated with race and gender (Livingston et al., 2012). Nevertheless, this invisibility or lack of individualism results in black female professionals' voices not being heard and as result more marginalised relative to their white female and black male counterparts (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Furthermore, some have argued that black women are more likely to experience discrimination linked to sexism and racism (Sesko & Biernat, 2010).

Due to their limited representation, women of colour who successfully reach senior leadership positions are likely to experience tokenism (Glass & Cook, 2016). Typically, because of their minority status in most organisations, black women tend to occupy an outsider-within stance (Jones, Hwang, & Bustamante, 2015). As a result, they are likely to experience heightened levels of visibility, scrutiny and performance pressures (Glass & Cook, 2016). Moreover due to the poor pipeline, black women in leadership are generally the first or one the few in their position, an experience that tends to be lonely (Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008). Additional negative consequences that arise include assimilation and polarisation (Torchia, Calabrò, & Huse, 2011). Furthermore even when successful, their leadership capabilities are often challenged and their success is attributed to other compensatory qualities (Cook & Glass, 2014a). However, when not successful in leadership roles, the beliefs and stereotypes regarding their leadership capabilities are confirmed (Cook & Glass, 2014a). In order to deal with these challenges, women of colour adopt a number of coping strategies (Holder, Jackson & Ponterotto, 2015). These include behavioural mechanisms such as shifting armouring and self-care (Holder et al., 2015). Additional interpersonal mechanisms include mentors, support networks and spirituality (Holder et al., 2015).

According to Reynolds–Dobbs, Thomas and Harrison (2008), superwoman is a status that is often given black females who manage to successfully break through the concrete ceiling. This creates an expectation within black female professionals to work twice as

hard as their male and female counterparts and often results in the need to excessively overachieve (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). As a consequence they tend to struggle in establishing boundaries when it comes to extra work and doubt their abilities and talents when they are not able to meet these unrealistic goals (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). Another paradigm that comes into play is the Strong Black Women (SBW) construct. The SBW construct is the belief within black women that regardless of the circumstance they must remain strong . As a result displays of emotion, vulnerability and requesting assistance are viewed as signs of weakness (Abrams, Maxwell, Pope, & Belgrave, 2014). This creates additional pressure to singlehandedly manage all the various roles and challenges within their lives (Abrams et al., 2014). Finally, one cannot analyse the leadership experiences of women of colour without exploring intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to how race, gender, society, class, sexuality and religion interact and shape the identities of black women (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). Women of colour face the additional challenge of having to figure out which aspect of their diversity will be accepted or rejected within multiple contexts (Johnson & Thomas, 2012)

In summary, black female professionals have to contend with a number of factors and challenges. These include stereotypes, invisibility, SBW, Superwoman status which based on the above are heightened by their race and gender.

## **2.4 Individual Barriers**

At an individual level, life stage issues and lower levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy are key factors that affect women aspiring to leadership positions (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2015). Studies have shown that in general women tend to have lower levels of confidence than men and this occurrence has been referred to as the confidence gap (O'Neil et al., 2015). In fact, men tend to overestimate their capabilities whilst women on the other hand underestimate their abilities (O'Neil et al., 2015). Due to these low levels of self-confidence and efficacy women believe that they have outperform their male counterparts in order to be successful (O'Neil et al., 2015). This often leads to stress, burnout and ultimately job dissatisfaction and are likely explanations to the pipeline shortage (Nakazwe-Masiya, Price, & Hofmeyr, 2017). Furthermore, women are likely to have an enhanced sense of accountability and often attribute lack of confidence or career challenges to deficiencies within themselves instead of considering the impact of other factors such as organisational factors (O'Neil et al., 2015).

The imposter phenomenon has also been associated with low levels of self-confidence. Commonly found within high performers, it refers to an internal state of mind that involves feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt despite consistent evidence of success (Nakazwe-Masiya et al., 2017). As a result, it can be barrier to promotion within organisations (Nakazwe-Masiya et al., 2017). In relation to males, females are more likely to be affected by the imposter phenomenon as they firstly, often feel the pressure to successfully juggle multiple roles at home and work and secondly have to manage the tension between their feminine characteristics and the expected masculine leadership traits (Nakazwe-Masiya et al., 2017). Females are also more likely to attribute their success to external factors such as luck or timing and failure to deficiencies within themselves (O'Neil et al., 2015). Furthermore, female professionals are more perceptive of the potential challenges they may experience with subordinates (Vial, Napier, & Brescoll, 2016). Specifically, in regards to acceptance of their leadership and their ability to influence. As result, female professionals may shy away from leadership opportunities (Vial et al., 2016).

## **2.5 Life Stage Responsibilities**

Life stage responsibilities and priorities on the other hand, affect the career decisions that women make as the juggle their professional and personal roles (O'Neil et al., 2015). This is further supported by a study conducted by Livingstone, Pollock and Raykov, that identified family responsibilities as one of the key factors that have prevented senior female managers from accepting or chasing promotions (Livingstone, Pollock, & Raykov, 2016). Recent times have seen men taking on more responsibilities within the home however, in most cases women remain and are expected to be the primary caregivers within the home (Eagly & Carli, 2007) .As a result, female professionals are more likely to have more interruptions and/or time constraints within their careers (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The consequence of this is less time at work and possibly less job experience which can impact income and promotion opportunities (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Finally, in some instances women may receive encouragement from their managers to take on less work or consider part time alternatives in order to manage work life issues (Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2014). This is known as benevolent sexism and whilst the intention is to provide support it actually hinders promotional opportunities and progress (Hoobler et al., 2014). Nevertheless, whilst work and family life balance remains a challenge, successful female leaders have adopted a number of strategies to manage the pressures

of work and home (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). These include outsourcing certain household tasks to hired help, support from extended family members and lastly redefining for themselves what it means to be good mother and effective leader versus society's expectations (Cheung & Halpern, 2010).

## **2.6 Social Networks, Mentoring and Sponsorship**

Exclusion from informal and professional networks and the lack of role models and mentors are some of the interpersonal factors that obstruct the advancement of women within organisations (Sabharwal, 2015). Building social capital within organisations is critical in increasing career advancement and authority (Carbajal, 2018). With this in mind, networking is recognized as the most critical component in building social capital (Carbajal, 2018). According to Eagly and Carli (2007), time constraints is one of the reasons that prevent women from building social networks in the workplace, driven by the fact that they have manage both work and family commitments. As result women may not invest the required amount of time in building social capital within their organisations which has been proven to impact their advancement (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Substantiation of this can be found in previous research that corroborated that men are more likely to use social networks in order to progress whilst women are more reliant on traditional methods (Hoobler et al., 2014). Benefits of these social networks include providing guidance, coaching, feedback, protection and an opportunities to influence key stakeholders (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011). However, even when time is sufficient, female professionals often struggle to build effective social networks within male dominated organisations (aka "boys club") as most activities within these clubs tend to be masculine in nature (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In such cases, female professionals often feel that they don't fit into the organizational culture (Hoobler et al., 2014). Furthermore, gender stereotypes have been associated with how women participate in these social networks (Kinnear & Ortlepp, 2016). In order to avoid being viewed as status seeking or self-promoting, women have been known to restrain themselves in these settings (Kinnear & Ortlepp, 2016)

Lastly, mentorship has also been identified as a crucial enabler to female leadership development. Similar to the social networks mentioned, benefits include career advice, emotional support and greater job satisfaction (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). However, although critical women may struggle to identify with male mentors and female leaders in senior are often in short supply (Carbajal, 2018). Whilst the benefits of

mentorship are clearly understood it does not always translate into promotion. Sponsorship on the other hand has been identified as an effective mechanism in career advancement (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). According to Bell a sponsor is defined as “ a senior manager within a company who advocates a junior employee’s advancement” (Bell, 1992, p. 152). White males were identified as the most common sponsors of women (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Whilst on the surface this may seem confusing it is most likely driven by the fact that white males tend to dominate most leadership positions within organisations (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

## **2.7 Structural Barriers**

Within organisations, both structural and attitudinal factors can negatively affect female leadership advancement (O’Neil et al., 2015). According to Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011), the primary cause of these barriers is the fact that the majority of company policies, structures and leadership programs were designed during a time when women were a minority within the workplace. For example, women are expected to make certain sacrifices such as long hours and mobility in order to progress their careers without consideration of their responsibilities at home (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). As a result, this creates a vicious cycle that reinforces the belief that men are better suited for leadership roles (Ely et al., 2011). Additional examples of structural barriers include inflexible work policies or practices (Haile et al., 2016).

## **2.8 Stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes are societal generalisations that describe how men and women exist and how they should behave (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Gender stereotypes are probably the most challenging form of stereotypes that women encounter as they climb the corporate ladder (Brescoll, 2016). According to Koch, D’Mello and Sackett (2015), stereotypes are defined as “category-based traits or attributes that are often applied to a group of people as a result of accepted beliefs about the members of the group” (Koch, D’Mello, & Sackett, 2015, p. 129). The impact of stereotypes is twofold. Firstly, they impact how individuals are viewed by others. Secondly, they affect how individuals relate and work with one another (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). As a result although functional and convenient, stereotypes are often inaccurate and result in bias (Koch et al., 2015).

This view is further supported by Gloor, Morf, Paustian-Underdahl and Backes-Gellar who state that gender stereotypes are one of the factors that are responsible for the gender gap in leadership within organisations (Gloor, Morf, Paustian-Underdahl, & Backes-Gellner, 2018). Typical attitudinal stereotypes such as think male, think leader and think female, think manager beliefs reinforce the false belief that leadership roles are more suited for males (O'Neil et al., 2015). These views are predominately centred around the belief that females display more communal behaviours such as nurturing, caring, collaborative, kind, helpful and affectionate whilst males are ambitious, dominant, aggressive, assertive and confident (Koch et al., 2015). Unfortunately, these masculine stereotypes are more likely to be associated with successful leaders and as a result, reinforce the perceptions that women are not capable of being successful leaders within organisations (Vial et al., 2016).

Moreover, from a race perspective leadership identities are typically associated with being white (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). These views once again support the belief in women that they have to work twice as hard as their male counterparts (Vial et al., 2016). Furthermore, these stereotypes often result in colleagues and subordinates being resistant to female authority (Vial et al., 2016). In fact, gender stereotypes prevent women leaders from affirming their power in the workplace (Kinnear & Ortlepp, 2016). Finally and most concerning is the impact that stereotypes have on performance and emotional wellbeing (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

According to Hoyt and Murphy (2016), the negative consequences of stereotypes include poor performance, disengagement, decreased motivation and a sense of belonging. A view that is echoed by Good, Rattan and Dweck (2012), who have found that consistent exposure to negative stereotypes not only decreases performance but can also diminish an individual's perception of their value and acceptance, which over time reduces one's sense of belonging. This has been proven to explain why women remain underrepresented in certain fields such as mathematics and can also be linked to their scarcity in other professions (Good, Rattan, & Dweck, 2012).

The risk associated with these communal attributes is that women can be perceived as being overly emotional and sensitive and as a consequence viewed as having less control over their emotions (Brescoll, 2016). Furthermore, female leaders may be viewed as not being able to give tough feedback and may be prone to personalise issues or challenges, all of which are regarded as the characteristics of an ineffective leader (Brescoll, 2016). However, these communal attributes have also been associated with a leadership advantage for women known as the feminine advantage (Vecchio, 2002).



Female leaders are typically better at interpersonal relationships, being inclusive, developing others and sharing power thereby making them superior leaders (Vecchio, 2002).

## **2.8 Role Congruity**

Leadership roles are typically associated with male or agentic characteristics (Powell, 2012). These qualities are typically viewed as being divergent from society's feminine expectations on how women should behave (Vanderbroeck, 2010). Role congruity theory defined as "the extent to which leaders behave in a manner that is congruent with gender role expectations" (Powell, 2012, p. 6), has been used to explain this negative experience. Essentially, women leaders struggle with the perceived stereotype incongruence of their gender and leader roles (Powell, 2012). Role congruity theory has its foundations in social role theory which states that the historic roles of men as providers and women as homemakers has not only created differences in behaviour but also shared societal norms (Gloor et al., 2018). Nonetheless, in order to be successful women in the workplace often have to conform to these masculine expectations of leadership but are often judged negatively as they are perceived to have violated their natural gender roles (Meister, Sinclair, & Jehn, 2017). Davis and Maldonado (2015) support this view and have found that in male dominated organisations, female managers may be required to adopt masculine cultural characteristics in order to be successful.

This conflict, between society expectations of how women should behave and the typical male stereotypes of effective leadership is known as the double bind (Vanderbroeck, 2010). As a result, women face a double standard where they are criticised for exhibiting agentic behaviours but in the same vein are viewed as not suitable for leadership positions when they display more communal feminine characteristics (Ely et al., 2011; Vanderbroeck, 2010). In fact when female leaders are assertive, confident or seek power, they are viewed by their colleagues as being aggressive, self-promoting or arrogant (Ely et al., 2011). Phrases such as "dragon lady" and "honorary men" are sometimes used to describe these women (Meister et al., 2017). Women of colour in particular are more susceptible to being classified overly aggressive and challenging (Ely et al., 2011). In addition to the above, role and gender conflict can result in low job satisfaction and increased levels of anxiety within female senior managers (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Finally as this lack of fit also results in subordinates being resistant to the

authority of female managers (Vial et al., 2016). However, increasingly research suggests that the traditional feminine characteristics are increasingly being associated with effective leadership within organisations (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012).

## **2.9 Queen Bee Phenomenon**

An interesting and concerning challenge that women face in the workplace is women on women violence, known as the queen bee phenomenon. This phenomenon refers to the tendency of women in senior roles to firstly dissociate themselves from other women across all levels in the organisation (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). Secondly, they obstruct the advancement of other women in the workplace (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). According to Baumgartner and Schneider (2010), those who have managed to navigate the labyrinth successfully have found little to no support from other females at the top. Typically these type of unsupportive female leaders are often portrayed as calculating and back stabbing (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). Moreover, these queen bee leaders tend to view their success as a result of their own hard work and as result expect others to work just hard as they did (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). Worse still in some cases they even challenge the existence of the glass ceiling (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).

Behaviours associated with this phenomenon include exclusion, sabotage and gossip (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). Surprisingly, it is key to note that this type of behaviour in women is a phenomenon that has been given a name whereas within the male professionals it viewed as a normal competitive behaviour i.e. “boys being boys” (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). This strongly suggests that elements of the queen bee syndrome are rooted in the gender stereotypes about women and men are expected to behave in society (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). In fact research has shown that in order to affirm their leadership competency and separate themselves from the negatives stereotypes attached to females, females in senior leadership positions are likely to try to differentiate themselves from other females thereby unconsciously causing harm to other females within the organisation (Ellemers, Rink, Derks, & Ryan, 2012). Moreover, social identity threat has been linked to the Queen Bee phenomenon (Derks, Ellemers, van Laar, & de Groot, 2011). Because a portion of a person’s identity originates from the groups they belong to (social identity), in organisations where their gender is not valued, women have to adopt male characteristics and behaviours in order to belong (Derks et al., 2011).

Due to their relative similarity, individuals within the same sex are more likely to compare themselves to others within the same sex thereby viewing them as competition (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). Therefore, as a consequence women are more likely to view other women as competition (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). Furthermore, given the relative scarcity of women in senior leadership positions this may create the perception of limited opportunities at the top thereby fuelling this negative type of competition within women (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). Considering the above mentioned points, literature seems to suggest that this type of destructive behaviour is more likely to be found in female leaders. However research conducted recently within organisations actually implies that women are more likely to become mentors to other women and generally focus their efforts in driving their advancement (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). Moreover, Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) argue that this phenomenon has been used to place unfair blame at the feet of female leaders when in fact, it is organisations that should have done more to advance women up the corporate ladder.

## **2.10 An African Context**

Although the challenges that African American women experience are similar to those that their African counterparts face, their cultural, historical, political and economic context plays a significant and unique role in their leadership journeys (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). This sentiment is echoed by Ndinda and Uzodike (2012) who identified cultural, structural and social barriers that have prevented women from advancing to top management positions. Key factors that affect the advancement of African female leaders include early socialisation, limited educational opportunities and patriarchy (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007).

Culture in particular, plays a major role in shaping the status, stereotypes, socialisation and work and family relations of African women (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Patriarchy in particular plays a significant role within South African culture (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). According to Naidoo and Perumal (2014), patriarchy plays a key role in questioning the suitability of women in leadership positions. Evidence of this can be found in a Northern Sotho proverb "Tsa etwa ke ya tshadi pele di wela leopeng" (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014, p. 810). Loosely translated this proverb means that disaster is likely to follow if a woman is placed in leadership (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). Furthermore, the majority of South African women are under the authority of their husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles and even their sons thereby, effectively rendering them as minor citizens in society (Naidoo

& Perumal, 2014). According to Dlamini and Adams (2014), patriarchy justifies putting the interests of men ahead of women. This is further compounded by our historical legacy. Historically, through the Bantu Education Act of 1954 which prevented women from advancing to management positions, black women today continue to experience the hangover effects of Apartheid's legacy of discrimination (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). This sentiment is echoed by Canham (2014) who states that economic exploitation, racism and apartheid have had the greatest impact on the degradation of South African black women. Evidence of this legacy today can be found in the unemployment statistics where black women make up the greatest percentage of the unemployed (Canham, 2014). Moreover, within an African context social and cultural expectations on the roles that women should undertake such as wife, mother and caretaker can result in conflict with their professional ambitions as they can be punished when they are successful in their careers (Turner Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, in the workplace men discriminate, exclude and discount women in order to maintain their positions (Dlamini & Adams, 2014). Moreover, women are disrespected, disempowered and excluded from activities that could drive their advancement (Dlamini & Adams, 2014). Those who are brave enough to stand up to this treatment are often labelled as defiant or abnormal (Dlamini & Adams, 2014). Ultimately in addition to limiting their upward mobility this negatively impacts their psychological well-being (Dlamini & Adams, 2014).

Relative to their white associates, studies have found that black professionals are more likely to experience discriminatory practices which limit their upward mobility (Koh, Shen, & Lee, 2016). In addition to gender, black women also have to contend with racial stereotypes and expectations (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). This results in a double minority status, which influences the development of their careers (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). Whilst a combination of legislation, qualification and experience have enabled black female professionals to ascend up the corporate ladder, it has been argued that the lack of social capital has slowed down this ascent (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012). Researchers contend that for white women their historical connection to dominant white male counterparts has helped in overcoming barriers whilst, black male professionals due to gender bias are more likely to benefit from the old boys club attitudes (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012).

### **2.10.1 Culture**

Culture is defined as "a set of shared understandings that permit a group of people to act in concert with each other" (Klettner, Clarke, & Boersma, 2016, p. 397). It prescribes

the acceptable values, norms and behaviours of society (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Furthermore, culture defines society's expectations with regards to the roles of men and women (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Therefore, culture plays a fundamental role in shaping the stereotypes of society. This view is supported by Ayman and Korabik (2010) who have found that peoples' cultural beliefs act as indicators that shape their stereotypes. Similar to gender, culture affects identity, access to power, authority and resources, interpersonal relationships and group cohesion (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Moreover, within an African context, patriarchy and oppression have played a pivotal role in preventing the advancement of women (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). By shaping work and family relationships, stereotypes and socialisation, African culture has played a pivotal role in determining the social and economic status of women (Turner Johnson, 2014). In summary, cultural beliefs about the appropriate role of women in society and male chauvinism produce salient barriers to female leadership advancement (Haile et al., 2016).

