

THE SEPARATION SPIRAL: MODELLING VOLUNTARY TURNOVER OF WOMEN EXECUTIVES

By

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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

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to gain a thorough understanding of the reasons for the high voluntary turnover amongst women executives in South African organisations.

Twenty-one, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with senior South African businesswomen in order to establish the reasons they had terminated their employment contracts. The feedback was analysed using a combination of narrative, content and constant comparative analysis. Snowball sampling generated a participant base of women with an average tenure of 8 years in their previous organisations; who collectively managed budgets exceeding R80 billion and were responsible for approximately 150 000 staff members.

The main reasons why these women left their organisations included the following: the need to make a difference, their exclusion from male social networks, their incompatibility with the paternalistic organisational culture, a perceived lack of organisational sponsorship and support, a values clash between the individual and the organisation or with one individual in the organisation and problems with their direct supervisor or board of directors. After experiencing a general feeling of uneasiness and dissatisfaction most of the women resigned as a result of a specific incident occurring in their organisational life. This paper offers insights into why women executives leave organisations and shows that the much discussed glass ceiling and family support networks do not feature as valid resignation reasons for women who have been successful in their careers for many years. It also presents the separation spiral - a model of the process that is followed when women executives voluntarily terminate their employment contracts.

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters 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.

Desray Clark

Date

Dedication

For:

My parents, Margie and Lionel who help me remember my roots,

My husband, Mike whose support is the thermal on which I fly and

My children, Courtz and Glen, who give each flight meaning.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the following people for their valued contribution:-

Nicola Kleyn my supervisor, for asking the tough questions and for intuitively guiding me through an unconventional process which aligned perfectly with my objectives, surpassing all my expectations regarding the role of a supervisor.

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Submission Overview

This research submission takes the form of a journal article that will be submitted to *Women in Management Review*, an international journal published by Emerald.

The submission is made up of seven sections which are each presented as separate appendices and appear in the following order:-

Appendix 1 – Article

The article for submission is titled “The Separation Spiral - Modelling Voluntary Turnover of Women Executives”, and is included as Appendix 1. It includes a structured abstract, a list of keywords, research limitations and adheres to the specifications set out in the journal’s guidelines to authors.

Appendix 2 – Literature Review

A separate, comprehensive literature review is included as Appendix 2. The review of the literature analyses the issues that women face in business as well as an in-depth analysis of labour turnover - its causes and consequences. A further analysis of the South African labour turnover situation pertaining particularly to women is included as Appendix 2-1.

Appendix 3 – Interview Schedule

A mindmap of the interview schedule is included in appendix 3; this schedule details the demographic details that were gleaned from respondents as well as the prompts that were used in order to obtain in-depth information from each person.

Appendix 4 – Respondent Database

The MS-Excel respondent database is included in Appendix 4. The database contains a list of the following information regarding each respondent: their previous positions, job titles, job size, tenure and demographic detail. Each respondents' interview notes are available on request.

Appendix 5 - Author Guidelines – Women in Management Review

The author guidelines for Women in Management Review are included as Appendix 5.

Appendix 6 – Journal Article Review Form

The Women in Management Review journal article review form is included as Appendix 6, the review form includes a submission checklist.

Appendix 7 – Supervisor Letter

A letter from the research supervisor, Nicola Kleyn is attached as Appendix 7; the dual purpose of which is firstly to assure the article adequately conforms to Women in Management Review's submission requirements and secondly to undertake that the article will be submitted to the aforementioned journal by the end of May 2007.

APPENDIX 1: ARTICLE

THE SEPARATION SPIRAL – MODELLING VOLUNTARY TURNOVER OF WOMEN EXECUTIVES

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Structured Abstract

Purpose

The aim of this exploratory study is to gain a thorough understanding of the reasons for the high voluntary turnover amongst women executives in South African organisations.

Methodology

Snowball sampling generated a participant base of twenty-one senior South African businesswomen with an average tenure of 8 years in their previous organisations; who collectively managed budgets exceeding R80 billion and were responsible for approximately 150 000 staff members.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with participants in order to establish the reasons they had terminated their employment contracts. The feedback was analysed using a combination of narrative, content and constant comparative analysis.

Findings

The main reasons why these women left their organisations included the following: the need to make a difference, their exclusion from male social networks, their

incompatibility with the paternalistic organisational culture, a perceived lack of organisational sponsorship and support, a values clash between the individual and the organisation or with one individual in the organisation, and problems with their direct supervisor or board of directors. After experiencing a general feeling of uneasiness and dissatisfaction, most of the women resigned as a result of a specific incident occurring in their organisational life.

Research Limitations

These findings are limited to South African executive women who voluntarily terminated their employment contracts. It might not be possible to generalise these findings across different age or gender groups, or across organisation levels or countries. Furthermore the appropriateness of extrapolating these findings to women who remain in organisations is questionable.

Originality/Value

This paper offers insights into why women executives leave organisations and shows that the much discussed glass ceiling and family support networks do not feature as valid reasons for resignation by women who have been successful in their careers for many years. It also presents the separation spiral - a descriptive model of the process that is followed when women executives voluntarily terminate their employment contracts.

Keywords

Voluntary Turnover, Women Executives, Social Networks, Burnout, Glass Ceiling, Intimidation.

Type of Paper

This article is a research paper.

Introduction

"... I am Woman, Phenomenally, Phenomenal Woman, That's me."

Maya Angelou

Given the benefits of a gender diverse workforce, it is a strange phenomenon that South African corporations appear unable to retain senior women, even though the retention of women executives produces long-term competitive advantage and improved company performance (Catalyst, 2005a; Hewlett and Luce, 2005; Krishnan and Park, 2005; The Businesswomen's Association and Synovate, 2006). If companies are aspiring or, as in the case of South Africa's Black Economic Empowerment policy, being legislatively compelled to become gender diverse, it becomes crucial for them to retain their women executives (Republic of South Africa, 2006).

Labour turnover is described as voluntary if the employee initiates the separation and as involuntary if the employer drives the decision (Maertz and Campion, 1998; Sutherland, 2003). Evidence suggests women's voluntary turnover rates are increasing when compared to that of their male counterparts. The findings of studies conducted more than five years ago assert that female managers either resign at marginally lower rates than their male counterparts or that the voluntary turnover rate of women and men is equal (Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner, 2000; Lyness and Judiesch, 2001). In a recent study and in direct contrast to the aforementioned findings; Krishnan, Park and Kilbourne (2006) assert that in America, women on top management teams resign at twice the rate of men. In South Africa this situation is intensified and the average voluntary turnover rate of South African women

executives is 17.15 % which is three times the rate of their male counterparts (Republic of South Africa, 2004). Organisations that wish to address issues surrounding the voluntary turnover of their women executives and to establish retention strategies need to understand the reasons why women resign.

In order to gain an insight into an individual's turnover behaviour, it is beneficial to understand the context within which the individual operates. This milieu is underpinned by the systems nature of organisations, their members and their environments (Senge, 1990). Concomitant with this view, Yukondi and Benson (2005) propose the adoption of a systems approach when considering a study of women in management and call for a gender-organisation-system perspective to be used. Johns (2006) further emphasises the necessity of analysing the context of any situation or decision and furnishes several examples of why previous acontextual studies regarding voluntary turnover are not as valid as they would have been, had they considered the context within which the decision to quit was made. A systems approach was therefore adopted for this exploratory study, the aim of which was to gain a deep understanding of the causes of voluntary turnover of women executives by examining the contexts within which they made their decisions.

The paper is structured as follows: Firstly, a review of the literature is presented, followed by an overview of the qualitative methodology that was employed. The results are then presented and discussed during which the separation spiral (a model of women executives' voluntary turnover) is introduced. In conclusion, a few practical implications for individuals, organisations and researchers are provided.

Theoretical Background

The review of the literature involves a discussion of possible determinants of voluntary labour turnover, viewed within the contextual systems framework of the individual within the organisation and the environment.

It is recommended by Krishnan *et al* (2006) that the determinants of voluntary turnover be examined at three levels, namely environmental, organisational and individual; thereby acknowledging the systems nature of individuals within their organisations and environments. However, it is useful to examine turnover determinants at an additional level. This level - the spanning level - encompasses the relationship between each aforementioned level (Cook and Hunsaker, 2001).

Environmental factors are those that exist outside the boundaries of the organisation, such as political factors, society's culture and behaviour, technological changes, economic and legal factors. These are factors over which the organisation does not have direct control (Cook and Hunsaker, 2001). Organisational factors are those within the boundaries of the organisation, such as staff policies and procedures, and the structure, strategy and culture of the organisation. These factors are controlled by the organisation (Cook and Hunsaker, 2001; Cummings and Worley, 2005). Individual factors are those that are unique to each person, such as life stage, family circumstances and their needs, wants and aspirations (Cummings and Worley, 2005). Individuals, the organisations for which they work and the environment incessantly interact and affect each other; the boundaries of each are fluid and constantly changing (Senge, 1990). This type of system is therefore known as an open, dynamic system and as such has spanning forces that are

representative of the interaction between each entity (Cook and Hunsaker, 2001). Possible factors causing voluntary turnover within each of these system components will be discussed below.

Environmental Factors

The global skills shortage of well-trained talent results in the high level of demand and consequential ease of movement and job opportunities in the current labour market. According to Winterton (2004) these factors, namely, ease of movement and job opportunities precipitate voluntary turnover increasing the demand for skilled personnel. In turn this demand enables the constant poaching and head-hunting of talented employees, not only by local rival firms, but also by other countries that are shifting to knowledge-intensive industries and therefore require executive management skills (Cappelli, 2000; Handfield-Jones, 2000; Davis and Stephenson, 2006). This skills shortage is not likely to improve in the foreseeable future and Gresham (2006) predicts that by 2020 developed countries will have a shortfall of knowledge workers that will be in excess of 35 million jobs; a substantial number of these will include management positions.

Notwithstanding the reported skills shortage, women's organisational progress appears to be hampered by societal pressure and prejudice according to Mainiero and Sullivan (2005). They report the three reasons women leave organisations are: generational differences and shifts in work values, issues in respect of balancing work and family life and discrimination against women in the workplace; and

suggest that these reasons are underpinned by factors that have their origins in societal and environmental conditioning.

A recent global study conducted by Accenture (2006) concurs with the findings of Mainiero and Sullivan (2005). The survey involving 590 male and female executives based in Europe and Asia Pacific reports three key reasons for the dearth of women in the top strata of organisations, namely the existence of the glass ceiling, strong male networks and societal pressure. The exclusion from male networks combined with societal pressure such as lack of support from government for childcare, lack of equal opportunities, demanding family commitments and social background all contribute to barriers inhibiting the advancement of women in organisations. This argument is supported by several authors who assert that the biggest challenge faced by career women is the balancing of their dual role within the family and the company, and state that even though women have equal rights constitutionally, many biases (social, organisational and personal) have kept women at lower levels in the organisation (Delamont, 2001; Budhwar, Saini and Bhatnagar, 2005). In addition to the abovementioned factors, women also face the problem of gender stereotyping that can be detrimental to their progress in an organisation. The constant publicity regarding executive women and how they differ from men serves to enhance stereotypical perceptions regarding women's leadership style and ability (Delamont, 2001; Catalyst, 2005b).

Considering the contextual environment created by the aforementioned factors, namely, the global skills shortage and societal issues surrounding executive women, it appears as if organisations in both developing and developed economies are faced

with the same dilemma - how to retain talented staff in general and talented women in particular.

A Chinese study emphasises the importance of environmental voluntary turnover determinants and states that the majority of employees leave their organisations because of better compensation packages offered by competitor firms (MRI Worldwide China Group, 2006). Employees in the USA mention reasons similar to their Chinese counterparts, namely increased compensation, grasping the opportunity to develop new skills or competencies and pursuing greater advancement opportunities (Catalyst, 2004). In direct contrast to this finding, research conducted on a predominantly male South African sample by Birt, Wallis and Winternitz (2004) confirms Lee's (1987) findings that organisational factors contribute far more to a South African employee's decision to leave than environmental or individual factors.

Organisational Factors

Current literature mentions several organisational factors that influence voluntary turnover, including lack of organisational support, organisational change, limited career advancement, lack of job satisfaction and poor quality of management (Baron, Hannan and Burton, 2001; Campbell and Alleyne, 2002; Winterton, 2004; Payne and Huffman, 2005), each of which will be reviewed in turn.

Mentorship is an example of organisational support, the lack of which promotes voluntary turnover (Payne and Huffman, 2005). In support of the importance of mentorship a survey completed by more than 20 000 employees indicated that in excess of a third would leave within the first year if there were no provisions for mentorship (Campbell and Alleyne, 2002). Mergers and acquisitions are prime examples of organisational change that can contribute to an increase in employee turnover (Baron *et al*, 2001). This phenomenon occurs because acquisitions change the power relations within the acquired company, often resulting in employees feeling less powerful, according to Lotz and Donald (2006).

The deficiency of advancement opportunities often propels executives to leave the organisation (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005). However, when career advancement opportunities exist, women tend to remain loyal to the organisation, especially if the organisational culture is favourable to them (Babcock, Laschever, Gelfand and Smal, 2003). A typical barrier that apparently hampers women's advancement up the organisational hierarchy is the ubiquitously perceived glass ceiling (Accenture, 2006). Research in developed countries now includes arguments regarding the increasing height and relative thickness of this metaphoric constraint (Nutley and Mudd, 2005; Yukondi and Benson, 2005).

According to Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel and Hill (1999) there is a positive correlation between lack of job satisfaction and voluntary turnover. In an opposing view Hammer and Avgar (2005) indicate that job dissatisfaction does not necessarily lead to voluntary turnover and that, provided there are less costly ways of adapting to dissatisfying aspects of the job, the person is likely to continue their tenure. However, regardless of all other efforts that are being made by the company to

retain employees, poor supervision consistently affects employees' departure (Campbell and Alleyne, 2002).

