NJERI MWAGIRU

PH.D. RESEARCH THESIS:

WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND THEIR POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP AND SOCIO-POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

Presented for the Degree of:

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

February 2015
Cape Town, RSA

Supervisor
Professor Kurt April
Graduate School of Business (GSB)
University of Cape Town

UCT GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
the international business school in Africa

DECLARATION

This Thesis is Presented in Fulfilment of Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration:

I declare that the thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town, hereby submitted, has not been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all the materials contained herein have been duly acknowledged.

Signed by candidate

Signature removed

_____

Njeri Mwagiru,
February 2015
Cape Town, RSA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With sincere thanks and gratitude for the support, contributions and encouragement received towards completion of this thesis, in particular:

The University of Cape Town, Faculty of Commerce (Dean Melvin Ayogu and Dean Don Ross), **Graduate School of Business** (Director Frank Horowitz and Director Walter Baets) for:
Hosting the Doctoral Degree research programme; providing funding support (through the Post-graduate Funding Office - PGFO); access to research resources (with specific thanks to Kate Wood and colleagues at the GSB Library); availability of research facilities and forums (with thanks to the GSB PhD Directors Office); administrative and ICTS facilitation (Mrs. Jill Stevenson and UCT-GSB ICTS officers); and for the kind accommodation of unexpected circumstances and challenges that affected the timelines of the PhD research programme.

PhD Supervisor (Professor Kurt April and his family) for:
Continued availability and commitment to the research programme, recommendations and approval of the research process, signposting and timely reminders to meet expected requirements for the Doctoral Degree. With particular appreciation for the flexibility allowed throughout the research process and programme, to attend to simultaneous professional and personal demands.

The Gender Unit in the UCT Department of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics, for:
Exposure to current gender and feminist discourse and debates, and for the opportunity to teach and tutor in the field. In particular, thanks to Jane Bennet, Helen Scanlon, Yaliwe Clarke, Adelene Africa, Selina Mudavanhu, Wardah Daniels, Hilda Ferguson.

HERS-SA (Board and Academy, Cape Town, South Africa) & **The DEPOT** (Courage To Lead Forums, Nairobi Kenya) for:
Privileged access to conducive forums to interact with and interview women in senior and leadership positions in the education and business sector.

Research Respondents (Women in senior and leadership positions in organisations) for:
Valuable time and willingness to meaningfully participate and offer rich contributions that formed the basis of the PhD research and thesis. The lessons acquired during engagement with senior women in Kenya and South Africa, and the experiences and knowledge shared by women in organisational leadership in Africa, yielded personal and professional gains extending beyond the PhD research process and thesis. With sincere thanks to the research respondents, and women in leadership more broadly, for the steps achieved in their journeys, which have opened and widened paths of opportunity.

Mentors, **Academic Peers, Personal & Professional Networks** (personal, professional and academic mentors and networks; UCT-GSB PhD cohort; research companions and friends) for:

Information sharing and exchange, introduction to data sources and resources, reference suggestions and helpful comments, insightful discussions throughout the doctoral degree programme. Particular thanks to the Malvern Girls' College, Landegg International University, and University of the Witwatersrand alumni and network of peers and friends. Additionally thanks to Scezons partners and professional collaborators for providing opportunity to beneficially link the PhD research process and programme to professional initiatives and activities.

Family (the larger Mwagiru and Muiruri families in Kenya and internationally, and immediate family) for:
Invaluable support and encouragement. In particular to Wangari Mwagiru for her artistic and creative perspective; Nyambura Mwagiru for the research collaboration; Wanjiku Muiruri-Mwagiru for the in-house supervision and step-by-step accompaniment; and to the late George Patrick Mwagiru (11 April 1948 – 19 January 2010) for his undying faith.

CONTENTS

List of Figures and Tables

PhD Research Thesis Submitted to the University of Cape Town: February 2015, by
Njeri Mwaqiru

WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND THEIR POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP AND SOCIO-POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

ABSTRACT

At a theoretical and practical level of inquiry, the research presented in this thesis explores the potential of women's contributions to epistemology and knowledge for enhanced leadership, organisational performance and sustainable processes of socio-political transformation.

The research inquiry is informed by a commitment to promote diversity, equity and sustainability, and prompted by the need to investigate women's continued low representation at senior and leadership levels in organisations, and characteristics of persistent gender bias.

The main focus of the practical research is the experience of women in senior and leadership positions in organisations. The practical research inquiry focuses on how organisations facilitate or impede women's contributions to knowledge and leadership processes at senior and leadership levels. The objective of the research was to identify organisational facilitators and obstacles that respectively support or constrict women in senior and leadership positions, particularly with reference to the motivations, collegial relations and decision making capacity of women in leadership.

A main stipulation of the research theoretical discussion is that current emergence of knowledge economies and societies, in environments of complexity and uncertainty, presents an opportune moment to explore diverse knowledges which may enhance leadership, organisational innovation and performance, as well as sustainable processes of socio-political transformation. In particular, focus is on the potential of women's contributions to knowledge and leadership towards expanded and alternative epistemologies and theoretical frameworks, conceptual models and practical approaches for improved organisational performance and sustainable socio-political transformation.

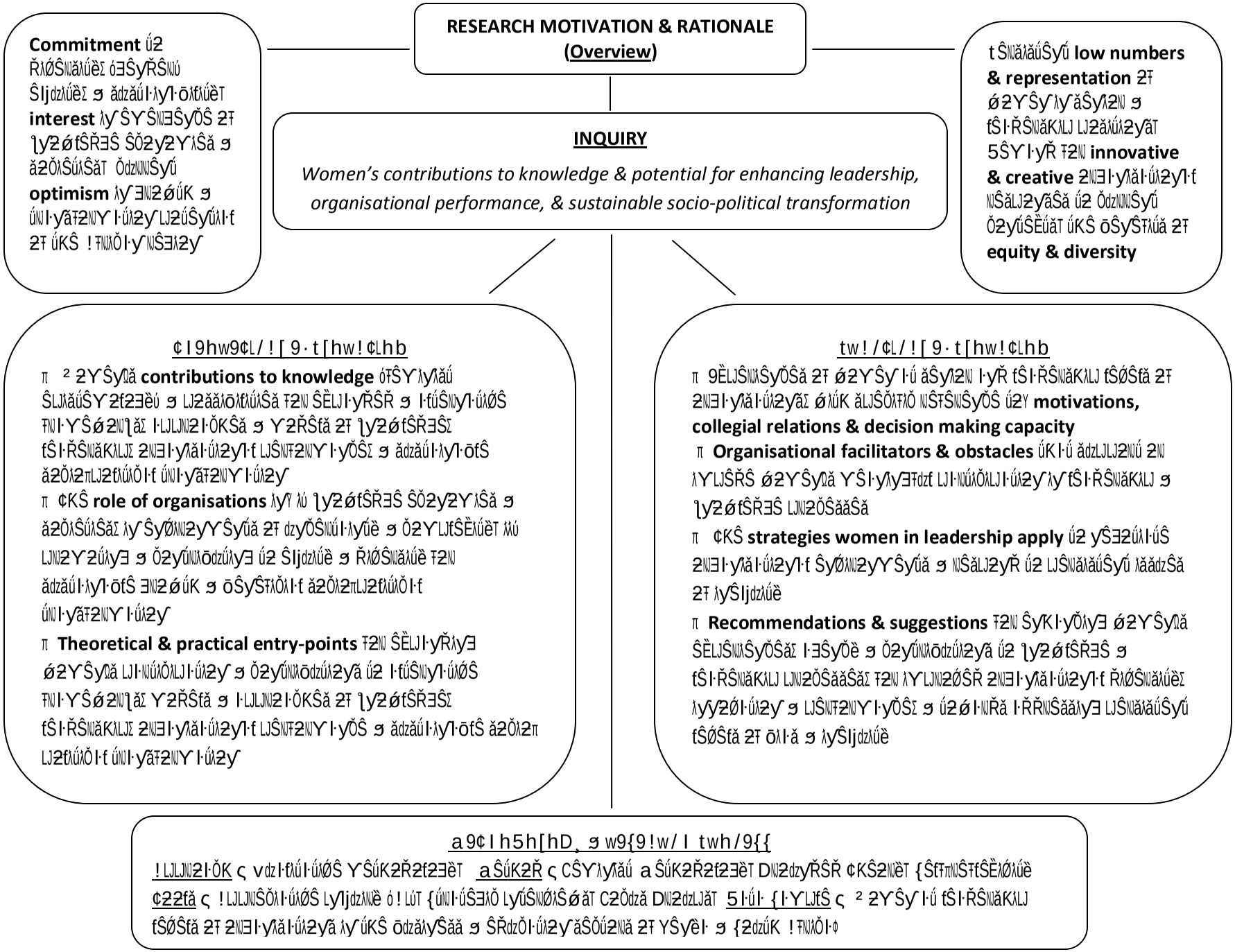
The principal context of interest is Africa, motivated by optimism related to positive patterns of recent economic growth, ongoing processes of democratisation, and a youthful population expanding the region's potential. The discussion references widely however (see References and Bibliography), and may be relevantly applied for a variety of international contexts.

The research process followed a qualitative and dual methodological approach, applying Grounded theory and feminist methodology, and was informed by a constant process of self-reflexivity. Research findings presented are based on data gathered through strategic interviews and focus group discussions undertaken with women senior managers and leaders within private and education sector organisations in Kenya and South Africa. (See Appendix)

Findings indicate that persistence of structural/tangible and cultural/intangible restraints compromise women's meaningful participation in leadership and knowledge processes at senior levels in organisations. In response, women in leadership have developed strategies of coping and negotiating organisational contexts to minimise challenges presented and to maximise beneficial gains. Strategies of women in leadership are clustered broadly as: behaviour, communication, information, planning, leadership.

The recommendations of the research suggest mechanisms and approaches to ameliorate/strengthen organisational obstacles/facilitators, and to better support women in senior and leadership positions within organisations, towards addressing underrepresentation of women at senior and leadership levels. Findings discuss the value of institutional and policy support structures and mechanisms including mentoring and capacity building, networks, gender and diversity policies, innovative technology platforms. The research findings and conclusion underscore the need for continued efforts to address persistent inequity and levels of gender bias, and to promote and contribute to diversity for improved leadership, organisational performance and innovation towards inclusive and sustainable socio-political transformation.

The inquiry aims to contribute to literature and studies in leadership and management; organisational studies and organisational performance; diversity, innovation and creativity, and knowledge management in organisations; feminist/women's/gender studies; sustainable development and socio-political transformation in Africa and internationally. Additional research addressing numerous questions related to each of these areas, is necessary and imperative towards expanding the search for relevant, applicable and equity-based solutions to address collective challenges, and maximise on positive possibilities presented by contemporary contexts of rapid change, complexity and emergence of knowledge economies and societies.


RESEARCH MOTIVATION & RATIONALE
(Overview)
INQUIRY
Women's contributions to knowledge & potential for enhancing leadership, organisational performance, & sustainable socio-political transformation
Commitment
interest
optimism
low numbers & representation
innovative & creative
equity & diversity
contributions to knowledge
motivations, collegial relations & decision making capacity
Organisational facilitators & obstacles
role of organisations
strategies women in leadership apply
Theoretical & practical entry-points
Recommendations & suggestions

Women's Knowledge Systems & their Potential Contribution to Leadership & Socio-Political Transformation

[illegible]

[illegible]

Organisational Structures & Cultures

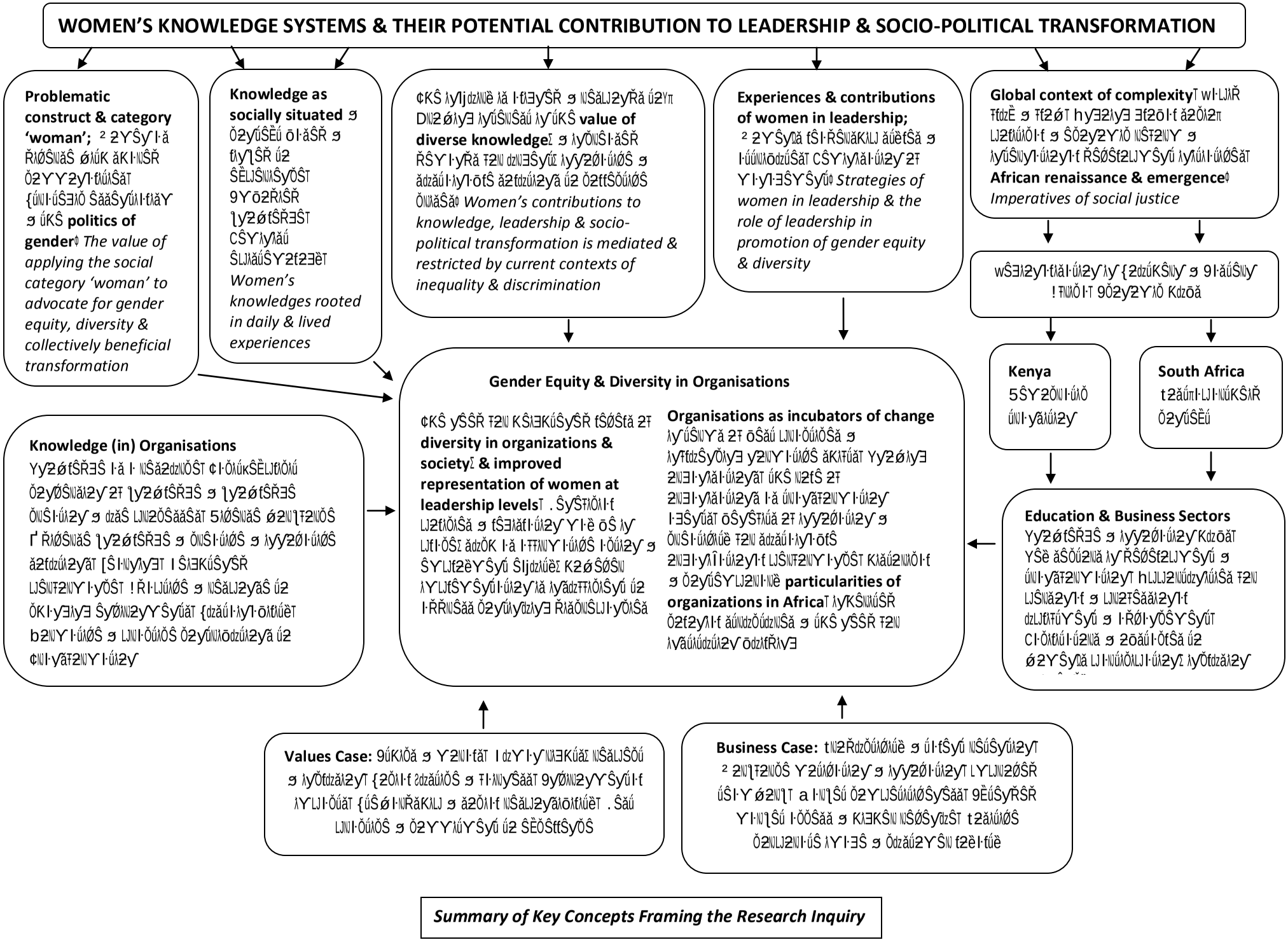
[illegible]

Organisational Obstacles & Facilitators

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] *Africa*
[illegible] *RSA, Kenya*
[illegible] *Business /private & Education sectors*
[illegible] *Women in senior & leadership positions*
[illegible]


WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS & THEIR POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP & SOCIO-POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION
Problematic construct & category 'woman';
politics of gender
The value of applying the social category 'woman' to advocate for gender equity, diversity & collectively beneficial transformation
Knowledge as socially situated
Women's knowledges rooted in daily & lived experiences
value of diverse knowledge
Women's contributions to knowledge, leadership & socio-political transformation is mediated & restricted by current contexts of inequality & discrimination
Experiences & contributions of women in leadership;
Strategies of women in leadership & the role of leadership in promotion of gender equity & diversity
Global context of complexity
African renaissance & emergence
Imperatives of social justice
Kenya
South Africa
Education & Business Sectors
Gender Equity & Diversity in Organisations
diversity in organizations & society & improved representation of women at leadership levels
Organisations as incubators of change
particularities of organizations in Africa
Knowledge (in) Organisations
Values Case:
Business Case:
Summary of Key Concepts Framing the Research Inquiry

1. INTRODUCTION

The value of knowledge, equity and diversity for leadership, organisational performance, and by extension, sustainable socio-political transformation, is the focus of the research presented here with particular reference to the African context.

At a theoretical level, the inquiry is located within current interests in the emergence of knowledge driven economies and societies, and argues for the benefits of diversity and equity in knowledge and organisational leadership for generating innovative and creative responses to complex, uncertain and rapidly changing environments. Towards augmented organisational performance and expanded processes of sustainable socio-political transformation, a key aim of the research is to examine potential nodes of entry for women's contributions to epistemology and knowledge, leadership, organisational performance and sustainable transformation.

At a practical level of inquiry, the research explores experiences of women at senior levels in organisations in relation to three components of leadership, namely: Motivation, Collegial Relations and Decision-making capacity. In particular the thesis identifies facilitative factors and restrictive obstacles that respectively act as catalysts or inhibitors of women's meaningful inclusion and agency in leadership and knowledge processes within contemporary organisations. Additionally, women's responsive and coping strategies for negotiating organisational contexts are presented.