Corporate Culture on the other hand is no different. It reflects the intricate connections within various communities in an organisation (Klettner et al., 2016). Corporate Culture prescribes a set shared understandings and strategies for action that determine the appropriate actions that are to be undertaken by individuals within an organisation (Klettner et al., 2016). Rooted in gender, cultural stereotypes or beliefs inform the behaviours that female leaders within organisations are expected to adopt (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Specifically when it comes to displaying authority, female leaders may be forced to downplay their feminine qualities in order to conform to the masculine stereotypes of competency (Ely et al., 2011).

## **2.11 Social Identity**

One cannot explore the female leadership journey without examining social identity. Social identity, first introduced by Tajfel in 1972, refers to the process by which an individual's identity is shaped by the groups they belong to (Hogg, 2001). In addition to the above, social identity enables us to understand how groups play a salient role in developing positive self-esteem and sense of belonging (Hogg, 2001). Developing this concept further social identification occurs when the concept of self combines with the group identity (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). Individuals use a number of variables in order to define their social identity (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). These include gender, race, nationality, class, culture, sexual orientation, roles at

work and in the family (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Consequently a person is likely to have more than one social identity (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). A study conducted in South Africa by Dlamini in 2016 confirmed the existence of multiple identities however for black women race was the dominant identity (Dlamini, 2016).

Of particular interest are the two social psychological processes of social categorisation and social comparison that are linked to social identity (Haslam, Knippenberg, Platow, & Ellemers, 2003). Social categorisation occurs when individuals cognitively divide their social world into segments known as ingroups and outgroups using prototypes (Hogg, 2001). Prototypes are the set of attributes, attitudes and behaviours that differentiate one group from another (Hogg, 2001). Often, this results in individuals seeing others and themselves as members of these groups instead of separate individuals (Haslam et al., 2003). The acceptable norms and behaviours that are required for group membership are set and defined by in-group prototypes (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). These prototypes can be shaped by gender stereotypes for example stereotypes that women are feminine, passive, nurturing and gentle (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). According to Hirsh and Kang (2016) in order to reduce personal uncertainty, people are motivated to conform to the norms and behaviours of their social groups in order to belong. This process of conforming in order to belong is known as self-stereotyping (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). This sentiment is echoed by Hohman, Gaffney and Hogg (2017) who state positive social identification occurs when an individual feels secure in their group membership. Furthermore, the security that is derived from belonging to a group, enables individuals to learn more about themselves within a group context (Hohman, Gaffney, & Hogg, 2017). Consequently the more a person identifies with a social group, the more likely they are to adopt the accepted norms and behaviours of that social group (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Social comparison on the other hand, occurs when individuals evaluate the value of people and groups according to these prototypes (Haslam et al., 2003).

However, individuals tend to have more than one social identity and these identities interact and can conflict with one another (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). According to the Multiple Self-Aspects Framework (MSF) an individual's self-concept is formed by the integration of multiple group identities (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Consequently, the impact of these multiple social identities on behaviour and reasoning is context specific and will be influenced by the extent to which an individual identifies with that social category and the significance of the social identity (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). An example of this is the switching behaviour observed in bicultural individuals within different contexts (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). However, when there is a conflict within the multiple social identities, this

results in significant psychological tension (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Social identity theory (SIT) has also been used to explain why individuals exclude and discriminate against those they perceive to be different from their in-groups (Haslam et al., 2003). Accordingly, SIT is linked to in-group bias, stereotypes and gender inequality issues (Brown, 1999). Women of colour are often labelled as being too masculine relative to their white female counterparts (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Furthermore, they don't fit the stereotypes prescribed to black males (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Assertive, independent, self-reliant and strong are some stereotypes used to describe women of colour (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Consequently, women of colour tend to be neither prototypical of blacks and women (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). As a result, within organisation their outsider within status may result in pressure to conform to the dominant group behaviours in order to fit in (Jones et al., 2015). Consequently, this may result in women of colour abandoning their leadership ambitions or living a life of double consciousness (Jones et al., 2015).

### **2.11.1 Identity**

Linked to social identity is the important concept of identity and identity formation. Identities "are distinct parts of self-concepts that include the internalized meaning of what to do, what to value, and how to behave in various roles and relationships" (Kwok, Hanig, Brown, & Shen, 2018, p. 2). An individual's self-concept on the other hand, is shaped by the groupings or classifications used by others to categorise that individual (Kwok et al., 2018). Examples of these classifications include race and gender (Kwok et al., 2018). As a result identity play a pivotal role in how an individual processes information and how they chose to behave in an environment (Kwok et al., 2018). Moreover, according to Kwok, Hanig, Brown and Shen (2018), individuals are incentivised to act in manner that is most consistent with their identity. Furthermore, with regards to leadership, individuals develop assumptions on the necessary leadership characteristics and how leaders should behave environment (Kwok et al., 2018). A sentiment echoed by Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011) who state that identity plays a critical role in how people become and act as leaders (Ely et al., 2011). Furthermore, a leader's identity evolves as one gains an increased understanding and appreciation of self (Ely et al., 2011).

Identities are influenced by past experiences and socialization (Kwok et al., 2018). Therefore, social groups provide a reference point to the acceptable range of behaviours in any situation (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Accordingly, an individual is more likely to conform to group behaviours when the group identity is important to that the individual (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). This is done in order to be valued (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). In addition to social

groups, identities can be shaped by the roles that one occupies (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). As a result, similar to social groups role identities also provide a guide in the acceptable range of behaviours and norms (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Therefore it is likely than an individual will have more than identity dependant on the roles they occupy or social groups they find themselves in (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). For instance a women can be a mother in the home and a supervisor at work (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Both these roles will behavioural expectations which may differ from each other (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). This may cause internal conflict (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). However, this conflict will only arise if the role, domain or social group identities are significant to the individual (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). The negative results of identity conflict include depression, low self-esteem and deteriorating physical health (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Strategies utilised to deal with the identity conflict include denial of the identity conflict, enhancing the dominant identity or integration of both identities (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). The latter which involves removing or modifying the conflicting elements of the identities is common amongst bicultural individuals (Hirsh & Kang, 2016).

## **2.12 When we succeed**

Despite the numerous gender, structural, organisational and racial barriers encountered by women, a select few have made it through the labyrinth. Previous studies identified a number of strategies that women adopt to accelerate their careers (Weidenfeller, 2012). These include seeking out challenging and stretching roles. These types of roles not only drive visibility within organisations but they also provide women with the necessary record of accomplishment that legitimises their leadership authority (Weidenfeller, 2012). Weidenfeller (2012), also recommends increasing self-awareness and developing an authentic leadership style. Furthermore, Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) recommend furthering your education and seeking out mentors as sources of wisdom and social capital. Research also suggest developing resilience, flexibility and comfort with ambiguity as critical competencies (Weidenfeller, 2012). A strong support system or even choosing to wait when it comes to having children are some of strategies that are suggested to manage work family balance. When it comes to managing the 'old boys club' studies recommend inviting yourself into the boys club whilst still maintaining your identity (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). On a personal note, self-belief, confidence and determination were identified are critical elements that assisted women in achieving senior management positions (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).



Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) took these strategies further by grouping them into pull and push characteristics . Push characteristics are those qualities that enable people to get into and survive in their positions (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Whilst pull characterises are those qualities that enable leaders to be appealing and influential to others (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). The table below summaries the push and pull qualities are necessary for success.

<b>Pull Characteristics</b>	<b>Push Characteristics</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Authenticity</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ability to know yourself and be yourself, with a close alignment to the organization's values</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Work Ethic, Drive and Ambition</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ability to work hard and have the will to win and to be the best - and then to act on it</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Confidence</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ability to speak up when you need to, without compromising your authenticity and to have conviction in your vies and beliefs</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Resilience, Perverserance</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ability to push through the barriers and perseve through difficult situations and potential bias</p>
<b>Support</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Supportive Organisation</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Selecting an organisation which supports you and is aligned with your goals and ambitions</p>	

Figure 4 – Elements of success (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017, p. 234).

Additionally authenticity has been recognised as key factor to successfully navigating the labyrinth of leadership (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). When there is a high congruence between your true self and your portrayed self, authenticity is achieved (Fox-Kirk, 2017). Authenticity enables leaders to have a strong understanding and belief of themselves, their values and beliefs (Liu, Cutcher, & Grant, 2015). Consequently, authentic leaders view themselves as being real and not fake (Liu et al., 2015). These beliefs and values, generally of a high moral standard often act as a compass in their decision making (Liu et al., 2015). Consequently they are less likely to succumb to external pressures (Liu et al., 2015). This trait, given the recent ethical scandals is valued in business today (Liu et al., 2015). Furthermore, although they have a strong sense of self, authentic leaders are not afraid to collaborate and seek different views resulting in objective decision making (Liu et al., 2015). Another key leadership trait closely linked to authentic leadership is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to having

strong awareness of emotions and the ability to effectively manage those emotions within yourself and others (Mayer, Oosthuizen, & Surtee, 2017). It has been linked to positive workplace behaviours, attitudes and outcomes, job satisfaction and constructive leadership (Mayer et al., 2017). Furthermore, building relationships in order to connect, collaborate and influence with impact are key leadership traits (Weidenfeller, 2012). Finally, in addition to the above women of colour also utilised religion and spirituality, support networks and shifting strategies (Holder et al., 2015). However, though most researchers agree that the above mentioned the push and pull qualities are essential, studies have also found that women who have successfully reached top management got there because someone was willing to give them an opportunity to display their abilities (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014).

As previously mentioned in order to overcome the stereotypes associated with their gender, some women have opted to distance themselves from their feminine traits and adopt agentic masculine traits (Gloor et al., 2018). However, some researchers argue that female professional need to leverage these differences as this is what will enable them to bring a much needed diverse perspective into their organisations (Vanderbroeck, 2010).

## **2.13 Leadership**

Leadership is defined as an interpersonal method of influence in which individuals use their power and authority in order to get others to act and accomplish a goal (Sanchez-Hucles, et al., 2010). Authority occurs when “others recognise one’s exercise of power as legitimate (Bowles, 2012, p. 191). Studies have found that the leadership style of women tends to be more inclusive, transformative and people orientated thereby making them better suited to manage crisis (Liu et al., 2015).

### **2.13.1 Social Identity of Leadership**

At its core, leadership is a relational process whereby one party attempts to influence and inspire another in order to achieve a desired outcome (Hogg et al., 2006). Anchored in a social identity approach, the role of leaders is to create and entrench a shared group social identity in order to combine the individual efforts towards a share goal (Steffens et al., 2014). Effective leadership refers to the ability of a leader to positively impact a number of key performance indicators namely profit, market share and customer service

(Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). This is important to effective leadership as a shared social identity acts as a guide to what is appropriate and desirable thereby playing an influencing role (Van Knippenberg, 2011). Secondly, it creates alignment between an individual's self-interest and the group interest because it uses group membership as a means to see one's self (Van Knippenberg, 2011).

Through the process of categorisation, individuals use their internal prototypes in order to construct their own concept of a leader (Gentry, Booysen, Hannum, & Weber, 2010). Consequently, the closer an individual is to that leader prototype, the greater the probability they will be viewed and accepted as a leader (Gentry et al., 2010). As mentioned previously, most leadership roles are typically associated with masculine prototypes such as aggression, dominance and self-promotion (Livingston et al., 2012). Therefore, within most organisations males typically represent the prototypical leader (Livingston et al., 2012). Accordingly, female leaders may struggle with leadership positions as they do not represent the prototypical ideal leader (Fox-Kirk, 2017). This is because the prescribed feminine stereotypes typically associated with women may be regarded as unsuitable for leadership (Powell, 2012). Furthermore, when women adopt the masculine prototypical leader behaviours they are penalised as they are acting outside of their gender role hence the double bind mentioned previously (Fox-Kirk, 2017). Finally, authenticity has been identified as one of the key elements of success in leadership (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). However, because women often symbolize the non-prototypical leader, they are likely to be classified as outsiders within social groups and hence struggle to gain the trust and acceptance of others in regards to their authenticity as leaders (Liu et al., 2015).

## **2.14 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an theoretical overview of this study. This chapter covered the external and internal challenges encountered by black female professionals as they ascend up the corporate ladder. The most prominent external barriers that have emerged in literature include, gender stereotypes, explicit prejudice or discrimination in the workplace, assumed incompatibilities between leadership requirements and the abilities of women, exclusion from social networks, inflexible organisational policies, competing responsibilities between the home and workplace and lack of mentors and role models (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Sabharwal, 2015). Furthermore, low levels of self-confidence and self-esteem were the internal barriers mentioned in literature (Haslam & Ryan, 2008;

O'Neil et al., 2015). The African context was explored and themes of patriarchy and gender role expectations were uncovered (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). Strategies utilised to overcome those barriers include a strong work ethic, self-confidence, authenticity, resilience and lastly stretching and challenging roles (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017; Weidenfeller, 2012). Furthermore mentorship and support networks were identified as key support structures required to overcome these barriers (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010; Cheung & Halpern, 2010).

Finally this chapter presented literature concerning social identity, identity and social identity theory of leadership. According to Kwok et al (2018), past experiences and social groups play a crucial role in shaping an individual's identity, which in turn determine how they behave and process information in an environment. Furthermore, social identity plays an important influencing and guiding role which, is important for effective leadership (Van Knippenberg, 2011).

## **Chapter 3**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of chapter three is to present the research questions that formed the foundation of this research. The research questions were formulated using literature from chapter two and drawing from previous women in leadership and identity studies. Taking into account the fundamental cultural and ideological differences between African and Western societies, it is important to explore African women leaders' stories within certain contexts (Odhiambo, 2011). The questions were formulated with the aim of building on existing but limited literature on black female professionals within the private sector in South Africa (Fourie et al., 2017). Underpinned by a Social Identity Theory (SIT) framework, these research questions aim to explore their professional experiences, understand the impact of these experiences on the interviewees' identities and finally explore their impact on their effectiveness as leaders.

### **3.2 Research Question 1**

*What strategies have female senior executives successfully utilised in overcoming barriers?*

There is an abundance of literature that has documented the barriers or challenges that women face as they climb the corporate ladder; however, more literature is needed that explores how women overcome these challenges (Bowles, 2012). Furthermore, whilst research on African leadership has increased significantly over the last twenty years, more research is required, particularly within the private sector (Fourie et al., 2017). Therefore, this question sought to understand the barriers that female senior managers have faced and how the strategies they have deployed to overcome these barriers.

### **3.3 Research Question 2**

*How black female senior executives' professional experiences have shaped their professional and personal identities?*

An individual's identity is shaped by past experiences (Kwok et al., 2018). Furthermore, according to Wyatt and Silver (2015), it is important to have a holistic understanding of an individual's career journey. Therefore, the aim of this research question is to understand the impact of their professional experiences on their identities.

### **3.3 Research Question 3**

*How do women's membership in social groups affect leadership effectiveness?*

"Fitting in" is an important part of the human experience" (Hohman et al., 2017, p. 125). It has been argued that leaders are more likely to be effective when they viewed as being one of us and doing it for us (Steffens et al., 2014). Consequently, the aim of this research question is twofold:

- Firstly, understand whether the interviewees view themselves as fitting into the social groups within their organisations.
- Secondly, understand the possible impact of fitting in or not fitting in on their leadership experiences.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the research questions that will be covered off in this study. Furthermore, it has also provided the rationale for these questions. By answering the above research questions, this study will build on the much-needed literature on female African leadership within the private sector.

## **Chapter 4**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research design utilised in this study. The objective of this study was to explore the leadership experience of black female executives and as such this was a qualitative study. Data was gathered from thirteen interviewees through semi structured interviews. This chapter will begin with an overview of the methodology followed by an overview of the data collection and analysis methods. Finally the chapter will end with a summary of the limitations of the study.

### **4.2 Research Design**

#### **4.2.1 Methodology**

The primary objective of this research was to build on the limited literature on the African black female's leadership journey (Odhiambo, 2011). As this study was an exploration of the leadership journeys of black female professionals, the study was a qualitative exploratory mono study. Qualitative research is a generic form of social research, grounded in the perspectives of the social actors themselves, that studies and tries to understand human actions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Qualitative research consists of two critical components (Babbie & Mouton, 2001):

- a focus on the process within the actor's natural setting versus the outcome.
- an increased emphasis on the interviewees' view and their understanding of an event or action within a specific context.

This research approach is aligned to the methodology utilised by Wyatt and Silvester in their 2015 study on the experiences of black and minority leaders (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). This approach has enabled researchers to understand how key experiences impact and shape the leadership journey of individuals (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). Furthermore, within the setting of leadership studies, qualitative research tends to focus on how leaders have adopted or changed their styles within a certain context (Bryman, 2004). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), an exploratory study is appropriate when a researcher aims to gain a deeper understanding of a relatively new or poorly understood topic. This is further supported by a study done by Parry, Mumford, Bower

and Watts who highlighted a number of advantages to a qualitative exploratory study in the field of leadership (Parry, Mumford, Bower, & Watts, 2014).

These include:

- the ability to conduct in depth analysis on social phenomena;
- the flexibility to explore unforeseen or emerging ideas and themes;
- the ability to explore processes effectively within their context
- the ability to progress the understanding of a phenomenon that has been studied extensively quantitatively but within a narrow context

(Parry et al., 2014).

Furthermore, through the further development of theories, qualitative studies have enabled researchers to create in depth and longitudinal studies of leadership (Parry et al., 2014).

This study made use of the personal narratives of the interviewees on their leadership journey. Narratives are defined as “ a form of storytelling that describes how sociocultural realities such as race, ethnicity, culture, and gender influence worldviews and hence sustain dimensions of oppression in society” (Walker, 2009, p. 649). In other words, narratives are the meaningful units that people use to organise their experiences (Moen, 2006). This is done in order to make sense their individual experiences as well as the behavior of others (Moen, 2006). Therefore, personal narratives were used as they gave interviewees a voice and enabled them to reflect on the impact of their experiences (Walker, 2009). Furthermore, an advantage of narratives is that they provide situational and contextual understanding (Heikkinen, Lämsä, & Hiillos, 2014). This study will be classified as a mono study as it utilised one data collection technique (interviews) and analysis procedures (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

#### **4.2.2 Research philosophy**

An interpretivism research philosophy was adopted to conduct this research. Interpretivism is defined as “ a study of social phenomena in their natural environment” (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p. 106).

#### **4.2.3 Research approach**



This study used an inductive approach that enabled the researcher to understand social phenomenon and its impact from the perspective of the interviewees of in the study (Parry et al., 2014). This approach was appropriate for research problem, as it enabled the researcher to understand the significance and meaning that people attach to events and in doing so formulate broad themes, theories and explanations (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

#### **4.2.4 Population**

The population of a study was defined as “all the possible data values that exist for the random variable” (Chiba, 2017) (Chiba, 2017, p. 120). In the case of this study, the population was all black female senior managers, directors, vice presidents or CEOs who, currently occupy or have occupied senior leadership positions within a business organisation or division in the private sector. Senior leadership roles within organisations are defined as roles with authority (Bowles, 2012). Interviewees who had not been in a senior management positions for more than two years were excluded from this study.