The organisation has a certain degree of control over all the abovementioned factors, but several factors regarding the employees' situation (over which the organisation has no control) may cause them to resign.

Individual Factors

Individual factors that facilitate an employee's resignation include the employee's skills or lack thereof, such as negotiation ability and political acumen; and her individual situation, such as life stage, family commitments, burnout or shocks (Griffeth *et al*, 2000; Lyness and Judiesch, 2001; Mitchell, Holtom and Lee, 2001; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski and Erez, 2001; Babcock *et al*, 2003; Sutherland, 2003)

Women continue to earn less than their male counterparts and are treated unequally in the workplace (Babcock *et al*, 2003). This phenomenon is often precipitated by a woman's inability to negotiate, and consequently simply accepting what the employer offers her. She often believes that her employer will look after her and her contribution will be valued without her having to negotiate the terms of her contract. The result of this behaviour is that if a woman receives a better offer, she resigns and doesn't use the new offer as a negotiation tool (Babcock *et al*, 2003).

Generational differences in terms of the role that work plays in an individual's life are also important determinants of behaviour and can lead to termination of employment (Gratton, 2004; Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005). The functions of childbearing and child-rearing often prompt a woman to leave the workplace. Nonetheless age and voluntary turnover are negatively correlated for women (Griffeth *et al*, 2000; Lyness and Judiesch, 2001; Mitchell, Holtom and Lee, 2001).

Burnout can lead to turnover but, as Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski and Erez (2001) assert, a decrease in job satisfaction and organisational commitment mediates this relationship. Emotional exhaustion increases an employee's susceptibility to shocks (precipitating events) that result in her resignation. These events can be triggered through organisational events such as a low performance rating, or personal events such as the death of a spouse. Shocks result in the employee's re-evaluation of her employment relationship and are found to be a significant reason for voluntary turnover (Lee *et al*, 1999, Sutherland, 2003; Sumner and Niederman, 2004).

Although the reasons for resignation stated above can be largely ascribed to the individual, there are a few factors that span the relationship between the individual and the organisation, such as the psychological contract, the concept of job embeddedness and lack of social networks, all of which can precipitate the employee's resignation.

Spanning Factors

A powerful spanning factor is the psychological contract which according to Rousseau (2004, p120), consists of:

"... beliefs, based upon promises expressed or implied, regarding an exchange agreement between an individual and, in organizations, the employing firm and its agents."

Psychological contract breach is the result of two psychological dynamics - the first being unmet expectations and the second a loss of trust. Both of these reduce the individual's contributions to the organisation, but would not necessarily cause them to leave the organisation, according to Robinson (1996). Lee *et al* (1999) disagree and report that psychological contract violations do increase employee turnover. Breach of the psychological contract and its effect on employees has been referred to in the literature for a number of years; however, the concept of social networks is a relatively recent development.

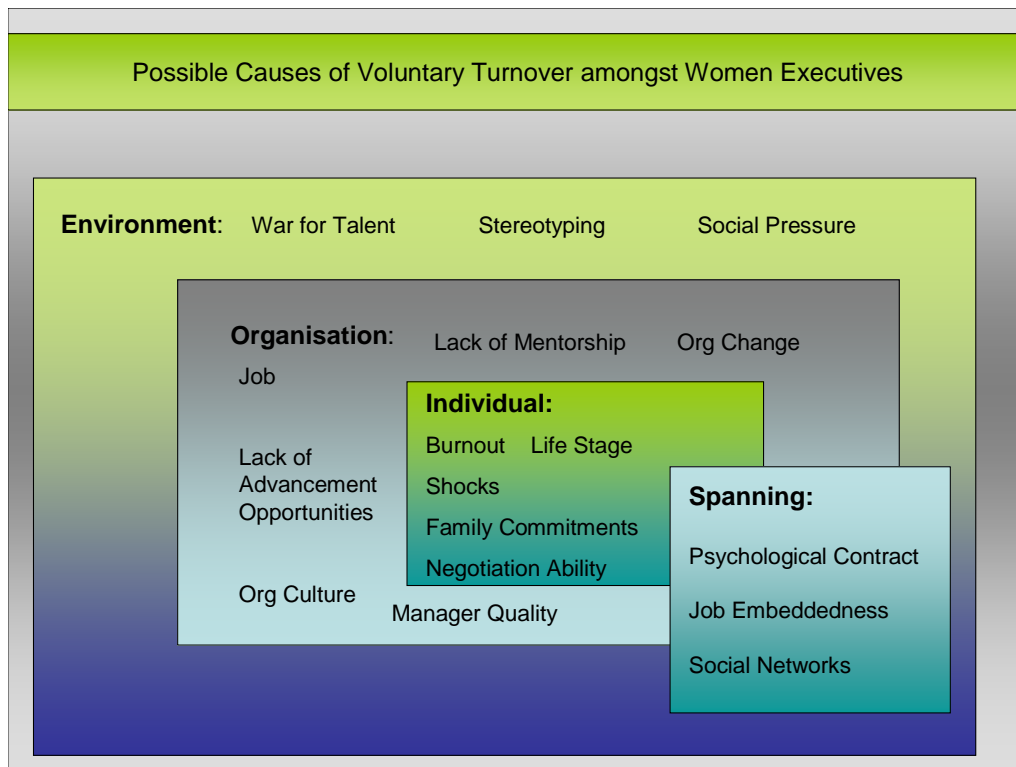
The individuals that enjoy the most personal power within the organisation are the ones who have the most solid social network; this includes males in a male-dominated business environment, but excludes females purely based on gender difference. This personal power is not always related to the positional power that is wielded through formal channels, but is often more influential in the organisation, the lack thereof leading to voluntary turnover (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve and Wenpin, 2004; Pini, Brown and Ryan, 2004).

Job embeddedness measures the degree to which an individual is enmeshed in her organisation and environment (Mitchell, Holtom and Lee, 2001). The three constructs used to determine the strength of embeddedness are fit, sacrifice and

links. Mitchell *et al* (2001) conclude that the stronger the job embeddedness of an individual, the less likely she is to voluntarily terminate her employment. Lee, Mitchell, Sablynski, Burton and Holtom (2004) refine the concept of job embeddedness into on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness; on-the-job meaning the level of embeddedness to the organisation and off-the-job meaning the level of embeddedness to the wider community. The essence of off-the-job embeddedness is: If individuals' affinity to their community is greater than their affinity to their organisations, they will resign in order to fulfil their obligation towards their community. They report that only off-the-job embeddedness is predictive of voluntary turnover (Lee *et al*, 2004).

Figure 1 depicts the possible causes of voluntary turnover, as discussed in the preceding literature review. These causes have been superimposed onto an adaptation of Cook and Hunsaker's (2001) Organisational Environment Context diagram.

Figure 1: Possible Causes of Voluntary Turnover amongst Women Executives



Organisational Environment Context Diagram adapted from Cook and Hunsaker (2001)

Methodology

The purpose of this empirical research is to test the environmental, organisational, individual and spanning factors of voluntary turnover as depicted in Figure 1 and their relevance on the participants' decision to leave.

This qualitative study generated data by means of exploratory, semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Kvale, 1996). The interviews were conducted using a combination of a life-history and phenomenological approach (Oakley, 1997; Leedy and Ormrod, 2001; Musson, 2004). Respondents relived certain experiences through the stories they told. They commented on periods of their lives, in this case paying particular attention to the reasons why they had decided to resign from their companies. An exploratory study such as this lends itself to the emergent nature of qualitative research, as it is not a linear, objective process that can easily be captured by means of impersonal questionnaires (Merriam, 1998). A phenomenological study was used because the purpose of the research was to understand an experience as it had been lived by the participants in order to gain deeper insight into the decision to leave by women executives. In a study of this nature a sample size of five to twenty-five individuals is considered adequate (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). Therefore twenty-one, one-on-one interviews were conducted with South African executive women. One interview was conducted telephonically; all remaining interviews were face-to-face meetings.

Seven primary contacts were made through a leading local university's business school. These people are considered to be well-connected in the South African business world, especially with regard to women in business. The purpose of these

interviews was twofold: firstly, to obtain their opinion on issues facing South African businesswomen and secondly, to obtain introductions to possible interviewees. Three of the primary contacts also became participants in the study. Each of the primary contacts approached likely candidates, either telephonically or by email, to determine their willingness to participate in the research. Snowball sampling was used in this part of the process (Welman and Kruger, 2001). If permission was granted, the researcher contacted the participant telephonically and arranged a time and date for the interview.

The interviewees were drawn from various industries, namely healthcare, banking, retail, non-profit, State-owned enterprises, legal, telecommunications and advertising. Twenty-one executive women were interviewed, eight of whom were Chief Executive Officers; one was a Chief Information Officer and another a Chief Financial Officer. In addition, there were seven senior managers, two executive managers, one acting chairperson and the second-in-charge of a large financial institution. The respondents included four of the twenty-two most influential women in South Africa in the private sector (Financial Mail Special Report, 2006). Four other respondents appeared in CEO Magazine's list of South Africa's top businesswomen (CEO Special Edition, 2006).

Table 1 illustrates the demographics of the participants.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Item	Category	No.	%	Item	Category	No.	%
Marital status	Partnered	12	57%	No. of children	Childless	7	33%
	Single	9	43%		1 child	7	33%
Age	30-39	4	19%		2 children	4	19%
	40-49	9	43%		>=3 children	3	15%
	>50	8	38%		Academic Qual	Matric	2
Race	White	13	62%	Undergrad		10	48%
	Black	5	24%	Post grad		5	24%
	Coloured/Indian	3	14%	> 1 Post grad		4	18%

It is evident from Table 1 that all women interviewed were older than thirty, with over 80% of respondents older than forty. Sixty-two percent of the respondents were white women - this reflects the current demographic profile of senior women executives in South African corporates (Republic of South Africa, 2004).

Table 2 illustrates the size of the income budget, the number of employees for whom each respondent was responsible, as well as the length of tenure each woman enjoyed in her previous position.

Table 2: Participant's Job Size and Tenure

Respondent	Size of Budget (Rm)	No. of people	Tenure (years)
1	45000	76	4
2	25000	500	5
3	4000	9000	8
4	2000	50	6
5	1500	200	1.5
6	1200	30000	10
7	800	250	21
8	600	200	4
9	420	20	2
10	300	500	12
11	240	100000	30
12	120	20	20
13	50	1700	10
14	50	10	5
15	40	10	5
16	25	58	5
17	10	100	2
18	10	30	2
19	10	6	5
20	6	35	6
21	0.4	1	25
Total	R 81,381.40	142766	188.5
Average	R 4,282.89	7512.11	8.29
Median	R 300.00	100	5

It is evident from Table 2 that at the time of their resignations, the respondents were cumulatively managing budgets in excess of R80 billion and were responsible for approximately 150 000 people, with an average tenure exceeding 8 years.

The interviews took place either at the candidates' offices or at a coffee shop. All interviews lasted between 1½ and 3 hours. Semi-structured interviews were conducted which proved to be a suitable method as certain demographic data needed to be captured (Gillham, 2005). This structured part of the interview was combined with an unstructured section, which took the form of narrative inquiry. The respondent was prompted to "tell her story". This approach proved to be highly

effective when trying to obtain a significant understanding of a specific event (Kvale, 1996). Probing open-ended questions were asked at the end of the narrative in an attempt at gaining a deeper understanding of the reasons that prompted the women executives to resign (Oakley, 1997; Welman and Kruger, 2001; Gillham, 2005). The following questions were asked:

“Do you have any regrets?” and “What would you have done differently?”

These questions prompted additional insights and the majority of the respondents reported that they found the process of telling their stories to be gratifying and enlightening. Due to the status in the community of most of the respondents, the sensitivity of the information and the informal coffee shop setting, the interviews were not recorded, but notes were taken during the interview so as not to detract from the process. Research notes and demographic information was recorded electronically into an MS-Excel template.

Data analysis in qualitative research is likened to a metamorphosis where the researcher retreats with the data, applies her analytic powers and finally emerges with the findings. The process is highly intuitive and it is not always possible to locate the source of an insight (Merriam, 1998). The method of analysis used in this study was a combination of narrative analysis, constant comparative analysis and content analysis. These methods were combined effectively as there is no correct way of performing analysis in a qualitative study, except for the constraint that it must be an iterative process, running parallel to the data collection phase (Daft 1983; Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Although several methods of analysis were combined, the overarching approach was McCracken’s (1988) five-phase approach

that recommends moving from specific units to broader themes when analysing the data. Each transcript was considered in isolation and the researcher's observations were noted. This process continued until the observations were compared and contrasted to each other, and finally emergent themes were consolidated to form meaning units (McCracken, 1988; Stake, 1995; Gillham, 2005). These meaning units reflected more about the meanings of the words than the actual spoken words. This technique was used in order to gain a deeper insight into how the participant experienced the termination of employment (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001).

Qualitative research needs to convince the reader that the study makes sense, unlike quantitative research that has to convince the reader that procedures have been followed faithfully (Merriam, 1998). In order to mitigate researcher bias that is inevitable in a study of this nature, the initial findings were discussed with two experts, one in the field of Human Resources and the other in the field of Women's Leadership Development.

Results

The interviews provided rich, meaningful data. The majority of respondents provided uninhibited accounts as to the reasons they had resigned from their organisations. In most cases it was clear that this was an issue they had intensely pondered. All of the respondents displayed insightful self-analysis regarding their decision to leave. The following words from one of the respondents summarises the personality profile of most of the women interviewed:

"I am almost obsessive about taking charge of my life, I am really a fighter, and I will disproportionately take responsibility for fixing things."