The rationale of the inquiry draws from an extensive body of literature and wide array of discussions to outline the central concerns and interests motivating the study, namely,

- *Women's continued underrepresentation at senior and leadership levels in organisations*: subtle and embedded characteristics of persistent gender bias maintain gender inequity within contemporary organisations. Women continue to be largely underrepresented particularly at leadership levels, despite commendable advances, celebrated gains, and approaches dedicated to increasing women's visibility and meaningful inclusion. A driving concern of the research is the need to interrogate and address the low numbers of women in senior and leadership positions, and to offer relevant and supporting mechanisms to support women's participation and contributions in leadership within organisations as well as at larger institutional levels that

influence and drive processes of socio-political transformation. The driving argument is that equity and diversity are core ingredients of sustainable prosperity.

- *Current interests in the value of knowledge resources and capacities of societies and economies, and trends towards diversity, innovation and knowledge management in organisations*: increasing attention to the value of knowledge and information, and the associated benefits of diversity and innovation for organisational performance, present an avenue of opportunity to expand approaches and further address issues of equity and representation. Environments characterised by rapid change, uncertainty and complexity require innovative and creative responses for successful organisational performance, and demand sustainable solutions to critical challenges of socio-political transformation. Research studies and commentary increasingly recommend organisations effectively maximise on the diverse knowledge resources and capacities available as a core factor of success. Additionally at the level of socio-political transformation and development, studies have unequivocally illustrated the negative costs and repercussions of myopic frameworks, models and approaches that disregard women's agency and perpetuate gender bias and inequity. Rectifying underutilisation of women as knowledge resources both quantitatively (inclusion of women) and qualitatively (levels of participation) is posited therefore as a value adding and valuable agenda for achieving growth and sustainability.

- *Optimism in current patterns of economic growth and processes of democratisation in Africa, and the opportunity to optimise on the potential and positively reposition the continent:* GDP estimates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) peg growth for sub-Saharan Africa at 5.8% for the year 2015, with the potential in some national cases for economies to double growth in the next decade. General trends across the region of 48 countries are, improved political environments and government accountability, low and managed rates of inflation, increased market capitalisation and foreign investment, a growing middle class consumer base, and rising numbers of a youthful population with promising productive potential. Renewed engagement and interest in the potential and possibilities of African emergent and frontier economies, positively positions African organisations in favourable markets, and presents a conducive environment for growth. In this context, a key motivation of the research is the need to promote the value of knowledge, equity and diversity in leadership to maximise on the full range of resources available, and respond optimally to current processes of emergence. An additional informing

interest for the thesis is ongoing debates on the requirements of socio-political transformation in Africa in order to overcome historical limitations inherited from a colonial legacy of repression.

Several assumptions and key philosophical premises underline the main concepts guiding the research, and these are presented in the analytical framework of the inquiry. The operational definitions of the key terms and concepts applied are specified as much as possible, with reference to pertinent literature, including flagging what the shortcomings and gaps of these applications are. Mainly, the notion of a feminist epistemology - women's knowledge systems and ways of knowing – is discussed with regard to, the limits and functions of the category woman; the argument for experiential and embodied knowledge; and a discussion of organisations as gendered spaces with capacity to perpetuate or alleviate gender bias. A conceptual path is charted that navigates central philosophical debates and outlines the theoretical framework informing the research study methodological approach and process of inquiry.

The research design and process followed a dual qualitative methodology approach applying both grounded theory and feminist methodology. Continued self-reflexivity was integrated at all stages of the research to foreground personal assumptions, interests, and the relationship – including implicit and explicit levels of interaction – between researcher and research respondents. Kenya and South Africa were selected as the focus countries for the research activities undertaken and from which strategic respondents were primarily sourced. This choice was based on firstly, the relative socio-political and economic influence of Kenya and South Africa as central regional hubs. The number, spread and longevity of organisations in these countries was therefore considered well suited to the questions of interest for the research. Additionally adding to the wider relevance of the research, organisational trends in Kenya and South Africa have widespread applicability and effects as a result of close ties and interactions with neighbouring countries in each respective region. At another level, in line with the concerns of the research, both countries continue to strive towards processes of equitable socio-political and economic development, while celebrating the rich diversity of their populations in terms of specific contributions as well as particular requirements. This contemporary context dovetails well with the research inquiry.

The sample of strategic respondents was women at senior levels of organisational leadership, drawn from organisations in the higher education sector and a variety of businesses and companies across the private sector. (See table depicting Position and Portfolio Profile of Research Respondents p. , and Appendix for a list of organisations from which research respondents were sourced in Kenya and South Africa) The data collection approach and tools included an intensive Appreciative Inquiry (AI) initial phase, to test feasibility of the study and confirm suitability of interview schedule questions in terms of content, tone and sequence. Subsequently, a more extensive primary data collection process involved strategic interview sessions and convening focus group discussions with research respondents. (See Appendix for Research Interview Schedule and Questions)

Findings show gender continues to be a mediating factor at senior and leadership levels within organisations. Tangible and intangible aspects of organisational structures and cultures are identified that impede or facilitate women's contributions to knowledge and leadership processes. Concurrently, strategies women in senior and leadership positions apply for coping, negotiating and manoeuvring organisational contexts are presented.

At a practical level, the thesis discusses suggested steps and approaches organisations and leadership may undertake to mitigate obstacles and challenges women in senior positions encounter that undermine their knowledge and leadership performance. At a theoretical level, findings support both a business and values case for promoting diversity and equity in organisational leadership and knowledge processes, with particular reference to opportunities and demands of emerging economies and knowledge societies, in highly connected, complex and uncertain environments. The research conclusions underscore the continued need for efforts to address all levels of inequity for heightened organisational performance and sustainable processes of socio-political transformation. Possibilities for additional research and further exploration of issues are indicated.

1.1 The Context of the Research: History, Development, and Transformation/Emergence of Africa:

Key markers define the context of the research and are considered pertinent aspects in the framing of the inquiry.

Particularly in context of Africa and discussing socio-political transformation, Africa's integration in the international political economy is a point of interest. Attention is given to historical and current parameters of the social context and political economy, with a focus on patterns of development and emergence that have shaped the social contours of the region (Louca, 1997) with impacts for gender relations, leadership and organizational contexts.

Discourse and engagement on development and transformation with and within the continent revolves around two key perspectives, focusing on external dynamics on the one hand and internal dynamics on the other.[1] A point of convergence in this discourse is the imperative for change and transformation to address the numerous challenges, and maximize on the potential of the region. In response to challenges and opportunities from the turbulent flux and flow of the global system, innovative solutions are critically required, linked to the lessons of history, acknowledging international geo-politics and economic interests, and responding appropriately to cultural influences and moorings.

i) History:

A historical perspective is helpful to inform analysis and assessment of contemporary dynamics within the continent, towards forging fresh directions in shaping Africa's future. As Hooks (1990, p. 40) states, history plays an important function as a way of knowing and learning from the past, and such retrospection can serve as a platform and catalyst to concretely chart a vision and direction for the future, based on self-recovery and re-discovery. Understanding the past is important "because otherwise it would be impossible to understand how the present came into being and what the trends are for the near future…" (Rodney. 1972, p. 7)

For this thesis, a main reference is the trajectories and circumstances of Africa's recent colonial history, and the vestigial influences evident in the continent's current positioning and levels of integration within, and as part of, the international community. Specifically, the thesis recognizes

[11] External dynamics refer to for instance the lingering historical impacts of colonial settlers, the continent's

that the impact of the colonial and imperial encounter had deep reverberations, and continues to substantially influence and inform the continent's social, political, economic and cultural fabric. (Ngũgĩ, 1986, p. 4; Mudimbe, 1988, p.4)[2]

A systemic consequence of colonial incursions and the systems and structures established (and thereafter inherited during independence) has been institutionalised entrenchment of highly inequitable social conditions and amenities. A gross maldistribution of income and wealth is relatedly a structural feature of most societies (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1998). Imperialism-associated styles of power and authority continue to be asserted and displayed within institutions and organisational structures established during the colonial era, such as schools and universities, the public sector and civil service as well as private sector, and present in practices and forms of rule and leadership. Indigenous forms of social organisation are subdued by adopted systems, practices, perspectives and values, promoted and globalised under rhetoric of objective universalism. In terms of knowledge, the influence of the colonial encounter continues into post-colonial Africa and remains a pertinent issue of discourse and debate. As documented, part of colonial interactions with local populations, included establishing normative dominance of colonial forms of knowledge over indigenous knowledge, privileging certain forms of cognition and behaviour (selfhood), and particular concepts, theories, and modes and methods of conceptualising and theorising, through processes of social and community re-engineering and restructuring that accompanied the colonial incursion (for instance through the education system, civil service and migrant labour.)

Colonial influences remain evident both at a collective level through adopted forms, systems and transmutation of cultural expression, and at an individual level as Norton (1993) notes, in the cognition of the population through the psychology of memory and lived daily experience.

A central premise of this thesis is that the search for sustainable solutions to Africa' challenges requires fundamental levels of transformation based on contextually relevant knowledge and systems, better aligned and particular to the contours of Africa's heritages and possibilities. A

[2] It is important to note here that the thesis essentially acknowledges the pre-colonial history of Africa, recognising that the contemporary African context, while significantly influenced, is not solely shaped by the colonial/imperial encounter. Particularly in exploring the knowledge of senior women and leaders in Africa, an awareness of historical continuities extending from pre-colonial, traditional cultures is important, and such an awareness is interlaced into as well as guided the research process.

strategic and open interrogation and examination of Africa's recent and distant past, present realities and future potentialities, may provide valuable pointers and building blocks for social restructuring and transformation. In focusing on the experience and knowledge of women in leadership positions in organisations in Africa, the thesis attempts to contribute to this agenda.

ii) Development:

A reflection on leadership, socio-political transformation and women's positioning in African contexts requires recognising the prominent and instrumental role of the structural mechanisms, conceptual frameworks, and activities of the development industry in Africa. A guiding query for the thesis is the way in which women's experiences opportunities and challenges have been shaped by 'development' as a theoretical field of study and discipline, as well as a set of policy guidelines and professional practice.

Predominantly, development theory and practice in African contexts has reflected a tension between the state and market as primary drivers and custodians of development. Contesting perspectives relate the shortcomings and benefits of each as the main engines of economic and developmental growth. In approaches to African development, after the initial state-centric development drive of recently independent national governments (in the 1970s), market-centric approaches are increasingly pursued. The informing perspective underlying market populism is that States are "cumbersome, intrusive, domineering" (Clarke, 2010, p. 375) while on the other hand, markets are dynamic, responsive, innovative and open, offering efficient and effective means of coordinating development. Market populism circulates through transnational circuits and apparatuses, and has been particularly evident in the model and programmes of macroeconomic adjustment promoted by the international financial institutions (IFIs) (the Bretton Woods bodies - the World Bank and IMF) (Clarke (2010, p. 275), which have been seminal in configuration of development processes in Africa, through conditional development aid funds, loans disbursement and debt servicing terms.

Linked to US originated growth theory, which suggests developing countries require foreign capital in order to generate growth[3] (Payer, 1989 quoted in Rai, 2002), macroeconomic

[3] A flaw in this approach is related to the fact that investors invest their capital in developing economies with the objective of extracting the profits made, prioritizing private accumulation over wealth distribution in the local business context and markets and amongst local populations. Weak tax laws and lax enforcement, coupled with corrupt official practices combine to enhance damaging capital flows out of the continent at a faster and higher rate

programmes and models promoted by IFIs aim to create conducive economic and political environments to attract and multiply investment in African countries. Political dimensions of macroeconomic adjustment in Africa focus on the value of good governance and leadership, and the role of democratic rule of law in establishing conducive contexts and friendly environments for liberal markets to thrive and societies to subsequently prosper. In determining the role and place of the state in development, which is defined as the liberalisation of trade and monetary flows, IFI interventions focus on transparency, openness, accountability and regulation (Clarke, 2010), towards delineating particular forms of internal economic and socio-political relations to meet standardised international criteria for investment. From this perspective, shaping domestic realities according to the demands of foreign capital (Campbell, 1989) includes reducing state expenditure and limiting the overextension of the state, improving incentives to attract foreign capital, and increasing the role of the market and efficient, market-driven resources allocation through a strengthened private sector (Elson, 1989).

The economic liberalisation approach of IFI programmes and models has been largely criticised however, for subverting national sovereignty through anti-statist and market-oriented conditionalities, and compromising basic human rights in a blinkered pursuit of open markets. The negative effects and inappropriateness of championed adjustment and austerity measures have been related to imposition on already fragile African contexts, and to lack of suitable contextualisation of policy and implementation mechanisms. Negative outcomes include heightened destabilisation for vulnerable populations, particularly women and children as well as low-income groups, while multinationals and ruling elites disproportionately benefit. (Bade, 1989)

In the past decade, continuing international financial crises have further destabilised the mooring of the notion of development within the narrative of the 'magic of the markets'. Clarke (2010), challenges and juxtaposes the promises "of possibility and of expansion" offered by the magic of the markets narrative – more wealth, more possibilities, generated by the dynamic, innovative and expansive energy of markets – particularly with regards to disenchantment with markets, and

---

than levels of investment, resulting in negative net transfers of capital and thereby compromising development goals. The promotion of corporate social responsibility practices attempt to alleviate this trend, however also remain compromised by a lack of obligation and weak monitoring. As Payer (1989, p.16, quoted in Rai, 2002) suggests, solutions will require drastically limiting unbalanced international capital flows.

the reality of recurring recessions and credit crunches. Declining confidence in market mechanisms, systems and institutions is fuelling ongoing debates discussing optimal models of development that promote economic growth, while simultaneously promoting social justice, safeguarding human rights and conserving the environment. Particularly relevant are shifts in the idea of development as primarily economic growth occurring through trade and liberalised markets within an environment of political stability (Mason, 1997, p. 17), to development as human-centred, based on sustainable collective and communal advancement (Sen, 1999).

iii) Gender and Social Impacts of Macroeconomic Adjustment:

In relation to women's experiences and positioning, as Elson, (1989, pp. 62 - 63) notes, "the relation between women, the market and the state is complex." The state does not always operate in the interests of women, frequently perpetuating social, economic and ideological processes, administrative and legislative procedures that uphold patriarchal norms and subordinate women. At the same time, the market does not definitively operate against the interests of women, encouraging individual economic independence and increasing women's economic self-sufficiency and bargaining power. However, while access to markets may hold benefits for women, these benefits are limited by persistent forms of gender discrimination.[4] Similarly, while governments may institute equal rights and opportunity legislation towards diminishing obstacles to women's participation, as indicated by the evidence, men remain at a structural and systemic advantage on unequal terms relative to women.[5]

Successes have been achieved through advocacy and campaigning initiatives at local and global levels, for "proper recognition of women's work both as producers of goods and services, and as reproducers of human resources; and for access to the resources women require to improve the productivity of their efforts." (Elson, 1989, p. 56) Development efforts have contributed to enhancing women's income-earning possibilities through special skills training, capacity

[4] An illustrative example of simultaneous benefits and restrictions presented by market-based development initiatives in micro-credit and micro-finance services, targeted at low-income women in developing countries. (See Grameen Bank) Economic empowerment gains for women as a result of these services are notable, however gains are simultaneously diminished by subsequent upset of traditional gender norms, where males are the main providers and household heads. Related negative outcomes include amongst others, increased rates of domestic violence, as well as heightened domestic restrictions in terms of decision making and agency. (See Ashe & Treanor (2011) for a discussion on gendered entrepreneurship and challenges to micro-credit and micro-finance projects and programmes)

[5] For instance only 22% of all national parliamentarians are female, and globally only 17% of government ministers are women (statistics from UN Women, August 2015)

building programmes (for instance micro-finance projects and enterprises), and specifically targeted grant funding. Nevertheless, socio-political and economic impacts of IFI promoted and applied development approaches essentially limit women's gains and advancement. A key limitation to gender equity latent in the conceptualisation, formulation and implementation of macroeconomic development policy, is that gender and women's issues remain under-prioritised and invisible in dominant development approaches. (Elson, 1989) An emphasis on productivity, efficiency and economic growth measures and indicators, obscures the gender division of labour as well as ignores socio-cultural features and characteristics of implementation contexts. According to critics, this is a symptom of market logics, principles and mechanisms, which tend to expand beyond economic spheres to subsume and subordinate non market and non economic spheres and domains of social life. As Somers (2008, p. 38) comments "sites of market 'invasion' are primarily the state and civil society and their ideational and discursive regimes...in an effort to gain the balance of power by subjecting both polity and civil society" to a regime of market fundamentalism. Frank (2001, p. 29) discussing extreme adherence to the principle of the market, outlines the ideology informing market populists is the myth that the market and the people – "understood as grand principles of social life rather than particulars" – are essentially the same. Supported by the state, with minimal interference, the machinery of the market is presented as the best vehicle for expressing democratic and popular will.