The interviewees were selected using the following criteria:

- Demographics: Black female of African descent
- Currently in senior management role or had recently held one (within one year)
- Have a minimum of three years’ experience in a senior management role
- Leading a team consisting of at least three direct reports
- Current or previous role (unemployed) is not more than four levels below the local or global CEO.

The tenure and criteria specified is similar to criteria used by Peus, Braun and Knipfer in their study on how women enacted their leadership styles in Asian and American markets (Peus, Braun, & Knipfer, 2015). In order to save time, interview criteria was checked telephonically with potential interviewees before the actual interviews were done.

#### **4.2.5 Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis is defined as the subject or occurrence or even process that you are researching (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Since this was a social study, the unit of analysis was the individual female leader who has occupied or currently occupies a senior

management position with leadership responsibility. This approach was in line with previous studies that have used the individual minority leader as the unit of analysis (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015).

#### **4.2.6 Sampling Method and Size**

The population of this study was all female black senior managers, directors, vice presidents or CEOs who, currently occupy or have occupied senior leadership positions within a South African business organisation or division in the private sector. According to Saunders and Lewis for a heterogeneous population, a sample size of 15 to 25 interviewees is recommended for a semi structured interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This will ensure that the researcher is able to reach data saturation. The sample for this study consisted of 13 women who met the population criteria defined previously. Data saturation was reached on the thirteenth interview when no new themes or concepts emerged.

The sample was selected using non-probability purposive sampling. This is a method of sampling in which the researcher's judgement is used to select sample members (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). Furthermore, due to the limitations of the researcher, snowball sampling was employed to find more interviewees. This was in line with an approach used by Meister, Sinclair and Jehn in their identity leadership study (Meister et al., 2017). This process involved asking previous interviewees to recommend potential candidates for the study (Meister et al., 2017). Consequently, 11 out of the 14 interviewees were from the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry.

### **4.3 Data Collection**

#### **4.3.1 Data Collection Method**

The study was an exploratory study. Interviews were conducted as this was the most appropriate way of conducting an exploratory research (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Citing Kahn and Cannell (1957), interviews are defined as "a purposeful discussion between two or more people" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 318). A semi structured approach consisting of open and probing questions was used. Semi-structured interviews provided the researcher with a versatile way of collecting data and allowed for the probing and exploring of themes and concepts (Welman, Chris; Mitchell, 2005). This

approach is supported by Parry et al (2014), who have found that quantitative and experimental methods are not sufficient when trying to understand the meaning and culture that individuals attach to phenomenon within the field of leadership. Additional evidence supporting this data collection method was found in a study done by Glass and Cook that utilised a similar data collection technique (Glass & Cook, 2016). This technique allowed for flexibility in the study and enabled the respondents to direct the study (Glass & Cook, 2016). Lastly, this type of data collection technique was in line with a narrative approach to research (Moen, 2006). Interviews can improve data quality as they allow the interviewees to bring their “voice” into the research process (Dobscha & Ozanne, 2001). However, a criticism levelled against interviews is that they tend to be one single source of data which can impact validity and comprehensiveness of the study (Bryman, 2004).

#### **4.3.2 Interview Schedule**

Questions found in the interview schedule (see annexure b) were centered around the literature presented in chapter two and aligned to answer the research questions presented in chapter three. The questions were derived from previous leadership and identity studies conducted by Bowles (2012), April, Dreyer and Blass (2007), Meister et al (2017), Aaltion & Hung (2007), and Silver, Benitex, Armstrong & Tussy (2018). Themes covered off in the interview schedule centred included barriers encountered on their leadership journey, success strategies employed and the impact social groups on their professional and personal identity within a professional context.

#### **4.3.3 Test Interview**

A test interview was conducted in order to refine the researcher’s interview technique and check whether the questions were easily understood by the interviewees. This approach was in line with recommendations found in literature on semi structured interviews (Rabionet, 2011). According to Rabionet (2011), pilot interviews enable the researcher to improve their research instrument by allowing the researcher to confirm alignment between the questions asked and the content required. Incorporating learnings from the test interview, the interview schedule was sent beforehand to interviewees. This was done in order to allow interviewees to get comfortable with the questions and provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their answers (Glass &

Cook, 2016). However, due to their busy schedules the majority of the interviewees did not review of the interview questions beforehand.

#### 4.3.4 Data Collection

A total of fourteen interviews conducted however upon analysis of the data, one interview was excluded as the interviewee did not meet the requirement regarding the number of direct reports.

Participant Name	Type of interview	Location of Interview	Duration
Interviewee 1	Face to Face	Office - Johannesburg	1hr
Interviewee 2	Face to Face	Coffee Shop - Johannesburg	1hr 2 mins
Interviewee 3	Face to Face	Office - Johannesburg	57 mins
Interviewee 4	Face to Face	Office - Johannesburg	1hr 6mins
Interviewee 5	Skype	N/A	35 mins
Interviewee 6	Face to Face	Office - Johannesburg	54 mins
Interviewee 7	Skype	N/A	1hr 30 mins
Interviewee 8	Face to Face	Home - Johannesburg	38 mins
Interviewee 9	Face to Face	Home - Johannesburg	51 mins
Interviewee 10	Face to Face	Coffee Shop - Johannesburg	59 mins
Interviewee 11	Skype	N/A	56 mins
Interviewee 12	Face to Face	Coffee Shop - Johannesburg	40 mins
Interviewee 13	Face to Face	Coffee Shop - Johannesburg	34 mins

*Figure 5 – Summary of interviews Conducted*

10 out of the 13 interviews were face to face interviews held in locations selected by the interviewees. This familiarity with the location was done to ensure that the interviewees were comfortable and hence able to open up (Dobscha & Ozanne, 2001). These interviews were held either in the candidates work offices or homes. This proved to be the most suitable locations for the interviews as the locations were quiet with a limited number of interruptions. Four interviews were held in coffee shops. Although comfortable for the interviewees, data collection at these locations was a times challenging due external factor mainly the noise of other patrons. Three interviews were conducted using Skype without the cameras. Consequently the researcher was not able to pick up any body language cues or facial expressions from the interviewees. However, interviews using this approach has been proven to produce data that is just as reliable as a face to face interviews (Glass & Cook, 2016).

The majority of the interviews were approximately one hour with only one interview lasting for 90 minutes and three being shorter than forty minutes. This duration of the interviews was in line with a previous female executive leadership study conducted where the duration of the interviews ranged from 45 to 150 minutes (Bowles, 2012). The researcher's mobile phone was used to record 85% of the interviews. Consequently there are moments during the interviews where incoming calls interrupt the recording however, this did not have an impact on the recording. Of the three skype interviews, there was only one interview where there were technological issues (interviewee G). Learnings were taken from this experience and all subsequent skype interviews were held in a quiet location with a good network.

Participation in this study was voluntary and all candidates were required to sign a consent form at the start of every interview. Furthermore, all information gathered will be treated as confidential and no names were reported.

#### **4.3.5 Data Analysis approach**

The data was analysed utilising a combination content analysis and critical incident approach. Content analysis is method of analysis that interprets meaning from text data which facilitates the identification of patterns and structure in data (Parry et al., 2014). In a review of qualitative and historiometric methods used in leadership research, content analysis was the most commonly used data analysis technique, accounting for 52% of all techniques (Parry et al., 2014). Given that, this research aspired to understand the holistic leadership journey of black women in South Africa, a critical incident technique was used (Saunders, Mark; Lewis, Phillip; Thornhill, 2009). Critical incident analysis, enables individuals to reflect on the critical incidents that occurred throughout their careers in order to make sense of the negative or positive experiences associated with those incidents (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). Ultimately, using these two approaches enabled the identification of prominent themes and patterns.

Interviews were coded by the researcher using Atlas Ti version 1.6. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) recommend that the data is analysed immediately after the interview to ensure that data is captured accurately and this provide the researcher with an opportunity to adjust interview technique or questions for subsequent interviews. This ensures credibility in the data (Spiers, Morse, Olson, Mayan, & Barrett, 2018). For this study, the services of a transcriber were used to transcribe the interviews. However, to ensure that data captured in the transcriptions was accurate, the researcher made notes

during the interviews. As a result, before coding, the researcher listened to all interviews again and simultaneously checked the transcriptions and the notes taken during the interviews. Initially a total of 334 codes were generated however upon closer inspection by the researcher, a number of codes were found to have the same meaning. Consequently, 129 were found to have similar meanings with other codes and were thus codes were removed or grouped under another code groups resulting in a total of 205 codes.

#### **4.4 Limitations**

This was an exploratory study with the limited number of interviewees therefore, the learnings from this study cannot be applied to the rest of the population (Kerrin & Pearson, 2018). Secondly, due to the physical limitations of the researcher namely geographic and access to interviewees, this research was conducted in South Africa in Gauteng. Moreover, due to the sampling methods (convenience and snowball) used, the diversity within the sample was limited. Evidence of this can be seen in age of most the interviewees and the fact eleven out of the thirteen interviewees were in the FMCG industry. As a result, the sample was not fully representative of the population. Consequently in line with previous studies the findings of this study cannot not be applied to other sectors of the market (Kark et al., 2012). Furthermore, the study consisted of a limited number of interviewees who are all black females. Consequently, the results are relatively homogenous and therefore may be difficult to apply to other races, genders and markets.

Given that the study was anchored in a social identity framework, it would have been valuable to include some black male interviewees in order for the researcher to compare and identify similarities and differences in experiences (Hogg et al., 2006). Moreover, the aim of the research was to understand how certain elements such as race and gender may have impacted leadership effectiveness. However, all the data came from the interviewees of the study and not their subordinates. As a result, all data relating the leadership effectiveness was from the perspective of the interviewees. This limitation is in line with the majority of leadership studies that have primarily focused on the leader's qualities versus how they drive change within organisations, people and processes (Dinh et al., 2014).

Furthermore, another limitation of the study was the amount of time spent with each of the interviewees. According to Dobscha and Ozanne (2001), in order to fully explore key

experiences and themes in a leadership study, three interviews are recommended. This facilitates the correction of any misunderstandings and enables the interviewees to give feedback to the interviewer (Dobscha, et al., 2001). Also, as previously mentioned, due to the researcher's personal constraints three interviews were conducted via Skype. Consequently, physical cues such as body language were not observed during these interviews. Additionally, interview bias may occur when the interviewer influences the responses from the interviewees (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents that findings obtained from interviews with 13 black female professionals in the private sector in South Africa. As previously mentioned in chapter four, the primary objective of this research is to provide a holistic understanding of the leadership journey of black female professionals within the private sector. Consequently, this research is an exploratory study and as such qualitative analysis has been used to present the findings. The findings are presented in line with the research questions and interview protocol outlined in chapter four and found in annexure b. This chapter will start with a brief summary of the data gathering process and proceed to a description of the interviewees and end with a detail account of the results related to each research question.

### 5.2 Interviewees Profiles

Participant Name	Industry	Age	Job Title	No of subordinates
Interviewee 1	FMCG	40	Business Unit Head	18
Interviewee 2	Architecture	40	Director	8
Interviewee 3	FMCG	40	Marketing Executive	3
Interviewee 4	FMCG	39	HR Director	3
Interviewee 5	FMCG	39	Finance Director	6
Interviewee 6	Power, Oil , Gas & Healthcare	49	Managing Director	20
Interviewee 7	FMCG	41	Product Group Director	4
Interviewee 8	FMCG	36	HR Director	7
Interviewee 9	FMCG	32	Channel & Category Sales Development Manager	4
Interviewee 10	FMCG	32	Regional Manager	6
Interviewee 11	FMCG	34	Senior IT Manager	3
Interviewee 12	Mining and Minerals	55	Head of Department	6
Interviewee 13	Oil & Gas	36	Head of Marketing	4

*Figure 6 - Table summarising the characteristics of the sample.*

Over a four week period, a total of 13 semi structured interviews were conducted. Interviewees were selected using criteria mentioned in chapter 4.

With regards to the age of the interviewees, 80% of the interviewees were in their thirties or early forties. The majority of the interviewees fell within the age brackets of 34 and 41, whilst two were in their early thirties (32) and two were in their late forties or fifties. All but



two of the interviewees reside in the Gauteng province. All of the interviewees primarily work within South Africa and are South African citizens. Only one interviewee is a Nigerian national working in South Africa. Although the interviewees held a variety of roles within the Sales, Marketing, Human resources and Finance, 70% of them were in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods industry (FMCG). Furthermore, all but two of the interviewees (interviewee 2 and 12) work for large multinational organisations Therefore considering the above, the sample can be described as being relatively homogenous. Four of the interviewees were heads of departments and all but one of these heads of departments were above the age of forty. The names of the interviewees and the organisations they work for have been removed to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees.

### 5.3 Organisational Demographics

The interviewees were asked to describe the demographics of their organisations in order to understand the racial and gender composition of their current professional environment. This was important as race and gender may or may not have played a role in their ability to fit in or belong which may have impacted their effectiveness as leaders (see results for research question 3).

#### Summary of Gender and Race Organisational Demographics

Figure 7 – Gender Demographics

Gender Demographics	No of Interviewees
Male Majority	7
Female Majority	2
Equal Representation	3

Figure 8 – Racial Demographics

Racial Demographics	No of Interviewees
White Majority	6
Black Majority	1
Equal Representation	6

With regards to gender, seven out of the ten candidates reported that that males dominated their organisations from a numbers perspective. From a racial perspective six out the thirteen interviewees reported their organisations still being predominately white whilst, six reported that their organisations have an equal representation of numbers across the races. For the purpose of this study, it is key to note that equal does mean that the demographics are representative of the country demographics but rather refers equality in terms of absolute numbers.

## **5.4 Results RQ1 : What strategies have female senior executives successfully utilised in overcoming barriers?**

The purpose of this question was to understand the interviewee's professional journey by exploring their journeys thus far, the critical experiences that shaped their careers, the barriers encountered and the strategies utilised to overcome those barriers.

### **5.4.1 *Can you please share your professional story and how you managed to get to your current position?***

Interviewees took the researcher through their professional journey which, for all interviewees started with a good education. Key themes that emerged from most interviewees included education, trainee management programs, cross functional experience, challenging roles and mentorship. These findings will now be presented.

#### **Education**

The importance of education as an enabler of success was mentioned by 10 out of 13 interviewees in the study. Education played a variety of roles for the interviewees. For some it played the role of providing access to better opportunities particularly when it came to access to tertiary education and a critical component of entry into the job market.

*"And I think my break through just came from being an academic achiever at school and that lead to a good sponsorship at that time from Eskom". (Interviewee 2)*

Education also played a vital role in assisting the interviewees in not only getting into organisations but also acted as a differentiator relative to their peers.

*"I think I've been privileged enough to be afforded I high standard of education from early days. So, from high school I've been afforded the opportunity to go to a good school...Thereafter I had the opportunity to go to a very good university...And I studied I think studied a business degree that has set me apart from a lot of my colleague". (Interviewee 13)*

Finally, for the majority of the interviewees, education played a key role in supporting their continuous professional development. 11 out of the 13 interviewees have continued to study after completing their undergraduate degrees.

*“I want to be known for knowledge and I acquire that knowledge, I absorbed that knowledge. Like you I did my MBA in 2014...But almost 20 years after I finished my first degree was when I went for my masters”. (Interviewee 1)*

### **Trainee Management Programs**

8 out of 13 interviewees started their careers as part of a structured management trainee development programs. For the interviewees, these programs gave them a cross functional overview of organisations which was important in giving them a holistic understanding of business early on in their careers. Furthermore, these roles provided early management development and access to senior leadership.

*“I entered Unilever into its structured training program for young graduates. I got my rotational roles in those first three years...which gave me a nice overview of the business and the various functions”. (Interviewee 5)*

### **Cross Functional Experience**

9 interviewees had a variety of roles across different functions within their organisations. This cross functional experience was important to their development in that it stretched their abilities and gave them a holistic understanding of business. This has proven to be a key differentiator for them and a critical skill set required in their current senior management roles.

*“So, it’s been kind of like a combination of all the different roles and the different pillars that now give me a more holistic understanding of the marketing... Where the challenge with marketers who have come up purely through the marketing channel is they don’t often have that understanding of route to market.” (Interviewee 3)*

*“So really when I think about the various roles, they’ve been stretching...Very steep learning curves.” (Interviewee 9)*

Whilst the experience of cross functional roles has been positive for most of the interviewees, for one interviewee these roles were viewed as lateral moves which created some frustration. However, the interviewee did see the value of these roles and how they enhanced her career development.

*“I was told in the five years no, give it two years it’s gonna to happen... And then, that’s how I spent the five years doing different roles keeping myself busy. Learning new I guess ah experiences in terms of management.” (Interviewee 7)*

Furthermore, 4 of the interviewees mentioned the importance of international exposure as it built their business and management capability within different contexts and also opened their eyes to different ways of working and opportunities.

*“And you need mobility to broaden your scope, broaden your horizon, broaden your exposure and your ability to adapt in changing situations, changing environment.” (Interviewee 1)*

### **Challenging Experiences and Roles**

All of the interviewees mentioned challenging experiences. The majority of the experiences were new or uncomfortable spaces that increased their knowledge, inner strength resilience and confidence.

*“And I was thrown completely into an unknown, out of my comfort zone...I had a baptism of fire running at 25 or 26, running a session on risk management for executives at Vodacom... If I think about it now, I ask myself how did I survive those experiences. I think being introduced to some of the hostilities of corporate at that young age and being introduced to, you know, how men perceive women at that young age helped me”. (Interviewee 4)*

### **Mentorship**

Finally, for 8 interviewees mentorship played a critical role in their professional journeys. The benefits of a mentor include giving advice, boosting confidence, creating the space to make mistakes and providing visibility or exposure within the organisation. A key distinction that was mentioned by most interviewees was the importance of having a mentor early on in their careers. In most cases, majority of the mentors were males who not only acted as mentors but also as sponsors within their careers.

*“Because also I had an MD who was who also acted as a mentor and a coach. And I think a lot of people don’t have that when they are coming into the workplace for the first time. Because it’s that it’s a boost in confidence you know. It boosts your confidence, it allows you to do and make mistakes because your boss has your back type of thing”. (Interviewee 6)*

*“When I came back to Unilever I quickly identified a mentor and I think that relationship with my mentor has been very helpful in terms of just the level of influence and just some of the things that she has imparted on me in terms of just guiding.” (Interviewee 11)*

*“the previous... he was very good at empowerment...He would actually be the one who leads... you know, he wants a woman doing this ...you haven't even thought about it... So at that stage he then made me the chairperson for the mining.” (Interviewee 12)*

#### **5.4.2 What were your most critical work experiences, that enabled you to get to your current leadership position**

The purpose of this question was to understand which critical work experiences played a role in getting the interviewees to their current leadership positions. The question was designed to not only get the respondents to account these experiences but also mention the learnings they gained from this experience. Across all of the interviewees the key roles or work experiences were the same roles that were previously mentioned when the interviewees described their professional journeys.