The participants displayed several similar characteristics. Eighteen of the 21 participants were the first women in their respective industries or organisations to have achieved the positions they had achieved; thereby displaying true pioneering characteristics. At the time of their resignation several of the respondents were the only women on their specific organisational level. Their strong need for freedom and autonomy was evident; they had great team-building expertise and most were loyalty-inspiring individuals. Nearly all respondents revealed strong family ties, especially with regard to the positive role their parents played in their upbringing. The majority of respondents were not brought up to adhere to traditional values regarding women in society, as one respondent reflected:

"We were always told: you aren't better than anybody else, but nobody is better than you."

Their parents had a strong belief in them and encouraged them to succeed. A few of the respondents were still young when their parents died; this event having a marked effect on their willpower to succeed. In particular, two of the respondents decided at a young age that -

"No man would tell me what to do."

"I would be independent – no matter what."

A few were freedom fighters in the days of apartheid – strong, fearless women who sublimated their own needs for the needs of their country. This need to make a difference not only in their organisations, but also in their country or industry, was strongly reiterated by the majority of respondents. All respondents were strong survivors, some were wounded soldiers who were quite disbelieving about the way their companies treated them, others refused to don the comforting robes of victimhood, as one exclaimed emphatically:

"I once told an offensive journalist: Can't you see I am not a hapless woman victim!"

Either way, they all shared a spiritual awareness of the lessons they had learnt within each organisation. Whilst most of them boasted about the scars they won fracturing the glass ceiling, a few of them were still trying to recover from the wounds. They did not display the angst of trying to balance home and family, as they had strong support systems and had previously conquered that internal conflict. These women were truly the pioneer species who would rather have fallen in battle than stopped fighting. They gave their lives to the organisation and some used language such as "baby", "love" and "my child" in reference to the organisation. In a few cases the participant's identity was synonymous with that of the organisation.

In addition to the aforementioned personality traits that the respondents shared, they also had several voluntary turnover determinants in common.

The determinants are grouped into the categories developed during the literature review: environmental, organisational, individual and spanning. Each of the participants accepted responsibility for their situation within their previous organisations and therefore several themes that were initially categorised as either organisational or individual factors have been reclassified as spanning factors. Thereby highlighting the relationship that exists between the individual and the organisation.

Table 3 illustrates the cumulative frequencies, as well as the number of respondents for each of the themes identified within these categories. It is evident from the subtotals in Table 3 that individual and spanning factors are the most significant determinants of voluntary turnover amongst women executives. Organisational factors are substantially less important and environmental factors are inconsequential.

Table 3: Voluntary Turnover Factors

Category	Theme	Frequency	Respondents
Individual	<i>Make a Difference</i>	36	18
	Freedom/Autonomy	23	11
	Power	19	11
	Flexibility/Balance	16	7
	Recognition	11	6
	<i>Political Acumen</i>	41	15
	<i>Burnout</i>	28	13
	Family Commitments	11	8
	Life Stage	5	4
Subtotal		190	
Spanning	<i>Social Networks</i>	38	16
	<i>Organisational</i>		
	<i>Support/Mentorship</i>	31	15
	<i>Values Clash</i>	30	15
	<i>Shocks</i>	15	14
	<i>Intimidation</i>	28	13
	<i>Problems with Manager</i>	23	13
	Organisational Relationship	18	9
Subtotal		183	
Organisational	<i>Organisational Culture</i>	50	15
	Job Content	32	12
	Advancement Opportunities	21	9
	Organisational Change	12	9
Subtotal		115	
Environmental	Stereotyping	12	7
	War for Talent	10	6
	Social Pressure	3	3
Subtotal		25	

The themes with the highest number of unique respondents appear in ***bold*** in Table 3 and will be analysed in more depth hereunder.

Need to Make a Difference

The majority of respondents sensed that they were no longer making the difference that they needed to make within their previous positions. A few respondents verbalised it as follows:

"I realised it was my dream to empower women, financially empower them. I exposed them to the best - the best offices, the best conferences, the best training. The good thing about MNC was that it was a FORTUNE 500 company, so I learnt a lot, really a lot. But suddenly everything was about the money. Beforehand money was important, but it wasn't the reason to do business, it was about the people and I hate to say this, but I had made an incredible difference in a lot of people's lives."

"All that mattered was whether I could make a difference or not. Now all that money, it seems to me, is going to the Island (referring to England) and I'm not working for that. I need to make a difference in this country, not to them. When you are younger your purpose is to make the people in your team happy, but as you get older you realise the effect you can have on your country, it is exciting and as you mature, you start seeing."

"Company X was starting to be my baby, I felt I would not let go of this child I had brought up even though I was moving up into a much broader responsibility. I was also made to feel as a black professional that I was responsible for building this country, so I had to heed the call of government to come on board, I felt it was my responsibility, I saw it as a platform to make a difference."

Almost three-quarters of the respondents felt that their ability to make a difference was hampered by their own lack of political acumen and negotiation ability.

Political Acumen

These respondents alleged their lack of political acumen had led to their specific situations within their previous organisations and that, had they been more politically

astute, the outcome might have been different. They illustrated their insights as follows:

"I would really have been more politically astute instead of being so open and honest. I am just naïve, I guess."

"I don't like the corporate politics. I find the corporate politics very difficult, especially when the company's values are against my values."

"I couldn't understand the game, couldn't play it, but they were both clever enough to keep me because they knew I made them look good."

Apart from their perceived lack of political acumen, participants also referred to the need for power, recognition, freedom, autonomy and flexibility. The need for power was the most important of all these factors. They referred to the value of positional power and how personal power was influenced by positional power. A few respondents were very pragmatic about the role of a powerful position, as one pointed out:

"The one great thing about having a powerful position is that you get to make the rules about working and expectations. I send them home because they have small children, and that's more important in the long run."

One respondent realised that the backlash of the acquisition of power was the envy of her colleagues:

"I was almost like the CEO because he relied on me so much. He would just say in the meetings: "What does the CFO say?" I suddenly had all this power; my colleagues envied this power and they hated that."

A few respondents alluded to the dichotomy between power in the workplace and power in the home, and how these roles were often contradictory:

“She was in charge of the USA branch, very powerful. She was starting new territories and was earning \$4-5 million a year. We giggled because she said her husband still told her what to do and he ran a hardware store! It was so funny; she said he couldn’t even pack his socks without her!”

They were also quite disparaging about some women in powerful positions although they did not refer to men in the same light. It was almost as if women were put under the microscope by one another, even at senior levels. One respondent eloquently described the situation as follows:

“... and they certainly don’t want to share it with anybody else, they like the limelight. They really don’t want to lose their position as the only woman in the team, because that in itself can be a very powerful position to be in. They talk about women’s rights and women’s issues, but what do they do? Nothing! If you look around them, there will not be another woman in sight, because they like that position too much. A lot of them are very good at self promotion.”

The issue of younger women with powerful men was raised by a number of participants, as one reflected:

“There is so much philandering amongst the top layer with the new women who are appointed. I think the young women get a sort of bush fever, and it’s all this power. They believe they get their power through the men and that it’s hugely glamorous. But somehow the guys are able to manage it and the women stay on; they become serial offenders - the guys up there set the pace. I did speak to the one guy; he didn’t take kindly to the conversation.”

Burnout

Thirteen of the participants spoke about extreme feelings of tiredness and exhaustion, and about being battle-weary. They showed different emotions when speaking about their previous jobs – one became tearful, another started blinking

her eyes anxiously; mostly they were quite dismayed about the events leading up to their decisions. They philosophised about their situations in the following manner:

"Eventually I got to a point where I had lost who I really was - I just didn't like it. I had tiredness in me that felt like it was in my bones. I felt that if I slept for a week, it wouldn't go away, I was continually in a battle; in a fight."

"Wisdom only really comes with age. I really went into my shell, I needed to hibernate and just unpack and get rid of my tiredness - I used to leave home when it was dark and I came home when it was dark."

"I left because I was really tired. I was tired of the loneliness (I was single at the time) and I would look at the men I worked with - they were going home to a family and I was going home to nothing. All I was doing was just working all the time. I think I was using work as a crutch; it was an escape. I knew I was burnt out because my whole body came out in acne, like you have never seen before."

"I had one child, and then I had another child - that was a problem. I didn't stay at home at all - I just kept working and travelling when they were tiny. I had to keep my chargeable ratio the same; my bottom line wasn't allowed to go down. I was running jobs from the bed (this was before cellphones and I sometimes wonder how I managed) - it was really hectic. I just remember being exhausted most of the time. I did employ a full-time midwife though, and I remember expressing in the shower overseas just to keep the milk going."

The participants did not generally blame the organisations for their state of burnout.

They recognised the role they played in the situation, as one participant remarked:

"The corporate world is not necessarily a bad place. The problem is you in that place, the individual in that environment - that is the problem. You have to be bold enough to get out."

Social Networks

Sixteen of the women interviewed referred to the existence of male social networks and how they negatively impacted on their experience in the workplace. They referred to the feelings of isolation, disappointment and a sense of disbelief.

"I just got to that point of total frustration; our gut always tells us what is going on. You try and you try and you try, and you aren't on the golf course, you aren't where they are, so you don't take part in their discussions, and you aren't where the discussions take place."

"It's a real boys-club company, the history is important to understand – they all worked together at a previous company; everyone who gets promoted is from there. It's worse than the 'Broederbond'; they really look after each other."

"I really was fighting it alone; it is a very closed club up there - all [SA university] 'boytjies'. Some of the guys are only there because they went to [SA university] and their positions are totally out of proportion to what they can deliver."

Lack of Organisational Support and Mentorship

A large percentage of the respondents referred to their feelings of isolation that were exacerbated due to the lack of female support at the top levels of the organisation.

"We women are our own worst enemies - you didn't want to be seen supporting women in the bank. I became overtly supportive of women, but I was really criticised. Men do that all the time and they don't have a problem with that. We always back down."

"Generally I think we women are very ethical, only to find that you are constantly creating enemies. The problem is you aren't at the same time creating friends, so you are alone, with a lot of enemies. You find you have no allies and the messenger gets killed."

The feeling of isolation and aloneness abounds above the glass ceiling. This was especially noticeable to some of the participants who had previously enjoyed organisational support that was subsequently withdrawn.

“When I was approached and wooed, there was a guy in charge. He really wanted me in that organisation, so he protected me. He saw the vision for the company and he wanted me to be part of it, but then the board decided they needed a change. It was pathetic, I tell you, pathetic. The shares were split, they ousted him and in came this new broom, and the circumstances changed. Had that guy still been there, it would have been very different”

“The CIO saw I had potential - he was so influential and really helped me in my career. He was a huge silent supporter of mine. After what has happened now I feel very disappointed because he has gone very quiet.”

“There was another very prominent woman there, but she didn't help me at all. Now she is very friendly when I see her, but when I was fighting no one came to me. I was alone, they were quiet.”

Values Clash

Fifteen of the 21 respondents reported a values clash, either between themselves and the organisation or between themselves and their immediate supervisor. They were unequivocal about compromising their values and verbalised their resolve in the following manner:

“I was continually in a battle, in a fight. There was a huge clash of values and principles between the organisation and me. I just felt I lost it; I felt all I was doing was fighting. Everything started conflicting with my values and principles and it just didn't go away.”

“There is absolutely nothing I would have done differently, absolutely nothing, because it would have meant I would have had to compromise my value system and I wasn't prepared to do that, not at all.”

"I left because they did something that contravened my value system, I will not go against what I believe in - my intuition and gut feeling is very strong"

Although some participants felt that previously they might have compromised their values in order to ascend the corporate hierarchy, on hindsight they did not think it was worth it.

"Sometimes you compromise your value system, but then you ask yourself if it's really worth it. You would still have your decent income, but you wouldn't sleep at night, and I don't think that it's worth it."

"It was just a different worldview and the issue wasn't going to be thrashed out because they couldn't argue it straight on. I had stepped on one of their basic unspoken values and how could they defend that? I really thought our culture and values were something different, but then I saw there was this point that really clashed with my values. The culture and values that get espoused are the good things and that's what they tell the organisation, but the real values - they are something else. Why didn't I pick it up before? I was either coming up with proposals that aligned with theirs, or else I chose not to see it."

Shocks

In 14 cases, even though there were other contributing factors, it was one specific incident that took place (mostly between the organisation and the individual) that caused the individual to resign.

"My pride really wouldn't let me stay and one thing did happen – another person at the same level as me told me about his perks and his salary and it was twice as much as mine. That's when I decided: bugger you all!"

"I suggested I would do marketing and sales and the COO could run the operations, next thing they brought in somebody who I was supposed to report to, I told them over my dead body."

"I was talking to the HR director and he was telling me they were having a discussion regarding talent and that I was classified as high performing and talented, but that they wouldn't promote me this year. So I thought to myself, what's going to change in me in a year, and I decided to leave."

Intimidation

Sixty percent of the participants referred to incidents of intimidation, ranging from inappropriate language and overt sexual advances to physical intimidation and sabotage - the worst incidents being death threats.

"I really had verbal abuse from my boss, always a sexual innuendo and comments: 'Oh, I see you've put lipstick on to come and see me. You know there are a lot of other professions that you can do and you don't need to train for them.'"

"International meetings were really difficult, they treated me with absolutely no respect and were really rude - turned their backs on me. If I argued a point, they would say that they didn't ask for my opinion and also hit the table."

"When the CEO interviewed me for the first time he asked: 'Do you have the balls to run this division?' I replied: 'Do you have the balls to run me?' After that he really wanted me to work there. There was so much sexual harassment, he pushed me in the corner and said: 'You are brilliant, brilliant, I want you.'"

"The security guard asked me why I left late and I said because he would protect me. He gave me a funny look and asked me what would happen if one of those security guards shot me down on my way out, and he suggested that I started leaving with the rest of the staff at 5 pm."