The repercussions of privileging market-based indices and measures of performance as central criteria for development, have been well documented. A range of case studies illustrate how in the majority of cases, macroeconomic adjustment processes and restructuring (such as the notorious SAPs) create worsening conditions, for lower income groups and particularly for women, largely burdened with shouldering the consequences of reduced public spending. Required reductions in state expenditure often translate into cutbacks of vital subsidies and social services, and transfer of these costs to women's low/unpaid labour, imposing further obstacles to women's already limited access to and control of vital material and cultural resources. (Westwood & Jack, 2007)

Elson (1989, pp. 58 - 59) argues, to rectify imbalances related to increasing economic productivity, efficiency and growth that weighs heavily and disproportionately on already disenfranchised groups, adjustment is required to the "'rules of the game' through which the

international system of trade and financial flows operates." The argument is, economic motives are not adequately aligned to matters of social and public interest. Similarly, at the nexus of post-colonial theory and feminism, Spivak (1987) calls for transformation of key institutions, structures and leadership of the contemporary global political economy, and for more critical comprehension of material and intellectual positioning of marginalised groups. At the level of the state, Clarke et. al (2007) suggest a distinction is made between use of public services and consumerism and privatisation, at societal and individual level. Campbell (1989, p. 18) has also critiqued assumed equalising and democratic characteristics of markets at a macro level, noting division of labour within international markets and trade configurations, assigns positions of dominance and subordination, which leads to externalisation and disarticulation of economies for localised populations. Particularly for African countries there is a high dependence of African economies on external financing related to and symptomatic of the colonial legacy. This vulnerable positioning and the significant extent of external influences on internal orientations of African countries is referred to by some as a form of neo-colonialism. In the foreword of the text *Our Continent, Our Future* (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999) K. Y. Amoako acknowledges concerns expressed by a range of institutions and scholars about foreign domination of African economies through development models generated external to, and subsequently not concomitant with, the needs of the continent.

The call is for an "epistemological rupture" to shift from the paradigmatic hegemony of the prevailing development and growth frame (Westwood & Jack, 2007, p. 256), and for the continent, the call is for an African perspective to lead the reform process and search for wider goals and more instruments that move beyond limiting analyses and responses to the circumstances and conditions of Africa. The resultant failures of applied inappropriate knowledge and theoretical frameworks championed by dominant discourse and development practices, has triggered a redirection of attention towards the value of local knowledge and to the danger of its devaluation, evident in heightened social marginalisation. (Evers, Kaiser & Müller, 2009)

The situation is complex however and further complicated by contradictions in Africa and internationally, indicating that the path to sustainable growth is neither linear nor singular and uniform. Rather it is contingent on a variety of context-based social, political and economic

factors, and characterized by processes of progression and regression, irregularity and simultaneity. (Cooper & Morrell, 2014) Rapid acceleration and deceleration of events is common (particularly in the technological era) (Poli, 2016) and diverse expected and unexpected outcomes can occur with either or both quantitative and qualitative effects. (Cohen, 1997; Stacey; 2001; Rooney & Hearn, 1999; Hearn et. al 2003)

iv) Transformation/Emergence:

Current features of transformation for the African continent may be characterized by the continent's emergent economies, and the idea of an African Rennaissance[6], juxtaposed against continued insecurity and instability related to multiple ongoing upheavals, from political and social conflicts, and epidemic health hazards, alongside inadequate capacity to respond and manage threats.[7]

Key optimistic contemporary trends that may be generalised for Africa include positive economic growth and market expansion potential of the region, and increasingly youth-based demographics, which will shape the continent's workforce and growth of the region (see Figure 2 '*Growth of African Labour Force 2010 – 2020'* on p. 24 of this thesis). The relevance of transformative processes on the continent is related to potential impact for other regions in the world. The geopolitical centrality of the continent in terms of size and wealth of natural resources, as well as the potential of the burgeoning youthful population and untapped markets, positions Africa as a region of international interest, despite associated high risks emanating from the teetering state of the continent's socio-political and economic conditions.

Recognizing Africa's potential, current global positioning and associated challenges, Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary General, emphasizes the need for greater involvement and deepened engagement with the continent. In a series of speeches and statements, Ban Ki-moon underscores Africa's current positioning and profile, which may be succinctly captured and paraphrased as follows[8]:

[6] The theme for the 2013 African Day (May 25th) celebrations, which also marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Organisation of African Unity - now the African Union - was '*Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance*'.

[7] See the African Economic Outlook 2015 Report for a detailed overview

[8] Similarly, Radelet (2010) mentions fundamental changes underway in African emergent countries including, democratisation and improved accountability of governments; sensible economic policies and better marcoeconomic conditions; the spread of ICTS innovations.

- Excitement, optimism and dynamism characterize much of the continent;

- Africa is a continent of unrealised potential and it is opportune to tap the wealth of natural and human resources within the region, including the empowerment of women and youth;

- While zones of severe civil unrest maintain, peace is promoted and prevails in most African countries; extreme poverty is being addressed and has declined by an estimated 10% in a decade; and several African countries are at present among the world's fastest growing economies, defying the prevailing global downturn (see Figure 1 '*The fast-growing continent: Projected real GDP growth rates, 2014 & 2015'* on p. 24 of this thesis)[9];

- Opportunities in Africa beckon ever greater interests from diverse peoples, investors and nations, increased international collaboration and partnerships, and more commitment to attain goals of growth and sustainable development.

Figure1: *The Fast-Growing Continent: Projected Real GDP Growth Rates, 2014 & 2015*

[9] The graph depicts projected real GDP growth rates for 2014-2015 for sub-Saharan Africa compared to other regions. As per the African Development (ADB) figures for GDP growth in Africa 2014 an estimated 5.2% was achieved with 4.6% projected growth for 2015 and 5.4% for 2016. The World bank projects 3.3% growth for 2016 and this more gradual rate is explained by lower commodity prices. See ADB, UNDP & OECD Group report '*African Economic Outlook 2015: Regional Development and Spatial Inclusion'* and IMF World Economic Outlook Update January 2016

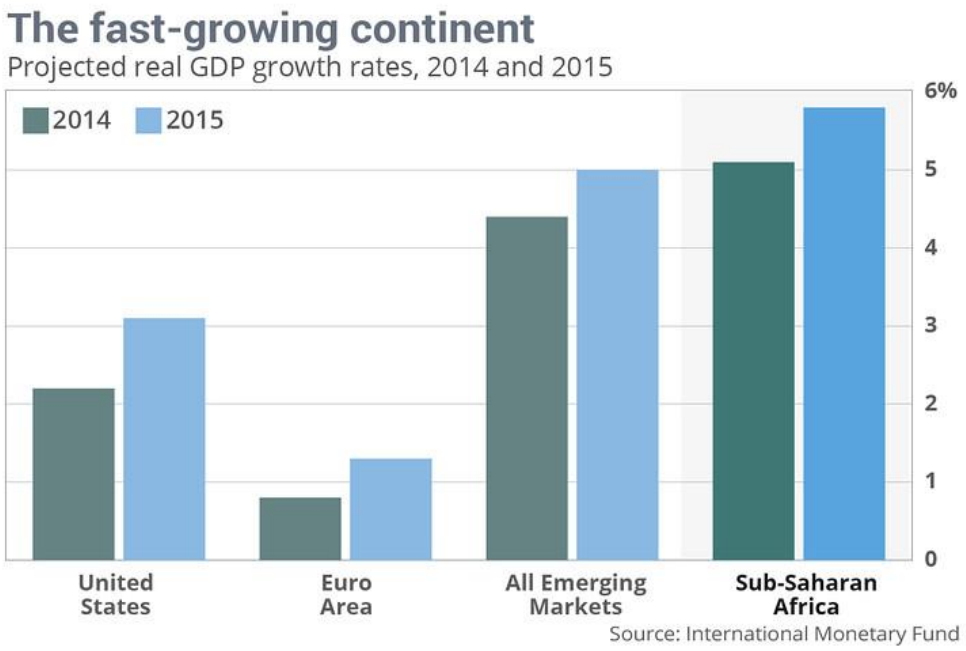
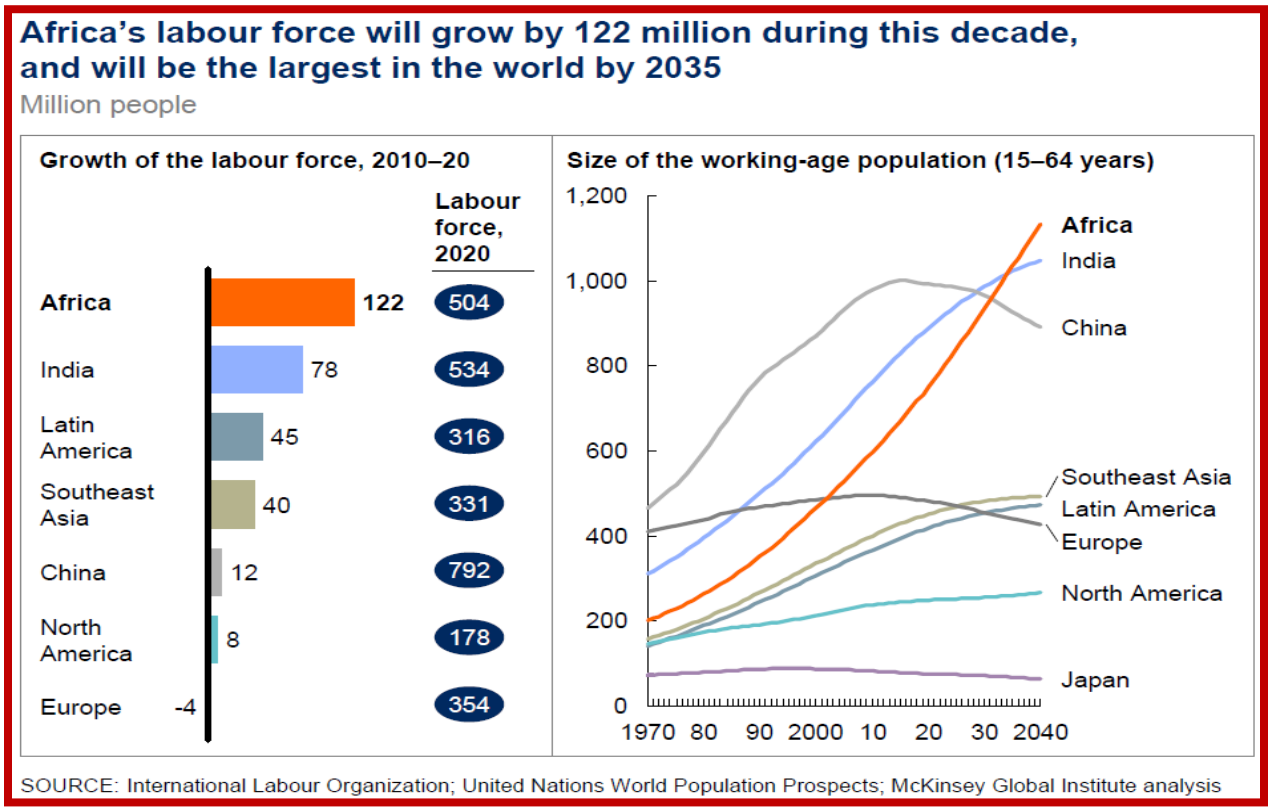


Figure 2: *Growth of Africa's Labour Force, 2010 - 2020*



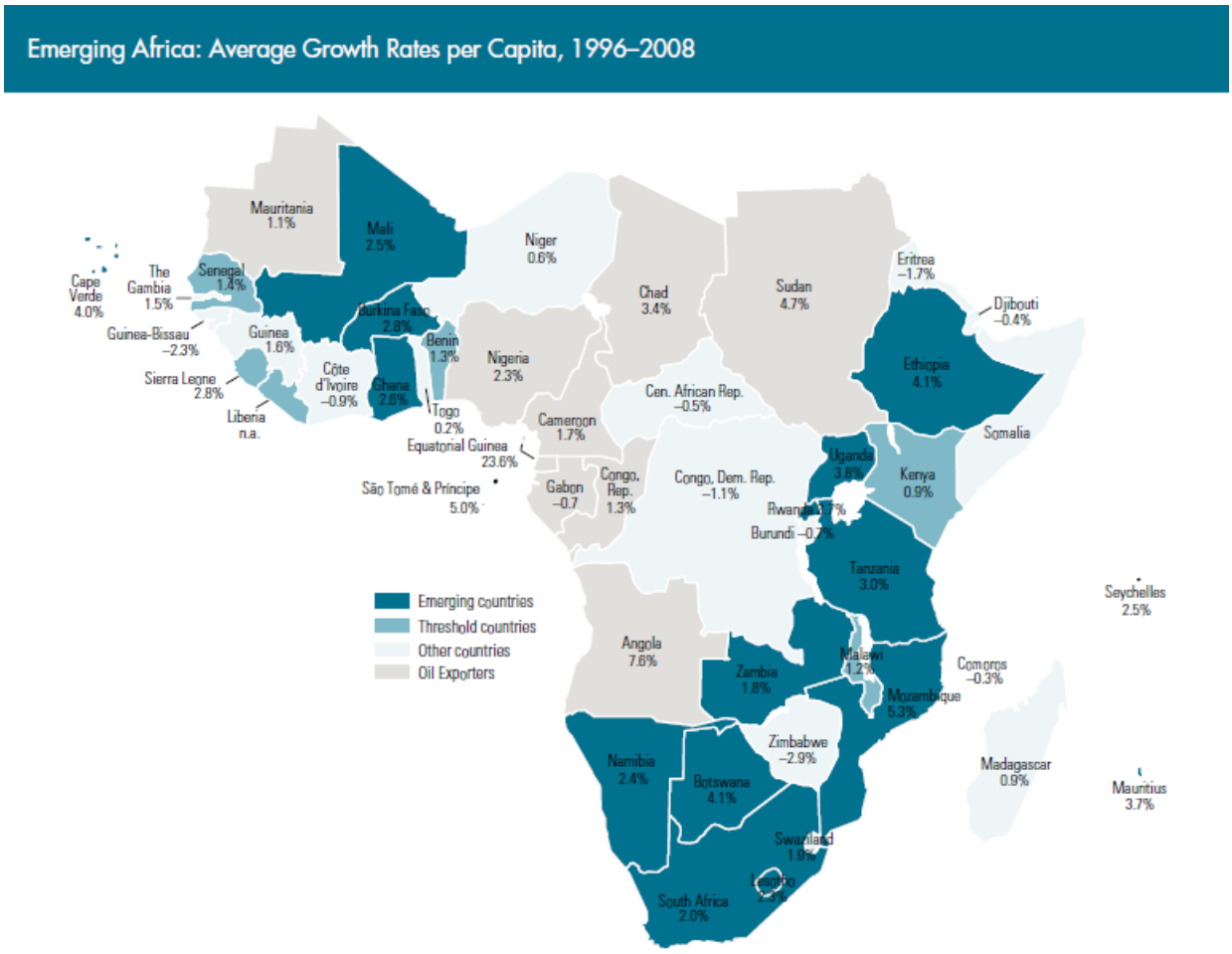
It is important to note, while the region's different territories may share general trends linked to a shared geographical location, interlaced histories, and contemporary patterns, the continent is at ground level diverse – from peoples, inhabitants, cultures and worldviews represented, to physical environments as well as geopolitical landscapes and economic contexts of African countries. (Cooper & Morrell 2014; Mo Ibrahim Index 2015; see also Figure 3 '*Varied Average Growth Rates Per Capita for African Countries 1996 – 2008'* on p. 26 of this thesis)

Investigating education and leadership amongst local groupings of people in colonial Africa, Doob (1957) for instance notes different definitions and practices evident in each society, cautioning that to simplify significant variations proves futile to understanding the influence and impact of different variables on the shape of diverse African communities. Doob, nevertheless concedes that acknowledging and making distinctions between differences, from superficial to deep-seated, need not prohibit nor negate efforts to identify where similarities lie or where general dispositions may be assigned. Discussing African-centred knowledges, Copper and Morrell (2014) agree there is a geopolitical and historical unity that underpins the continent, nevertheless a multiplicity of understandings inform knowledge in Africa.

For the purposes of the research, in addition to the above general trends, the following were also considered and are discussed briefly:

- Regionalisation trends in Southern and Eastern Africa
- Democratisation and socio-political transformation in Kenya and South Africa
- Positioning of the business and education sectors

Figure 3: *Varied Average Growth Rates per Capita for African Countries, 1996 - 2008*



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators; data for South African Reserve Bank.

Regionalisation trends in Southern and Eastern Africa: Local regionalization trends within the continent have relevance for organizations and leadership and the ways in which commerce is conducted and driven. Kenya and South Africa, the focus countries for this research, are both key economies within their respective regions of eastern and southern Africa, and are particularly well placed as focus nodes of regionalization initiatives. South Africa accounts for over a third of the GDP of sub-Saharan Africa, as the most developed economy among the 48 countries in the region. Kenya is the biggest economy in the East African Community (EAC) and the stability of other countries in the region is closely tied to Kenya. Organisations in South Africa and Kenya already largely operate regionally with centralized headquarters and branches in the wider region. Similarly the HEI sector is significantly regionally integrated, in large part due to the

colonial make-up and constitution of universities. The value of regional presence and reach is recognized for several reasons including access to larger markets and expanding opportunity, sharing of resources and exchange of knowledge and expertise, towards a highly mobile and skilled African population in line with the vision of sustainable growth outlined for the continent. The African Development Bank (ADP) promotes the value of regional development and spatial inclusion in its 2015 African Economic Outlook, noting that regional isolation and disparities present a major obstacle to transformation, growth and poverty eradication in Africa. For women in senior and leadership positions, linkages across regions can be transformative creating opportunities to forge alliances, share experiences, skills and information, and to explore alternative approaches to leadership and senior management in organizations. Solidarity, mutual encouragement and support across regions can provide a sense of community to senior women in leadership, and regional networks have capacity to link dispersed and often isolated senior women leaders around commonalities and resonance on challenges and success stories.