*“And so, from a career point of view I started at Unilever when I was 19 years old.” (Interviewee 8)*

*“Oh, I'm very clear on those. The one is my Unilever experience. Why? Because, and I only appreciated it after I left Unilever, but at Unilever they took the HR function quite seriously”. (Interviewee 8)*

The majority of the interviewees described these work experiences as challenging and stretching and often these experiences gave them cross functional experience. Based on the data collected from the interviewees it became clear to the researcher that there was a great deal of similarity between this question and questions one and four. Subsequently a number of themes were repeated. These included stretching and challenging roles, mentorship and cross functional experience which have already been covered off in the previous questions. Furthermore, being yourself, confidence and finding your voice were key themes that also emerged with this question. These themes also came through when the interviewees were describing how they overcame the various barriers within their careers. Subsequently those themes will be discussed in findings for question 4.

#### **5.4.3 What were some of the barriers you faced as you climbed the corporate ladder?**

There were a number of barriers that were described by the interviewees. These barriers can be grouped into external barriers that are caused by external forces and those internal barriers that the interviewees imposed on themselves. All thirteen interviewees experienced some type of external barrier whilst five interviewees spoke about self-doubt as an internal obstacle in their careers.

### **Racial Stereotypes**

9 of the interviewees mentioned experiencing some type of racial bias or stereotypes in their careers. For 5 interviewees, the discrimination was not overt but rather subtle usually in the form of disparaging and exclusionary tactics. Surprisingly, 1 interviewee even mentioned experiencing discrimination from other black South Africans.

*“And then probably the biggest one that I faced in my life is the race discrimination.” (Interviewee 10)*

*“I think I think coming back to South Africa was really it was really the... I wasn't prepared for how racist the corporate environment was... “But here in South Africa I felt it and the worst part of it is I felt it more from other black managers.” (Interviewee 3)*

This discrimination had a number of negative effects on the interviewees. Firstly, 5 of the interviewees often felt that their competency or abilities as professionals was often questioned or underestimated.

*“And she expected me to be this dumb chick who's just brought in here cause she's black. And she used to say because you're black and pretty that's why you're here.” (Interviewee 3)*

Secondly, the racial bias resulted in 6 interviewees feeling excluded within their organisations in a variety of ways which included language, meetings and social networks.

*“I mean to a point where, you know, you would even be left out of certain meetings. And then you would hear in the grapevine that no actually there's a meeting and you would need to grab your diary and just kind of show up at the meeting.” (Interviewee 10)*

Furthermore, relative to their white counterparts, 2 interviewees felt they were not afforded as many opportunities to have their opinions and ideas heard.

*“but a company where there’s that underlying racism and you feel that when you are white you get a chance to be heard more than if you are black.” (Interviewee 1)*

Finally, 4 interviewees mentioned that the racial bias often resulted in their white colleagues being given more advancement opportunities in the form of exposure, breathing room to make mistakes, mentoring and promotion.

*“If I was a white male I can tell you today that I would have had more doors open for me. More opportunities, I would have done a lot more.” (Interviewee 2)*

*“I think if you’re white your starting point is and it’s a racial thing... You are given the benefit to develop and make mistakes. You are given a longer rope than say other races.” (Interviewee 7)*

## **Gender Stereotypes**

9 of the interviewees experienced some type of gender bias or gender stereotypes during the course of their careers. 7 interviewees reported having their competency and abilities being challenged as a result of their gender. As result this at times this impacted their ability to deliver successfully within their roles.

*“the biases that I’ve walked into often is who’s this black girl. Where does she come from? What does she know?... so that’s really been probably my biggest sort of bias and stereotyping, is that people haven’t always been accepting to change. And accepting to new ideas.” (Interviewee 13)*

Furthermore, 4 interviewees experienced negative stereotypes associated with their gender that created expectations within others on how they should look and behave and even impacted promotional opportunities

*“they see a black female and they feel like I should be making them tea, I should be bringing them coffee and not take challenging their thinking.” (Interviewee 3)*

*“So, when I was due for that promotion, it had been clear that I’m the successor and everybody knew that. And then the MD said to me he gave me feedback he said ja you know I think you can do the job but you know first of all when we hired you, you had long hair... And he is like now your natural hair just makes you look*

*masculine, unapproachable. And it would be good if you have a bit of make-up on you know.” (Interviewee 4)*

### **Patriarchy**

4 interviewees mentioned experiencing patriarchy as a barrier within their careers. This was experienced from both white and black colleagues and often resulted in the interviewees being expected to be submissive and at times viewed as a potential love interest.

*“I always found that the relationship also was about me submitting to authority even when I didn’t have to. It was an expectation that I ‘m not gonna have a voice, I’m not gonna raise my voice.” (Interviewee 4)*

*“I always found that my encounters with African men where I think I’d say 99% of the time. It’s very rare where I’ve found an African male that I’ve worked with who has not wanted anything beyond just the work.” (Interviewee 4)*

### **Queen Bee Phenomenon**

3 interviewees within the study reported having negative experiences with other women in senior positions. The interviewees reported being attacked, sabotaged, exploited and unsupported by these women. Furthermore, 1 interviewee mentioned that these women were reluctant to share knowledge and develop other women.

*So, when I get there and I’m eager to learn from this person she doesn’t want to share her knowledge. All she wants to do is kind of, you know, keep me down.” (Interviewee 3)*

*“You see the biggest barriers are with women themselves...I got pregnant, had a child, you come back and sometimes they are just not sensitive to the fact that there are demands on you” (Interviewee 1)*

Whilst negative, according to 2 interviewees these experiences have shaped their leadership style in that they focus strongly on developing and mentoring others particularly black women.

*“The one time when I had female mentor or manager leader call it what you [...]. She let me down badly. And I think it has also shaped me it has shaped me in how I view people like new employees... To say I will never repeat the mistakes*



*that that person made. I will always look out for young black girls coming into the workplace.” (Interviewee 6)*

On the other hand, 3 interviewees reported having positive experiences with women their organisations who not supported them but also influenced the kind of leaders that they became. All 3 interviewees were under the age of 35.

*“You know as a female it’s very difficult in corporate. There’re very few people who’ve taken risks to play that role to support beyond the norm. And when I think about it mostly it has been females in my career...who’s played that role” (Interviewee 13)*

*“My professional story started with a manager that I had who was very ambitious and that had a very positive influence and effect on me. She was very unrelenting and would push the boundaries... So, that kind of set the foundation for who I became within the corporate environment” (Interviewee 9)*

### **Exclusion from social networks**

4 of the interviewees experienced exclusion from social networks within their organisation as a barrier in their career. Referred to as the “boys club” these networks resulted in their colleagues being given more opportunities in the form of visibility, exposure to senior leadership, mentoring and promotion.

*“When you are a male and in corporate it’s like there’s a secret society. The males are very willing to help each other, listen to each other...he’s got a starting point.” (Interviewee 13)*

*“I mean they get invited out for drinks with the big guys. They get coached behind the scenes on their projects. They get given the more visible projects that are going to, you know, give them high visibility within the organisation.” (Interviewee 3)*

### **Work and Family Challenges**

5 interviewees mentioned the challenge of having to balance their professional and personal duties at home. The interviewees mentioned three negative consequences. Firstly, 2 interviewees mentioned delaying their careers in order to perform their duties as wives and mothers.

*"I think as females we create a barrier in terms of how quickly we climb the corporate ladder because we put it on ourselves to be the support structure. So, we will say, oh no my kids are still small...When I started having kids I put a pause on my career and I did that intentionally because I said to myself and I said to my manager at the time, I don't think I wanna be a manager yet I just need to focus on my child." (Interviewee 7)*

Secondly, 1 interviewee mentioned not being as effective in her professional role.

*"So, I do feel sometimes that balancing those personal responsibilities or other roles with my professional responsibilities can sometimes be quite challenging which can have an impact on my effectiveness as a leader definitely. Cause, you know, sometimes I'm not all here ja." (Interviewee 5)*

Lastly 2 interviewees spoke about having to make sacrifices and tradeoffs when it came to the amount of time they spent with their families and on themselves

*"The last year specifically in particular being able to go on a short-term assignment in India... I mean it was a very difficult year for me. I left my kids. I left my husband in South Africa so personally I think it was a huge sacrifice and it was a difficult year." (Interviewee 11)*

However, although challenging three interviewees mentioned a positive impact with regards to having multiples roles within the workplace and home. These include improving their abilities to multitask, being present and focused in the moment, planning and managing people.

*"I'm also a mother so I have to be a multitasker by essence because kids will push you to all kinds of limits" (Interviewee 13)*

*"I have heavy work schedule. I am responsible for millions of rands in this company... But when I get home I am home... Full focus I'm not browsing. I'm not Facebooking. I'm not Whatsapping." (Interviewee 1)*

### **Self-Doubt**

The most frequently mentioned internal barrier was self-doubt. Despite their qualifications and experience 6 interviewees mentioned having moments of self-doubt within their careers. The main impact of the self-doubt is that the interviewees doubted their abilities and consequently didn't share their ideas or opinions, didn't take on challenging roles and often sought external approval on their decisions.

*“I think some of the barriers were more internal than external. That was purely because of let’s call it self-doubt” ... “And not being confident that I’ve got what it takes to hold the positions ... And I think that sometimes gets in my own way.” (Interviewee 5)*

However, it is key to note that for 1 interviewee the source of this internal self-doubt was due to external doubts with regards to her ability.

*“The only thing though that I feel sometimes creeps in is I find sometimes I second guess myself. And I think sometimes it comes from not always being trusted to execute...And then I’ll kind of then I’ll start getting second third opinions you know kind of thing. And I feel the need that I must just reconfirm that my thinking is correct.” (Interviewee 3)*

#### **5.4.4 What were the lessons that you learnt that helped you overcome those barriers?**

The purpose of this question was to understand the lessons utilised by the interviewees to overcome the barriers that were mentioned in the previous question. There were some interviewees that repeated some of the lessons they learnt during critical work experiences (question 2) and these were incorporated into the findings below. Overall key lessons deployed by the interviewees include: delivering the result; being knowledgeable; asking for help, being authentic, resilient and finding their voice.

##### **Delivering the result**

Strong performance and delivering the organisational objectives were mentioned by 8 interviewees. This enabled them to gain credibility and trustworthiness of both superiors and subordinates and consequently unlocked opportunities.

*“And I started to learn to first understand what is required to get to the top. Performance was key.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“I think one of the things that stand out for me is the fact that your work and the quality of your work will speak for itself and it will probably just make room for you in the future.” (Interviewee 11)*

In order to deliver great results, 5 of the interviewees mentioned hard work as critical component. 2 interviewees mentioned having to work harder than peers in order to overcome the racial and gender biases they faced.

*“17 years of hard work it pays off... sometimes you have to work harder to be noticed.” (Interviewee 8)*

*“I must work harder. I don’t have a choice. Because the first assumption placed on me is that I’m going to fail. And it’s that I’m put into a role because of the colour of my skin.” (Interviewee 10)*

### **Being Knowledgeable**

6 interviewees mentioned the importance of being knowledgeable about their roles and organisations. Knowledge played a crucial role in building their confidence enabling them express their ideas and opinions and trust their decisions. Furthermore, knowledge enabled them to gain credibility and respect within their organisations.

*“And my point of view that I have is based on a certain level of research and understanding. And therefore it, you know, it gave me confidence to say that I was going in the right direction.” (Interviewee 9)*

*“First is I have to be ... knowledgeable...The second thing for me also was with that knowledge honestly comes confidence... Before (interviewee says her name) starts to talk she has researched it, she knows where she’s coming from... Because honestly I make sure that I’m so knowledgeable that it is difficult for other people to either belittle me or put me down.” (Interviewee 1)*

### **Being Authentic**

Being themselves and remaining authentic was mentioned by 7 interviewees as being an important element that helped them overcome the barriers they faced on their professional journeys. Authenticity was a key in enabling 4 of the interviewees get others to understand them thereby, allowing them to connect and build real relationships with peers and subordinates. Moreover, 1 interviewee mentioned that being authentic enabled her to set boundaries with regards to how she expects to be treated by others.

*“I think those are the things that that have helped me in my career. Remaining authentic, being grounded. ” (Interviewee 6)*

*“Just be yourself and you know ah let them understand who you are as a person, your background, what you’re about, what you like what you don’t like. Create those moments where they get to know you as a person not just see you as a woman ...They get to know you as a person and they start to understand okay so she likes this and okay this is how I interact with her socially or both.” (Interviewee 7)*

Furthermore, one interviewee stated that authenticity was critical in helping her with regards to leading others.

*“I absolutely think that people generally want to associate with authentic people. And I think that that enables you as a leader. (Interviewee 11)*

## **Resilience**

4 interviewees mentioned being resilient as key characteristic that was required to overcome barriers they encountered. Resilience was important in assisting the interviewees in moving forward towards achieving their goals or a business outcome.

*“We are not immune to what happens externally. No, but you have to pick yourself up and keep running. Like I said we will trip, we will fall, you can get up and keep running. If I didn’t get up I wouldn’t be the person that I am today.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“But it’s also just as easy to reset, think back on what you have done, in terms of what has and hasn’t worked. Read just, start more conversations, find alternatives solutions and move forward.” (Interviewee 10)*

Closely linked to resilience, 2 interviewees mentioned the importance of being able to adapt to different contexts in order to be successful.

*“I would just say situational...Adapting to the situation, to the requirement of the situation.” (Interviewee 1)*

## **Self-Belief**

5 of the interviewees mentioned the importance of believing in yourself particularly in a male dominated environment. For 2 interviewees, self-belief was important in giving them confidence about their abilities and overcoming negative experiences.

*“And basically, back myself basically just learn to trust that I’ve got the tools, the support system, skills...the experience I need to be an effective leader.” (Interviewee 5)*

*“I think what has helped me in overcoming quite a lot of the stupid negativity as I call it is the racism, the sexism, you know the isms. It’s constantly reminding myself why I was why I’m there, how I came to be there and how and what my contribution is in the organisation...if I was not the right person I would not have been appointed.” (Interviewee 6)*

3 out of the 5 interviewees mentioned how self-belief enabled them to express and not be afraid to ask for what they want.

*“in most of these organisations, when you are surrounded by male leaders you gotta believe in yourself... But finding my voice to speak up has probably been my biggest lesson”. (Interviewee 13)*

*“Be vocal about it: this is what I want.” (Interviewee 1)*

Finally, for 1 interviewee, self-belief was important in helping her be comfortable with her development areas and asking for help where necessary.

*“Getting to that point where I knew exactly what it is that I know, and what it is that I don’t know...What I can fix and learn, and what I’m actually just at my limits but how can I get help to fix that... And not being ashamed...I’ve become comfortable with that.” (Interviewee 4).*

### **Asking for help**

6 interviewees mentioned the importance of asking for help from others in both their professional and personal space. This was done in order manage dual responsibilities and achieve success in both contexts.

*“we think we need to do everything for our families and...for the organisation in order to perform. In order to get to the next level. Whereas I feel, you know if you create a structure. You outsource certain things. So, you have the space and the time...if you wanna climb the corporate ladder you also need to think of how you do that differently.” (Interviewee 7)*

*“I think we try too hard to deal with things on our own.... You know that this thing of the strong black woman, that can kind of carry everything. And then if you ask for help...then you are weak and you are not competent...the biggest lesson that I’ve had is to not walk alone.” (Interviewee 4).*

2 interviewees mentioned that women are more likely to extend themselves. Therefore, asking for help was important in ensuring success and longevity.

*“we take on more responsibility without even asking for more...resources for you to do what you need to do. So, we end up burning the candle on both ends. Either*

*end up burnout yourself. Or leaving the company because, you know, it's just not sustainable. You can't do that forever.” (Interviewee 6)*

For 4 interviewees, support came in the form of mentors, social networks and from spouses and family members.

*“From a personal point of view...before marriage, before choosing spouse to say my career is very important...are you in this boat or not? And the answer was yes. And honestly that has fueled that has been a very strong pillar in my success.” (Interviewee 1)*

### **Finding their voice**

10 interviewees mentioned the importance of finding your voice and expressing your ideas, beliefs and opinions. This has enabled them to add value within their organisations and be understood and respected by their colleagues. Furthermore, finding their voice enabled 6 of the interviewees to ask for what they want in terms of career development or additional resources.

*“I always sit at the table. I always want to make my voice heard. Not just because I want to just blah blah but because I honestly, I want to contribute, I want to add value.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“You must never be afraid to ask for what you want. The worse that can happen is that you're just back to where you were before you asked...And I think it taught me to move, in in in corporate both in the public and private sector actually, with boldness you know.” (Interviewee 6)*

### **Summary of Research Question 1**

Interviewees took the researcher through their professional journey which, for all interviewees started with a good education. The majority of the interviewees were introduced into the corporate world through trainee management development programs that were challenging and offered cross functional experience. All 13 interviewees mentioned experiencing some type of barrier throughout their career. The barriers that came up most frequently amongst the interviewees included racism, gender and racial bias, patriarchy, the queen been phenomenon, limited access social networks and work family conflicts. In regards to internal barriers, the most commonly mentioned barrier was self-doubt. Overall the impact of these barriers included being underestimated and

undermined, exclusion, expectations to be submissive, delays in career advancement, not being as effective in roles and making sacrifices when it came to the amount of time they spend with their families and on themselves. Self-doubt on the other hand resulted in the interviewees doubting their abilities, not voicing their opinions and ideas and not taking advantage of challenging roles or opportunities. Key lessons deployed to overcome these barriers include delivering the result, being knowledgeable, asking for help, being authentic, resilient and speaking up. Mentorship played a critical support and development role throughout their careers.

## **5.5 Results RQ2 : How black female senior executives' professional experiences have shaped their professional and personal identities?**

The purpose of this question and the subset of questions outlined in the interview schedule was to understand how the professional experiences described in question one has influenced the interviewees personal and professional identities. Furthermore, the theme of belonging or fitting were explored and the subsequent impact on the interviewee's identity.

### **5.5.1 Over the course of your career, how if at all, has your personality or identity changed both professionally and personally?**

Overall the majority of the interviewees felt that their professional and personal identities had changed over the course of their careers. 9 interviewees stated that their personal identities had changed whilst all but 1 candidate reported changes in their professional identity. Personal and professional changes mentioned by the interviewees include an increase in their confidence, goal orientation and finding their voice. Professional changes mentioned by the interviewees include an increase in their ability to listen and understand. 4 interviewees mentioned no changes to their personal identity whilst only one interviewee mentioned no changes to their professional identity. Below is a discussion the findings.



## **Professional and Personal Changes**

### **Increase in confidence**

6 interviewees mentioned that the experiences in their careers had increased their confidence. The increase in confidence was driven by successes in previous roles and being given more responsibilities within their organisations.

*“I was very fortunate to have had a series of success very early on in my career and therefore, you know, it kind of gave me confidence.” (Interviewee 9)*

*“People trusted me with you know big responsibilities the more confident you know I got.” (Interviewee 1)*

For 3 of the interviewees, the increase in their confidence enabled them to be more assertive and better able to manage conflict and hold people accountable in both their personal and professional life.