"I told my boss about some possible corruption I had accidentally stumbled across. He told me to 'just be quiet, my girl'. He said he would investigate, but that I shouldn't say anything to anybody. I also told the director and all she said was that she wasn't interested. The next thing I knew, there was somebody in my office putting a gun on the table. He said that if I didn't shut up, my children and I would be eating it. He then told me this thing went right to the top and if I knew what was good for me, I would be very quiet."

Problems with a manager

Thirteen of the 21 respondents reported problems with their managers or a board member - somebody in the organisation in a position of power. These problems related to an ego issue, a values clash or an individual who felt threatened. In some cases the participants realised that the boss simply didn't have the skill to do the job that he/she was doing. The relationship with the boss is an important factor that often prompts women to resign, either because of the poor quality of the relationship or because of a fundamental difference in their worldviews.

"I thought it was going to be wonderful, but it was a disaster. The main issue was that the leadership/management was very young (30s) and mostly men. I had no relationship with the CEO at all. It was very stupid - his whole strategy was to divide and conquer; he was an awful boss."

"The top guys swapped 3 times. The next guy was Italian and very smooth and I was told I was a huge threat to him. He was revolting to work with; he was so vindictive. He used to whisper to me: 'I will get rid of you.'"

"She would engage with me 1-on-1, but then publicly she would pretend as if we had never had the conversation. She would also pretend it was all her idea."

In the majority of cases the reasons for leaving were not about the job at all, but about relationship issues.

"I started and knew nothing about the job, but it ended up being about relationship issues and not about job issues. It was either him or me and so I left. I couldn't compromise what I believed in."

Organisational Culture

More than half of the respondents felt the organisational culture was really paternalistic, which they hadn't noticed previously.

"Even though some of the men don't deserve their positions, there is still a feeling that if a woman has a high position, it's because she is a woman. Trying to be a female in a male dominated culture is nearly impossible."

"There is a one-liner why I left – 'too male'. I didn't want to be a male anymore; I wanted to use my intuition and my EQ, and to be feminine. Now I am free to be just that."

"Basically it's just too white and too male. They play in the arena of men. You need to be an alpha wolf in the pack otherwise you don't survive."

One of the more humorous stories was told by an elegant, beautiful woman (responsible for a substantial division of a global cosmetics company) regarding the pervasiveness of male culture within the organisation:

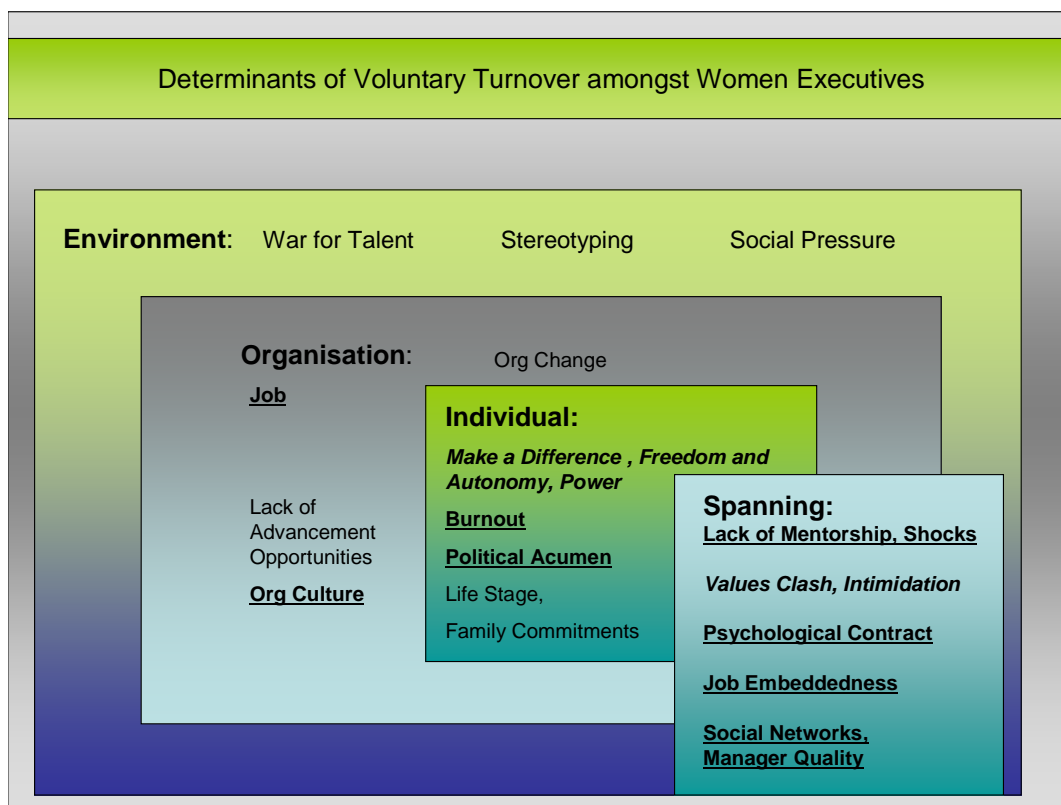
"I thought to myself: 'Hey, is this what it's all about?' I get invited to a conference and get awarded a beer mug, the same as the men, for good performance, I have still got it, it's so ridiculous."

The aforementioned findings are the most significant shared determinants of voluntary turnover amongst women executives. Despite the fact that the respondents' experiences were similar in certain respects, each respondent related unique anecdotes and awe-inspiring insights regarding the role of women in business.

Discussion

This study examined the determinants of voluntary turnover amongst women executives. These were grouped into the four categories identified in the literature review, namely environmental, organisational, individual and spanning. Figure 2 summarises these determinants, exemplifying that the findings are at once consistent with and contrary to existing research. The **underlined** items are those items that were discovered during the study and concurred with the review of the literature. The themes in *italics* are causes of voluntary turnover ascertained via this study, but were not reviewed in the literature. The remainder of the constructs illustrated in Figure 2 were mentioned in the literature, but were not applicable to the majority of participants in this study.

Figure 2: Determinants of Voluntary Turnover amongst Women Executives



Organisational Environment Context Diagram adapted from Cook and Hunsaker (2001)

Table 4 tabulates the determinants of voluntary turnover depicted in Figure 2. Thereby illustrating the similarities and differences between the findings of the literature review and the results of the exploratory study.

Table 4: Comparison of Literature Review and Study Findings

Category	Lit Review Only	Lit Review and Study	Study Only
Environmental	Stereotyping War for Talent Social Pressure		
Organisational	Organisational Change Advancement Opportunities	Job Issues Organisational Culture	
Individual	Life Stage Family Commitments	Burnout Political Acumen	Make a Difference Freedom and Autonomy Power
Spanning		Lack of Mentorship Shocks Psychological Contract Job Embeddedness Social Networks Manager Quality	Values Clash Intimidation

The overall findings of this study concurred with Mainiero and Sullivan (2005, p108) who reflected that the reasons why women leave organisations “run much deeper” than those reported in the media. The essence of the women executives - their

pioneering spirit, competitive nature, compulsion for success, their search and dependence on freedom, autonomy and making a difference - is what drives their exit from inflexible, staid, unaccommodating organisations. However, the results of this study are contradictory to the findings of Birt *et al* (2004), whose sample included mostly males and whose results indicated that organisational factors were the most important drivers of voluntary turnover.

The analysis revealed that, contrary to global trends regarding the war for talent (Cappelli, 2000; Handfield-Jones, 2000; Davis and Stephenson, 2006); the effect of environmental pull-factors such as global headhunting was not generally experienced by women executives. Environmental factors accounted for a very small percentage of resignations; only one person that was interviewed had accepted an offer by a global company and less than a third of the respondents mentioned environmental factors as being instrumental in their decisions to leave. Stereotyping and social pressure are often cited reasons for barriers to women's advancement (Delamont, 2001; Budhwar *et al*, 2005), these barriers were invisible to the respondents of this study. A possible contributing factor to this finding is that the respondents were at a stage in their lives where society's perceptions of them were irrelevant, thereby concurring with Gratton's (2004) life-stage arguments.

The following findings, as mentioned by the majority of respondents, were consistent with the literature review: poor quality of management, job attributes and lack of mentorship (Baron *et al*, 2001; Campbell and Alleyne, 2002; Payne and Huffman, 2005). The combination of poor management and lack of organisational support resulted in a few of the respondents feeling isolated and deserted. Their

perceived exclusion from male social networks exacerbated this experience, thereby concurring with the findings of Brass *et al* (2004).

One of the most deplorable discoveries of this study is the high incidence and severe nature of intimidation to which women executives are being subjected. Although in some cases the intimidation was an ongoing process, in most cases it was experienced as a shock by the respondents and precipitated their decision to leave, thereby supporting the findings of Sutherland (2003) and Sumner and Niederman (2004). The paternalistic organisational culture creates a climate wherein this kind of behaviour is ignored, condoned or, more alarmingly, encouraged. The organisation's response could be symptomatic of the paternalistic culture that exists within the country (Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services (PCAS), 2006). It could also be due to the nature of groups and their aspiration towards homogeneity, as Schein (2004, p36) points out when referring to a group's tendency to reject change:

"... it is easier to distort new data by denial, projection, rationalization or various other defence mechanisms than to change the basic assumption."

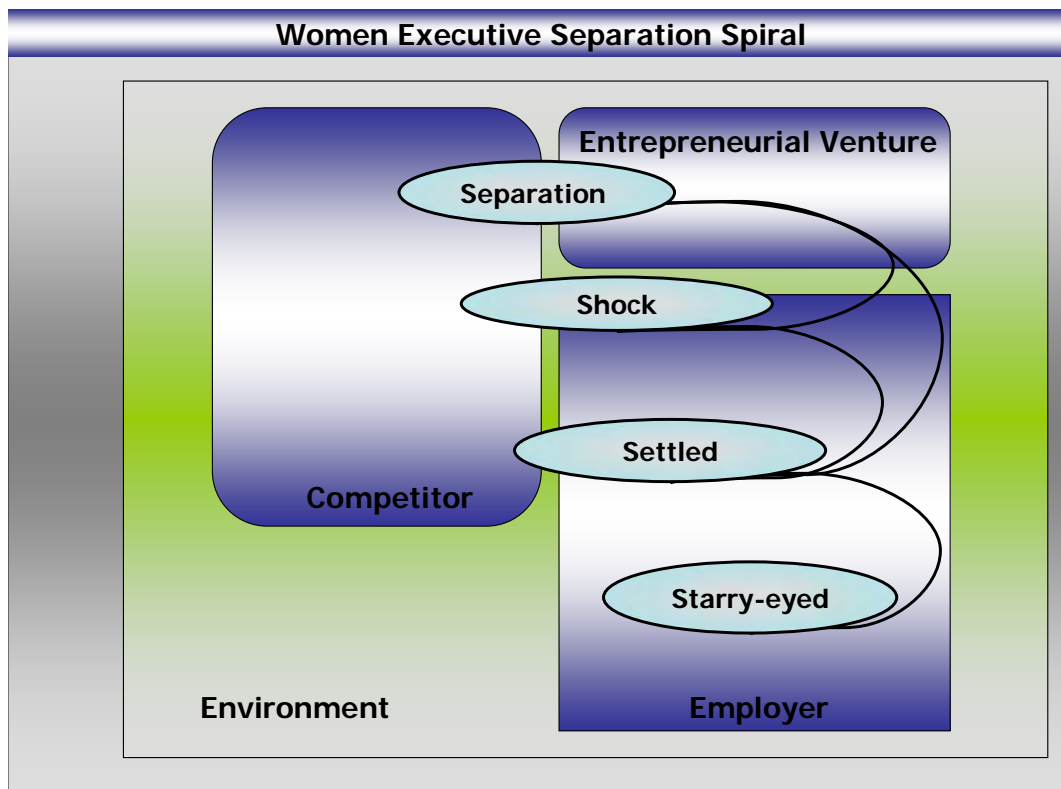
Women in this study didn't feel part of the in-group, which, according to Kleiner (2003), is an inner circle of employees who control the organisation. This core group has nothing to do with the organisational structure and women are often not part of this network. Interestingly, during their meteoric careers women often imagine that they are accepted by the in-group; it is only once they have permeated the glass ceiling that the reality of their situation becomes evident. The reason for this occurrence could be that the current incumbents are threatened by their presence. In an interesting study Boone, Van Olffen, Van Witteloostuijn and De Brabander

(2004) found that teams tend to reject members who are demographically different from the core members and that in times of economic pressure teams tend to close ranks - the team members who differ are the first to leave. Even if there are environmental factors that promote heterogeneity, the team tends towards homogeneity. They also found that the greater the demographic distance between the person and the existing team, the quicker his/her exit from that team.

Underpinning the aforementioned result is the nature of the pioneering women that were interviewed and their drive to make a difference in their communities. This finding supports the concept of off-the-job embeddedness as described by Lee *et al* (2004). In addition, the respondents' need to make a difference coupled with their need for freedom and autonomy concurs with Mainiero and Sullivan's (2005) discovery, namely, that women in the later stages of their careers strive for authenticity and being true to themselves. The necessity of authenticity often results in the women experiencing a clash of values between themselves and their organisations. The values clash leads to a breach of the psychological contract, resulting in the termination of employment. This finding concurs with Lee *et al* (1999) and Vermeulen (2004), but contradicts that of Robinson (1996).

It was further discovered that most of the participants followed a similar route during their separation from their respective organisations. A descriptive modelling of this process - the Women Executive Separation Spiral - is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Women Executive Separation Spiral



The separation spiral depicted in Figure 3 is a descriptive model (Carlile and Christensen, 2005). It illustrates the phases women executives pass through during their tenure and voluntary separation from their employers, exemplifying the importance of procedural context. The process is non-linear, resembling instead a spiralling of the individual through the phases of the process, as her career spirals through the organisation's hierarchy. Although the separation spiral depicts a somewhat sequential process, it is by no means that straightforward. The complex process is enmeshed within the individual's life experiences, the organisation's life cycle, as well as the environment wherein this drama occurs.