Democratisation and socio-political transformation in Kenya and South Africa: In both South Africa and Kenya, wide-ranging issues of transformation and ongoing societal processes of transition, presented a conducive environment for the research. The inquiry dovetailed well with questions, debates and discourse around issues of transformation and diversity in the socio-political and economic context, and within organisations and institutions in the two countries of focus. In post-apartheid South Africa the ongoing context of transition and transformation was a foundational reference point. In Kenya, the contemporary context of democratisation (including recovery from the 2007 post-election violence) was a main contextual reference point at the time of the research activity.

With regards to the issue of gender equity, prevailing social contexts offered an apt milieu for the inquiry. Concerns with social justice and redressing past imbalances within both national contexts, emphasize the imperative for equitable representation, visibility, diversity and appropriate legislation to support women and other marginalised groups (e.g. youth, minority ethnicities, LGBTIQ, disabled persons). Numerous criticisms may be mentioned with reference to how gender and diversity is mainstreamed in national policy agendas and addressed in policy implementation. Nevertheless, gender and diversity policies indicate political will to promote diversity and gender equity within societies. In the countries of focus for the research, conducive

policy and legislation worth noting are amended and more liberal constitutions (RSA, 1994; Kenya, 2010); introduction of free primary and secondary education in Kenya, including increased focus on the education and upliftment of girls; affirmative action legislation in SA for the benefit of previously disadvantaged populations; and increased representation of women in economic and cultural spheres and political governance in both countries.[10] The findings and recommendations relayed as part of the research are hence couched within and aim to examine, contribute to and enhance ongoing processes of socio-political transformation in both countries of focus, as well as the wider continent.

Positioning of the business and higher education sectors: With reference to Africa, few empirical or theoretical studies address leadership and management on the continent. (Walumbwa, Avolio & Aryee, 2011) At the same time, leadership continues to be a main avenue through which the mandate of development and transformation is enacted and realised.

In literature from development studies, political science and international relations, including from critical and gender studies, a key critique of African leaders has been the undermining of state and private sector institutions, as a result of poor leadership practices and irresponsible mismanagement of resources, with repercussions for social institutions,. In a context where issues of power often take precedence over issues of social justice, crises of leadership has been a constant denominator affecting the socio-political and economic milieu, and demanding resolution to attain critically required sustainable development and equitable advancement for the continent.

Ampofo, Beoku-Betts and Osirim (2008) discussing African scholarship and gender relations, caution against the blanket application of borrowed knowledge and imported institutional forms, which may mask existing subordination. With reference to relevant business and management practice for emerging knowledge economies and societies in contexts of increasing complexity, similar perspectives support and discuss grounds for radical reconfiguration of core aspects of knowledge production, dissemination and implementation within the field. The argument is that management and leadership, international business and organisation continue to perpetuate

[10] In 2013, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta nominated six women to cabinet, one third of total seats, the highest number in the country's history since independence in 1963. For more information on the status of women in leadership in Kenya see *Gender Audit of Kenya's 2013 Election Process* report by USAID, NDI and Federation of Women Lawyers

practices based on partial (outdated) frames of reference and limited systems that demonstrably fail to serve the collective interest. (Baets, 2006; Westwood & Jack, 2007; Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006)

In context of Africa, the need to deconstruct the colonial roots and neocolonial continuities of management theory, organisations and institutional structures is a leading interest in the research inquiry and discussion on the need to explore diverse knowledges, towards reconfiguring systems and structures that (re)produce and insulate power asymmetries and inequity.

With regard to the higher education sector, from where a significant percentage of strategic respondents for the research were drawn, and as a key node in knowledge production and generation within society, it is notable that African scholars, perspectives and intellectual contributions are underrepresented, and generally the context remains undertheorised, or mis-theorised. Discussing feminist theory, Connell (forthcoming publication in *Feminist Theory*) notes a significant gap in scholarship where rich and sophisticated analyses and theory of gender produced around the postcolonial world, receives little recognition in the current global economy of knowledge. This oversight signifies a power dynamic and relation in the acknowledgement of ideas and their dissemination through publications and practice. Hountondji (1997 & 2002) identifies a global division of labour in knowledge production within the global economy, shaped by imperialism and privileging intellectual workers and theory generated in centres and sites of former colonising powers. This theoretical hegemony is critiqued for operating as a normal functioning of the global economy of knowledge. (Connell, forthcoming publication in *Feminist Theory*)

To rectify this bias, the call is to challenge the institutional apparatus that govern business and intellectual practice, and to interrogate the interests, commercial and political pressures business organisations and institutions of academia respond to. This involves examining politics of knowledge production, dissemination and use, with implications for higher education institutions and business industries as principal nodes in knowledge work and systems. As Westwood and Jack (2007, p. 262) state, there are institutional demands associated with such calls, and institutions of knowledge production and dissemination – universities, research associations, publishing bodies, business organizations, professional networks – may need to reconfigure and better align their structures and practices. Demands on institutions are to their role and impact on

research and education practice, knowledge creation, development and production, dissemination and application, as well as resultant benefits and consequences of knowledge processes.[11]

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Research:

i) Aims

The aims of the research are defined at both a theoretical and practical level of the inquiry. The research attempted to focus on theory as well as praxis in order to circumvent the tendency to underestimate the potential and strengths of either approach to provide denominators or cornerstones for social-organisational reconstruction. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) agree it is worthwhile to dynamically unite, and to eliminate the artificial dualism separating theory from practice. Research aims may extend beyond "detached discovery and verification of social laws allowing for prediction and control" and be defined in terms of "generative capacity" – "capacity to challenge the guiding assumptions of the culture, to raise fundamental questions regarding contemporary social life, to foster reconsideration of that which is 'taken for granted' and thereby furnish new alternatives for...actions." (Gergen, 1978, p. 1346)

The overall aims of the research inquiry focus on the potential of diverse knowledges to contribute to enhanced organisational leadership and performance, and to engender equitable and sustainable processes of socio-political transformation within contexts of emerging knowledge economies and societies. Women's knowledges and women in organisational leadership in Africa are the principal focus of the study, however an overarching goal was presentation of discourse and findings that may be widely generalisable across diverse social and identity lines, and useful in redirecting research towards alternative knowledge, leadership, organisational and social transformation potentialities, with promise to more effectively address issues of diversity, equity and sustainability.

[11] As a contemporary example, during the period of the PhD research, the University of Cape Town alongside other national universities in South Africa, experienced a wave of student protests demanding better responses and concrete measures from universities towards addressing the struggles and plight of students subjected to financial, racial and gender marginalisation. Protests revolved around access for marginalised communities to the benefits of higher education; transformed curricula that reflects African histories, realities and perspectives; transformation towards broader diversity in university staff and the student body; improved student support, e.g. accommodation and facilities, culturally and gender sensitive psycho-social support, and applying suitable approaches and methods to teaching and learning, which is particularly relevant for first generation university entrants and where students' first language is not the main language of instruction

Theoretical Inquiry:

- *Explore the Potential of Women's Contributions to Knowledge for Enhanced Leadership, Organisational Performance and Sustainable Processes of Socio-Political Transformation* – At a theoretical level, the focal interest and driving motive of the research was to explore the parameters and potential of women's contributions to expand the search for relevant and collectively beneficial solutions to shared challenges, supported by the emergence of knowledge economies and societies. A central emphasis of the study is the value of equity and diversity for, enhanced frameworks and alternative models of epistemology and knowledge, leadership, organisational performance, and socio-political transformation; and for innovative and sustainable responses to demands and exigencies of rapidly changing, complex and interconnected environments.

Practical Inquiry:

- *Identify Organisational Obstacles, Facilitators and Strategies of Women in Leadership* – The focus of the practical inquiry was women's experience in senior and leadership positions in organisations with reference to levels of agency to meaningfully participate and contribute to leadership and knowledge processes. In particular, the aim was to examine organisational facilitators and obstacles that respectively enhance or impede women's leadership and knowledge processes. In engaging with issues of women's location and experiences in senior and leadership positions in organisations, the research study was underpinned by a sensitivity to balance the exploration of persistent issues of gender bias, with a parallel examination of women's forms of resistance and achievements as agents of transformation. As such, complimentary focus is given to strategies women in senior and leadership positions apply to counter and mediate circumstances of inequity, and negotiate and manoeuvre organisational environments.

ii) Objectives

A key objective was to identify facilitators and obstacles within organisations that support or impede women's roles in leadership. Specifically, the research sought to unpack issues of inequity by exploring women's experiences with reference to three specific components of

leadership that impact upon effective performance, namely: Motivation, Collegial Relations, and Decision-Making.

- Motivation: Marshall (1984) discusses the recurrent issue of the questioning and devaluing of women's motivations towards work and the underlying gender stereotypes in the debate around whether or not women want, or should have, jobs or careers and particularly at senior levels. Additionally, motivation has been widely identified as a key component of effective leadership (See Gill, 2006, pp. 236 - 245) for a detailed discussion of motivation as a core aspect of leadership).

- Collegial Relations: Inquiring into collegial relations was considered pertinent for the research as leader/subordinate relations are widely agreed to constitute a key dimension of effective leadership. Perceptions by, and interactions with others (colleagues, subordinates, seniors) is considered a main denominator in leadership behaviour, style and success. Acknowledging that leadership involves interactive processes between leaders and others, considering the constraints and opportunities presented by role expectations is worthwhile. (Rosen & Jerdee, 1973; Bartol & Butterfield, 1976; Bartol, 1978) According to Marshall (1984, p. 24), how women are seen by others "determines what opportunities are open to them, and how effective they will be in particular circumstances."

- Decision making: Questions exploring women's decision making agency were targeted at ascertaining the spaces available, as well as the constraints, options and challenges for women to lead effectively and enact their knowledge in decision making in organisations at senior and leadership levels. The key consideration is that decision making is a key activity of leadership as well as a useful indicator of status and a benchmark for gauging the quality of women's participation, involvement and engagement at leadership levels. Discussing the empowerment approach in the field of development, Oxaal and Baden (1997) pinpoint women's increased participation in decision-making processes as a key indicator of empowerment and capacity as active players to influence the direction of strategic options and to trigger transformation. Similarly Karl (1995, p.14) links greater participation to greater decision making power and control and to transformative action. Madhok and Rai (2012) emphasise the influence of agenda setting on social transformation and note that policy makers, practitioners and activists often invoke the concept of decision making and

enactive agency as an instrument and means to achieve social change outcomes. Madhok and Rai however also caution against an uncritical focus on individual agency underlined by a neoliberal assumption and discursive logic, which can invoke injurious practices for women. (Wilson, 2007) The authors question popularised notions of agency and empowerment and query the informing philosophical premises of individualist interpretations that obscure systemic power relations and ignore personal costs and risks of exercising such agency in political landscapes shaped by severe inequality. Examining women's decision making agency involves "attention to the parameters of power within which agential subjects seek to act." (Madhok & Rai, 2012, p. 246) In foregrounding women's agency it is imperative to recognise the forms of subjection and risks faced within existing socio-political, economic and organisational structures and contexts.

1.3 Limitations and Delimitations of the Research:

i) A Focus on Organisational/Structural vs. Personal Behavioural Factors:

For the research presented here, organisational configurations are the main focus of interrogation, as opposed to a discussion of particular biological or personality traits which various discourses on gender equity and leadership revolve around. How persistent dimensions of discrimination and practices of exclusion may be rooted in, and find expression, at the individual level, is a discussion whose in-depth examination went beyond the scope of this study. As Harding (1991, p. 29) cautions, while sexism at the individual level remains a key concern "personal bias" is not the only issue. In fact, "to associate and refer to discriminatory practices essentially as personal biases obscures their institutionalisation and consequences." Taking this view, the decided scope of the research focused on the structural aspects of gender discrimination and inequity. As Marshall (1984) comments, there is need for more attention to be given to organisational mechanisms that undermine women's entry into senior and leadership positions.

It is important to note however that such an approach while necessary is not sufficient in itself, and the aim should be to complement and enhance more personalised orientations that seek to understand gender issues primarily at the cognitive and behavioural levels of the individual. This remains a critical point and is revisited as a central theme of the findings particularly with regard

to the importance of socialisation in achieving meaningful and sustainable change and transformation at personal, cognitive and behavioural levels.

For the research, specific analysis and focus on how gender difference and bias manifest internally as cognitive and behavioural aspects within individuals, was a secondary issue of consideration mainly due to the miasma of contradictory opinions surrounding the topic and a lack of conclusive data. While some posit that noteworthy differences between women and men are physiological and hormonal, and that otherwise women and men are basically the same; others believe women and men fundamentally differ in orientation to life, attitudes, motivation, behaviours and skills, and such differences may be due to heredity or environment." (Powell, 1993, p. 35) Questions of differences between men and women have been explored by science, from a material and more biological perspective, and the discussion is far from complete, and is dependent on advances in theories, technologies and applications of science into the future. Currently science is presenting many grounds for biological sex and by extension gender, to be disputed as a set construct. As Powell (1993, p. 107) notes, "sex differences supporting gender stereotypes are less evident than before" distorting previously assumed set lines of correlation between sex and gender. There is no clear consensus however on the extent or levels at which general and perceived dispositions of men and women are the consequences or cause of biology, or exist as a result of socialisation norms and practices.

For the purposes of the research therefore a focus on structural manifestations of gender bias and discrimination was considered more feasible. As Harding (1991, p. 29) urges, while gender inequity and discrimination find expression through idiosyncratic personal biases, "culturewide social, political, and economic characteristics" also deserve focus. It is important to note nevertheless that an emphasis on structure also has limitations, as Sawyer (2005, p.194) discusses in critiquing shortcomings of sociological structuralist theory, arguing that studying social phenomena objectively without recourse to individual-level characteristics is also a limited approach.

ii) A Focus on the Practical vs. Theoretical Level of the Inquiry:

The broad and philosophical nature of the theoretical level of the inquiry also extended beyond the scope as well as resource materials available for the research process and thesis. Limitations were primarily in regard to time, finances and limited access to primary data texts and sources.

As a result of the particular historicity of the African context (related to the precedence of oral traditions and tacit knowledge processes, as well as the repressive impacts of the imperial and colonial encounter) original texts and primary sources of data on African based knowledge systems are few and difficult to access. As such a textual or content analysis approach to the research was not feasible. Current philosophical and management debates on the concept of Ubuntu offer possible entry points to contribute to the search for alternative epistemological and theoretical frameworks. (Mbigi, 1995 & 1997) However, appraisal of the demands of engagement required at this level of theoretical engagement, revealed contingencies on advances in broader discourses and debates on African history, identity, and questions of representative authority.

Constitutive elements of African-based philosophies remain contested, and as such decided emphasis for the research was the practical level of inquiry. Additionally, a practically grounded focus on women's own accounts of their experiences, aligned well with the applied feminist methodology approach that advocates for women-centred research, as well as grounded theory methodology which encourages fresh explorations and new analyses.

iii) A Focus on Gender vs. Sex:

In delineating the research, the decided focal point was gender because of the concept's applicability to an exploration of structural limitations to, and opportunities for women's access and participation at senior and leadership levels. The concept of sex held relevance for the research, in so far as the discussion on gender equity is with specific reference to women as the 'embodied feminine gender'. This specification is not to negate the many discourses around the complex relationship between sex as a biological body and gender as a social construct[12], but rather serves to aid the feasibility of the research. Gender is understood here to be a cross-culturally "learned quality, an acquired characteristic, an assigned status" (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 529) with modalities that vary and shift beyond biological and nature-based attributes.

Moreover, it is worthwhile to note a useful observation by Powell (1993) arguing the limitations of biologically based explanations for unequal gender relations. Powell discusses the claim by

[12] Transgender individuals evidently demonstrate that an individuals' biological sex does not automatically or necessarily 'match' their gender, i.e. whether individual's feel more resonant with the masculine or feminine gender. The case of the South African athlete Castor Semenya is a publicised example of the complexities in the assumed linear association between sex and gender.

evolutionary theory that the differences between men and women are the result of evolutionary tendencies. He explains that traditionally sex roles linked to gender roles, in that women are expected and socialised to behave in accordance with their presumed feminine attributes, and men in accordance with their presumed masculine attributes. These roles according to evolutionary theory have been typically assumed to be innate (Powell, 1993, p. 10), and it is suggested that sex/gender differences evolved as humans developed, as a natural and necessary function ensuring the survival of the species. As such within this theory gender distinctions in various manifestations are considered essentially beneficial to individuals and society.