*“As I matured...in thinking, in experience I’ve developed more confidence. I use to be very afraid of conflict. Now that’s (laughs) become much less of an issue.” (Interviewee 5)*

*“I’ve always been a people’s pleaser and I think at the core of it I’ll always have that issue...I’ve had to learn to be assertive...but I think even when with my kids I think I’m firmer with them.” (Interviewee 7)*

### **Finding their voice**

7 interviewees mentioned how the experiences in the careers enabled them to find their voice and express their ideas, beliefs and opinions. This was also mentioned as a key factor that enabled them to overcome the barriers in their careers.

*“When I started off even though I’ve always been a very strong personality, I’ve kind of I would bite my tongue and not say what I think I need to say...So all of these experiences have shaped a different (participant says her name)...I now am not afraid of saying no to opportunities or to decisions that I don’t agree with. I’m much more vocal.” (Interviewee 4)*

Furthermore, this enabled them to ask for what they needed in both their professional and personal lives.

*"I've had to learn to articulate my needs ...in my personal space, with my family, with my friends" (Interviewee 7)*

*"I had the confidence at the time to say actually you are not paying me well, I want more money and this is why I want more money, and I deserve more money." (Interviewee 7)*

### **Increase in goal orientation**

4 of the participants mentioned how their professional experiences have increased their ambition and made them more goal orientated in both professionally and personally.

*"In my personal life it's definitely made me more goal oriented. Because I mean at least you can always aim for other roles and other things to do but you also get to the point where you have to say okay what do I want to get out of working or my work experience. So that affects your personal life cause you have different goals." (Interviewee 8)*

Consequently, the interviewee spoke about how this resulted in them having to plan better for the future.

*"You must have a vision I want to be (he he he) you know then you will get there. So, I didn't have that to start with." (Interviewee 12)*

### **Listening and Understanding**

3 respondents reported an increase their ability to understand others more. This was mentioned as a crucial component of their success. For all 3 of the interviewees this was enabled by an improvement in their ability to actively listen to others. Overall this approach enabled the interviewees to build strong relationships with people in their organisation and improved their ability to collaborate and develop and empower their subordinates.

*“I sit and I listen and then I ask questions, and I don’t necessarily impose my own way of thinking or my own ideas on the team... that’s something... that they actually appreciate because it now allows them to think.” (Interviewee 4)*

*“I’ve believed in a lot of collaboration when I was at my best and when I was not trying to fight the men... its help me to be able to pull on different people, and bring them into a room. So, I think I’m able to bring in different perspectives.” (Interviewee 4)*

Finally, because their focus was on understanding others, respondents reported that others were more open to understanding them.

*“I had to first listen. Listen to what they had to say... Like I said seek to understand first before being understood. So yes I understand and I adapt myself but also I realise that people need time to understand me.” (Interviewee 1)*

1 participant mentioned how this change in her professional career has carried over into her personal life as well.

*“I’m at a space where it is more about listening with the intent to understand... That’s metamorphosed into ... in my personal life.” (Interviewee 9)*

### **No Professional and Personal Changes**

4 interviewees mentioned no changes to their personal identity.

*“I’m still the person that I was. In fact I’m still a grounded Zulu woman... who goes home who I’m still the same in terms of things I like and the things that I don’t like on a personal level.” (Interviewee 4)*

2 interviewees mentioned that changes in their personal identity have been shaped by spirituality and not their professional experience.

*“I think I remain to the core the person I’ve always been. I don’t think my personality ...has changed over the years. I don’t think that it has been shaped by my professional environment at all. If anything... I think it’s very much shaped by ...spiritual relationship.” (Interviewee 11)*

Only 1 interviewee mentioned no changes to her professional identity.

*“In a professional sense I think it’s what people ascribe to you rather than what you call yourself. I still pretty much feel like I am still (participant says her name and surname). I am just doing my role here... is nothing more than that. I don’t think it’s changed me.” (Interviewee 6)*

## **5.5.2 What changes do you like and what changes don’t you like?**

### **Changes they like**

Overall 9 interviewees liked the changes in the personal and professional identities. Interviewees mentioned an increase in confidence, resilience, their ability to speak up and understanding of others as changes they liked.

### **Confidence**

4 interviewees liked the increase in their confidence as it helped them move from being a people pleaser to being more assertive and sticking to their convictions.

*“I think my career my professional experience shaped me to be a lot more confident.*

*I think as a person... I tended to be more on the timid side... To just learn to say yes and to learn to say no. You’ll be popular for some you won’t be popular its fine it’s the decision you’ve made.” (Interviewee 2)*

### **Being Vocal**

3 interviewees stated they liked that they were able to find their voice. This has enabled them to express their needs, ideas and opinions.

*“The changes that I love is being able to speak up. And stand up for myself. I think that’s unlocked quite a few things in my life. And helped me become a lot more empowered in general both in a personal and professional sense.” (Interviewee 5)*

## **Increased understanding**

2 interviewees reported to liking the increase in their ability to understand others. This has resulted in them being less judgemental, more empathetic and overall a better leader.

*“I think I’ve also become a little bit softer and a little bit more empathetic, you know. I’m more calmer... than what you would have dealt with in 2009 where I was just like hard...I understand better their struggles and I don’t judge.” (Interviewee 4).*

## **Resilience**

Finally, 2 interviewees stated they liked the increase in their resilience which has enable them to deal with the complexities of business.

*“I think my ability to be tough has also, you know, provided me with that resilience. So when times are good I can I can navigate through that space. When times are bad I can navigate through that space.” (Interviewee 10)*

## **Changes they don’t like**

Overall, 4 interviewees mentioned not liking some changes. Namely impatience, bossiness, being tough and increase in self-doubt.

### **Impatience**

Two interviewees mentioned that their professional experience had made them more impatient in the personal and professional lives

*“What I like less ...is my increasing impatience. I generally always been a patient person. My husband now tells me I’m one of the most impatient people he knows.” (Interviewee 5)*

### **Being Bossy**

2 interviewees mentioned that had become very instructive and bossy, a trait they didn’t like.

*"I think I've noted that sometimes you know when you've been a boss for a long time...I think sometimes it sort of you get use to telling people. You bossing around.*

*I become too instructive." (Interviewee 12)*

## **Self-Doubt**

1 interviewee mentioned that she didn't like the fact that her self-doubt had increased over the course of her career. She did however mention that this was largely driven by external forces.

*"Sometimes I second guess myself...And I think sometimes it comes from not always being trusted to execute...I was always like a confident child.. I feel that comes from the doubt that has been in my work environment." (Interviewee 3).*

### **5.5.3 As a black female in the private sector, in what ways if at all, have you seen yourself as being different to the majority of your colleagues?**

#### **Different to my peers**

12 out of the 13 interviewees saw themselves as being different from the majority of their colleagues. Respondents mentioned differences in background, education, work ethic, people focus and refusal to suck up.

#### **Background**

3 interviewees mentioned that they are different from the majority of their colleagues in terms of their background. They referred to differences in how they grew up and some of the negative experiences they have had. Furthermore, all three interviewees mentioned that their peers were afforded more privileges. However, for 2 interviewees this lack of privilege had enabled them to be more resourceful with less.

*"I think sometimes I could feel the difference in terms of the backgrounds that we have like in terms of privilege. I think with the background that I had as a black manager I definitely had more maybe baggage or difficulty coming up." (Interviewee 8)*

*"I do think it's coming from my background as a black person, I do see thing from a different lens. Than people who are typically privileged and not haven't been*

*exposed to the kind of things that we've seen. You know, I can do a lot more with less because that's how I grew up." (Interviewee 4)*

1 interviewee mentioned that the differences how they grew up made them more motivated.

*"I'm different because I have a different background. I grew up differently... I'm motivated, I'm a fire starter. I would never, you know, give up on something ...Whereas there are people in the organisational context who are not like that. Who would prefer to mull over things...never see any progress for a year and they would still be fine with that. I'm not that person." (Interviewee 9).*

All 3 respondents mentioned their race when describing the differences in the background. 2 of the respondents were in male dominated organisations.

### **Work Ethic**

5 interviewees mentioned being different to their peers in that they have a stronger work ethic. This was in part driven by a different set of expectations that was placed on them which, in most cases were driven by bias.

*"I only see myself different in that I feel that the expectations are different for me. So, I feel like because I'm black and because I'm female I must always I must always come up with the smartest idea. I must always work longer hours to show commitment. I must always deliver impeccable work." (Interviewee 3)*

However, 1 interviewee mentioned that in some instances these expectations were self-created.

*"I think also kind of sometimes, you know, you suffer the term thing of saying oh ja no I've got to prove myself, you know, and push yourself harder and harder. And I think females tend to do that and I think black females in particular tend to do that even more." (Interviewee 6)*

### **People Focus**

Relative to the peers, 5 interviewees mentioned a strong focus on the well-being of people as a key difference. As a result, their leadership style tends to be collaborative and focused on development.

*"I think I bring a feminine approach to my leadership, a collaborative approach to my leadership... I'm very big on people. And I'm in a space where ...there's a lot of gaps but even in those gaps I'm trying to find ways on how do I meet them*

*where they are, and then take them to where I need them to go to... And I say that it's softer because when I look at my male counterparts in other functions, that style is very different. It's very direct. It's either you get on the bus or you don't. And it's quite ruthless... (Interviewee 13)*

Furthermore, 1 interviewee mentioned being able to work better with different types of people.

*"We are better able to work with other people...If you put me in a boardroom full of mixed race, white, Indian, coloured whatever. Chances are I'll talk to everybody I'm able to do that versus when you take a white person and you throw them into a mixed pot of people you are going to find them navigating towards the white people." (Interviewee 10)*

### **Education**

1 interviewee mentioned being different to their peers due to her higher quality of education and that she continuously develops herself in this area. This is viewed a key differentiator by the interviewee.

*"I see myself as different from my colleagues firstly is, from an educational background...Currently right now what sets me apart as well is that I is that I have a masters degree, which no else in my department has. So, I think from an education strategy, seeing the bigger picture perspective that sets me apart." (Interviewee 13)*

### **Sucking Up**

For 6 interviewees, the refusal to suck up to superiors in order to get ahead is what made them different. Enabled by their own courage and self-belief, this enabled the interviewees to remain true to themselves, treat people equally and vocalise their views even if unpopular.

*"I find that a lot of people have to lick...sorry for my French, you know, manage upwards and brush stroke their egos to get to get ahead. And I battle with it. I just can't do it... we are all human beings. I will respect you, you will respect me." (Interviewee 7)*

*"I am a bit more outspoken than you know. People are very polite...Now I must say that I find it difficult to keep quiet when something is wrong" (Interviewee 12).*



## **Not Different**

1 interviewee did not view herself as being different to the majority of her peers. Similar to her peers this participant felt that they were always equipped and supported to succeed. Furthermore, the respondent mentioned that there were times when their advancement was prioritised. The interviewee described the demographics of her organisation as being balanced and mentioned that whilst representation at senior management levels was not ideal, it was improving.

*“Because in general... in all my roles I’ve always felt equally enabled to succeed. Equally supported. And at times even prioritised to advance and grow” (Interviewee 5).*

### **5.5.4 How has this influenced your professional and personal identity?**

6 interviewees mentioned that being different to their colleagues had influenced their professional identity. The influence was negative. Interviewees mentioned constantly fighting, pushing themselves to hard and watching what they say as the negative influences on their professional identity. None of the interviewees reported any influences on their personal identities.

#### **Constantly Fighting**

For 4 interviewees, the theme of constantly having to fight was associated with being different to their peers. Whilst this made the interviewees stronger, the costs mentioned by the interviewees include a poor personal life and being hard.

*“You’ve got to be strong it’s tough...you constantly have to fight...you have to work harder. There’s a massive personal cost. And I know this because during this time I had the worst eating habits of my life. I had the worst sleeping patterns of my life... I had the most the longest working hours of my life. I had the most intense working hours of my life.” (Interviewee 10)*

Furthermore, 1 interviewee mentioned that the constant fighting resulted in her being viewed as aggressive by some of her peers.

*“So and then he said the second thing was I’m too assertive and it borders on aggression”*

#### **Pushing themselves too hard**

2 interviewees stated that impact of the differences resulted in them feeling the pressure to perform and which resulted in them pushing themselves

*“I think sometimes it added anxiety to for me like to perform, to be seen, because I felt like there was a barrier for me to overcome” (Interviewee 8)*

### **Watching what they say**

1 interviewee mentioned that being different to her peers made her less vocal and more careful about what she said in order to remain likeable to the majority

*“Because sometimes you feel you eliminate some people, you know, because you are vocal... So I do find that ... definitely I was less vocal then.” (Interviewee 12)*

### **5.5.5. As a black female in the private sector, can you tell me about a time where you have felt pressure to behave or act in a certain way in order to be successful?**

8 interviewees mentioned feeling pressure to behave in a certain way in order to be successful. The respondents felt pressure to be masculine, suck up to superiors, network more and change their beliefs.

#### **Pressure to network**

4 interviewees reported feeling pressure to network and socialise in their organisations in order to build relationships. Respondents described having to be more open and extroverted in order to be successful.

*“So sometimes people will be like you have to go out and build relationships with people, you have to share more of yourself. That I battled with... because I’m an introvert and I’m a relatively private person” (Interviewee 8)*

This was echoed by another interviewee who reported that networking was key function of her role as a senior manager.

*“When you’re in senior roles you’re expected to network. You’re expected to build, maintain, and invest in relationships. You’re expected to engage up, down, sideways.” (Interviewee 5).*

1 interviewee mentioned feeling pressure to take an interest in popular sporting activities and attend company functions.

*"I use to get told to watch the cricket over the weekend so I can have material to conversate with at the water cooler... you get given advice as well to... show up at more events. And I'm selective because I can't be fake." (Interviewee 3)*

### **Sucking Up**

2 respondents also mentioned feeling pressure to suck up to senior managers in order to be successful.

*"Right we use to have a boss ... And he required that you know suck up. I was much younger then and I had to play ball. You know that kind of you look so nice, Is your husband doing well?" (Interviewee 1)*

### **More Masculine**

2 interviewees worked in male dominated environments reported being required them to be adopt masculine behaviours. Specifically, being ruthless on people.

*'I think of a time when I worked in ... And that organisation is very masculine. Very ruthless. And the last role required me ... to also behave that way. Required me to I'll say cut people down to size.'" (Interviewee 13)*

### **Changing their beliefs**

2 interviewees reported feeling pressure to change their personal values in order to be successful. For both respondents, a strong belief in themselves and their values resulted in them rejecting this pressure.

*"I remember once I'll never forget this conversation where this guy is like (participant says her name) 60% for me 40% for you, do you want this business or not? And I said no I don't" (Interviewee 2)*

### **No pressure**

2 interviewees mentioned not experiencing any pressure to behave in a certain way in order to be successful. Both interviewees attributed this to the fact that they had never required external validation or high-profile roles.

*"I have been lucky... I have just refused to cower down to the demands of what other people expect of me or want from me. I've never sought the limelight nor do I think that there's a need for the limelight in anything that I do. I have never sought the validation of others in defining who I am and what I am and what I do." (Interviewee 6)*

### **5.5.6 Can you describe if at all, how this has influenced your identity both personally and professionally?**

This experience influenced the professional identity of 4 interviewees. Interviewees mentioned being tougher and more vocal as key changes in their professional identity. No changes to their personal identity were mentioned by the respondents.

#### **Being more vocal**

3 interviewees mentioned that these experiences increased their confidence in regards to their beliefs. Consequently, they were more comfortable with being more vocal and fighting the status quo.

*“It...changed me to make me speak up more...you get taught to be very assertive and to know your rights.” (Interviewee 3)*

#### **Increased Resilience**

For 1 interviewee, the refusal to change her behaviour in order to be successful made her tougher and increased her ability to deal with difficult situations.

*“So I had to be I had to be strong (neh). Ja I had to be strong because I needed to be able to challenge.” (Interviewee 10)*

### **Summary of research questions 2**

The purpose of this question was to understand how the interviewees professional experiences shaped their personal and professional identities. Overall, 70% of the participants mentioned changes in their professional and personal identities. Out of the thirteen respondents, twelve reported changes to their professional identity. Changes liked by the interviewees included an increase in confidence, drive, and resilience and being more vocal. Furthermore, across the majority of the interviewees a strong focus on people and their ability to understand, empower and develop them was a professional change they liked. However, they were some changes not liked. These included an increase in their impatience, being tough, the tendency to be bossy and lastly an increase in their self-doubt. For a number of the interviewees the professional changes spilled over into their personal life. In some cases, this was viewed as being positive (goal orientation and increased confidence). However, some changes namely impatience and an increase in self-doubt were viewed negatively. 30% of the interviewees reported no changes to their personal identity. All but one interviewee viewed themselves as being

different to the majority of their peers. Respondents mentioned differences in background, education, work ethic, people focus and refusal to suck up. For 45% this difference had a negative impact on their professional identities. Interviewees mentioned constantly fighting, pushing themselves to hard and watching what they say as the negative influences on their professional identity. None of the interviewees reported any influences on their personal identities. For the one interviewee who viewed herself as similar to her peers, her organisations had played in key supportive and transformative role in ensuring this. Finally, the majority of the interviewees reported an incident where they had felt pressure to conform. The interviewees felt pressure to be masculine, suck up to superiors, network more and change their beliefs Whilst challenging, the respondents reported that these experiences made them stronger and more vocal about their beliefs.

### **5.5 Results RQ3 : How does women's membership in social groups affect leadership effectiveness?**

The purpose this research question is to understand whether the interviewees viewed themselves as fitting in into the groups within their organisation and to understand the possible impact of this on their leadership effectiveness.

#### **5.5.1 How would describe your experience as a leader within your organisation?**

The majority of respondents struggled to answer this question. The majority of responses related to their competencies as leaders and not their leadership experience. Because of this is covered off in question 5.5.7, this question was removed from this study.

#### **5.5.2 What biases or stereotypes have you encountered in your leadership position?**

12 respondents reported experiencing stereotypes whilst in their leadership positions leadership journeys. Gender and racial bias were the most common type of stereotypes experienced by most of the participants. Seven respondents reported experiencing gender bias. 9 respondents reported experiencing racial bias. The majority of the findings were the same as those described in question 5.4.3.

*"Yes of course I have... What is your job? And then you say I'm the IT manager for supply chain Africa and one of the things that people would say...is oh it's so lovely, my gosh ...a female person in IT that is amazing. And somebody once*

*said you don't see that often black people with IT and manager for that matter.”*  
(Interviewee 11)

Similar to the answers reported in question 5.43, the impact of these stereotypes included being underestimated and undermined and expectations to be submissive.

*“I remember at the ... ja black people don't know what they doing whatever.”* I mean one of my ex bosses said to me you really changed my perception of black people.” (Interviewee 8)

### **5.5.3 Would you describe yourself as fitting in or belonging to the majority of the groups within your organisation?**

8 of the interviewees stated that they do not fit into the majority of the groups within their organisations. All of the respondents reported to being comfortable with this. For the majority of the respondents, not fitting into with the groups in their organisation is what gave them an advantage in their organisations.