The four stages in the separation process are: starry-eyed, settled, shock and separation. Starry-eyed equates to the honeymoon phase to which Boswell,

Boudreau and Tichy (2005) refer and is evident whenever an employee accepts a new job.

The starry-eyed phase eventually matures into the settled phase, which Boudreau *et al* (2005) refer to as the hangover-phase. The commencement of this phase is marked by a degree of pragmatism that becomes evident in the employee. During this phase the women were able to identify the organisations' strengths and weaknesses. The settled phase can last for many years and the participants in the study were all successful at what they were doing during this phase - the majority enjoying meteoric career paths. The participants in the study alluded to feelings of uneasiness and varying degrees of dissatisfaction during the settled phase, although most reported a period of solid productivity, they referred to troubling incidents that jarred their value systems but did not exceed their zones of tolerance. Consequently, none of the incidents when considered in isolation would have caused them to resign.

In the event of an impending voluntary separation, one of two likely scenarios occurs, indicating the conclusion of this vital settled phase. Either the incumbent strategically plans her exit, or she quits impulsively. Both scenarios lead to the same result, namely a separation from the organisation.

The separation phase is either reached directly from the settled phase or a shock occurs that propels the resignation decision. However, in this study the majority of participants referred to a specific event that preceded the decision to leave. The precipitating event was mediated by the participant's growing uneasiness and restlessness regarding organisational issues. The separation phase signals the end of

the employment contract and the women either start their own entrepreneurial venture or join a competitor. In this context competitor refers to rival firms that compete for talent (Cappelli, 2000). As soon as the individual separates from one organisation and joins a rival firm, the cycle repeats itself. The spiral therefore provides a useful context within which to map an individual's career in an organisation.

There are practical implications for individuals, organisations and the wider community throughout the separation spiral, which will now be presented.

Practical Implications

Perhaps the most obvious practical implications concern individuals and employers. Employers need to address the factors over which they have control during the first two phases of the separation spiral, namely the starry-eyed phase and the settled phase. Once a shock has occurred, the organisation has lost its ability to positively influence the woman executive and she will resign.

One of the most important practical implications for both the individual and the organisation is the manner in which the separation is managed. The respondents, who managed their own exit even after suffering a shock, are the ones who suffered the least angst. They were able to negotiate a win-win situation regarding the terms of their departure and, not surprisingly, they were also the women who by their own admission were politically astute.

Further practical implications include a warning to women not to allow their identities to be subsumed by that of their organisations, especially during the starry-eyed phase. Generally women need to be more astute with respect to the expectations they have of their organisations. They should also be pragmatic regarding the terms of engagement, ensuring roles and responsibilities are clarified.

Women should be clear about their own needs, wants and aspirations, and should verbalise these to their organisations. The organisation in turn should create a favourable climate within which to conduct these discussions, thereby allowing women to proactively determine whether or not the organisation is conducive to the achievement of these goals. Women executives should also be realistic about their skills, analysing these in conjunction with the skills required by the organisation. If there is a mismatch between what the organisation requires and what the individual can offer, it is the dual responsibility of the organisation and the individual to rectify the situation by the establishment of a training and development plan.

Mentorship is one of the most important training and development interventions for women executives, especially if organisations are serious about improving their diversity profile. The employment of mentors and coaches to assist women executives negotiate the hurdles above the glass ceiling is imperative.

Organisations should also increase the numbers of women at executive level. In support of the concept, Elvira and Cohen (2001) assert that executive women are less likely to leave if there are more women at their level and at levels above them in the organisation. This will diminish women's feelings of isolation and exclusion from

male social networks as new networks will form. It would also reduce the paternalistic organisational culture evident in most male-dominated companies.

Perhaps slightly less obvious practical implications involve competitor organisations and the country wherein the women reside. As depicted in Figure 3, competitor organisations can benefit from employer organisations' inability to retain women executives. Competitors can leverage this situation by undertaking a long-term view with respect to attracting female executives. The wooing process should start when the woman executive is in the settled phase of her existing employment contract. During this phase the competitor could embark upon a relationship building exercise with potential candidates. The relationship should be nurtured throughout the settled phase while the competitor organisation bides their time because the woman is most likely to get bored or a shock will occur and she will quit. Subsequently the competitor organisation that has the best relationship with the woman executive when this occurs will attract her.

Alternately she will begin her own entrepreneurial venture, which is a positive practical implication for the country of residence - this will create jobs, thereby alleviating unemployment problems and stimulating the country's economic growth. More than half of the respondents - well-qualified women who have years of experience - left corporate organisations and started their own businesses. These businesses have the potential of creating thousands of jobs in a country where the unemployment rate is estimated at 26.6% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2006). Eight of the respondents have started businesses that are involved in the empowerment of women, which is a godsend for the women of South Africa.

Future Research Directions

In order to convert the descriptive model in Figure 3 into a normative model of voluntary turnover amongst women executives, it is necessary to empirically test the relative role each determinant plays in the decision to leave (Carlile and Christensen, 2005). Therefore a quantitative study could be undertaken, the aim of which would be to correlate the determinants and the voluntary turnover process.

Future research should also be undertaken in order to establish whether the findings presented in this paper could be generalised across different levels of the organisation, across generations, genders and countries.

It would be interesting to undertake a cross cultural study in order to determine whether environmental factors are more relevant in other groups and in other countries.

Conclusion

It seems as if the wave of global talent warfare has not yet hit the shores of South Africa. Organisations are failing to keep their female talent because of their paternalistic organisational culture, the poor quality of management and their inability to accommodate their top female performers even though they have relatively few requirements. These requirements include the need for freedom and autonomy and the need to make a difference, not only to the bottom line of the organisation, but also to the bottom line of South Africa.

Companies that realise they are letting a wealth of talent walk out of their doors and who engage in dialogue with these women to try and change their organisations systemically, are the ones that will be most buoyant when the talent tsunami finally hits the Southern African shoreline.

The separation spiral is an attempt to illuminate the complex fluid process of women executives' voluntary turnover. This process is driven by women executives' need to make a difference to their communities and to achieve self-authentication. The companies that understand the nature of this drive and create climates conducive to the achievement of this goal will be the ones that attract and retain the best of the female talent pool. Perhaps female owned and managed companies that create jobs for the women of this country may be just what is needed to change the South African business landscape.

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APPENDIX 2:- LITERATURE REVIEW

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Appendix 2-1: Labour Turnover Analysis	
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1. Introduction

A substantial body of academic knowledge exists regarding the main variables of this study, namely, labour turnover and issues faced by executive women in organisations. A systems thinking approach is used to contextualise the literature review. This perspective recognises the interdependence of individuals, organisations and the wider environment. In addition it focuses on the interrelationships between these entities and not the entities themselves (Senge, 1990; Cook and Hunsaker, 2001).

The systems nature of organisations, their members and their environments is supported by Yukondi and Benson (2005) who argue further that in order to gain an insight into an individual, it is essential to understand the context within which the individual operates. They propose that a systems approach be followed when considering a study of women in management and call for a gender-organisation-system perspective to be used. In support of this approach Johns (2006) stresses the necessity of analysing the context of any given situation or decision, giving several examples of why previous acontextual studies regarding voluntary turnover are not as valid as they would have been had they considered the context within which the decision to quit was made.

In support of this perspective, the literature is reviewed in two sections. Firstly the literature regarding women executives and a few of the issues they face in organisations are reviewed. Secondly labour turnover is defined and the causes and consequences of voluntary turnover are presented.

Issues faced by Executive Women in Business

Numerous issues faced by women executives are referred to in the literature, for the purpose of this study the following issues will be described more fully: women's role in society, stereotyping and the negative impact it can have on women in the workplace, the concept of the glass ceiling and the impact of male social networks on women in the workplace.

1.1 Societal Pressure

In a recent study involving female and male executives in several countries, factors regarding barriers that women faced in business were studied (Accenture, 2006). One of the findings of this study was that societal pressure was a significant reason preventing women succeeding in business. Factors that contributed to this pressure are the following: lack of support from government for childcare, lack of equal opportunities, demanding family commitments and social background (Accenture, 2006).

The pressure that women face from society regarding their child-rearing responsibility is pervasive. Society generally condones a woman's right to work if she has to, for instance if she is a single parent or if her family needs her income for survival, but not if she would like to work because she feels that it is her rightful place in society (Delamont, 2001). Working mothers are even more exposed to the wrath of society according to Angier (2000) especially if they leave their child in day

care and something happens to the child. She highlights further that the child's father escapes this anger as society perceives that a man's place is in the workplace.

Women in developing nations such as India have a paradoxical status and although they are respected in society, women who work outside the home are looked down upon (Budhwar, Saini and Bhatnagar, 2005). This finding can be used as an indicator for women in other developing nations such as South Africa. Budhwar *et al* (2005) expand this argument by reporting that the biggest challenge faced by women is the balancing of their dual role, within the family and within the company. They argue further that even though women have equal rights constitutionally, many biases including social, organisational and personal have kept women at lower levels in the organisation.

Power can be defined as the ability that an individual or a group has to act in any way they choose without the approval of others (Weber in Groshev, 2002). He states that women believe in power sharing and using it for the greater good. The findings reveal further that society strives not only to give more power to men but also to re-enforce men's power, at the same time limiting and depriving women of power. The societal pressure and resultant expectations regarding women's role in society and the power they command in society lead to harmful stereotyping for women in business.

1.2 Stereotyping

Social stereotyping is the process of categorising people based on generalisations; in the case of gender based stereotypes these categorisations are based on the supposition of how men and women differ (Catalyst, 2005). These broad based powerful gender stereotypes that have been tightly woven into the complex fabric of society and confront children before they exit the womb, are particularly destructive for women in the workplace according to Delamont (2001) where the skills necessary to succeed are stereotypically masculine.

Catalyst (2005) support Delamont's (2001) assertions and report that the constant publicity regarding executive women and how they differ from men serves to enhance stereotypical perceptions regarding women's leadership style and ability. These attitudes are often perceived by women to be detrimental to their careers and they cite gender based stereotyping as one of the barriers they face in organisations that prevents their success.

One of the skills necessary for business success is the ability to solve complex problems. Women are stereotyped to be poor problem solvers; this attitude has a negative effect on a woman's perceived leadership abilities as well as her personal power within the organisation. This lack of power caused by a negative stereotype can cause women to leave the organisation as they feel their prospects are not as good as those of their male counterparts (Sumner and Niederman, 2004; Catalyst, 2005).

Motherhood exacerbates the stereotyping problem that women in business face and that as soon as a woman is a mother she is treated more like a house-wife than a businesswomen according to Williams (2004). She found that as soon as a woman fell pregnant she would probably find her proficiency questioned and could experience a serious drop in her performance ratings.

Ironically, these harmful gender stereotypes are often perpetuated by women. They play the passive, victim role, use special low self-confidence vocabulary to express themselves and don't try and change the situation wherein they find themselves (Fischlmayr, 2002). Women can also use gender stereotyping to their advantage according to Budhwar *et al* (2005) and whilst she supports the existence and importance that gender stereotyping has in the workplace, she argues that often females are privileged and their mistakes are overlooked by management.

1.3 Glass Ceiling

This often-used metaphor is used to describe the phenomenon that women only advance to a certain level in the organisation and then no further (Accenture, 2006).

In a study conducted by Delamont (2001) where she compared men's and women's attitudes regarding labour in the United Kingdom in 1893, 1951 and in the late 1990's. She found that organisations still operate a labour market based largely on male values and work patterns and prejudice; she found an abundance of glass ceilings and old-boy networks. Yukondi and Benson (2005) point out that most of the research regarding glass ceilings has taken place in developed countries and

pose the question whether these findings can be extrapolated to developing nations. In an overview of several Asian countries their conclusion is that women managers are an “underutilised resource and are discriminated against in the workplace”, thereby concluding that the glass ceiling does in fact exist in Asian companies.

There is little contention in the literature regarding the existence of the glass ceiling; even the increasing height of it is discussed by Nutley and Mudd (2005). In addition they warn that more dangerously, women are faced with a “glass cliff”. Meaning that women are often set up for failure and that when the organisation fails, the women are held personally responsible, whilst men in similar situations enjoy a safety net, and their personal reputations are left intact. They are offered sideways moves whereas women leave the organisation with their reputation in tatters.

Although the concept of the glass ceiling has been referred to in the literature for a number of decades the concept of male social networks and their effect on the advancement of women is a relatively recent topic in academic literature.

1.4 Social Networks

In a recent global study of male and female executives conducted by Accenture (2006), more similarities than differences were found between female and male executives, yet the main reasons cited for the lack of women on the top rungs of organisations are still the existence of male networks and family commitments. Networks are described by Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve and Wenpin (2004) as being interconnected social relationships that offer benefits to some members but are

barriers to non-members. Benefits are offered to the members who are most similar to each other, as this eases communication, fosters trust and promotes predictability of behaviour. Similarity can be considered in different ways, e.g. racial, sexual or job function. The actors that enjoy the most personal power within the organisation are the ones who have the most solid social network; this according to Brass *et al* (2004) would include males in a male dominated business environment but exclude females purely based on difference.

A particularly powerful type of social network is the in-group, which according to Kleiner (2003) is an inner circle of employees who control the organisation, this core group has nothing to do with the organisational structure and women are often not part of this network. Their exclusion is purely based on the demographic profile of most large organisations which are made up of old-boy or male networks which by their very nature exclude women (Accenture, 2006).

In South Africa it is reported that although women generally have vast social networks they are not very useful in the business environment and therefore women have much lower social capital than men. This is exacerbated by a woman's race and class. Socially they are relegated to a subordinate position in the hierarchy of rights and therefore have to struggle to raise themselves from the lowest rung of the ladder; this is apparently true in both society and business (Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services (PCAS), 2006).