As Powell points out, this argument could be applied to justify the majority of perceived differences between the behaviour and status of men and women. By the same token however, such an argument acknowledges that due to the dynamic nature of evolution, sex differences that may have been necessary in the past may now be unnecessary, and could be undesirable in the future (Powell, 1993, p. 11). Indeed, the assumption that in the study of sex differences, "biological structural properties have ineluctable behavioural consequences" has been strongly contested. (Shields, 1982) Thus the issue of continually and critically assessing sex /gender roles and relations remains pertinent and is not resolved by references to patterns of survival and biologically based constructs. Additionally, few studies advocate that the existence of biologically based sex differences affect the capability of women versus men to lead effectively, or suffice as explanations of ongoing inequity in senior management within organisations. (It is important to note however that the evolutionary theory perspective remains pervasive.)

iv) Single vs. Mixed Gender Respondents Sample:

A consideration during planning the research was whether to have a mixed sample group of respondents with both women and men, for the strategic interviews. The decision was to focus the primary and core data collection on a female only sample group in order to firstly delimit the scope of the research. Secondly, in order to gather substantial data on women in senior management and leadership without diluting this focus by including a sample of male individuals. The reasoning informing this point of choice is based on the feminist critique that the dominant literature reflects the experiences of men and do not often equally reflect women's experiences. (Connell, forthcoming publication in *Feminist Theory*) The decision was also based on the principle focus of the research to explore the experience of women in leadership in terms

of benefits to be gained from their knowledge. Towards addressing this imbalance, and to enrich the data collection and analysis process with primarily experiences of women in leadership, the majority of strategic respondents were female.

Initially, the inclusion of male voices in the inquiry was considered suitable as a way to observe distinctive comparisons or contrasts between female and male respondents. Additionally, the inclusion of male voices was deemed to provide a realistic back drop for the research into women in leadership, as the majority of senior and leadership positions continue to be populated by men as well as informed by male experiences and knowledge.

The aim was to include a male perspective, as a type of control variable in the research, and several male interviewees were included as respondents to the strategic interview questions. Ultimately however, during the data analysis process, a focused comparative analysis of the variations in responses between the few male and largely female respondents was not considered a part of the scope of the research. Such a comparative focus would have shifted the lens of the inquiry away from the stated objectives. As such the data was analysed and findings presented with reference only to the responses of female respondents, although in the initial stages of the research male respondents were also interviewed and gave responses to the questions. It is worthwhile to note however, there continue to be rich avenues for further investigation in the direction of comparing male and female experiences of the workplace, particularly within an African context.

As Marshall (1984, p. 10) notes an interesting dilemma is how woman-centred to be. Literature in the management field generally advocates comparative male-female studies and analyses, an approach where men "invariably become the standard against which women's experiences are evaluated." Marshall focuses "without apology on women's experiences" as valuable in their own right, and to "avoid merely adding women on to a world which has so far mainly been interpreted through men's eyes." As necessary however, comparisons with men may be made as appropriate while maintaining awareness to avoid "seeing male as a norm." (Marshall, 1984, p. 11)

v) Extensive vs. Intensive Data Collection Process:

Harré and Secord (1972) and Shepherd and Watson (1982) recommend researchers apply an intensive rather than extensive approach to data collection, as part of the general psychological approach that places emphasis on understanding individuals' cognitive frameworks for dealing with and making sense of the world. As Canter et. al (1985) note, this involves in-depth engagement with individuals to understand their terms and frames of reference, towards respecting their ability to formulate ways of thinking about the world and their experiences of it.

Initially such an approach appealed to the intention and objectives of the theoretical inquiry to explore women's knowledge systems and ways of knowing as based in daily and lived experience. In particular an intensive data collection method may better align to gaining access to tacit levels of knowledge nestled at the level of experience. Additionally a focus on intensive data collection may present a suitable process for emergence and articulation of respondent's conceptual frames, philosophical considerations and models of knowledge, towards direct contribution to epistemological discourses and the defining of a women's knowledge system(s).

As part of the methodology and research process, during the pilot interview and test phase for the strategic interview schedule questions, an intensive process of data collection was attempted applying Appreciative Inquiry (AI) interview techniques. AI was initially considered a fitting approach for the data collection of the research, specifically because of the flexibility offered to accommodate individuals' personal expressions and conceptualisations of their experiences. However, this process proved exceedingly intensive and time limitations of both the research respondents and the research programme, prevented engagement in in-depth and ongoing conversations and exchanges to question the meanings underlying respondents' responses from the perspective of the respondents. Subsequently, future research may benefit by including and reflecting respondent feedback, suggestions and participation at all levels of the research. For this thesis, respondents' formal engagement with and participation in the research process is limited to the time span of the interview and focus group sessions convened.

For the substantial data collection stage, it was considered worthwhile to engage in an extensive rather than intensive approach to gathering data, with a focus on access to a broader rather than intimate sample of respondents. Given the limited amount of information available on the contexts of women in senior and leadership positions in organisations in Africa and more

generally, such an extensive approach to data collection presented access to widely generalisable and applicable findings with possibilities for more probing inquiry in future research.

vi) A Focus on Qualitative vs. Quantitative Methodology:

At the level of methodology, the main approach is qualitative applying a dual grounded theory and feminist methodology to underpin the combined theoretical and practical levels of inquiry. The detailed discussion and presentation of the key issues and interest area of the research, as well the research process considerations and steps – analytical framework, method of data collection and analysis, interpretation of findings – is reflective of the qualitative approach of the research. The lack of empirical data inhibits pronouncing conclusive theoretical outcomes of the research, however the aim is to broaden and enrich the parameters and content of future research by outlining and building on core philosophical arguments and advances in ongoing discourse, particular in relation to the African context. On this basis, practical recommendations are suggested towards maintaining momentum and progression towards gender equity, diversity and sustainable social transformation, targeted at leadership within organisations as well as larger policy institutions.

2. RESEARCH RATIONALE AND SUPPORTING LITERATURE

2.1 The Persistence of Gender Inequity and Underrepresentation of Women in Senior and Leadership Positions in Organisations

Commendable and noteworthy advances have been made towards inclusion of women and the legitimization of the feminine, and numerous studies have reinforced a rising awareness of women's contributions, demonstrating the fact that women's empowerment is a notable social change of recent times. (Elson, 1989; The Economist, 2010) Various shifts have created occupational opportunities that are changing the situation between women and men, where previously women were largely restricted in their personal and professional career options and possibilities. These shifts include higher levels of employment with significantly greater numbers of women entering and participating in the workforce; the changing nature and structure of work as a result of contemporary trends in the international economy and technological innovations; and the growing legislative, stakeholder and competitive demands on organisations to adapt and strive for relevance in increasingly challenging contexts. (Harding, 1991)

Nevertheless, ongoing changes while positive are incomplete or unsatisfactory, and underlying processes of beleaguered transformation are persistent issues of inequality that remain to be addressed, for greater levels of gender equity. Marshall (1984, p. 10) makes reference to the "resilience of unequal relations between men and women" and cautions that in a range of contexts, advances towards gender equity fail glaringly to achieve their full potential. Marshall emphasises that "neither official statute, nor a growing popular awareness of 'women's issues'" seems "sufficient to produce radical change." (Marshall, 1984, p. 4; Vinniecombe, 2000)

Ample literature exists to support claims that discrimination and marginalisation of women continues, often in latent and disguised forms, as evidenced through perusal and analysis of the observations, commentaries, propositions or queries posed by a number of workers and writers on the subject.

At an essential level, the prevalence of patriarchal societies in which the male has authority and a higher status over the female has been widely attested to (Harding, 1991; Powell, 1993; Omwami, 2011; Shabaya & Agyemang, 2004). Discussing "*The Female Person and How We Talk About Her*" Polly Young-Eisendrath (1988, pp. 155, 161) stresses that in male-dominated

society, “less-than attributions imbue reasoning about women and relationships with women in ways that are remarkably intractable.” Young outlines how “men are expected to be stronger, more objective, more competent and more independent than women.” Conversely, women are assumed to be “weaker, less competent, and more emotionally expressive and subjective than men.” Such assumptions of the inadequacy of women and female subjectivity, posited opposite “tacit and explicit assumptions of male superiority”, work to constitute social reality according to “male standards of health, mental health, leadership, culture, competence, judgement, relationship and personal freedom”. As an obvious result in daily life, “female persons are often excluded from the decision-making and status-holding positions of society, and women daily witness the general devaluation of the work and culture they produce.” (Young-Eisendrath, 1988, p.160) The continuation of a sexual division of labour in employment and at household level where women are allocated less remunerated and rewarded tasks than men, is ample evidence of this point (Young, Workowitz & McCullagh, 1981). Correspondingly therefore, although women constitute over 50% of the world’s population and its global workforce, the majority occupy the lowest echelons in social hierarchies as confirmed by the disturbing trend aptly coined the ‘Feminisation of Poverty’ (UNDP, 1995).

Within a Kenya context, a particular focus for the research, Wanjala and Were (2009) found gender disparities largely determine differential employment outcomes for women and men. Analysing investment policy options for key sectors in Kenya, and resultant effects on gendered formal and informal employment generation and skills levels, the authors discuss limitations to women’s effective participation in Kenya’s labour market, and constraints to women benefiting equally from growth-promoting opportunities. Wanjala and Were argue gender disparities in education and human capital development contribute to gender inequality in Kenya’s labour market and economic structure. Policies supporting women’s skills and capacity development, and facilitating their increased productivity are necessary for women to benefit more from employment creation agendas, and safeguarded against impoverishment.

Against the backdrop of persistent patterns of gender inequity and imbalance, and informed by observations of the enactment of this predominant norm in women’s daily experiences in their personal and professional lives, feminism and the women’s movement demand and insist on access to fair and equal opportunities for women at the same levels as men. With relevance for

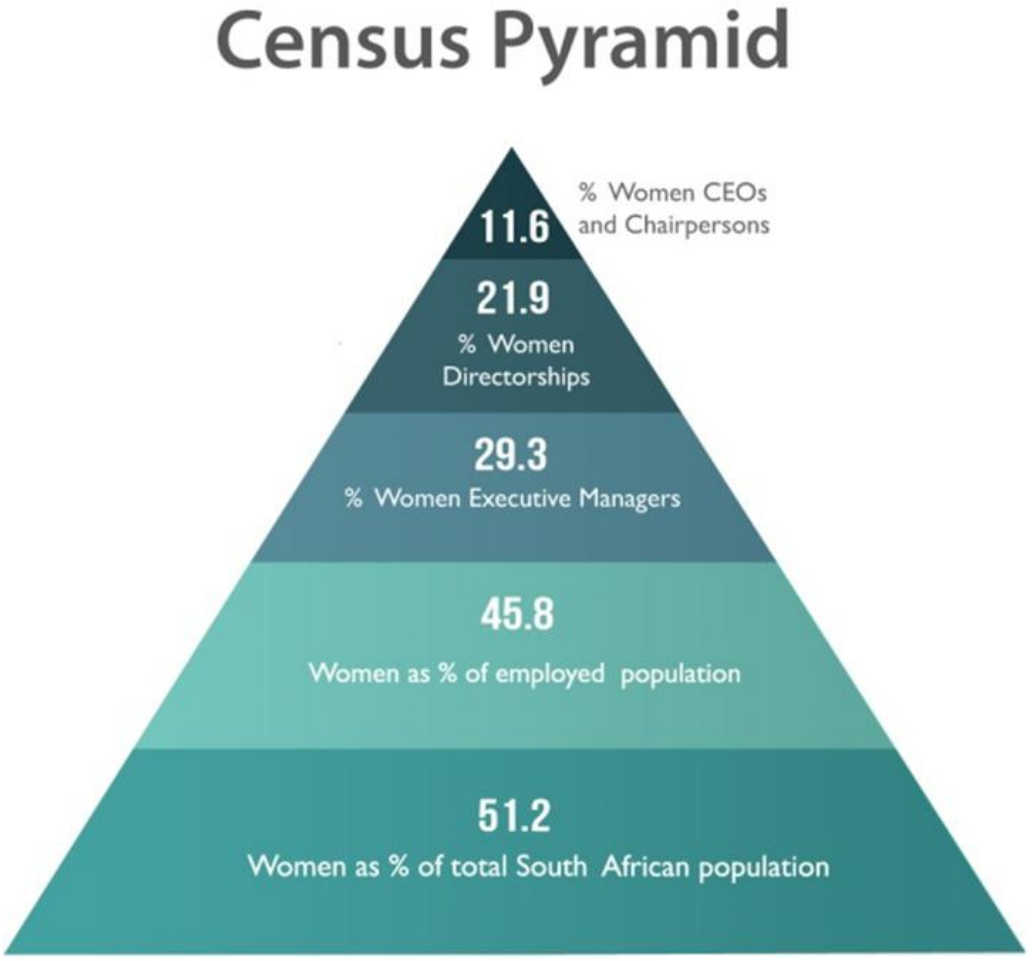
this thesis, this includes amongst others, opportunities and access to basic and higher education, tertiary and professional qualifications, degrees, awards and associated accolades, meaningful career positions and promotions, leadership appointments, membership in professional networks, communities and societies, as well as the range of choice options that emerge and accrue as a result of participation and inclusion at various levels in different bodies of organisation and institutions in society.

The development of an agenda and discourse around these issues of concern has been necessary and championed in theory and practice alike, across disciplines and field areas in academia, research and scholarly circles, as well as through social action movements at global and local levels. The goal is to advance and promote the principles of fairness and equal opportunity, and eliminate barriers to participation by women and other diverse groupings. Moreover, as Falco (1987, p. xi) observes, feminism aims not only to eliminate barriers to women's access, but further seeks, "to break down the walls which have denied women full recognition for the quality and value of their participation in and contribution to...social life." Harding (1991) underscores that vigorous struggles for equality are unlikely to cease as long as there are situations of discrimination and inequity maintained where certain groups are marginalised in relation to others.

Various research studies emphasise crucial gaps remain for women's meaningful inclusion and participation (see Figure 4 *Women in Organisational Leadership: Census Pyramid* on p. 43 of this thesis, depicting statistics from the Business Women's Association of South Africa, 2015 Women in Leadership Census). Booysen and Nkomo (2010) observe that despite gains achieved for women within management in organizations in South Africa, senior management and leadership positions continue to be predominantly occupied by men, locally and on an international scale. (Eagly & Carli, 2003; UNDP, 2008). Vinnicombe (2000), reflecting on the position of women in management in Europe, emphasises that regardless of women's increased participation in the labour force, and regardless of ability, the ratio of women to men in leading positions in major corporations and private sector organisations remains low. Similarly, Powell (2011) states that despite considerable changes, sex differences in workplace status continue to be clearly defined in numerous contexts. While the trend across countries is towards increased employment and representation of women in management, female managers are consistently

concentrated in positions with less power and authority than men; the higher the level of the organisation, the fewer women there are (Barreto et al., 2009; Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Powell, 1999). Women are also consistently shown to be underrepresented at corporate board level (Hawarden & Marsland, 2011; Pesonen et al., 2009; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003).

Figure 4: *Women in Organisational Leadership: Census Pyramid, South Africa 2015*

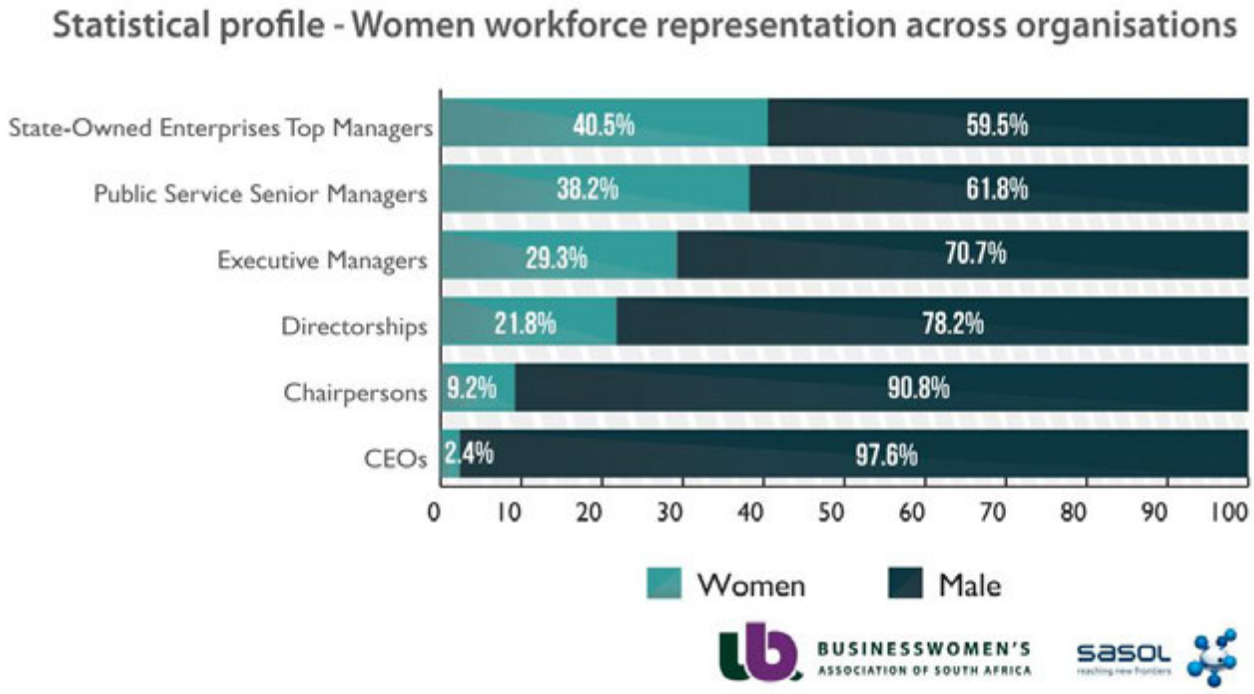


BUSINESSWOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

sasol reaching new frontiers

Although there is limited data available portraying levels and status of women managers in organisations in Africa, a United Nations study depicts women's participation in management and administrative jobs is averaged at 15% across 26 African countries (United Nations, 2000). In South Africa, information conveyed in the Business Women's Association 2009 annual census reports women continue to be underrepresented in executive management and CEO positions in the country (Business Women's Association South Africa, 2009). Additionally, among all companies listed on the JSE Securities Exchange and in 17 state-owned enterprises in South Africa, women constitute a low 10.7% of all board directors (Business Women's Association, 2004). Figure 5 below illustrates percentages of women in senior and leadership positions in South Africa according to the Business Women's Association South Africa *Women in Leadership Census 2015*. The current census highlights few women are thinly spread across organisations' senior and leadership positions, indicating organisations are recycling the same talent and under utilising women talent available, impacting overall efficiency and effectiveness.