6 interviewees reported that they don't fit in because they chose to remain true to themselves. 3 mentioned it was important remain authentic

*“I'm not a fitter. I don't want to fit in...That's not my intent...I'm (participant says her name). I'm an individual... Like I said before if you are authentically yourself and you don't want to fit into boxes and be classified as certain things.”*  
(Interviewee 11)

1 interviewee mentioned that she does not fit in because she was passionate about delivering good performance or result.

*“I would say I don't fit in or belong because it's not okay for me if it's not working. We cannot continue to do things the same way for ten years and not receive deliver a positive result... and then be okay with that. It's not okay.”* (Interviewee 9)

1 interviewee mentioned that she does not fit in because of her experience has given her a holistic understanding of business which her competitive advantage.

*“I definitely don't fit in. Majority of the leaders in my business are mainly engineers...I'm a generalist in business... For the first time in my career I loved that I don't fit in. Because that keeps me that keeps my edge. It keeps me creative. It keeps me pushing the boundary.”* (Interviewee 13)

5 interviewees stated that they did fit in with the majority of the groups within their organisations. 2 interviewees reported that they had worked in environments with similar or like-minded individuals therefore fitting was not a challenge.

*“Ja for sure... Well professionally. I work with brilliant professionals that have many shared interests with at least from the professional sense.” (Interviewee 5)*

2 interviewees mentioned that initially they don't fit it however they are able to adapt and this has enabled them to fit in.

*”Ja. I can be a bit of a chameleon and adapt. “I sus out my environment and I figure out okay, you know, what's the lay of the land.” (Interviewee 3)*

1 interviewee mentioned that they force their way in.

*“No, not initially. But I forced my way in” (Interviewee 10)*

#### **5.5.4 How if at all, has this impacted on your leadership effectiveness?**

Regardless of whether they fitted in or 11 interviewees reported an impact of their leadership effectiveness. One interviewee reported no impact to leadership effectiveness.

Of the 8 interviewees who did not fit into the majority of the groups within their organisations, six interviewees reported that this had a positive impact on their leadership effectiveness.

4 interviewees reported that not fitting in has improve their leadership effectiveness because they have become more inclusive. As a result they are able to have a positive impact on more people and be better understood themselves by more people.

*“Because I find that I get approached by different types of people...But it's changed and I'm much more effective now cause people don't just see a person who is aunty...People know my politics, and they know where I stand. However, as a leader in the organisation they see me as inclusive.” (Interviewee 4)*

1 interviewee mentioned that not fitting in and remaining authentic has resulted in more people liking her and thus made her more effective as a leader.

*“I think people love people who are authentic, and who are themselves and who don't succumb to the boxes. So I absolutely think that it makes you more effective as a leader.” (Interviewee 11)*

3 interviewees reported that not fitting in had a negative impact on their leadership effectiveness. 2 respondents mentioned not fitting in impacting delivery as they not able to get the necessary support from social networks.

*“Probably. I think that a lot happens outside of the workplace. From an execution point of view. So you know who’s support you’re going to get when you’re in a social setting easier than when you are all here and trying to make things work.” (Interviewee 6)*

1 interviewee mentioned feeling the pressure to perform better at a higher standard.

*“ I’m achievement oriented and I want the teams that I lead to win ...when you are ... one of the few you feel the pressure to perform higher.” (Interviewee 8)*

Finally, 1 interviewee mentioned that not fitting in resulted in her conforming and mirroring the behaviours of her colleagues. However, this had a negative impact on the interviewee.

*“ Doing stuff that men did... Having our own private meetings and not including other people. ...Stuff that we saw them do and we think okay...I became very much, I don’t know what the English word would be, but I became very much the people that I was trying not to become. It made me ill because it wasn’t who I was. ” (Interviewee 4)*

For interviewees who did fit in, two interviewees mentioned that because they fit in they were able to build relationships with different types of people thereby making them more inclusive.

*“I also work in teams both within my function and cross-functionally that I think are big on relationship building...I don’t feel like I have to work extra hard to develop ...And I mingle with all sorts all sorts...I’m able to be a bit more inclusive. “ (Interviewee 5)*

#### **5.5.5 How if at all, do you think your race has had an impact on your effectiveness as leader?**

11 interviewees reported that their race had an impact on their effectiveness as a leader. All 11 interviewees reported a negative impact to their leadership effectiveness.

7 interviewees reported having to deal with negative stereotypes that were associated with their race. Typically they experienced doubts regarding their knowledge, capability



and suitability for their leadership roles. As a result, interviewees reported being undermined, challenged, not taken seriously and not listened to.

*"I think it does. I think that certain ah people have certain perceptions about ah your capabilities based on your race. And I push through it .... But I do think ...some people just decide that they will not be told or they will not listen or they will not do. " (Interviewee 11).*

For 2 interviewees the impact of this was that they would feel the need to work hard to justify their appointment to leadership roles and try to change the negative biases that exist

*"It makes you paranoid...it has influenced me in the sense that I do feel like I work harder because I'm black. ..It's a responsibility I feel like I need to ...really justify ... I've earned my seat." (Interviewee 8)*

*"I'm lucky to have this opportunity. How do I make it work? And how do I make it a positive experience for my colleagues around me because I don't know what they think about me. I don't know what biases they have to deal with as individuals" (Interviewee 7)*

2 respondents mentioned that their race made it harder to deliver and lead. This was because most people prefer to do business with people who are similar to them.

*"People want to do business or sometimes want to be led by somebody who looks like them, it's important... they are find it... it easier. I think they are finding it more relatable to work with somebody who looks like them." (Interviewee 13)*

#### **5.5.6 How if at all, do you think your gender has had an impact on your effectiveness as leader?**

Similar to race, 11 interviewees reported that their race had an impact on their effectiveness as a leader. However unlike race only 7 interviews found their gender to negatively impact their leadership. 4 interviewees viewed their gender as having a positive impact on their leadership effectiveness.

Similar to race, 5 interviewees mentioned experiencing negative stereotypes that were associated with their gender. Similar themes of doubts regarding capability and suitability was mentioned by the respondents. Once again interviewees mentioned being undermined, challenged, not taken seriously and not listened to.

*“Because they were women would doubt their they would doubt their abilities and they would question and challenge them quite a bit.” (Interviewee 6)*

One respondent mentioned having to conform to stereotypes about how a women should look in order to be heard

*“ I still fundamentally believe that people listen to you differently when you are wearing heels, wearing make-up, seeming professional... So I felt like there’s certain things that I’ve be forced to accept as prerequisite to the way that I show up.” (Interviewee 9)*

4 interviewees mentioned that their gender had positive impact to their leadership. Interviewees mentioned being better at problem solving and multitasking. One interviewee reported to being more empathetic than their male colleagues.

*“When I think of decisions that need to be made I always think about other people before I think about myself (laughs). And I find that with men it’s different. Men will think, okay what’s in it for me, and then let’s move on, or I just need to get this thing done.” (Interviewee 4)*

*“I think women bring a different twist to problem solving. Not to bash my male counterpart but I think we bring different dimensions. I think we will look at a problem and probably find five or six different ways to go around it.” (Interviewee 13)*

**As leader in your organisation, how do you believe you have most effectively earned the respect of your team and colleagues?**

Similar to answers given in previous questions, interviewees mentioned gaining the respect of the colleagues by being knowledgeable, having a strong work ethic, delivering, focused on people and being authentic. Furthermore, two interviewees mentioned gaining the respect of their peers by not being afraid to challenge or speak up.

*“I never thought I’m brave... People are so fearful people would be like wow (participant says researcher’s name) you really said that in the meeting. It’s like where else am I supposed to say it cause this is the place to challenge you know.” (Interviewee 8)*

### Summary of research question 3

The purpose of this research question was to understand the impact of social groups on the leadership effectiveness of the participants of the study. In line with some of the findings presented in research question two, 62% of the participants mentioned not fitting into the majority of the groups within their organisations. All eight participants were comfortable with this. For the majority of the interviewees the impact of not fitting in was a positive one on their leadership effectiveness. Respondents reported becoming more inclusive and more authentic as positive outcomes associated with not fitting in. According to the participants these capabilities made them better leaders within their organisations. However 23% of interviewees noted a negative impact on their leadership effectiveness because they did not fit in. Challenges with execution was the main negative outcome mentioned by most participants. Finally 85% of the interviewees reported that race and gender had an impact on their leadership effectiveness.

All the respondents reported that race impacted their leadership effectiveness negatively. Interviewees reported being undermined, challenged, not taken seriously and not listened to as some of the negative outcomes. As a result the respondents reported feeling pressure to work twice as hard as their peers to justify their leadership appointments. Unlike race however, only 54% of the interviewees reported gender having a negative impact on their leadership effectiveness. The negative outcomes reported by the interviewees were similar to the ones mentioned against race. In addition to this interviewees mentioned not being heard as an additional negative outcome. 31% of the interviewees reported that their gender had a positive impact on their leadership effectiveness. Interviewees mentioned more empathetic and being better at problem solving, and multitasking as some of the advantages associated with their gender. Finally despite the gender and racial stereotypes and not fitting in respondents were still able to gain the respect of their peers and subordinates. Similar to the with answers presented in research questions one, interviewees mentioned gaining the respect of the colleagues by being knowledgeable, having a strong work ethic, delivering, focused on people and being authentic. Furthermore, two interviewees mentioned gaining the respect of their peers by not being afraid to challenge or speak up.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings obtained from thirteen semi-structured interviews with black female professionals in the private sector in South Africa. Findings reported in this chapter found that black female professionals experience both external and internal barriers throughout their careers. The most common barriers include gender and racial stereotypes, patriarchy, the queen bee phenomenon, limited access to social networks, work family responsibility conflicts and self-doubt. Overall the impact of these barriers included being underestimated, undermined, exclusion, expectations to be submissive, delays in career advancement and not being vocal. Key strategies deployed by the participants to overcome these barriers include hard work, being knowledgeable; asking for help, being authentic, resilience and speaking up. For the majority of the interviewees, these experiences influenced their professional and personal identities. Changes liked by the interviewees include an increase in confidence drive and resilience, a strong focus on people and being more vocal. However, they were some changes not liked. These included an increase in impatience, being tough, the tendency to be bossy and lastly an increase in their self-doubt. 92% of the interviewees reported being different to the majority of their peers however only 45% reported this difference having a negative effect on their identities. Finally, this study explored the impact of membership to social groups on their leadership effectiveness. The majority of the interviewees reported not fitting in with the majority of the social groups. The majority of the interviews were comfortable with this and reported these differences as part of their leadership advantage. Overall for the majority of the interviewees their race and gender impacted their leadership effectiveness negatively.

## Chapter 6

### 6.1 Introduction

Following the findings detailed in chapter five, this chapter will now provide an analysis of the findings. This will be done by comparing the findings from the semi-structured interviews to the literature that was presented in chapter two. The analysis will be presented in relation to each research question.

### 6.2 RQ1 : What strategies have female senior executives successfully utilised in overcoming barriers?

The purpose of research question one was to gain a holistic understanding of the interviewees professional journey thus far by exploring their critical professional experiences, the barriers encountered on their journey and the strategies deployed to overcome said barriers.

There is a great deal of literature that documents barriers that women face as they climb the corporate ladder (Cook & Glass, 2014b). A variety of metaphors have been used to describe these challenges. These include glass ceilings, labyrinths, sticky floors, glass escalators and maternal walls (Carli & Eagly, 2016). According to Peus, Braun and Kniper (2015), these barriers can be personal or relational. Furthermore, challenges can be caused by organisations, culture and society as a whole (Peus et al., 2015). The most prominent external barriers that have emerged in literature include gender stereotypes, explicit prejudice or discrimination in the workplace, assumed incompatibilities between leadership requirements and the abilities of women, exclusion from social networks, inflexible organisational policies, competing responsibilities between the home and workplace and lack of mentors and role models (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Sabharwal, 2015). From an personal perspective low levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy and a fear of success are some of the barriers most frequently mentioned in literature (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; O'Neil et al., 2015). In line with the literature found in chapter two, all thirteen interviewees experienced some type of barrier or challenge during their professional journey.

A significant portion of previous studies centered around a Western perspective of these experiences (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Culture in particular, plays a major role in shaping stereotypes and the status of African women (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). In addition, whilst

there are similarities in the challenges that women of colour and white women face, there are also key differences (Bell & Nkomo, 2003). If the glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing upwards within organisations, the concrete ceiling is described as denser and more difficult barrier for black female professionals to break (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). Unlike their white and male counterparts, black women encounter challenges associated with both race and gender (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Known as double jeopardy women of colour experience negative stereotypes because they are neither white nor male (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). For South African women, patriarchy in particular plays a significant role within their culture (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014).

All thirteen respondents reported experiencing some type of external barrier. This is despite the fact that 85% of the interviewees started their careers in post-Apartheid South Africa. This is a confirmation that legislative interventions such as the Employment Equity Act and Affirmative Action have had limited success in addressing some of the imbalances of the past (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). Similar to the literature, with regards to internal barriers, five respondents reported experiencing self-doubt throughout their careers.

### **6.2.1 Race and Gender Stereotypes**

Based on the results presented in chapter five, racial and gender stereotypes were the most common external barriers faced by the participants of this study. 69% of the interviewees reported facing either both or one of these challenges over the course of their careers. Typically, racial and gender stereotypes affect how women are viewed by others and how they engage and work with others (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). Consequently, these stereotypes although convenient tend to be inaccurate and cause bias (Koch et al., 2015). Literature suggests that gender bias or prejudice is one of the most difficult barriers that women encounter (Brescoll, 2016). For women these stereotypes tend to be generalisations that describe how they should behave and exist at home and in the workplace (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). In the workplace these attitudinal stereotypes reinforce beliefs that men are better suited for leadership roles (O'Neil et al., 2015). Consequently because these stereotypes support the view that women are not capable of being successful leaders, women tend to work harder than their male counterparts in order to prove themselves and justify their leadership capability (Vial et al., 2016). According to the findings described in chapter 5, the interviewees reported

having to work harder and deliver good results in order to justify their ability and leadership positions. Furthermore, in relation to authority, authors have noted that gender stereotypes prevent women leaders from affirming their power in the workplace (Kinnear & Ortlepp, 2016). This was echoed in the findings, where interviewees reported being undermined, challenged and not listened to.

Typically these stereotypes are centred around beliefs that women leaders are nurturing, caring, collaborative and affectionate (Koch et al., 2015). As a result, women can be perceived as being overly sensitive and having limited control over their emotions which, impacts their ability to hold others accountable and not take things personally, thus making them ineffective leaders (Brescoll, 2016). However, literature has also found that the communal attributes mentioned above, have also been associated with reasons why women are often better leaders than men (Vecchio, 2002). Authors have found that female leaders tend to be better at displaying superior leadership characteristics such as being inclusive, developing and connecting with others and sharing power (Vecchio, 2002). Findings described in chapter five are consistent with the literature with 77% of the interviewees stating that these characteristics were key in their success as leaders.

### **6.2.2 Concrete Ceiling**

As previously mentioned, women of colour often experience a thicker denser ceiling driven by the combination of both racial and gender discrimination (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Consequently, they are likely to experience a double outsider status as they are neither share gender nor colour with the majority of their colleagues (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). This double minority status influences the development of their careers (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). Moreover, from a race perspective leadership identities are typically associated with being white (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Out of nine interviewees who reported experiencing either racial or gender bias, seven noted experiencing both. Today, it is more common for women of colour to experience a subtle and cunning form of bias (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Interviewees reported experiencing this type of subtle bias usually in the form of being undermined or ignored. As it often goes unpunished it produces a variety of emotions that range from indifference, anger and frustration (Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

African women have to contend with patriarchy which plays a role in determining the suitability of women in leadership positions (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). According to literature, underpinned by patriarchy, the majority of South African women are subject to

the authority of males within their personal lives thereby, effectively rendering them as minor citizens in their private lives (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). Consequently, patriarchy justifies putting the interests of men ahead of women (Dlamini & Adams, 2014). This extends into the workplace where men disempower, disrespect and exclude women from promotional opportunities in order to maintain their positions (Dlamini & Adams, 2014). Hence the current reality where men dominate leaderships positions whilst women occupy subordinate roles (Dlamini & Adams, 2014). In line with literature, four interviewees in this study described experiencing patriarchy in their careers. They were expected to remain submissive and quiet. Respondents reported constantly fighting and being labelled as aggressive. This is in line with previous studies that have found that women who stood up against patriarchy are often labelled as defiant or abnormal (Dlamini & Adams, 2014).

This combination of consistent gender and racial prejudice results in poor performance, disengagement, decreased motivation and a decreased sense of belonging (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Similar to their white female counterparts, the professional journeys of black female professionals are filled with experiences of isolation, methodical discrimination, challenges to their competence and authority, limited power and exclusion from informal networks (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). However some authors have argued that it is these negative experiences of race and gender that have contributed in building their capability to understand, manage and negotiate challenges within diverse communities (Bass, 2009). This corresponds to findings documented in chapter five where respondents reported that the challenges built up their resilience, helped them find their voice and increased their ability to deal with complexity.

### **6.2.3 Social Networks and Mentors**

Building social capital is recognized as critical component in driving advancement within organisations (Carbajal, 2018). Therefore networking inside the organisations plays a crucial role (Carbajal, 2018). Previous studies have found that exclusion from informal and professional networks and a lack of mentors as some of the interpersonal factors that hinder the advancement of women within organisations (Sabharwal, 2015). Furthermore, men are more likely to use social networks in order to progress whilst women are more reliant on traditional methods (Hoobler et al., 2014). Benefits of social networks include providing guidance, coaching, feedback, protection and opportunities to influence key stakeholders (Ely et al., 2011). Authors have argued that whilst legislation, qualification and experience have enabled black female professionals to



ascend up the corporate ladder, the lack of social capital has slowed down their ascent (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012). Findings presented in chapter five confirm this. Four interviewees reported to being excluded from the “boys club” and as result experienced limited visibility, exposure to senior leadership and promotional opportunities. As result, the majority of the respondents narrated how hard work, delivering and being knowledgeable were core components of their success. However, unlike the literature, 60% of the participants in this study had access to a mentor. For most this was early on in their career and played an important support, sponsorship and advisory role. Interestingly enough for most of these interviewees their mentors were males. This could be ascribed to the ‘queen bee’ phenomenon (which will be discussed below) however it is more likely that it is driven by the lack of women in senior positions. This is reinforced by the literature that confirms that whilst women are more likely to identify with other females, they tend to be in short supply (Carbajal, 2018). Moreover due to the poor pipeline, black women in leadership are generally the first or one of the few in their position, an experience that tends to be lonely (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008).

#### **6.2.4 Queen Bees**

In this study, three interviewees reported having negative occurrences with senior women in the workplace. The queen bee phenomenon is the tendency of women in senior roles to distance themselves from other women and obstruct their progress (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). Literature has found that those who have managed to navigate the labyrinth successfully have found little to no support from other females at the top (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). Behaviours associated with this phenomenon include exclusion, sabotage and gossip (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). Results presented in chapter five corroborate this. However, for all the interviewees this experience shaped the type of leaders they became in that they were determined to be better leaders for other black females. This is in line with recent research conducted by Sheppard and Aquino that confirmed women are more likely to become mentors to other women and generally focus their efforts in driving their advancement (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014).