2. Labour Turnover

Labour turnover occurs when employees leave organisations (Sutherland, 2003). Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner (2000) report that the rate of voluntary turnover for men and women is more or less the same. In contrast to this finding, Lyness and Judiesch (2001) assert that voluntary turnover rates of men are higher than that of women in the United States of America. It appears as if the opposite is true in South Africa where the voluntary turnover rate of top women managers is 17.15 %. This is substantially higher than the rate in China, where the average voluntary turnover rate has increased from 8% to 14% in the last 5 years (MRI Worldwide China Group, 2006). Appendix 2-1 presents a detailed analysis of the labour turnover situation of women executives in South Africa.

This section of the literature review firstly examines various labour turnover classifications. Secondly a discussion of the causes of labour turnover is presented and finally it illustrates the possible business consequences of labour turnover.

1.5 Classification of Labour Turnover

Various classifications of labour turnover exist, two of which are presented in this review.

1.5.1 Voluntary and Involuntary Labour Turnover

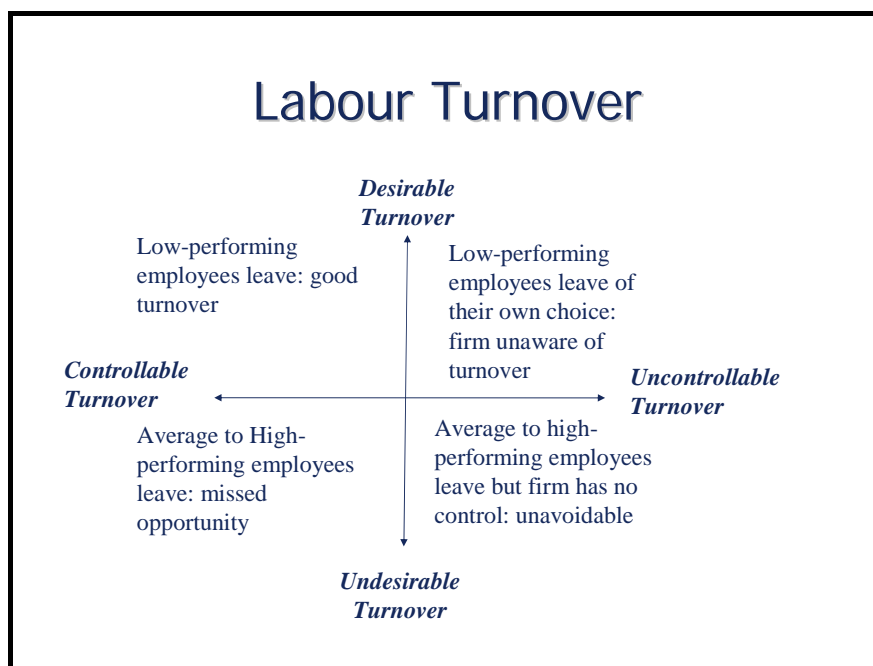
The basic classification of labour turnover depends on whether it is initiated by the employee or the employer; it is called voluntary turnover if the employee decides to

leave the organisation and involuntary turnover if the employer terminates the contract (Sutherland, 2003). Voluntary turnover according to Maertz and Campion (1998) is those instances where management agrees that even though the employee had the physical opportunity to continue employment they still decided to terminate the relationship.

1.5.2 Controllable, Uncontrollable, Desirable and Undesirable Turnover

A further breakdown of labour turnover is shown in Figure 3 which illustrates that labour turnover can be desirable or undesirable as well a controllable or uncontrollable, once again this is viewed from the organisations viewpoint (Bekker, Huselid and Ulrich, 2001). Desirable turnover can also be termed functional turnover and undesirable turnover can be termed dysfunctional turnover (Allen and Griffeth, 1999). This research focuses on undesirable, uncontrollable voluntary turnover.

Figure 1: Classification of Labour Turnover (Bekker *et al*, 2001)



1.6 Causes of Voluntary Turnover

1.6.1 Environmental Factors

Environmental factors include political, economic, social, technological, legal and ecological factors, all of which can influence an individual's decision to leave an organisation.

The global skills shortage of well-trained talent gives rise to the high level of demand that is evident in the current labour market. This demand gives rise to the constant poaching and head-hunting of talented employees not only by local rival firms but also by other countries that are shifting to knowledge intensive industries and therefore require executive management skills (Cappelli, 2000; Handfield-Jones, 2000; Davis and Stephenson, 2006). The skills shortage is not likely to improve in the foreseeable future and Gresham (2006) predicts that by 2020 the developed countries will have a shortfall of knowledge workers, a substantial number of which include executive management skills that will be in excess of 35 million jobs. Florida (2005) agrees with this sentiment and predicts that there will be a shortage of 5.3 million skilled workers by 2010 in the United States of America and the primary reason for this will be purely demographic, baby boomers make up most of the workforce and they are beginning to exit the workplace, this will peak in twenty years time and there are not enough skilled people to replace them.

It appears as if organisations in both the developed and developing economies are faced with the same dilemma, and that is how to retain talented staff as the only factors that Chinese employees cite for leaving their organisations are environmental

factors related to better offers by competitor firms. The principle reason of a better compensation package is cited by nearly half of all employees who resign (MRI Worldwide China Group, 2006).

Research conducted by Catalyst in 1998 cited the reasons that women executives leave large organisations in America were all organisational reasons. These reasons were lack of flexibility (51%), existence of the glass ceiling (29%), unhappiness with the work environment (28%) and feeling unchallenged with their jobs (Catalyst cited in Vermeulen, 2004). The latest research conducted by Catalyst (2004) cites very different reasons, the reasons are all environmental reasons and they are :- 42.0% citing increased compensation, 35.0% to accept the opportunity to develop new skills or competencies, and 33.0% to pursue greater advancement opportunities.

South Africa is not exempt from the skills shortage and its dire consequences. Barker (2003) predicts that the shortage of skilled labour in South Africa is likely to put a ceiling on economic growth and development; this shortage will be exacerbated by the increased demand for management and professional skills, which follows the international trend. In an attempt to try and alleviate this shortage, the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) was launched by the Deputy President of South Africa in March 2006. She recognised that skilled women are a scarce commodity that need to be retained in South Africa in order to meet the growth targets that the government has set (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2006).

South African skilled workers are also faced with high levels of crime in the country as well as the equity legislation, all of which make it even more attractive for some sectors of the population to leave the country, thereby contributing to high levels of

emigration (Sutherland, 2003). Organisations can not directly control any of these environmental factors but there are certain factors that organisations can control.

1.6.2 Organisational factors

In the 1950's Whyte cited in Cappelli and Hamori (2005) stated that the only reason an executive would leave her organisation was if the organisation did not live up to the promise of upward mobility that had been made to the employee. The research conducted by Birt, Wallis and Winternitz (2004) confirms Lee's (1987) findings that organisational factors contribute far more to an employee's decision to leave than environmental factors (such as other job opportunities) or individual factors.

The views expressed by these authors are in direct opposition to the findings of the MRI Worldwide China Group (2006) which cites environmental factors as the only reason why Chinese employees resign. Regardless of this finding current literature mentions several organisational factors that influence voluntary turnover, some of them are: - lack of mentorship, mergers and acquisitions; corporate politics; diversity avoidance; manager quality; job satisfaction and corporate culture.

1.6.2.1

1.6.2.2 Lack of Mentorship

Mentorship has been defined as "an intense interpersonal exchange between a senior experienced colleague (mentor) and a less experienced junior colleague (protégé) in which the mentor provides support, direction, and feedback regarding career plans and personal development" (Russell and Adams cited in Payne and Huffman, 2005). Mentorship is negatively related to turnover behaviour which is

described as “actual quitting” (Payne and Huffman, 2005 p 158). In support of the importance of mentorship, a survey of 20,000 employees stated that more than a third said they'd leave within the first year if there were no provisions for mentorship (Campbell and Alleyne, 2002).

1.6.2.3 Mergers and Acquisitions

Mergers and Acquisitions are prime examples of organisational change which can contribute to an increase in employee turnover (Baron, Hannan and Burton, 2001). This phenomenon occurs because acquisitions change the power relations within the acquired company, letting employees feel less powerful according to Lotz and Donald (2006). They go on to illustrate that acquisitions are stressful events that create a high level of uncertainty and can lead to increased job dissatisfaction and increased staff turnover. The reason that mergers and acquisitions result in increased staff turnover is that if staff feel undervalued they will leave (Carey and Ogden, 2004).

1.6.2.4

1.6.2.5 Advancement Opportunities

Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) report that if opportunities for career advancement are poor then executives, whether they are male or female leave the organisation. However when there are career advancement opportunities then women remain loyal to the organisation.

1.6.2.6 Diversity Avoidance

In an interesting study Boone, Van Olfen, Van Witteloostuijn and De Brabander (2004) found that teams tend to reject members who are demographically different from the core members, and that in times of economic pressure teams tend to close ranks, the team members who differ are the first to leave, even if there are environmental factors that promote heterogeneity, the team tends towards homogeneity. They also found that the greater the demographic distance between the person and the existing team, the quicker their exit from that team. The findings of Boone *et al* (2004) support the arguments of Zatzick, Elvira and Cohen (2003) who report that turnover of minority race groups decreases as the number of minority group representatives' increase. However as the minority representation approaches 50% the minority group experiences a backlash from the majority and turnover increases. These findings might be valid for all minority groups and not only minority race groups.

In support of the tendency towards homogeneity Elvira and Cohen (2001) assert that executive women are less likely to leave if there are more women at their level and at levels above them in the organisation. Leonard and Levine (2006), in their recent study found that diversity does not increase turnover, except in the case of women where it does increase turnover, this finding concurs with Elvira and Cohen (2001) with regards to women's affinity to homogenous groups. The literature therefore suggests a double edge sword in that both males and females tend toward homogenous teams. This is a dilemma for women in male dominated corporates.

1.6.2.7 Manager Integrity and Quality

Regardless of all other efforts that are being made by the company to retain employees, bad supervision can cause employees to leave (Campbell and Alleyne, 2002). A few authors are advising employees to leave if their career advancement is being hampered by factors beyond their control such as problems with an immediate supervisor (Cappelli and Hamori, 2005).

1.6.2.8 Job Satisfaction

Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel and Hill (1999) report a positive correlation between lack of job satisfaction and voluntary turnover. Hammer and Avgar (2005) disagree with Lee *et al* (1999) and indicate that job dissatisfaction does not necessarily lead to voluntary turnover and that as long as there are less costly ways of adapting to those dissatisfying aspects of the job, the person is likely to stay. Even if employees are satisfied with their jobs and a better offer is made to them, they may decide to leave (Sumner and Niederman, 2004).

1.6.2.9

1.6.2.10 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture often discourages women from asking for what they want as colleagues may have deep seated expectations of how women should behave and if they do ask for what they want they are often labelled as over-bearing, this culture could cause women to easily accept another offer and leave (Babcock, Laschever, Gelfand and Smal, 2003).

1.6.2.11 Lack of Flexibility

Although a large majority of “South Africa’s Best Companies to Work for: 2005” (Corporate Research Foundation and Finance Week, 2005), do have processes and procedures regarding flexible work practices, paradoxical evidence shows that flexible working hours and the ability to work from home are still major needs of South African business women working in large companies and the lack thereof often cause women to leave (Business Day Editorial, 2006).

1.6.3 Individual factors

Several factors regarding the employees’ situation may cause them to resign, these are: - burnout, lifestage, family commitments, intention to leave, negotiation ability and shocks.

1.6.3.1 Burn Out

“Emotional exhaustion is a chronic state of physical and emotional depletion that results from excessive job demands and continuous hassles” (Wright and Cropanzano, 1998, p 486). They go further and explain that emotional exhaustion is one part of burn-out, and that whilst burn out is not associated with job satisfaction it is associated with job performance and turnover. In an opposing finding Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski and Erez (2001) agree that burnout leads to turnover but they argue that the route is via a decrease in job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

One of the most concerning aspects of burn-out for organisations is that 40% of mid-career employees (who are aged between 35 and 54 years and make up half of the workforce in the USA) report feelings of burn-out and disenchantment with their careers. The problem of disenchanted employees is greater than employee turnover but can lead to employee turnover (Morison, Erckson and Dychtwald, 2006).

1.6.3.2

1.6.3.3 Life Stage

It is vital in any study of this nature to consider the context of the individual who makes the decision. This context means taking into account the group membership the individual holds as well as the life stage of the said individual. Each group will exert different pressures on an individual to conform, and different life stages demand different priorities outside the workplace, these include caring for elderly parents or caring for young children. Generational differences in terms of the role that work plays in an individuals life is also an important determinant of behaviour (Cook, 2001; Gratton, 2004; Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005). The functions of child-bearing and child-rearing often prompt a woman to leave the workplace, and age and voluntary turnover are negatively correlated for women (Griffeth *et al*, 2000).

1.6.3.4 Family Commitments

Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) assert that women leave for three reasons: - generational differences and shifts in work values, work-family balance issues and discrimination against women in the workplace. In support of this argument Mitchell,

Holtom and Lee (2001) argue that family and non-work factors such as having children at home or having a spouse are better predictors of turnover than organisational commitment. This sentiment is shared by Lyness and Judiesch (2001) who state that people who take family leave are more likely to resign than those who had not taken leave.