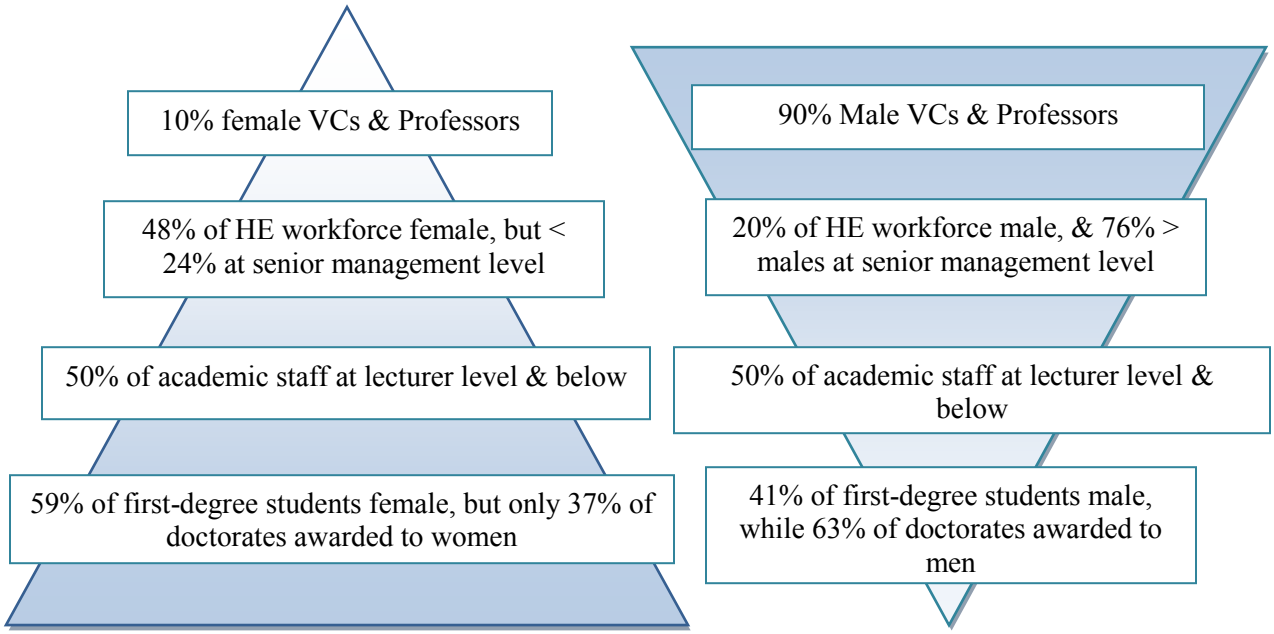
Figure 5: *Percentage of Women in Senior and Leadership Positions In South African Organisations: South African Women in Leadership Census 2015*



In the field of organisational management and leadership studies, the lack of visibility of women in senior and leadership positions is regarded as evidence of continuing inequity. This despite theoretical recognition of the value and imperative to more thoroughly, adequately and meaningfully involve women in all sectors of society to achieve sustainable growth and development (Powell, 2010).

Similarly in the higher education sector low percentages of women in senior management positions in higher education institutions is telling of continued discrimination despite increased access. Gender and leadership studies in higher education acknowledge numerous barriers to women achieving senior and leadership positions (Still, 1994; Brown & Ralph, 1996) with statistics indicating that in the higher education sector, as in the business sector, men, male culture and masculine values are dominant. (Hall, 1996; Whitehead, 2001; Olsson & Walker, 2003) With reference to the higher education sector in South Africa, but indicative of trends in higher education more generally, Figure 6 below (Mwagiru & Mwagiru, 2006, p. 34) illustrates levels of gender imbalance.

Figure 6: *Gender Imbalances in South African HEIs*



2.2 Characteristics of Gender Bias in Organisations and Impacts for Women in Leadership

Attempts to understand the persistence of gender discrepancies at senior managerial and leadership levels pervade research on women in management. The notion of organisations as gendered or structured according to sex, and the persistence of gender role stereotyping are among major limitations identified, that impede women's advancement into and upward mobility within leadership positions (Bartol, 1978; Acker, 1990; Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Heilman, 2001; Ely and Padavic, 2007).

The "think-manger, think-male" attitude highlighted by Schein (1973, 1979, 2001, 2007) is a particularly widely validated explanation of the glass ceiling effect[13] that hinders women's career progression. The manager-as-male hypothesis, is a broadly applied classification of the ideal manager as reflecting stereotypically male characteristics as per the publicly understood norm. This perception of managers as men, and management as a masculine domain (Powell, 2010) fosters and entrenches gender bias against women in training, selection, placement and promotion decisions in management (Schein, 2007).

Marshall (1984) and Powell (1993) discuss the findings of Schein's classic research on gender and management stereotypes (Schein 1973 & 1976) which show "women's route into management is fraught with difficulties." Traditionally, perspectives on leadership have favoured stereotypically male traits, e.g. strength, judgement, decisiveness, knowledge, dominance, independence, objectivity, command and control (Powell, 1993; Young-Eisendrath, 1988). Powell (2012) describes how men and behaviours stereotypically associated with the masculine gender continue to be favoured in management and leadership. Women are generally not associated or identified with the categories that define senior leadership or management roles, and which are consistently related to men. Indeed, many of the existing theories of management were developed with male managers in mind. (Powell, 1993, p. 152)

Schein's studies were conducted in Germany, UK, US, China, and Japan, (Schein, 2001). Minimal research exists however on how the stereotype applies for organisations within an African context (Schein, 2007; Booysen & Nkomo, 2006). In the case of South Africa, the

[13] The notion of the "glass ceiling" is that women are restricted access to senior management and leadership positions primarily because they are women. See Barreto, et. al (2009), and Davidson & Cooper, C.L. (1992) Chapman, London.

country's uniquely challenging history continues to inform present-day configurations. Despite the end of apartheid and subsequent proactive employment equity legislation, Booysen and Nkomo (2010) note a hierarchy is still evident in the labour force as illustrated by current statistics. The representation of groups in the labour force is mostly unvaried from the occupational pattern established during apartheid: white males dominate top and senior management positions representing on average of over 50% of top and senior managers; white females comprise an average of 15% of upper management levels; black males are 11% of top and senior management; and the average presentation of black women in top and senior management is 5%, the most underrepresented groups on all levels of management and the professions (South African Department of Labour, 2009). Booysen and Nkomo explain, white males and females occupy a privileged social location because of race, although white women face gender bias relative to male counterparts. Black men are privileged by gender but subordinated by race, while black females are exposed to both racial discrimination and gender bias.

Booysen and Nkomo (2010) use an intersectional analysis to test Schein's gender role management stereotype hypothesis among different race groups in South Africa. Findings confirmed the think manager, think male hypothesis for black and white men, who are less likely to attribute successful managerial characteristics to women, with the hypothesis holding more robust among black men. However, for black women Booysen and Nkomo found the hypothesis to be reversed. Black women perceived a high resemblance between the characteristics of successful managers and the characteristics of women in general, more than men in general. White women equally attributed the requisite characteristics for successful managers to both genders. On the other hand, Littrell and Nkomo (2005) reported no significant differences among black men, black women, white men, and white women in descriptions of preferred leader behavior. With a focus on gender impediments to the South African executive suite, April et al. (2007) cited the prevalence in modern South African society of roles allocated on the basis of gender often to the disadvantage of women.

Studies internationally as well as in Africa (Nanthanson, 2008) have shown that at a general level, women have assumed stronger economic roles, providing at least half of their household income, but are rarely adequately or equitably recognised for their substantial contributions. A

good illustration of this is the fact that even where women rise to top management jobs, in most cases men earn more, and the higher the level in management, the more evident the gender wage gap. As women's entry into the workplace has not guaranteed their access to senior positions, neither has it assured equitable remuneration, with women paid significantly less than men on average (The Economist, 2010). Discussing differences in access to employment and the unequal distribution of the rewards from employment between women and men, Powell (1993) underscores the fact that within the ranks of higher managerial levels, men continue to hold more positions and receive higher salaries than women. Indeed, it is debatable if gender disparities between the pay packages of women and men in management are decreasing; meanwhile equal pay for women is as important an issue as participation. (Vinnicombe, 2000, p. 13).

Previously, the higher ratio of privilege accorded to men over women in leadership and management has been viewed as due to women's lack of skills, abilities and qualifications (Schein, 2007) as well as due to women's lack of interest in pursuing top management positions (Alvesson, Mats, 1996). However, it has consistently been well established by literature and studies on gender that negligible differences exist between women and men in terms of intellectual capacity, ability or skills.

Reviewing a wide array of studies on differences in intellectual capacities and abilities of women and men over the period of the twentieth century, Powell (1993) offers the tentative conclusion that perhaps the most striking trend in results is differences between women and men seem to be declining over time (see also Feingold, 1988). Similarly, key findings from research on sex differences between women and men in skills and social behaviour, illustrate that while some differences continue to exist, these differences appear to be diminishing over time. (Kelly, Wildman & Urey, 1982)

In the fields of leadership and management, studies spanning the last three decades have explored diverse dimensions and angles of the question of difference between women and men in management and leadership positions, styles, behaviour etc. Commenting on her own survey of relevant literature within the field of gender and organisational studies, Marshall (1984, p. 15) notes that "from their different perspectives, these studies come to remarkably consistent conclusions: that women are very similar to men in their leadership style." Additionally, according to Tkach (1980) psychologically, men are not more qualified than women for positions

of seniority. In a meta-analysis on sex differences in leader effectiveness, Eagly et al., (1995) found that overall women and men did not differ in their effectiveness as leaders.

While analysing the intersections between gender and power-use in the field of leadership, Molm (1985) exposes how traditional typecasting no longer seems to apply to women and men, and shows how both women and men can equally display and utilise power. This is contrary to the stereotype whereby men are favoured in positions of authority because masculine identities are considered better suited and more consistent with traits related to powerfulness. The findings from Molm's research indicate that in power relations, males do not use their power more effectively than females in equivalent positions of authority.

With regard to directions of power-use, gender did appear however as a salient factor. That is, while women and men do not differ in terms of capacity to apply their power, i.e. males and females can equally display and utilise power, underlying differences were detected in the style of interaction women and men display in power relations. These differences were particularly in terms of the choices made by each gender to adopt particular behaviours and characteristics in their power relations and in given situations; that is, less with regards to capacity, and more in relation to the reasons for and directions of power application. Irwin (1995, p. 132) discusses alternative understandings of forms of power developed by critical feminist pedagogy within the fields of education and human development. Sharing power with others, characterised through collaboration, community and mutuality is offered as a more complete understanding of the concept of power beyond narrow conceptions presented in dominant theories of power. (Nyberg, 1981; Kreisberg, 1992)

Other studies have found differences to exist between women and men at this level in terms of their approaches to and styles of interaction. Differences described however are in favour of women within the current context of rapid change and increasing diversity, and therefore continue to be insufficient explanation for the low percentages of women in senior management and leadership. In studies of gender-based differences in leadership, "the most frequently reported difference is that women managers sometimes score higher on the supporting dimension

of leadership[14] than do male colleagues" (Marshall, 1984, p. 16). That is, women tend to display more of an orientation towards relationships. (Denmark, 1977) In current contexts this may in fact provide women with an advantage in the arena of leadership. A quick perusal of the field shows accumulating studies and theories with regard to the potential benefits of including a feminised perspective, often represented by women, in leadership. In response to this, popular arguments are that women are increasingly at an advantage within leadership as current trends are directing growing attention and effort towards valuing interpersonal skills "as previously neglected aspects of the managerial role" (Marshall, 1984, p. 16). The contemporary trend of more feminine associated traits being given precedence as instrumental leadership qualities and characteristics has been referred to as the 'feminisation of management.' (Fondas, 1996; Lee, 1994)

Examining the fields of leadership, the notion of feminine or woman-centred leadership has been a burgeoning topic of interest. A core focus of the research is the impacts of this trend on leadership and management within organisational contexts. Vinkenburg et. al (2000) discuss the popularity of women as "the managers of the 21st century" (Rosen, Miguel & Peirde, 1989; Schwartz, 1992). With regard to women's advances within organisations, the authors stipulate rapidly changing environments dictate the need for organisations to find, select, train and develop human resources with requisite ability to contribute to accomplishing organisational performance outcomes. Neglecting to maximise on the full and diverse range of expertise and resources available, diminishes organisations' competitive advantage. Similar to Vinkenburg et. al. (2000), Powell (2010) elucidates that demands and turbulence of change presented by contemporary contexts require rapid and innovative responses from organisations that want to continue as relevant entities, sustain, and gain on their market position.

At another level of this trend, Vinkenburg et. al discuss the phenomenon where theorists and practitioners alike describe managerial behaviour and requirements for successful leaders, increasingly in terms more traditionally associated with the feminine and female gender stereotype. (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Peters, 1996; Fondas, 1997) The authors relate this to changes in organisations in response to demands of the macro context and the association of these

[14] Supporting dimensions of leadership behaviour refer here to "a concern for people and the development of their capabilities, and for maintaining good relationships within the work group." Support dimensions of leadership behaviours are typically associated with a more participative leadership style. (Marshall, 1984, p.15)

changes with gender stereotype attributes. To maximise on current fluid and dynamic environments characterised by high uncertainty, there is increasing emphasis on innovation, creativity and organisational learning instead of control and uniformity (Bohl et. al, 1996; Baets, 2006). This focus is motivating a shift away from task-oriented and directive leadership - traditionally associated with male gender stereotypes - towards management with an emphasis on consensus-based decision-making, high-involvement work teams and sharing responsibility across a network of relational support - characteristics generally associated with female gender stereotypes.

Illustrating the association of gender stereotype attributes with ongoing shifts in organisational leadership and management trends, Powell (1993, p. 105) shows that in a meta-analysis of laboratory studies examining the effect of the sex composition of groups on group performance, all-male groups were found to exceed at activities that required high amounts of task-oriented behaviour. In contrast, all-female groups surpassed at activities that required high amounts of interactive behaviour, such as reaching a consensus on the best solution to a problem. (Anderson & Blanchard, 1982; Wood & Karten, 1986) Such differences were found to be consistent with gender stereotypes: the masculine stereotype is associated with a high propensity to exhibit task-oriented behaviours such as goal-setting, instigating work activity, and problem-solving; the feminine stereotype is associated with a high propensity to exhibit interpersonally-oriented behaviours such as consensus-seeking, demonstrating concern and consideration for subordinates and their wellbeing (Cann & Siegfried, 1990). In the current environment, more relational and democratic models of leadership based on open communications, decentralised control, and less hierarchical management approaches, are considered most conducive to the success of organisations. (Drucker, 1988; Hitt et al., 1998; Lawler et al., 1995).

Additionally, a consistent difference is captured in research studies between women and men in their tendencies to adopt a democratic versus autocratic style of decision making. In support of gender stereotypes, women tend to be less autocratic and more democratic leaders than men in a majority of settings and under most circumstances (Powell, 2010). Further, the autocratic style of decision making is more associated with the masculine stereotype, reflecting a greater emphasis on dominance and control over others as opposed to the involvement of others as in democratic decision making. (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

These findings have pertinence for contemporary inclinations towards more collaborative and less control-focused leadership, and can explain the popular association of women and feminine leadership with leadership and management styles preferred and promoted for the success of organisations. A growing body of research provides evidence that a feminine interpretation of leadership deviates from the male image of power and perspective on authority, which pervades traditional theories and models. With particular regard to gender and leadership, this has notable impact on how women enact leadership. Blackmore (1989) for example presents an image of female leadership that is incongruent with largely dominant assumptions of power as exemplified by coercion and control of others and reinforced by hierarchical structures and depersonalized relationships. Based on a survey of women's leadership styles in the field of education management, Blackmore argues that women's leadership styles centre on a common theme of Leadership as Responsibility to Others. Feminine leadership practice is defined as emphasizing a sense of community and the empowerment of others through participation, and processes of dialogue consistent with the establishment of more cohesive and congruent interaction between people, ideas and policy. Participatory leadership models centred on a common theme of feminine leadership as responsibility to others, and based on interdependence, collective effort and reciprocity, (Kezar, 2000) have been described as a possible panacea for fixed understandings of leadership as individualistic, power-based and authoritarian. From this perspective, women are a potential resource for positive transformation. According to Sally Helgesen (1995) women's experiences and developed talents, attitudes and skills are well suited to the demands of the post-industrial economy. As concerns female leadership in the new economy, the argument is that, in many ways, women are better able than men to be effective leaders in emerging knowledge economies and societies. This is because the effective management of information, ideas and people is a complex process often requiring more democratic and diverse techniques that perhaps is better achieved by women than men (Rikowski, 2007, p. 58).