#### **6.2.5 Work Life Responsibilities and Self Doubt**

At an individual level, work life balance challenges and lower levels of self-confidence and self-belief are key factors that affect women aspiring to leadership positions (O’Neil et al., 2015). Life stage responsibilities and priorities on the other hand, affect the career decisions that women make as they juggle their professional and personal roles (O’Neil,

et al., 2015). In this study, five interviewees mentioned the challenge of having to balance their professional and personal duties at home. Respondents described delays in their careers, limited focus in jobs and making tough sacrifices as the negative outcomes of balancing both work and family. According to previous literature, low levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy are key factors that affect women aspiring to leadership positions (O'Neil et al., 2015). In line with the literature, the only internal barrier mentioned by participants was self-doubt. Accordingly, respondents felt pressure to work harder and outperform their peers but also held themselves back from taking on certain opportunities. This is in line with literature that reports that women often feel pressure to outperform their males counterparts (O'Neil et al., 2015). Furthermore, they are likely to have a heightened sense of accountability (O'Neil et al., 2015). Finally, this self-doubt causes female professionals to shy away from leadership opportunities (Vial et al., 2016).

#### **6.2.6 When we succeed**

Despite a significant number of barriers that are internal and external, a select number of females have managed to successfully navigate the labyrinth of leadership. The strategies utilised by female professionals can be grouped into 'push and pull' tactics (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Successful push strategies include a strong work ethic and drive and increased resilience (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Furthermore stretching and challenges roles are recommended in order to build resilience and increase visibility and credibility (Weidenfeller, 2012). Consistent with literature the majority of the respondents described hard work, drive and resilience as key characteristics that not only built their credibility in the organisation but propelled their success. All of the interviewees had stretching and challenging roles that increased their knowledge, inner strength, resilience and confidence. Furthermore, for 70% of the interviewees these roles often gave them cross functional experience which gave them a holistic understanding of business, a key differentiator for them. With regards to pull characteristics, interviewees mentioned pull characteristics such as authenticity and confidence as key components of their success. This is in line with literature that identified both authenticity and self-confidence as key contributors to success (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010; Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Finally, in line with literature mentioned previously a strong support structure both inside and outside of the workplace was mentioned by the participants as an important factor in their success. These include outsourcing certain household tasks to hired help and support from extended family

members (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Findings reported in chapter five show that participants utilised this approach in order to manage their dual responsibilities.

## **6.2: How black female senior executives' professional experiences have shaped their professional and personal identities?**

### **6.2.1: Identity Changes**

Identity plays a crucial role in how individuals process information and how they behave in an environment (Kwok et al., 2018). Furthermore, literature suggests that an individual's identity is shaped by their past experiences and their interaction with social groups (Kwok et al., 2018). With this in mind, the purpose of this question was to understand how the professional experiences of the participants shaped their professional and personal identities. Core to any individual's identity is their self-concept that is shaped by a number of factors including race, gender and ethnicity (Kwok et al., 2018). For leaders this is a constantly evolving aspect of themselves that is linked to a greater understanding and appreciation of self (Ely et al., 2011).

The findings documented in chapter five revealed that for the majority of the participants, their professional experiences influenced their personal and professional identity. For most the changes were positive. Studies have found that increased confidence, self-belief and determination were critical components in the successful leadership journey of women (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). Furthermore, Weindfeller (2012) added the importance of being adaptable and building resilience as important contributors to success. This is in line with findings reported by the interviewees who noted that a strong drive, an increase in their confidence and resilience as changes they liked in their professional identity. Furthermore, for the majority of the respondents this increase in their confidence enabled them to find their voice. A factor that enabled them to add value in their organisations. On the surface, this seems to contradict previous research that found that the invisibility of black female professionals results in their voices not being heard (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). However, what is important to note is that for most of the participants finding their voice was a process that was facilitated by an increased self-belief and confidence. This suggests that whilst the invisibility does exist, it can be overcome. Furthermore, studies have found that the leadership style of women tends to be more inclusive, transformative and people orientated thereby making them better suited to manage a crisis (Liu et al., 2015). This correlates to the findings documented in chapter five. Respondents reported an increase in their focus on people which

increased their ability to understand, empower and develop their people. This has been linked to the leadership advantage that women have over men (Vecchio, 2002).

However not all changes were positive. 30% of the interviewees mentioned negative changes to their personal and professional identities. For the majority, an increase in their self-doubt was most common. The explanation for this can be found in previous research that has found that consistent exposure to negative stereotypes and bias can eventually decrease an individual's self-worth and sense of belonging (Good et al., 2012). And given that 69% of the interviewees reported experiencing either racial or gender bias in their careers, this reported increase in self-doubt is not surprising. Shifting, armouring, self-care and spirituality are some of the mechanisms that are utilised by black women to manage the challenges they face throughout their careers (Holder et al., 2015). Based on the findings reported in chapter five this is likely to be the reason why 30% of the participants reported no changes to their personal identity.

### **6.2.2: Fitting In**

Social groups and roles provide a reference point on the acceptable range of behaviours in any situation (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Accordingly, the more an individual identifies with a role or social group, the more likely they are to conform to the group behaviours and norms (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Underpinned by a social identity theory framework, the theme of fitting in and its consequent impact on the interviewee's professional and personal identity was explored. Literature suggests that people are motivated to conform to the behaviours and norms of social groups in order to belong thereby reducing personal uncertainty (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Furthermore, according to Carbajal (2018), building social capital within an organisation is a crucial component to career advancement and increasing authority. Consequently, studies recommend inviting yourself into the traditional male networks whilst still maintaining your identity (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). This is in agreement with previous literature that has found authenticity as a key enabler of success (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). As previously mentioned in chapter two, advantages of authenticity include a strong sense of self, more objective decision making and increased collaboration (Liu et al., 2015).

Results presented in chapter five, found that 92% of the participants in the study viewed themselves as being different to their peers. This confirms previous research that has found that women of colour generally do not share gender or race with the majority of their colleagues (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Furthermore, according to the descriptive statistics presented in chapter five the majority of the participants worked in male-

dominated primarily white organisations. Respondents mentioned differences in background, education, work ethic, people focus and a refusal to suck up. It is key to note that education, work ethic and strong people focus were factors the participants also mentioned as contributors to their success. Yet another confirmation of qualities linked to the female leadership advantage stated literature (Liu et al., 2015).

Anchored in social role theory, previous research has found that often women have to conform to masculine expectations of leadership (Meister et al., 2017). Furthermore, SIT has been used to explain why individuals exclude and discriminate against those they perceive to be different from their in-groups (Haslam et al., 2003). This is likely to be reason why 45% of the interviewees noted a negative impact on their professional identity due to them not fitting in. Women of colour tend to be non-prototypical in terms of gender and race (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Consequently they are likely to experience pressure to conform to the dominant group behaviours in order to fit in (Jones et al., 2015). This explains the findings reported in chapter five, where interviewees mentioned constantly fighting, pressure to work harder than their peers and watching what they say as the negative influences on their professional identity. Once again however, it these negative experiences of race and gender that have contributed in building their capability to understand, manage and negotiate challenges within diverse communities (Bass, 2009). An sentiment that was echoed by respondents in chapter five.

### **6.3 RQ3 : How do women's membership in social groups affect leadership effectiveness?**

There are a number of definitions for leadership. However for the purpose of this research leadership is defined as “a process of social influence through which particular attitudes and behaviours are harnessed towards the realisation of group goal” (Subašić, Reynolds, Turner, Veenstra, & Haslam, 2011, p. 170). Leadership effectiveness on the other hand refers to the ability of a leader to positively impact the following key performance indicators namely profit, market share and customer service (Hogan et al., 1994). As previously mentioned, literature states that the primary responsibility of a leader is to create and entrench a shared group social identity in order to combine the individual efforts towards a share goal (Steffens et al., 2014). A shared social identity is important to ensure leadership effectiveness (Van Knippenberg, 2011). This is because a shared social identity acts a benchmark on the appropriate and desired behaviours and creates alignment between individual's interests and those of the group (Van

Knippenberg, 2011). Furthermore, because individuals use their internal prototypes in order to construct their concept of a leader, the closer an individual is to that prototype the greater the probability they will be viewed and accepted as a leader (Gentry et al., 2010). Therefore, the purpose of this research question was to understand the impact of social groups, specifically fitting in or belonging to these social groups, on the leadership effectiveness of the interviewees.

According to Brown (1999), SIT has been linked to bias, stereotypes and gender inequality issues. In this study, 92% of the interviewees reported experiencing racial or gender bias in their leadership positions. This result can be explained by previous studies that state that the historical roles of men and women have shaped society's behavioural expectations of both genders (Gloor et al., 2018). As a result, the typical characteristics that shape female prototypes tend to be communal i.e. nurturing, gentle and submissive (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Furthermore, because of their past dominance, most leadership roles are typically associated with males (Livingston et al., 2012). Consequently prototypical leadership qualities include aggression, dominance and self-promotion (Livingston et al., 2012). Moreover, because women of colour do not fit the typical racial and gender stereotypes, they are neither prototypical of blacks and women (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Consequently the literature seems to explain why the majority of the participants did not view themselves as fitting in with the majority of the groups within their organisation. According to the literature the negative consequences associated with not representing the prototypical leader include pressure to conform, pressure to perform and a struggle to gain trust (Liu et al., 2015; Powell, 2012). The findings presented in chapter five are in line with the literature. Respondents reported being challenged, undermined, not listened to and feeling the pressure to work twice as hard as their peers. This is linked to literature that states that due to their limited representation, women of colour are likely to experience tokenism which results in heightened levels of visibility, scrutiny and performance pressures (Glass & Cook, 2016). However, despite not belonging to the majority of the social groups, the majority of the participants did not report this impacting their leadership effectiveness negatively. On the surface this seems to contradict the literature to literature. However authenticity, drive and inclusivity are some of the differences mentioned by the interviewees which as previously mentioned have been linked to effective leadership (Mayer et al., 2017) .

Finally, the pressure to work harder than their counterparts is corroborated by literature that has found women are more likely to use traditional methods such as hard work and qualifications in order to succeed (Hoobler et al., 2014). Moreover, when women of colour achieve success in corporate, the label of "superwomen" and the related

expectation of outperforming their peers, is often ascribed to them (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). As a result they tend to struggle in establishing boundaries when it comes to extra work and doubt their abilities and talents when they are not able to meet these unrealistic goals (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). This literature further cements our understanding on why the respondents in the study consistently mentioned feeling pressure to perform and work harder than their peers. However for 31% of the interviewees, their gender actually had a positive impact on their leadership effectiveness. Respondents mentioned being more inclusive, empathetic better at problem solving and multitasking as some of the positive abilities that increased their leadership effectiveness. Once again this corresponds to the female leadership advantage stated literature (Liu et al., 2015).

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## **Chapter 7**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This study set out to understand how a select group of black female professionals successfully navigated the challenging labyrinth of leadership in the private sector in South Africa. As described in chapter two, the metaphor of a labyrinth was used because it captures the uneven and complex path that women navigate throughout their careers (Carli & Eagly, 2016). Employment Equity statistics presented in chapter one suggest that whilst overall there has been some progress in driving gender equity at senior and top management levels, when race and gender are combined the private sector continues to lag behind (Department of Labour, 2018). Twenty four years into democracy, black female professionals make up only 5.4% and 3.3% of senior and top management roles respectively in the private sector in South Africa (Department of Labour, 2018).

There is a great deal of literature concerning women and leadership primarily from a western perspective (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). However, there is a need for more research that takes into account the ideological, cultural and social contexts of these women (Odhiambo, 2011). Furthermore, whilst growing, literature documenting African female leaders stories remains somewhat limited (Odhiambo, 2011). Therefore underpinned by a SIT framework, this exploratory study set out to firstly explore the experiences of thirteen black female professionals, secondly understand the impact of these experiences on their identities and finally explore the impact of these experiences on their effectiveness as leaders.

Through a summary of the findings, this chapter presents the conclusions of this study. Linked to these conclusions, the implications for theory and business are presented. Finally the limitations and areas for future research are presented.

### **7.2 Research Findings**

By exploring the leadership journeys of thirteen black female professionals in the private sector, this study has successfully answered the following research questions outlined in chapter three namely:



- What strategies have female senior executives successfully utilised in overcoming barriers?
- How black female senior executives' professional experiences have shaped their professional and personal identities?
- How do women's membership in social groups affect leadership effectiveness?

In line with the literature, the findings of this study confirm that the leadership journey of black women is a tough, complex and challenging journey. Black female professionals experience a number of external and internal barriers on their ascent up the corporate ladder. And whilst difficult, these challenges often build up key leadership competencies within these women. Consequently, this research has shown that it is often these competencies that are their differentiators and contributors to their success, a sentiment echoed in literature. According to Bass (2009), women of colour are likely to have negative experiences associated with race and gender but it is this very experience that has built their capacity to navigate complex and diverse communities. Secondly, past experiences and social groups play a role in shaping the identity of an individual (Kwok et al., 2018). These findings were confirmed in the study where the majority of the participants mentioned changes to their personal and professional identities due to their professional experiences. Finally, at its core, leadership is an interpersonal process of influence between leaders and their subordinates (Sanchez-Hucles, et al., 2010). As a result social identity plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of leaders (Van Knippenberg, 2011). However, not representing the prototypical leader in corporate South Africa did not have a negative impact on their leadership effectiveness. This apparent contradiction was explained by the fact that the factors that differentiated the participants from the social groups, were the contributors to their success.

### **7.2.1 Barriers and Strategies of Success**

As previously mentioned there is a significant amount of research that has recorded the challenges that female professionals face as they ascend up the corporate ladder (Cook & Glass, 2014b). These challenges arise from personal, relational, cultural, societal and organisational barriers (Peus et al., 2015). In this study 100% of the respondents reported to experiencing some type of barrier over the course of their careers. Authors have found that the most commonly found barriers in the workplace include gender stereotypes or bias, exclusion from social networks, inflexible organisational policies, competing responsibilities between the home and workplace, low

levels of self-confidence and a lack of mentors and role models (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; O'Neil et al., 2015; Sabharwal, 2015). In this study, the most common challenge experienced by the 92% participants was gender and racial bias. For almost half of these participants they experienced both gender and racial bias. This was proof of the concrete ceiling that black female professionals have to break through (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). Moreover, SIT has been linked to bias, stereotypes and gender inequality issues (Brown, 1999). Furthermore, in line with the literature presented in chapter patriarchy and the queen bee syndrome were some of the barriers encountered by the participants. As a result the leadership journey of these women was filled with experiences of discrimination, isolation, challenges to their competence authority and power (Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

However, it has been argued that it is these negative experiences of race and gender that have contributed in building the capacity to understand, manage and navigate complex and diverse situations (Bass, 2009). Successful strategies utilised by female professionals include a strong work ethic, drive, resilience, authenticity, self-confidence and strong support system that includes mentors and social networks (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). The findings of this study were consistent with literature as the majority of the respondents described hard work, drive, authenticity, self-belief, resilience and mentorship as key contributors to their success.

### **7.2.1 Impact on identity**

Past experiences and social groups play a crucial role in shaping an individual's identity, which in turn determines how they behave and process information in an environment (Kwok et al., 2018). For the majority of the participants in this study, their professional experiences shaped both their personal and professional identities. As presented in chapter five, the majority of the changes reported by the participants were positive and were similar to the components of success mentioned in the previous section i.e. confidence, resilience, strong work ethic and self-belief. Furthermore, for some of the participants in this study, these changes had a positive impact on their personal lives. Previous research has found that in general women tend to have lower levels of confidence than men and are more likely to underestimate their abilities (O'Neil et al., 2015). Some literature has suggested that the source of this self-doubt is internal (O'Neil et al., 2015). However, findings from this study show that the increase in self-doubt was external and linked to negative professional experiences. A likely explanation of this self-

doubt is found in literature that states consistent exposure to negative stereotypes and bias can eventually decrease an individual's self-worth and sense of belonging (Good et al., 2012).

Finally, in line with a social identity framework the theme of belonging or fitting in was explored in this study. Literature suggests that people are motivated to conform to the behaviours and norms of social groups in order to belong thereby reducing personal uncertainty (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). This was in contradiction to the findings presented in chapter five that revealed that 92% of the participants in the study viewed themselves as being different to their peers. Furthermore, all the participants were comfortable with this difference. However this apparent contradiction is explained by literature that has found that women of colour generally do not share gender or race with the majority of their colleagues (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Reported differences include differences in education, work ethic and focus on people. As previously mentioned these differences have been linked to the female leadership advantage stated literature (Liu et al., 2015).

### **7.2.3 Group Membership and leadership effectiveness.**

Leadership effectiveness refers to the ability of a leader to positively impact the following key performance indicators namely profit, market share and customer service (Hogan et al., 1994). Additionally, one of the key responsibilities of a leader is to create a shared social group identity which is vital in enabling leadership effectiveness (Steffens et al., 2014; Van Knippenberg, 2011). This is because a shared social identity acts a benchmark on the appropriate and desired behaviours and creates an alignment between an individual's interests and those of the group (Van Knippenberg, 2011). Furthermore, individuals use their internal prototypes to construct their concept of a leader (Gentry et al., 2010). Therefore, the closer one is to that prototype, the more likely it is that they will be accepted as leader (Gentry et al., 2010). Finally, most leadership prototypes are typically associated with white males (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Livingston et al., 2012). Therefore in line with the literature, the majority of the participants in this study reported to not belonging to the majority of the groups. However, this did not negatively impact their leadership effectiveness. As previously mentioned the differences noted by the participants were the enablers of their success as leaders. Nevertheless, 92% of the interviewees reported experiencing racial or gender bias in their leadership positions which primarily had a negative impact on their leadership effectiveness. This

can be explained by the fact that black female professionals generally do not fit the prototypes of race and gender (Sesko & Biernat, 2010).

The negative outcomes associated with not representing the prototypical leader include pressure to perform and conform and a struggle to gain trust (Liu et al., 2015; Powell, 2012). Furthermore, for black female professionals their token status due to their minority status results in heightened levels of visibility, scrutiny and performance pressures (Glass & Cook, 2016). The findings presented in this study confirmed this reality articulated in literature. Participants of this study, reported being challenged, undermined, not listened to and feeling the pressure to work twice as hard as their peers to justify their leadership appointments. However, a strong self-belief and work ethic, a more inclusive approach and knowledge enabled them to succeed in spite of these challenges. However in opposition to the literature, 31% of the interviewees reported their gender actually had a positive impact on their leadership effectiveness. Respondents mentioned being more inclusive, empathetic better at problem solving and multitasking as some of the positive abilities that increased their leadership effectiveness. Once again this corresponds to the female leadership advantage stated literature that has reported that women tend to be more inclusive and people orientated (Liu et al., 2015).

### **7.3 Implications for Business**

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership journeys of black female professionals in the private sector. This was done in order to increase the understanding within business of their unique and challenging journeys and to build on the academic literature documenting their journeys. Based on the findings presented in chapter five and six, the following is recommended:

- Given the shortage of black female professionals in leadership positions, organisations have created acceleration programs to fast track key talent. Incorporating the learnings from this study, it is important that these programs include cross functional experience, post graduate education, coaching and mentorship. Furthermore, organisations should create social networks or provide access to social networks where candidates can engage with other women especially black female professionals.