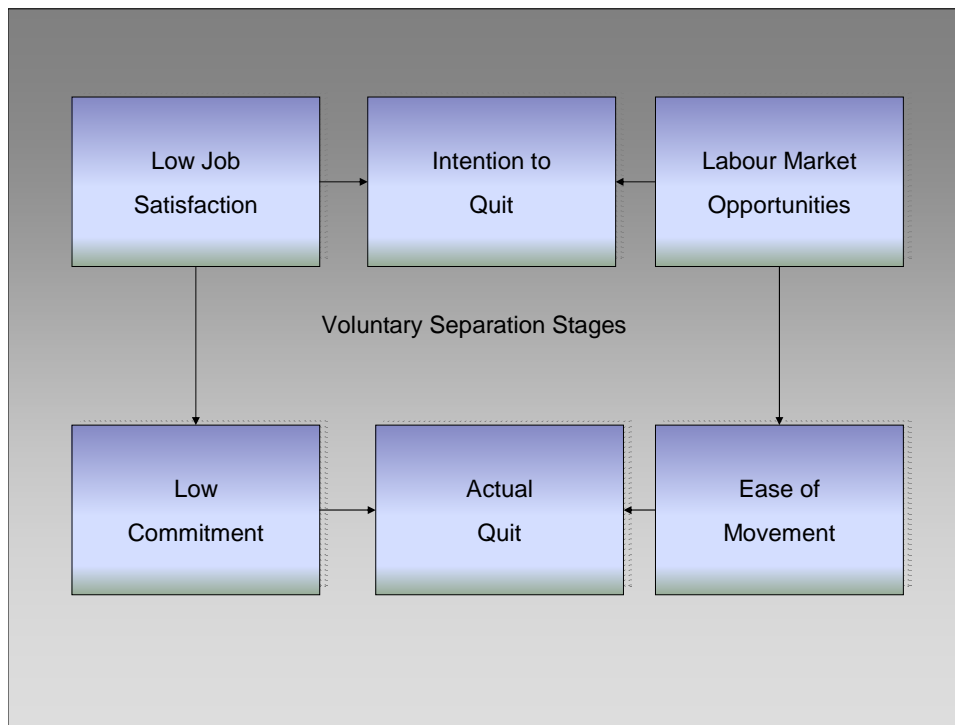
Vermeulen (2004) supports the family commitment argument and confirms that a woman's decision to leave a company can be driven by a feeling of guilt that the woman is not fulfilling all her responsibilities that she has in other areas of her life. The woman will be inclined to give up her career and assume a less demanding job in order to fulfil the needs of her family; this self-sacrificing behaviour permeates into all aspects of the woman's life (Greer, 2000).

1.6.3.5 Intention to Leave

Intention to turnover is closely correlated to turnover, but contrary to previous studies it was found that job satisfaction was not a contributing factor to intention to turnover (Hwang and Kuo, 2006). Alternative employment offers were found to be positively correlated to an employee's intention to leave an organisation and with the ever increasing war for talent employees will be faced with increasing offers thereby increasing their intention to leave the organisation (Cappelli, 2000; Hwang and Kou, 2006). An individual's intention to leave is considered by many authors to be the best predictor of voluntary turnover (Sutherland and Jordaan, 2004). The time between intention to leave and actually leaving is longer for women than for men according to Sumner and Niederman (2004).

Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between intention to quit and actual decision to quit, Winterton (2004) emphasises that each of the reasons in the four corner blocks can precipitate the termination process.

Figure 2: Voluntary Separation Phases (Winterton, 2004)



1.6.3.6 Negotiation ability

Women continue to earn less than their male counterparts and are treated unequally in the workplace, this phenomenon is often caused by a women's inability to ask for what she wants, and to just accept what the employer offers her. She often believes that her employer will look after her and her contribution will be valued without her having to negotiate the terms of her contract. The result of this behaviour is that if a woman receives a better offer, she resigns and doesn't use the new offer as a negotiation tool (Babcock *et al*, 2003).

1.6.3.7 Shocks

Shocks are specific events that cause an employee to leave an organisation; these can be caused through organisational events such as a low performance rating or personal events such as death of a spouse. These events cause the employee to re-evaluate their employment relationship and are found to be a significant reason for voluntary turnover (Lee *et al*, 1999, Sutherland, 2003). The concept of “shocks” as precipitating events which lead to employee turnover is supported by Sumner and Niederman (2004) who go further by stating that shocks due to labour market forces are more important as a precursor to voluntary termination than job dissatisfaction.

1.6.4 System Interrelationships

Systems do not operate in isolation and it is therefore important to consider the factors that are attributable to the relationship between two different systems and not only to a specific system, hence the psychological contract, organisational commitment and job-embeddedness are also reviewed.

1.6.4.1 Psychological Contract

Rousseau (2004) describes the nature of the psychological contract to be expressed or implied promises that take place between the agents of the organisation and an individual employed in the firm. In organisations the written employment contract typically captures the formal work arrangements, while the psychological contract contains the more subjective, unspoken and subtle expectations of the relationship. Unlike formal or implied contracts, the psychological contract is inherently

perceptual, and thus according to Robinson (1996) one party's understanding of the contract may not be shared by the other.

The impact of psychological contract breach comes about as a result of two psychological dynamics; the first being unmet expectations and the second a loss of trust. Both of these incidences reduce the individual's contributions to the organisation but would not necessarily cause them to leave the organisation according to Robinson (1996). Lee *et al* (1999) disagrees and reports that psychological contract violations do in fact increase employee turnover.

The positive aspects of employee turnover are highlighted by Grobler and Wörnich (2006) who introduce the concept of new contracts which demand an adult-to-adult relationship between the employee and the organisation. The employee is expected to add value to the organisation and stability is not ensured. New contracts are underpinned by the constant movement of people into and out of an organisation.

1.6.4.2

1.6.4.3 Organisational Commitment

The level of commitment within an organisation defines the level to which an individual identifies and is involved with his organisation (Greenberg and Baron, 2000). Without the feeling of being aligned and involved with an organisation an individual cannot be committed to the goals of the organisation. Commitment is not an isolated concept and is influenced by a multitude of related factors, for example: the psychological contract between the parties, and the level of trust that both

parties will act with integrity and in the mutual interest of the parties as well as their own efficacy to achieve the set goals.

What people do in their jobs, in other words their performance is more important than whether they remain with the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Hence although turnover could be a valuable indication of organisational commitment, a more important indicator is the level of employees' contribution towards organisational goals and facing organisational challenges.

1.6.4.4

1.6.4.5 Job Embeddedness

Mitchell *et al* (2001a) introduce the concept of job embeddedness which measures the degree to which an individual is enmeshed within their organisation and environment. The three constructs that are used to determine the strength of embeddedness are: fit, sacrifice and links. Their findings are that the stronger the job embeddedness of an individual the less likely they are to voluntarily terminate their employment.

Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton and Holtom (2004) refine the concept of job embeddedness into on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness. On-the-job meaning the level of embeddedness to the organisation and off-the-job means the level of embeddedness to the wider community. They report that only off-the-job embeddedness is predictive of voluntary turnover.

1.7 Business Consequences of Labour Turnover

There are positive and negative consequences associated with an organisation's ability to manage the rate of voluntary turnover of its employees.

1.7.1

1.7.2 *Positive Consequences of Labour Turnover*

A certain attrition or turnover rate is positive for a company operating in a fast changing environment as it allows that company to cope better in a dynamic environment and also it promotes fresh ideas and removes "the rust" as Kulshreshthra and Kumar (2005, p103) point out. In their econometric model they describe the optimal attrition rate per employee per organisation. The variables used in the model are the employee's learning speed, motivation and initial knowledge. These variables are contrasted with the employee's cost to company and thereby the optimal attrition rate for each employee within that organisation can be calculated (Kulshreshthra and Kumar, 2005). The optimal rate of attrition becomes even more crucial for organisations that have low levels of certain categories of employees, a case in point being the low levels of women executives within large organisations. The positive consequences for organisations that manage the attrition rate of their female talent pool include that of a long-term substantial competitive advantage (Hewlett and Luce, 2005).

Individuals as well as organisations can benefit from voluntary labour turnover according to Cappelli and Hamori (2005) who assert that successful executives need to constantly change their career paths. They found female and male executives in

Fortune 100 companies are only spending an average of 3.2 years in each job and only 32% of them started their careers with their current firm. It is evident that if an employee has aspirations to get to the executive suite then a regular change of job is required.

1.7.3 Negative Consequences of Labour turnover

The negative consequences of labour turnover include direct and indirect costs. The direct costs include recruitment costs, administration costs, training costs (Maertz and Campion, 1998). In addition, all of the new incumbent's relocation costs need to be included in this figure. Indirect costs are much more difficult to quantify and include loss of knowledge, negative impact on productivity, declining morale of remaining staff as well as increased customer dissatisfaction (Sutherland, 2003).

Most organisations realise that it costs more to employ a new person than to retain an existing employee according to Gresham (2006) who argues that the exact cost depends on the person, but that Human Resource executives typically estimate that it costs at least 50% of the current incumbents annual salary up to several times that salary depending on the individual. Sutherland (2003) estimates the costs of knowledge workers, of which women executives are a subset, to be 22% of that person's annual salary. The high variance in these estimates supports the fact that organisations still battle to quantify the costs of voluntary turnover.

The cost of labour turnover is not limited to the organisation. It can also have a substantial effect on the individual; these costs include non-economic factors such as separation from a network of friends and also the possible uprooting of family

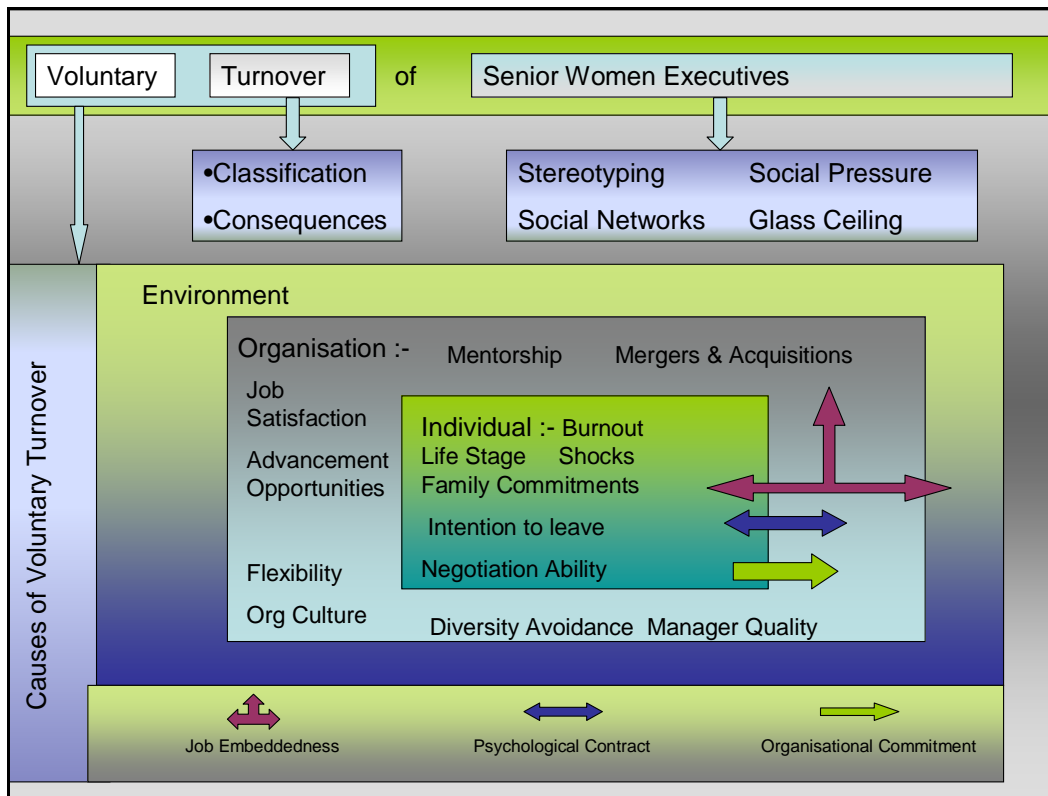
members. Most people adapt to dissatisfying jobs because of the psychological costs of leaving (Hammer and Avgar, 2005). The people that cannot adapt to these conditions will leave the organisation. The organisation has control over some of these reasons but no control over other reasons (Sutherland, 2003).

The causes of voluntary turnover can be environmental factors, organisational factors or individual factors. There are also factors that exist between each of these entities and are a variable of the relationship between the organisation and the individual, or the individual and the external environment. Examples of such relationships are the psychological contract, organisational commitment and job-embeddedness all of which will be reviewed in the next section.

3. Conclusion

The literature presented in this section abounds with possible reasons that employees terminate their employment contracts. These include environmental reasons such as the EEA, organisational reasons such as inferior quality management or individual factors such as lifestage or burnout. The structure of the preceding literature review is summarised and diagrammatically represented in figure 3 that depicts the classification, the causes and the consequences of voluntary turnover, superimposed onto an adaptation of Cook and Hunsaker's (2001) Organisational Environment Context diagram. The aim of this research is to discover the primary drivers that cause women executives to terminate their employment contracts.