One school of thought insists however that usurpation of feminist-oriented and women-associated definitions and terms into dominant discourse, subverts and depoliticises advocacy and activism, maintaining the status quo and yielding few actual benefits for women. (Gouws, 2012) The scepticism echoed in critiques of international development interventions, is that popularization of participatory consensus-based leadership in dominant discourse, is a

convenient marriage between conventional and participatory approaches; a process whereby the dominant narrative subsumes within it alternative discourses which "serve to qualify and not dislodge" the status quo. (Hoebink, 2000)

In discussing agency and representation, Madhok and Rai (2012) argue that approaches to expand women's agency and empowerment are predominantly influenced by a neoliberal agenda and politics, garnered towards producing particular corresponding subjectivities. That is, the vocabulary of 'agency' and 'empowerment', integral to a narrative of collective resistance and emancipation, is applied to describe an autonomous, independent and individually self-focused subject, amenable to and engaged in the neoliberal project.[15]

As a result, potentially transformative concepts such as 'participation', 'consensus' and 'people-based', are co-opted into prevailing culture in ways that continue to legitimize set processes and endorse superficial changes whose parameters are already delineated by centres of power. (Brock et. al, 2001) As Ferguson (1984, p. 103) suggests, usurpation of the concept of consensus and participatory approaches into dominant discourse has therefore largely been another avenue and banner for sanctioning traditional discourse, which continues to be dominated by racialised patriarchy "determining what is said, when it is said and how it is said" as well as put into practice. (Blackmore, 1989)

At one level therefore, field evidence shows overall numbers of women in managerial ranks have risen internationally, and proportions of female representation in management positions have increased. Evidence also suggests women tend to be better suited than men to serve as leaders in ways required by contemporary international environments. The results of meta-analyses demonstrate women rate higher than men in behaviours perceived to contribute to effective leaders, reinforcing the favourable association of women and feminine leadership with current trends. Nevertheless, while these trends may suggest a softening of obstacles, there is little translation of theory into practice, and low numbers of women in leadership indicate resistance remains with regard to entry at senior levels.

[15] The neoliberal project here refers to the increasingly widely recognised and analysed multiple and pervasive manifestations of neoliberalism in contemporary society. For instance in widespread processes of globalisation, national, regional and international governance, and within economic, political and cultural systems, at a macro level, and a micro level in the conceptualisation and enactment of personhood as primarily *homo economicus.*

Despite studies rating women as no less effective than men, refuting commonly held perceptions that men are better leaders and that better leaders are masculine, there has been minimal impact on the real distribution of women and men in leadership positions in organisations (Powell, 2010; Marshall, 1984). It may certainly be surmised that these studies and findings, which explain how women and men do not differ as extensively or fundamentally as purported with regard to stereotypical assumptions, have contributed somewhat to professional advancement and progress of women. Undeniably however, given the expansive implications and potential of numerous findings that both men and women have equal ability to lead, women's concomitant entry into senior and leadership positions has not matched the wide range of data supporting increased access.

More recently Kezar (2000), in an exploration of difference in interpretations of leadership has further emphasised the need for deeper understanding of levels of differentiation, in efforts undertaken to embrace diversity and incorporate multiple voices. Kezar observes that an inconclusive gap persists regarding understanding reasons for differing viewpoints of leadership. How and why interpretations of leadership differ remains largely unexamined, making it difficult to negotiate diverse perspectives in order to meet challenges ascribed to leadership. As noted, "the literature on different leadership perspectives (mostly…examining how gender impacts the way an individual views the world) offers incomplete explanations of why these differences exist" (p. 726). This lack of understanding undermines equitable social change and transformation processes, and extends beyond gender to include multiple overlapping and complex aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, nationality, culture etc. (Kezar, 2000)

The findings from research studies therefore highlight an interesting niche regarding the need to delve more critically into subtle factors of gender relations, stereotyping and leadership. Simultaneously, these studies have opened the way for more probing questions related to sets of factors and issues which combine to fuel the persistence of discrimination and status differences between groups, and in particular men and women. Achieving fundamental transformation beyond superficial and surface appearances will require more nuanced understanding and committed action to address essential influences and patterns of inequity.

One argument explaining more entrenched reasons for continued discrimination against and marginalisation of women is that within many contemporary institutions and structures, even if women do gain access to positions of leadership, the institutions and structures in place impede their manoeuvrability and make it difficult for them to bring to bear some of their unique qualities, which may otherwise have a positive and enhancing effect on leadership. (Gouws, 2012, details a personalised account of the difficulties of changing male dominated institutional environments, with particular reference to a university setting).

Apart from prejudices at individual level, structural realities affect realisation of feminine leadership. There is need therefore to address structural impediments as well as the facilitating nodes, that discourage or encourage full accommodation and incorporation of feminine leadership in terms of style, but also in terms of the interest of this thesis, with regard to embodiment. In relation to this, addressing organisational structural issues may also help to address prejudices at the level of the individual.

2.3 Approaches to Gender Equity in Organisations and Increasing Women's Representation in Leadership

The women's movement deserves commendation for creating more possibilities for women's participation by confronting barriers that compromise equal access to opportunities. Habitually, however, in the intense focus on the necessary agenda of increasing the numbers of women in previously restricted spaces, attention to the unique resources women may provide to industries, fields of expertise and areas of discipline, has been superseded.

The initial generation of women entrants into previously male dominated fields insisted on being evaluated equally on the same basis as their male counterparts. The informing drive in the demonstration of women's capabilities has been to focus on working harder and smarter along the same standards as men. (Schumpeter, 2010, p. 48) In order to attain their positions, the successful women in previously male exclusive domains of employment, management and leadership, have had to inexorably exhibit their conformity to the existing norm. The emphasis has been on women as 'just one of the boys', with the insistence that in the professional content and quality of work, women's outputs are not affected by, and should not be assessed according to their gender as female. (Harding, 1991, p. 62) In this approach, efforts by feminists and

advocates of the movement, have been to largely accommodate and mirror the dominant perspective they are simultaneously attempting to dismantle.

This approach has had positive outcomes and to a large extent continues to be evident in the approaches and attitudes displayed by women in senior and leadership positions currently.[16] A noteworthy gain has primarily been growth in numbers of women in careers, professions and levels of employment traditionally populated by men. Nevertheless, feminist critics contend that the full potential of women's access, inclusion and involvement within organisations and at senior levels, is compromised by continued adherence to male set parameters and rules. (Schumpeter, 2010) That is, the ability of women to enter and retain senior positions as a result of their matched capacities to men, is inadequate to comprehensively address the essential claims for gender equity. The issue of access is also about type of access, and the "'add women and stir' prescription" (Hawkesworth, 1987, p. 5) advanced as a suitable approach suggests that while women as a category may be an untapped resource, there are no associated unique or particularly distinctive benefits that women add. (Harding 1991)

More recently, the critical issue has shifted from a focus on the numbers of women gaining entry into the workforce and into organisations, as the numbers of women are increasing, to an inquiry into the quality of the entry. Particular queries are reasons for the persistently low numbers of women within the ranks of senior management and leadership, as well as investigations into the levels of involvement and amount of influence women exercise at these levels. Discussions and analyses have underscored numerous obstacles women encounter in the navigation and negotiation of organisational contexts in order to penetrate the glass ceiling, from a lack of professional development support, to bias in selection and promotion practices. Furthermore, despite upward mobility for the few women that gain access to senior positions, tangible and intangible restrictions and limitations substantially mediate women's participation and contributions. Young-Eisendrath (1988, p. 161) observes that for female authority, there are unavoidable binds predicated on societal assumptions that women have "less than" the attributes of competence expected and do not fit the conditions and requirements of senior and leadership positions. These binds will continue to be a factor for women, unless loosened and removed by a

[16] Often to combat being isolated as special cases, women in senior and leadership positions commonly insist that their attained stature reflects their skills and capacity, and is not merely a superficial realization of employment equity mandates

thorough review of the informing assumptions on which concepts such as competence and authority are based.

As aptly noted by Agarwal (1997), simply allowing women a given space to participate within current structures, will not necessarily translate into enabling them to fully engage or exercise their agency for systemic change. Challenging conventional parameters and dictates of effective leadership in organisations, requires contemplation of how women view their participation in leadership and senior management professions predominantly constituted and determined by men. This invites inquiry into how women engage, manage and express their agency in traditionally male dominated and male-oriented positions of power and authority. (Young-Eisendrath, 1988) Questions of interest are the extent to which women are facilitated or constrained from acquiring and legitimately exercising predominantly male modes of leading and managing, and on the other hand exploring the aspects that either promote or prevent women learning and applying new modes of operating for efficient and effective performance.

In relation to this, Kanter (1977) provides an incisive discussion on the repercussions of the low proportions of women in positions of influence, by examining the impacts of sex composition of teams on individual group members. Identifying distinct configurations of work teams, Kanter discusses the dynamics of skewed and tilted groups, where in both cases group membership is disproportionate with an imbalance between minority and majority members. In skewed groups the ratio of majority members to minority members is higher than in tilted groups. In tilted groups, as the majority do not exceed minority members in too high a number, in this group configuration, minority members may become allies and have more effect on group culture than in skewed groups.

Majority members in skewed groups control the group dynamic and culture and are referred to as “dominants”, while members of the minority group are called “tokens”. Explaining Kanter’s findings, Powell (1993, p. 113) describes tokens as underrepresented members in a skewed group, categorised on the basis of easily recognisable characteristics, such as sex, race, ethnicity or age. These characteristics are associated with a certain “set of assumptions” about expected behaviour and traits of token group members, as group representatives rather than as individuals.

According to Powell (1993, p. 112),

"since women have entered the management profession in large numbers, the overall proportions of women and men in managerial ranks have shifted from being skewed to being balanced. However, particularly at upper levels, the proportion of women to men managers in many organisations remains skewed."

The experiences of women in leadership and senior positions are therefore considered to be analogous to those of tokens in skewed groups. (Powell, 2010) Women leaders are isolated as tokens as numbers of women at this level are low. Applying the case of skewed composition of teams, token women risk being classified primarily by sex and according to feminine gender stereotypes. Dominant male team members apply stereotypical male responses to token women in these situations, and consequently distort and limit the extent of their participation. (Powell, 1993, p. 115) This can have detrimental impacts for the performance of women in these positions.

Powell (1993, p. 114) summarises key challenges women leaders as token representatives may face. Firstly, as highly visible, women leaders receive special treatment and particular attention. The effects of this contribute to differences between female tokens and male dominants becoming exaggerated, and men may over emphasize commonalities, excluding women from interactions and activities. Additionally, women are under extra performance pressure, as their achievements tend to be misperceived and accomplishments devalued as a result of programmed stereotypical responses to their competence on the part of male dominants. Tokenised women have to work twice as hard as male colleagues to have their competence recognised.

Moreover, in order to succeed token women attempt to compensate for these pressures in several ways, involving different approaches. Tokens may strive to overachieve relative to peers, capitalising on their privileged status and aiming to maximise their advantage. While this has individual benefits, it is rarely the case that successes gained by individual women have positive ripple effects that improve the situation for other women (Harding, 1991). In some accounts, women with token status as the sole representatives, or amongst few women in their positions, can compromise other women from gaining similar entry and status. On the other hand, tokens may also aim to be discreet, and attempt to maintain a subtle presence and understate their accomplishments. (Powell, 1993, pp. 114 - 115) Regardless of the approach however, the result of such dynamics is that even after gaining entry into male-dominated arenas of top

management, women tokens face challenges being effective in their performance that men in equivalent positions of power and authority do not face. (Kanter, 1977).

Regressive tendencies persist therefore and act as barriers to women exercising the legitimate authority that their entry into senior and leadership levels within organisations should make possible. Nevertheless, the argument can still be made that even in situations of tokenism where women in positions of power appear to only have token status without substantial authority or decision-making power, these women by their very presence, heighten awareness of, as well as pose a threat to the dominant culture, and thereby play a positive role towards change, however minimal.

On the other hand, as Harding (1991, p. 55) queries, what is progressive about organising campaigns to 'add women and gender' to predominant social structures and subject matters, without questioning the legitimacy of the social hierarchy and inequity these structures progress and protect?

Critics of business-as-usual do not advocate for the advancement of women in existing enterprises if such action is perceived to offset the need to change existing structures and institutions. From one stance, this perspective claims the core issues of gender equity remain unaffected when women are uncritically included in social structures that perpetuate bias. In fact, such a preoccupation may deviate attention from efforts to resist underlying sources of discrimination and give credence to situations that reproduce injustice. Additionally, women 'added' to leadership positions are at risk of tokenism, with little or no positive effect on the situation of women. Token women tend to inevitably contribute to, benefit from and be part of the forms of domination that are responsible for suppressing women at other levels of social and organisational hierarchies. From the perspective of the critics of business-as-usual, women in senior positions are in this way complicitous with male domination. The argument is that adding women to current organisational structures and institutions may strengthen practices that should be weakened, particularly if fulfilment of quota requirements is the principal change targeted. An important caveat to mention is that criticisms of the legitimacy of the 'adding women' approach however, need not consequently discourage women from seeking representation within traditionally restricted organisational spaces and cultures, especially when women have resisted exclusion, and the gains and accomplishments of women's advocacy is becoming more visible.

Women have had to overcome numerous challenges to achieve the leadership credentials and positions that more routinely belong to men regardless of token status. (Harding, 1991, pp 67 - 68)

Additionally expanding the ground gained, studies examining the influence of situational characteristics on the manifestation of gender stereotypes in the work place, have shown how "over time, being supervised by a woman or simply working with women seems to affect attitudes toward them." (Powell, 1993, p. 110) In other words, increased interaction with women colleagues in the work place diminishes the probability that these women will be characterised according to gender stereotypes by their professional peers. (Ezell et. al, 1981) In addition to adding to the pool of available resources therefore, the campaign by women to seek entry by numbers has provided and yielded other benefits. Particularly, quantitative change has to some degree led to qualitative impacts. It should be noted therefore that adding more women to the collective of the workforce can ultimately generate positive effects for engendering equity and diversity in the workplace.

At the same time it is important to acknowledge that a statistical approach alone, while crucial for addressing overt discrimination, "may be powerless to address problems relating to ideological oppression." (Hawkesworth, 1987, p. 8) Young-Eisenrath (1988, p. 166) advocates that the transformation imperative in patriarchal society, requires women to protect their creative expression and personal power, the integrity of their beliefs and values, and to exercise their sovereignty and agency. This is not an imperative that recedes as women enter into the male dominated world of leadership and success. Indeed, it is at these levels that the imperative most strongly needs to take root.

A moot question however is, do women have something unique and specific to offer leadership, to organisations, and to contribute to equitable and sustainable processes of socio-political transformation? Does the women's movement contribute to the growth and transformation of knowledge from content and structures, to underlying logic, conceptual and theoretical foundations, and resultant models? (Harding, 1991)

Rikowski (ed. 2007, p. 60), observes that seeking new ways to create value, tapping into some of the unrealised value potential in women, and nurturing female intellectual power and leadership are becoming increasingly important in the knowledge economy.

Proceeding from this, a core concern of the research is the extent to which women perceive and experience contextual factors within their organisational environments that constrain or facilitate what and how they know and can enact their knowledge in senior and leadership positions. By extension, the research presented in this study seeks to contribute to an examination of such issues, by exploring whether and how women's ways of knowing and knowledge may be better facilitated and accommodated within the structures, systems and processes of organisations and the institutions that order and govern societies. The guiding premise and assumption is that accommodating women's expression of their agency at senior and leadership levels will render more explicit the conceptual frameworks that guide and inform women's knowledge systems, and perhaps yield alternative models and approaches towards resolution of shared challenges and collective issues.

2.4 Organisations in Emerging Knowledge Economies and Societies

The growing value and importance of knowledge for organisations presents an opportune context for the research. Increasingly, organisational ability to deal effectively with knowledge resources is considered a key component and contributory factor for development and growth (Grant, 2000). According to Drucker (1993), in contemporary society, knowledge is a critical economic resource, equivalent and surpassing the role of capital and labour. Grant (1996) and Jakubik (2007) similarly recognize knowledge as a vital source of competitive advantage and a factor of success. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) note that current conditions are generating growing recognition of the immense transformative capacities of interaction on knowledge, and providing impetus for re-examination of the role of knowledge in contributing to more sustainable societies.

Current trends are unique as ideas, information, and beliefs are increasingly central in construction and formation of social reality, from local to global level. Although throughout history, diverse knowledge systems have provided sustenance and meaning to social existence, particularly unique to this period, is that society is experienced and governed more by

widespread social interactions, and is a growing miasma of interacting ideologies, perspectives and minds. Under these conditions, ongoing shifts towards information and knowledge societies are progressing.