- In spite of laws and legislation that has been passed in South Africa since 2004 gender and racial bias was a prominent problem that came through the research. In some cases, the bias or prejudice was unconscious and typically anchored in historical social and cultural norms. With this in mind, it is recommended that organisations host diversity workshops that celebrate the differences between races and gender but also facilitate honest and open communication amongst participants. Moreover, it is important in these workshops openly discuss the legacy of Apartheid and its impact today. Finally, in order for these interventions to be meaningful, they should occur relatively frequently (once per quarter) and be held in small groups.
- Racial and gender inequality starts at the first promotion. Taking on learnings from this study on the importance of mentorship, it is recommended that organisations create mentorship programs that target different levels across the organisations for example management trainees, managers, directors etc. Furthermore, it is important that middle and senior management participation in these mentorship programs is formalised and measured particularly for those who aspire to higher leadership positions. For example a manager cannot move to the next level unless they have been a mentor to a younger colleague.
- Finally given their dual responsibilities both in the home and the workplace and in line with findings from previous literature and this study, it is recommended that organisations adopt flexible work place policies such as agile work policies, crèches at the workplace and full pay during maternity leave.

#### **7.4 Limitations**

There are a number of limitations that have been identified for this study. Firstly, this was an exploratory study and given the limited number of interviewees, the learnings from this study cannot be applied to the rest of the population (Kerrin & Pearson, 2018). Secondly, due to convenience and snowball sampling techniques used, the diversity of the sample is limited. In fact, 85% of the participants work in the FMCG industry and only 15% of them are over the age of 45. Consequently, the findings of this study are within a relatively specific context and age range. Furthermore, the study only explored the leadership journeys of black female professionals therefore findings cannot be applied to other minorities such as black male professionals or white female professionals. Furthermore, the limited amount of time spent with the interviewees may have impacted the of depth data and insights received from the participants. Finally, the construct of

leadership effectiveness was measured from the view of the participants and did not include any feedback from their subordinates or peers.

## **7.5 Suggestions for Future Research**

This study set out to understand how a select group of black female professionals successfully navigated the challenging labyrinth of leadership in the private sector in South Africa. Issues of racial bias came through strongly in this study, therefore it is recommended that future studies incorporate black male professionals in order to compare differences and similarities, especially given the impact of patriarchy noted in this study. Additionally in line with the previous recommendations, future studies that specifically incorporate white female professionals is recommended, especially considering that on the surface statistics suggest they have been relatively more successful on their journeys. Finally, taking into account their cultural context, the themes of patriarchy and the need to be assertive, strong, and independent in order to succeed in business, it is recommended that a study that explores how black female professionals manage these multiple identities.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to understand how a select group of black female executives successfully managed to navigate the challenges they faced in the private sector. Utilising data gathered from thirteen qualitative interviews, this study achieved its objective of building the literature that documents that the leadership journeys of female African leaders. In agreement with literature, this study found that black female professionals encounter a number of external and internal barriers on their leadership journeys and adopt a number of coping strategies in order to overcome these challenges. Furthermore, this study found that these experiences played a role in shaping their personal and professional identities. Ultimately, it is these very challenges and experiences that have equipped them to be better, authentic and ultimately effective leaders in their organisations. Social groups and their impact was also explored in this study. Our findings suggest that whilst the fitting in or belonging is an important human need, for majority of the participants not fitting wasn't an issue, however it did have an impact on their identities. However in contrast to the literature, it did not have a negative impact on their leadership effectiveness.



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## Annexure A – Workforce Movement and Skills Development Tables

Appendix A - Workforce movement and skills development at senior and top management in South Africa

	MALE				FEMALE				FOREIGN NATIONAL		TOTAL
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Male	Female	
Workforce profile-all employees	19 893	6 657	9 865	55 710	11 150	4 210	5 076	26 073	3 220	1 009	142 863
	13.9%	4.7%	6.9%	39.0%	7.8%	2.9%	3.6%	18.3%	2.3%	0.7%	100.0%
Recruitment	15.0%	4.6%	6.4%	37.7%	9.8%	3.0%	3.6%	16.1%	2.9%	0.9%	100.0%
Promotion	17.8%	5.5%	7.5%	29.0%	11.2%	4.0%	5.0%	17.2%	1.9%	0.9%	100.0%
Terminations	12.9%	4.6%	6.1%	42.3%	7.1%	2.7%	3.2%	16.8%	3.2%	1.0%	100.0%
Skills development	28.8%	1.3%	12.2%	23.2%	28.1%	1.2%	1.1%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Figure 9: Workforce movement and skills development at senior management (Department of Labour, 2017).

Table 10: Workforce Movement and Skills Development at Top Management level

TABLE 10: WORKFORCE MOVEMENT AT TOP MANAGEMENT LEVEL BY RACE AND GENDER											
	MALE				FEMALE				FOREIGN NATIONAL		TOTAL
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Male	Female	
Workforce profile-all employees	5 867	1 924	3 895	33 192	2 705	1 030	1 395	7 673	1 704	310	59 695
	9.8%	3.2%	6.5%	55.6%	4.5%	1.7%	2.3%	12.9%	2.9%	0.5%	100.0%
Recruitment	19.4%	3.4%	5.6%	40.1%	9.6%	1.8%	3.5%	10.6%	5.3%	0.6%	100.0%
Promotion	13.0%	5.0%	7.9%	37.7%	7.8%	3.4%	4.6%	17.4%	2.3%	0.9%	100.0%
Terminations	14.5%	3.6%	4.9%	49.1%	7.2%	1.7%	1.8%	11.6%	4.8%	0.8%	100.0%
Skills Development	65.8%	1.8%	2.9%	17.0%	3.6%	1.2%	1.6%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Figure 10- Workforce movement and skills development at senior management (Department of Labour, 2017).

## Annexure B - Letter of Consent and Interview Protocol

### 1. Letter of Consent



#### Dear Participant

My name is Thabile Khuzwayo and I am a MBA student studying at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). I am currently in the process of completing the compulsory research report component of my degree. My research is titled **An exploratory study of the leadership experiences of senior African female executives in the private sector**. I am trying to understand their leadership journeys of senior female executives and the evolution of their identities. I humbly request the opportunity to interview you regarding this topic and subsequently be allowed to use the data gathered from the interview for the completion of my research report.

Interviews can take place via skype or at a location of your choice. They will be approximately 60 minutes long. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. The audio recording of this interview is also voluntary and you may choose not to be recorded.

In line with GIBS, all the information gathered will be kept confidential and will only be collected for the purpose of the research report. Data will be stored without identifiers.

If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor on the details provided below.

Kind Regards

Thabile Khuzwayo

17393567

Email: 17393567@mygibs.co.za

Phone: 082 885 9178

Research Supervisor name: Dr Zukiswa Mthimunye

Email: mthimunyez@gibs.co.za

Signature of participant:

Date: 24 August 2018

Signature of researcher:

Date: 24 August 2018

Permission to record the interview granted

1. Yes
2. No

## **2. Interview Protocol**

### **Demographics**

1. What is your age?
2. In which sector is your organization in?
3. What is your level of seniority?
4. How would you describe the demographics your organization?

### **RQ 1 What strategies have senior female black executives successfully utilized in overcoming barriers?**

1. Can you please share your professional story and how you managed to get to your current position?
2. What were your most critical work experiences, that enabled you to get to your current leadership position?
3. What were some of the barriers you faced as you climbed the corporate ladder?
4. What were the lessons that you learnt that helped you overcome those barriers?

(Bowles, 2012)

### **RQ 2 How black female senior executives' professional experiences have shaped their professional and personal identities?**

1. Over the course of your career, how if at all, has your personality or identity changed both professionally and personally?

2. What changes do you like and what changes don't you like?
3. As a black female in the private sector, in what ways if at all, have you seen yourself as being different to the majority of your colleagues?
4. How has this influenced your professional and personal identity?
5. As a black female in the private sector, can you tell me about a time where you have felt pressure to behave or act in a certain way in order to be successful?
6. Can you describe if at all, how this has influenced your identity both personally and professionally?

(Meister et al., 2017), (April et al., 2007)

**RQ 3 How do women's membership in social groups affect leadership effectiveness?**

1. How would describe your experience as a leader within your organisation?
2. What biases or stereotypes have you encountered in your leadership position?
3. Would you describe yourself as fitting in or belonging to the majority of the groups within your organisation?
4. How if at all, has this impacted on your leadership effectiveness?
5. How if at all, do you think your race has had an impact on your effectiveness as leader?
6. How if at all, do you think your gender has had an impact on your effectiveness as leader?
7. As leader in your organisation, how do you believe you have most effectively earned the respect of your team and colleagues?

(Aaltion & Huang, 2007; Silver, Benitez, Armstrong, & Tussey, 2018)

## Annexure C - Ethics Approval



Dear Thabile

*Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved. You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.*

*Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained*

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

*Kind Regards*

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

14 August 2018

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**University of Pretoria**

## List of Codes

### ATLAS.ti Report

#### Interviews

#### Codes

Report created by Thabile on 07 Nov 2018

- **Ability to say no**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **academic Achiever at school**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Accesible leadership**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Adapting leadership style**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Add Value**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Advantages of Mobility**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Affrimative action**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Aggressive behaviour**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **agile work policies**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Allow people to grow**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Always Figthing**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Ambitious goals**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Appreciate different types of perspectives/views**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile



- **Appreciation of your uniquenesses**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Armouring**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **articulating yourself**

**Created:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile

- **Asking for help**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Assertive & Confidence**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Avoiding Conflict & holding other accountable**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Awareness of leadership style**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Bad experinces making you better**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **barrier**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Barrier For Women**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Barriers**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Barriers : Age**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Being Authentic**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Being Authentic (yourself)**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Being yourself & authentic (real)

- **Being Brave and courageous**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Being Empathetic**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Being Empathetic,less judgemental**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **being firmer, more articulate**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Being peoples champions**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Being Present where you are**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Being superwomen**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Believing that you have to be strong and solve all the problems on your own

- **Being told to remain calm**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Being Tough**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Being undermined/underestimated because of racism**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Being vocal**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **being vocal about what you want**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Being vocal and knowledgeable**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Beloning/Fitting in**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Beloning/Fitting in - dont**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Beloning/Fitting in - impact**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Benefit of Diversity**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Benefits**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Best version of you**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Bias - sticking to people like you**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Bias against females & impact**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Bias: blacks who speak english well promotable**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Black Tax**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Blocking each other from opportunities**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **boys club behaviour**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Breaking down mental barriers**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Buliding relationships and being visible**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Buliding support network from different pple in organisation**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Burning Out**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **can make mistakes**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Challenge the status quo**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Clear vision of career**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Early clear about what she wanted to achieve

○ **coaching others**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

○ **collobaration**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

○ **Comfortable in own skin**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Comfortable with conflict**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Commitment due to engagment**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Communal Leader**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

○ **Comparisons with colleagues**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

○ **Comptency and Behavioural standars**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Confidence in yourself**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Conforming**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Connecting with people**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

○ **conscious leadership**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

○ **Consistency**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Constant Adaption**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Constant Reassurance of self**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Constant revision**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Context impact**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Continous learning**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Continuously learning on the job or enhancing your qualifications

- **Continually having to prove yourself**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Cost**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Created opportunities**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **creating better environment for others**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Creating Groups**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Refers to when participatns created social groups/professional groups with other females.

- **Creating space to make mistakes**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Cross Functional Experience**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Cross Functional Experince**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Crucial conversations**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Refers to being comfortable to have difficult/challenging conversations with people

- **culture**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Delivering for your people**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Delivering the result**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Demographics - mixed**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **demographics @ senior level**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Refers to the race and female demographics at a higher levels

- **Demographics: age**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Demographics: Gender**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Refers gender demographics of organisation

- **Demographics: Gender. & Race**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Demographics: job function**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Demographics: Race**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Racial demographics of organisation

- **Destressing Activities**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Different to majority of colleagues**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Different to majority of colleagues: Background**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **difficult to bulid rapport**

**Created:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile

- **Disempowerment**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Diversity : Driven by senior leadership**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Duration**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Early exposure to good leaders**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Early exposure to good leaders in their careers

- **Early start into management roles**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **earning credibility**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Education as an enabler**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Refers to education being a key driver of their success - always seeking additional post graduate qualifications

- **Elevating thinking**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Empathetic**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Endorsement**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Enhancing community**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **equal to others/team**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Equally supported**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Equally supported like fellow colleagues

- **Exclusionary Behaviour**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Experience as enabler**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Extended family as suport structure**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Family Work Balance Challenges**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Fear in women**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Fearless**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Describes the ability to brave and take chances

- **Femine Approach to leadership**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Feminime Stereotypes - how to fight against it**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **fight bias**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Fighting for what you want**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Fitting in Takes Time**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Flexible Organisational Policies**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **focused on the team**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Forcing your way in**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Frequent change has helped her to adapt quickly to environment**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile



- **Future opportunities**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Gender Pay discrepancy**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Get things done without breaking people**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Getting my hands dirty**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Glass Cliff**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Taking on difficult job or an area that is doing poorly

- **Goal Orientated**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Growth in self confidence**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Gulit**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Hard Work**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Have to make choices**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Having to prove you are as good as male counterparts**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Helping you people grow**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Higher Expectations due to race & gender**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Holding other accountable**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Holistic understanding of business**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

○ **I think my break through just came from being an academic achiever at school**

**Created:** 2018/10/27 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/27 by Thabile

○ **Impact**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

○ **Impact of managment role**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

● **Impact of Race and Gender**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

○ **Impact of Race on leadership effectiveness**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

○ **Impact of seeing other succesful women**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Impatience**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

○ **Importance of Developing others**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

○ **Inclusion**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

○ **Inclusive**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

○ **Inclusive company culture**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

○ **Inclusive leadership**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

○ **Incorrect implementation of legislation**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

○ **Influencing oothers**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

○ **Influencing others**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

○ **Insipiratio leadership**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Inspiring team**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **int**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Internall Pressure**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Internationl Exposure**

**Created:** 2018/10/17 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/17 by Thabile

- **Justifying appointment**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Keeping your word**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Knowledge about role**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **lack of access**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Lack of barriers**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **lack of diversity**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Lack of doubt**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Lack of recognition for work**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **lack of resourcing**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Lack of sensitivity**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Lateral Moves**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Leadership effectiveness**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Leadership effectiveness**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Leadership experience**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Leadership quality**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Leadership role**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Legacy of leadership**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Limited funds to go to university**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Listening**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Key competency required to win

- **Lonely at the top**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **low tolerance for expectations not being met**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Luck**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Lucky break**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Lucky break disadvantages**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Making Trade Offs/Sacrifices**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Male Confidence**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Male leadership style**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Management development program**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Managing conflict**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Refers to the ability to be comfortable with dealing with conflict

- **Managing stakeholders**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **managing upwards**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Masters Program**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Masters Program studies to enhance qualifications

- **Matrix org - overlap of responsibilities**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Men struggling to connect with women**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Mentorship**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **mentoship**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **mirroring male behaviour**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Mobility**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Money**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Motivational leadership**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Navigating Politics at Work**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Networking Responsibilities**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **No change to professional identity**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **No changes to personal identity**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **No difference to the majority of colleagues**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **No stereotypes/biases experinced**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Not Being Vocal**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Onsite creche/daycare**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Open communication in team**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Open to Feedback**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **organisational policies to promote & develop young talent**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Other Racial Stereotypes - Coloured**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **outcome focused**

**Created:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile

- **overcoming limitations**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Overcoming the bias**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Own Definition of success**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Passionate**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Patriarchy**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Patriarchy impact on behaviour**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **People pleaser**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **People shocked that you have an opinion**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Performance Driven Culture**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Persistence**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Personal changes**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Personal Impact**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Plan Plan Plan**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Planning of activities**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Practicality**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Pregnancy as a barrier**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Pressure to be the saviour of everyone**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Pressure to confirm driven by role**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **pressure to perform**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/31 by Thabile

- **Prioritised to advance and grow**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Priotisation**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Profession**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Professional**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Professonal Identity Change**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Promotion - merit only**

**Created:** 2018/10/17 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/17 by Thabile

- **Promotion Policies: Merit based**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Proper Planning by Organisation**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Prorities to advance and grow**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Protecting other women**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Pushing yourself very hard**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Putting in extra hours**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Queen bee pheonomen**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Women attacking each other or senior women attacking those lower down

- **Quotas**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Refers to quotas set by organisations to achieve diversity

- **Racial dynamics in SA & impact**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile



- **Racial element**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Racial quotas**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Racisim**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Racisim from other black managers**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Real authentic engagement**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Recruitment Practices : bias black & female**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Reflecting on bad experinces**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Refusal to assiumulate**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Refusing to sucking up**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Refusing to sucking up (personal)**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Reject status quo**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Rejection of race or gender bias**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Remuneration - lack of**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Resiliant**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Quality that has helped the women succeed

- **Respect**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Respect for Elders - impact**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Role Congruity**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Role Modles**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Scholarship**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Seeking to improve things**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Seeking to understand**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Self Acceptance**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **self Belief**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **self created barriers**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Self Development Focus**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Self Doubt : Internal barriers**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Self imposed limitations**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Self Motivation/Drive**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Shadowing mentor**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Signalling early on**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Social Networks**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Social networks that can help build you & your career

- **Societal role expectations**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Spirituality**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Sponsored by senior male manager**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Spousal support**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Stereotypes**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Stereotypes - female expectations**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Stereotypes on African Talent**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Stereotypes - Gender bias**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Stereotypes - Gender Roles Expectations**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Stern without being aggressive**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Stereotypes - cultural**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Stick to the basics**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Sticking to your convictions/values**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Stop ourselves from taking on big roles**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Stretching and Challenging Roles**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Stretching yourself**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Strong belief in values**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Subtle discrimination**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **successs**

**Created:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile

- **Sucking up to superiors**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Changing or adapting your behaviour in order to impress superiors

- **Support from other collugues**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **support structure at home**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Supporting and correting your people**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Supportive leader**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Supportive organisation structures**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Supportive Spouse**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Surrounding myself with people smarter than me**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Systematic frustation in role**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Taking on more responsibility without help**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Taking people along with you on the journey**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Teaching people how to treat you**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **To conform**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **To understand**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Top & Senior Management**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Transparent & open**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Understanding of yourself & abilities**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

**Comment:**

Refers to comfort about you abilities and limitations

- **Understanding your context**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Understanding your people**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Unequal playing field**

**Created:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/22 by Thabile

- **Variety of roles**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **vulnerable**

**Created:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/24 by Thabile

- **Wanting to be liked by others**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **White male colleagues given more opportunities**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **White male mentors**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **White males**

**Created:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/21 by Thabile

- **Window Dressing : Affirmative Action/BEE**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **with different races**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Women as Barriers to succes**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

**Comment:**

women acting as barriers to other women in organisations

- **Work Family Balance**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Working Extra hours (quotes)**

**Created:** 2018/10/17 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/17 by Thabile

- **Working Hard & Being Knowledgeble**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile

- **Working harder**

**Created:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/23 by Thabile

- **Zero Impact of Race & Gender**

**Created:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile, **Modified:** 2018/10/19 by Thabile