Figure 3: Literature Review Structure



Organisational Environment Context adapted from Cook and Hunsaker (2001)

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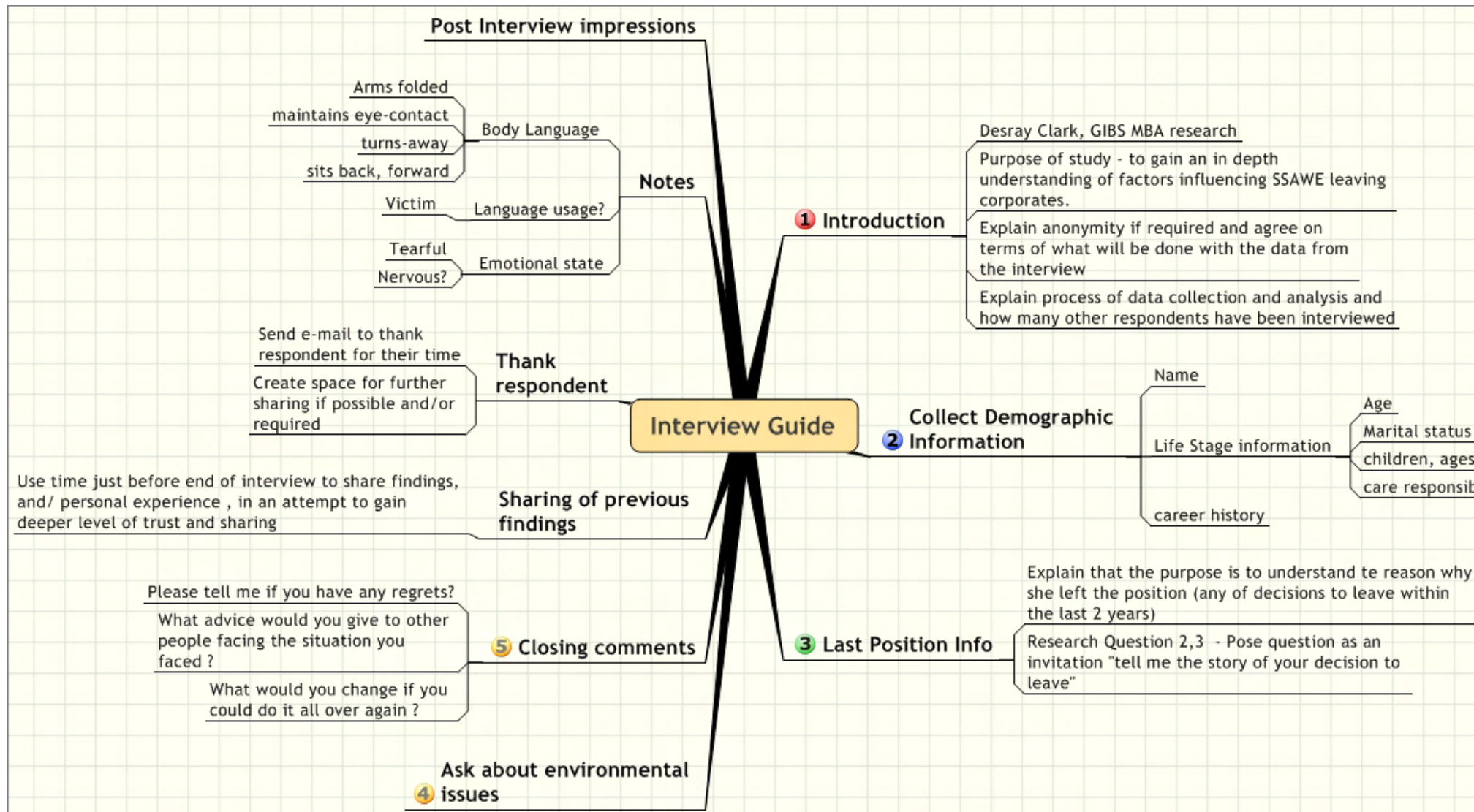
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APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE





UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

APPENDIX 4: RESPONDENT DATABASE

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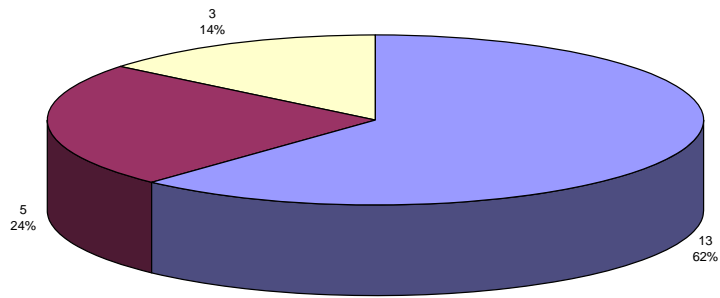
Participants

<i>Name of Primary Contact</i>	<i>Designation</i>
Available on request from author	
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Previous Position</i>
Available on request from author	
<i>Name of Expert</i>	<i>Designation</i>
Mark Bussin	HR strategist and remuneration expert
Stephanie Vermeulen	Author of "Stitched-Up", and emotional intelligence consultant

Participant Demographics

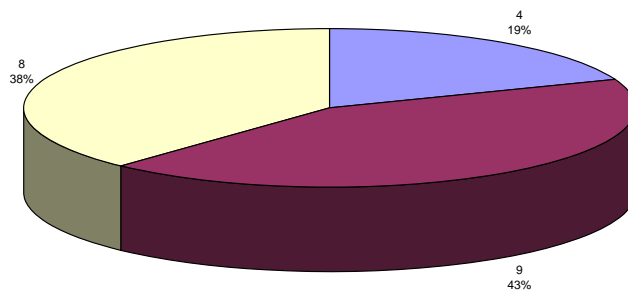
Item	Category	No.	%	Item	Category	No.	%
Marital status	Partnered	12	57%	No. of children	Childless	7	33%
	Single	9	43%		1 child	7	33%
					2 children	4	19%
			>=3 children		3	15%	
Age	30-39	4	19%	Academic Qual	Matric	2	10%
	40-49	9	43%		Undergrad	10	48%
	>50	8	38%		Postgrad	5	24%
			> 1 Postgrad		4	18%	
Race	White	13	62%				
	Black	5	24%				
	Coloured/Indian	3	14%				

Respondents : Race



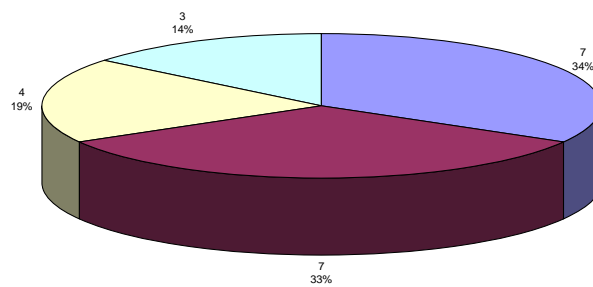
White Black Coloured/Indian

Respondents : Age



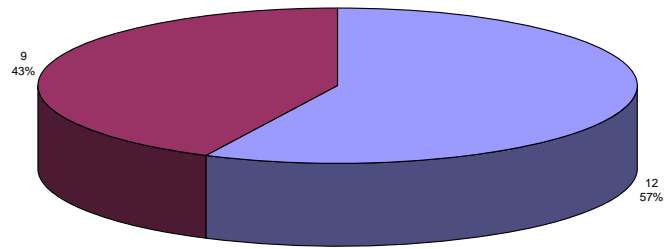
30-39 40-49 >50

Respondents : Nr of Children



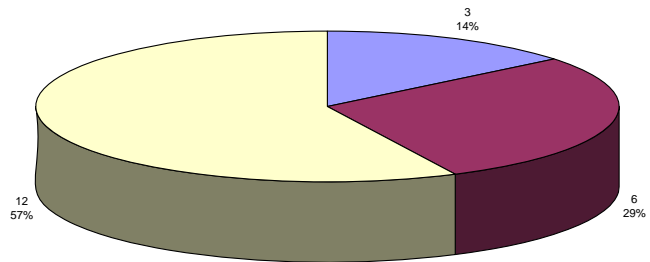
No children 1 child 2 children 3 or more children

Respondents : Partnered



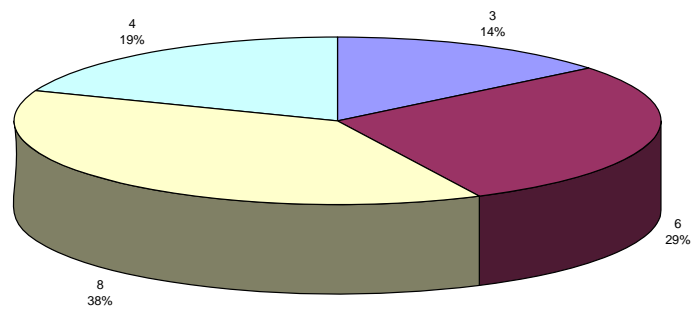
Partnered Single

Respondents : Care Responsibilities



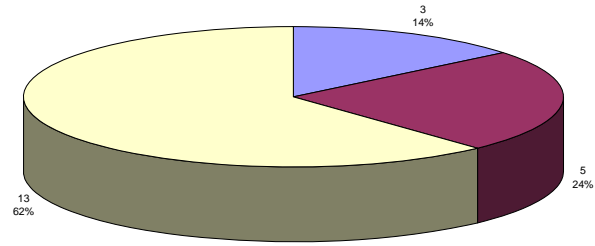
None Partial Full

Respondents : Job Size (nr of employees)



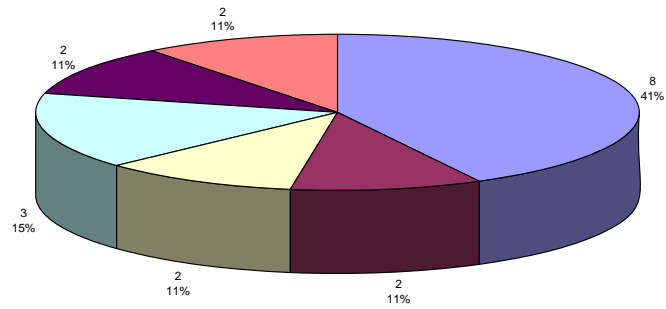
< 10 > 10 - < 100 > 100 - < 1000 > 1000

Respondents : Job Size (t/over budget)



Legend: 1- 10 M, R10M - R100M, >R100M

Respondents : Functional Area



Legend: General, HR, Sales & Marketing, IT, Finance, Projects

Participant Tenure and Job Size

	Respondent	Size of Budget (Rm)	Nr of people	Tenure (years)	
	1	45000	76	4	
	2	25000	500	5	
	3	4000	9000	8	
	4	2000	50	6	
	5	1500	200	1.5	
	6	1200	30000	10	
	7	800	250	21	
	8	600	200	4	
	9	420	20	2	
	10	300	500	12	
	11	240	100000	30	
	12	120	20	20	
	13	50	1700	10	
	14	50	10	5	
	15	40	10	5	
	16	25	58	5	
	17	10	100	2	
	18	10	30	2	
	19	10	6	5	
	20	6	35	6	
	21	0.4	1	25	
	Total	R 81,381.40	142766	188.5	
	Mean	R 4,282.89	7512.11	8.29	
	Median	R 300.00	100	5	

Interviews

Available on request from author.

Results

	Category	Theme	Count	Unique Respondents	
	Individual	<i>Make a Difference</i>	36	18	
		Freedom/Autonomy	23	11	
		Power	19	11	
		Flexibility/Balance	16	7	
		Recognition	11	6	
		<i>Political Acumen</i>	41	15	
		<i>Burn Out</i>	28	13	
		Family Commitments	11	8	
		Life Stage	5	4	
	Spanning	<i>Social Networks</i>	38	16	
		<i>Organisational Support/Mentorship</i>	31	15	
		<i>Values Clash</i>	30	15	
		<i>Shocks</i>	15	14	
		<i>Intimidation</i>	28	13	
		<i>Problems with Manager</i>	23	13	
		Organisational Relationship	18	9	
	Organisational	<i>Organisational Culture</i>	50	15	
		Job Content	32	12	
		Advancement Opportunities	21	9	
		Organisational Change	12	9	
	Environmental	Stereotyping	12	7	
		War for Talent	10	6	
		Social Pressure	3	3	

APPENDIX 5: AUTHOR GUIDELINES – WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Women in Management Review

ISSN: 0964-9425



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Editorial objectives

The journal is aimed at women in management, academics and professionals involved in HR development, equal opportunity initiatives, management and training. The main objectives are to focus on current research, practice, ideas, developments and news of major issues in the field of women in management. The journal takes an international perspective.

Editorial scope

It is the journal's intention to address broad-ranging social issues, such as political and legislative decisions, social policy, educational policy, and economic factors, in its consideration of the role of women in management.

General principles

blank Microsoft Word document. Artwork created in MS Powerpoint is also acceptable. Artwork may be submitted in the following standard image formats: .eps - Postscript, .pdf - Adobe Acrobat portable document, .ai - Adobe Acrobat portable document, .wmf - Windows Metafile. If it is not possible to supply graphics in the formats listed above, authors should ensure that figures supplied as .tif, .gif, .jpeg, .bmp, .pcx, .pic, .pct are supplied as files of at least 300 dpi and at least 10cm wide.

In the text the position of a figure should be shown by typing on a separate line the words "take in Figure 2". Authors should supply succinct captions.

For photographic images good quality original photographs should be submitted. If submitted electronically they should be saved as .tif files of at least 300dpi and at least 10cm wide. Their position in the text should be shown by typing on a separate line the words "take in Plate 2".

Tables should be kept to a minimum. They must be numbered consecutively with roman numerals and a brief title. In the text, the position of the table should be shown by typing on a separate line the words "take in Table IV".

Photos and illustrations must be supplied as good quality black and white original half tones with captions. Their position should be shown in the text by typing on a separate line the words "take in Plate 2".

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(b) for chapter in edited book
surname, initials and year, "title", editor's surname, initials, title, publisher, place, pages, e.g. Bessley, M. and Wilson, P. (1984), "Public policy and small firms in Britain", in Levicki, C. (Ed.), *Small Business Theory and Policy*, Croom Helm, London, pp.111-26.

(c) for articles
surname, initials, year "title", journal, volume, number, pages, e.g. Fox, S. (1994) "Empowerment as a catalyst for change: an example from the food industry", *Supply Chain Management*, Vol 2 No 3, pp. 29-33

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commerce", *IEEE Journal on Selected Areas in Communications* , Vol. 13 No.8, October,pp.1523-31. Available (IEEE SEPTEMBER) <http://www.research.att.com/jsac/>

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**What's In
This Section** ▶▶

Appendix 6 and 7 available from the EMERALD insight database.