New ways of thinking and fresh ideas are required to keep resonant with and address emerging realities and demands exerted by the rapid rate of global change. Particularly in market economies as Allen (1994) notes, the unpredictability of different factors and difficulties in mapping precise trajectories for policy and planning, epitomise the essentially chaotic characteristic of contemporary processes of change. Trade, commerce and investment patterns shift and change, driven by innovation and particular local events. (Poli, 2016)

Key concurrences may be mentioned that contribute to the value of knowledge gaining currency, and that point to the increasing importance of organisations in knowledge economies and societies, and as agents of development:

- Growth and expansion of ICTS and Knowledge Management
- Contemporary crises and multiple intersecting issues
- Commodification and demands of knowledge

Growth and Expansion of ICTS and KM: The pace of global change derives substantially from new technologies that have increased information and communications capabilities and digitised work contexts, systems and processes. This has triggered new industries, expanded trade and increased interconnectedness and interdependency between social, political and economic systems. (Laszlo, 1992; Mulgan, 1997; Friedman, 1999; Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville, 2003)

Proliferation of information associated with the information and communications technologies era is an indicator of increasing prominence of ideas and knowledge. Castells (1996) has discussed the current technological revolution as characterised by the centrality of knowledge and information, as well as the centrality of different modes of generation and application of knowledge and information, through knowledge and information processing and communication systems.

Against this backdrop, a notable trend observed from the 1990s is increasing interest in Knowledge Management (KM) with widespread diffusion of KM research, concepts and

practices in organisations. (Jakubik, 2007) The introduction of new roles such as 'Chief Knowledge Officer' as professional and functional positions is attestation to the increasingly valued role of knowledge management within organisations. While KM is defined in many ways, the core focus is creation, capture, and application of knowledge to enhance organisational performance. (Bassi, 1997) As Scarbrough (2001) details, knowledge management processes aim to exploit knowledge resources to find solutions to problems within a business and organisational context, utilizing a range of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The concern to capture knowledge as an organizational resource applies both to the internal domain of knowledge creation, production and use, as well as to the changing macro and external environment and institutional context of organizations. (Scarbrough, 2001)

Contemporary Crises and Multiple Intersecting Issues: Within this context of heightened interdependence and connectivity, there is a critical call to expand human social, economic, environmental, cultural and political options (Kezar, 2000). Multiple issues arising from complex and intricate interconnections underscore the need to address and refine approaches across contexts, to achieve sustainable progress in a "globally enmeshed world" (Allee, 2003, p. 6). That is, the increasing interdependence characterising the current era of globalization, necessitates urgent inquiry into how humanity can interactively seek to cope with shared challenges and realise common goals, utilising available tools and capacities.

Discussing current shifts and changes in the global political economy, Clarke (2010) explores parameters of contemporary crises and modes of thought that dominate the framing and interpretations of global conditions, and related solutions proffered and interventions prescribed. He veers from deducing one root cause or identifying any primary and foundational crisis as underlying current instability in the global political economy, focusing instead on a conjuncture of different types of crises and the implications of this multiplicity of issues, including for instance, a crisis of governance, a crisis of leadership, a crisis of regulation, economic and financial crises, environmental and climate change crisis, global crisis. As he states:

"Thinking conjuncturally implies examining the multiple _ and potentially heterogeneous _ forces, tendencies and trajectories that are compressed or condensed into a particular moment. These tendencies have different weights, different effectivities, different histories and even different rhythms _ but it is their combination or coming together that constitutes a conjuncture. In such a perspective, the search for the primary cause represents a mistaken analytical route _

even if a prime mover was identifiable, it only gains its significance in its articulation with the other tendencies that together make up this specific conjuncture." (Clarke, 2010, p. 383)

Clarke further notes, these crises contexts may be fertile ground for the construction of new imaginaries. There is need and demand for contextually relevant, useful and actionable information and knowledge to guide and inform praxis, and steer sustainable processes of economic growth, development and socio-political transformation. The call is to seek new approaches to growth based on appropriate foundations, principles, and tools that take into account the dynamic complexity, diversity and multiculturalism that is an increasingly prominent feature across most societies. (Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville, 2003) The insistence is that alternative ways to realise sustainable global prosperity need to be explored, building on the impetus and potential presented by the current emergence of knowledge economies and societies. (Allee, 2003) In this context, adaptability is emerging as a prominent feature of organisations with awareness and capacity to respond to changing circumstances applying creative solutions and fresh ideas from diverse knowledge sources. (Allen, 1994)

Commodification and Demands of Knowledge: In emerging knowledge economies and societies, knowledge is a core driving force for creativity and innovation, and strategic use of knowledge as a productive resource and factor for wealth creation and economic development, is increasingly a competitive requirement. (Evers, Kaiser & Müller, 2009; Lauring & Selmer, 2012) In order to effectively respond to changing environments in the current era, a range of viewpoints stress an important feature of organisations and societies is the ability to: produce; efficiently and effectively manage; apply, monitor and measure; share and protect knowledge. (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Jakubik, 2007)

Nonaka (1994) and Allee (2003) observe, gradual emergence of knowledge driven societies is a shift involving re-orientation in thinking and practice concerning how knowledge is created, processed and utilised to the best advantage of contemporary organisations and societies. Evers, Kaiser and Müller link the growth of knowledge economies and societies to contemporary trends in international development, stating that within the current strategic focus and policy approaches of influential multilateral organisations such as the World Bank[17], "there is now a

[17] See World Bank Report 1998-1999 on *Knowledge for Development*

globalised awareness and consensus regarding the importance of knowledge for ensuring the quality of daily life and as a key factor for social change." (Evers, Kaiser & Müller, 2009, p. 55)

As such, current circumstances and conditions from global to local, are ripe for intensive cross-cultural exploration and critical engagement on the relevant issue of types and forms of appropriate knowledge required for resolution of cross cutting problems. Allee (2003, p. 5) further emphasises, the repercussions and ramifications signified by ongoing trends and interests in knowledge are extensive, as "the knowledge question has fired the imagination of people in every type of organisation and at every level of community and government. It has swept every continent and nation."

Examining the emergence of knowledge driven economies and societies with reference to Africa, in terms of statistical and quantitative measure of research and knowledge outputs, the continent is ranked the lowest region in the world. Measures applied to gauge knowledge outputs include number of registered patents, number of journals and journal articles and publications produced among other indicators, where Africa generally performs poorly compared to other continents. African HEIs as key organisational engines of knowledge are also positioned comparatively low in global rankings.

Nevertheless, the issue of knowledge is a topical and vibrant theme in ongoing discourse on transformation in Africa. Diverse voices including seasoned academics, youth, LGBTIQ, rural and other communities are engaged in critical analysis and interrogation of types and systems of knowledge, and related experiences and identities, that are privileged vs. silenced, and that are recognised vs. invisible. Debates on knowledge issues occur within the field of development with regard to grassroots project interventions; within educational and academic institutions where the relevance of curricula and syllabi is questioned; and within social media and protest spaces that critique inherited colonial systems and types of knowledge, calling for a radical reclamation of African authenticity. In their edited text on African-centred knowledges, Cooper and Morrell (2014) contribute to the project of identifying and outlining the different parameters of African knowledge systems and their contributions, inviting more research engagement. This thesis seeks to further and advocate for the revival and renaissance of African knowledges, applying the particular lens of gender, specifically examining the contributions of senior women in organisational leadership.

Scarbrough (2001) however, cautions against the view that increasing importance of knowledge as a denominator of innovation, growth and progress in contemporary society automatically calls for a shift in thinking. Rather, growing interest in knowledge could be more characteristic of interests in consumption and commodification of knowledge, and less about knowledge driven changes or fundamental shifts. In other words, from this perspective the current popularity of knowledge is indicative of "fashionization of knowledge" in society, and may not necessarily yield new or alternative modes of organisation, development and patterns of production. Evers, Kaiser and Müller (2009, p. 56) support this observation that current trends are indicative of a decisive shift towards competitive economisation and privatisation of knowledge on a global scale.

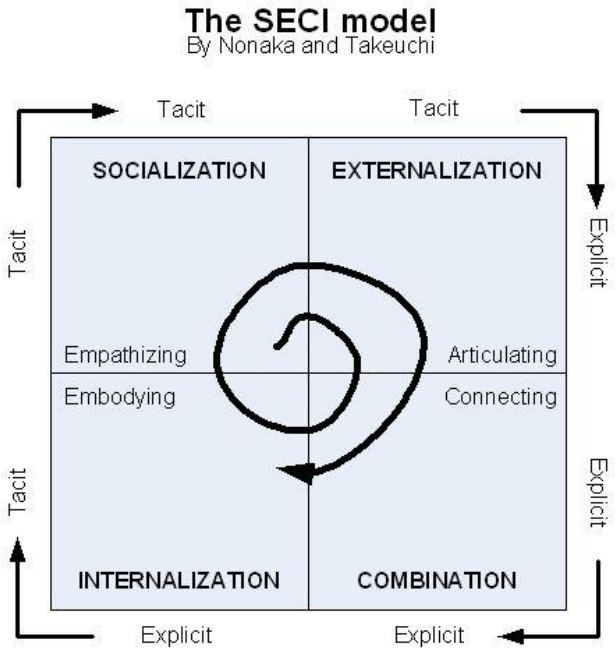
Nevertheless, a key stipulation of this thesis is that current contexts present an opportune moment for deeper and more exploratory research into latent potential and unrealized assets of different systems of knowledge and ways of knowing. With regard to emerging knowledge economies and societies, full implications of current trends are yet to be understood. As knowledge is assigned increasing market value, changes instigated by knowledge production and commodification trends, might offer fresh opportunities for transformation extending beyond purely commercial interest. For organisations, current environmental and social demands and expectations obligate business and commercial benefits to extend beyond profit margins and include positive impacts for broader society.

Organisations as Agents of Development

The responsibility of organisations to act as agents of development and change has been consistently emphasised, particularly in context of Africa where it is imperative to systemically tackle such issues as corruption, poverty, and abuse of human rights. Organisations are uniquely placed to be incubators of change that can have broad impacts for society as a whole. As Marshall (1984, p.233) notes organisational structures and processes are a significant channel for transmittal and translation into practice of societal norms and values. As such, organisations can be a key node involved in reappraisal of current social values and norms, fundamentally contributing to required change and reflecting new principles in creative and new organisational forms and practices.

In his book *Images of Organisation* Morgan (1986) presents different metaphors of organisation, discussing the situational and contextual relevance and functionality of each organisation type described. For the purposes of this thesis, organisations are considered to offer a potentially conducive space for emergence of knowledge, as well as to act as significant sites of change and transformation with repercussions for broader social reality, from the local to global. (Gouws, 2012) Organisations have been studied as spaces for knowledge creation, explication and application, and in particular the works of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), and Bereiter (2002) have informed the research. Particularly relevant in these studies are the proposed models that aim to convey different aspects and dimensions of the knowledge creation process in organisations. For Nonaka and Takeuchi a key process in organisational knowledge creation is conversion of tacit knowledge – associated with personal and subjective knowledge embedded in individual experience and action – to explicit knowledge which is formal, articulated and codified (see Figure 7 *The SECI Model* as a diagrammatic summary of key concepts and processes of conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge). Similarly, Bereitter focuses on processes of knowledge building emphasising conceptualisation aspects towards articulation and sharing of tacit forms of knowledge. A key question for the research presented here was to explore features of conducive organisational environments that facilitate conversion/externalisation, from tacit to explicit, of the knowledges of women in leadership.

Figure 7: *The SECI Model* by Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995)



Organisational knowledge processes can have wide beneficial impacts, optimally positioning organisations as leaders in defining macro-cultures. At one level, broader social factors and dynamics influence the structures and internal cultures of organisations in regulative, normative and cognitive dimensions. At another level, organisations have potent capacity to influence and shape societal environments and contexts. Organisational influence on society may be direct through the development, marketing, advertising and provision of goods and services; as well as indirect through the values, principles and norms that guide and inform internal organisational cultures, corporate identity, and interface platforms and dynamics with share/stakeholders.

It is useful here to mention institutional theory, which emphasises organisational institutional fields are made up of other organisations and institutions within a wider system, and boundaries between organisations, other field entities and the system environment are porous. In systems thinking, the idea that organisations as systems exist in relation to the informing environment is generally accepted, and this thinking may also be extended to knowledge systems. (Luhmann, 1995) Organisational staff and employees for instance make up and constitute professional organisations while also exercising membership and constituting other organisations and institutions (e.g. religious, cultural, family etc.) and navigating the distinctions and intersections between each organisational/institutional entity and context. (Allen, 1994 & 1997; Luhman, 1995; Morgan, 1997) Changes in one organisation therefore can automatically trigger changes in other organisations and institutions in the same field and system. From this vantage point, beyond a shift in a given landscape, change implies the creation of the landscape itself. (Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville, 2003; Allen, 1994 & 1997)[18] In succinct summary,

"The overall innovation performance of an economy depends not so much on how specific formal institutions (firms, research institutes, universities, etc.) perform, but on how they interact with each other as elements of a collective system of knowledge creation and use, and on their interplay with social institutions (such as values, norms, legal frameworks, and so on)." (Smith, 1995, p. 72)

The organisational/societal interface and "the critical dependencies between an organisation and its environments" (Choo, 1998, p. 2) require organisations to be anticipatory and constantly responsive to changes, shifts and dynamics within external environments, in order to maintain an

[18] A suitable contemporary example of the capacity for organisations to contribute to and shift social norms is the He-for-She campaign spearheaded by UN Women in 2015. With this initiative, the UN is seeking to promote gender equity in societies by enlisting strategic organisational partners including universities, as champions of gender equity and to promote gender equity processes.

edge on comparative advantage and relevance. The interaction between transformative capacities of organisation and societies is therefore twofold. On one hand, organisations have potential to push social boundaries, by generating fresh and alternative approaches and modes of operation within their internal contexts, with impacts for how the organisation relates to the external environment. Similarly, organisations, in order to maintain relevance, are compelled to react and respond to changes within social contexts with direct impacts for their systems, structures and processes. With regard to increasing gender equity at senior and leadership levels within organisations, the implications can be multiple.

Allee (2003, p. 6) writes about "the changing nature, structure, and identity of organisations" noting organisations need to take account of knowledge resources and endeavour to leverage organisational knowledge and intelligence to create maximum value and benefits. Designing strategies for maximising on knowledge resources is therefore a challenge to organisations. Babbie and Mouton (2005, p. 4) comment, in modern institutions the capacity to manage and apply knowledge effectively, efficiently and with relevance is an increasingly important feature of successful organisations. Capacity to generate and meaningfully apply knowledge enables development of new capabilities, improved organisational processes, design of new products and services, enhanced market offerings and solutions. (Choo, 1998, p. 2).

Synthesising contemporary perspectives Choo (1998) highlights growing interest and appreciation of processes by which organisations manage and use information, create meaning, produce knowledge and engage in action. Discussing the question "what is a knowing organisation?" Choo (1998, p. xi) describes knowing organisations as possessing "information and knowledge that confer a special advantage" allowing organisations to "manoeuvre with intelligence, creativity, and occasionally, cunning" to sustain growth and development in a dynamic environment. Through openness to learning and acquisition of new knowledge, knowing organisations are well equipped for early adaptation, to execute decisive action in response to changing conditions. Knowing organisations invest in skills development and expertise of human resources, and promote continuous learning, creativity and innovation in sensing and understanding containing environments. Choo (1998, p. xi) emphasises, central to knowing organisations is management of processes that underpin sense making, knowledge building, and decision making.

Bringing together insights from organisation theory and information science research Choo additionally highlights the richness and complexity of information use in organisations" (p. xi). He outlines three strategic arenas (p. xii) within which organisations produce and utilise information and knowledge:

1 – Organisations interpret information about the environment, to construct meaning about what is happening to the organisation and what the organisation is doing

2 – Organisations create new knowledge by converting and combining expertise and know-how of human resources in order to learn and innovate

3 – Organisations process and analyse information and knowledge in order to select and commit to appropriate courses of action

Choo (p. xiii) further clarifies conditions, patterns, and rules of use which render information and knowledge meaningful and valuable. The pertinence of Choo's work is specifically the observation that in knowing organisations, knowledge and information systems and services focus on what people know, including how and why information and knowledge are used and applied. Choo invites additional research into organisational learning and information and knowledge management as strategic capacities that enable organisations to grow and adapt, to maintain relevance.

Acknowledging these views, a key departure point of this thesis is that knowledge as an organisational resource needs to be appropriately accommodated, utilised and maximised upon. In particular the overriding focus of the research inquiry was to examine the organisational context in which women are expected to apply their knowledge. A concern with the modes and rationale of information use and knowledge application within organisations, closely intersects with examination of ways in which women are either restricted or facilitated in knowledge and information processes, at senior and organisational leadership levels. The interest of the research is to explore facilitative nodes and obstacles influencing women's explication and enactment of knowledge within organisations in order to add value to activities, make better sense of situations and present better decisions in response. As discussed, within organisations, strategic management of knowledge and information, in terms of creation, production and application is a crucial tool that maximises organisational potential and aids growth. Moreover, increasingly

consensus is that significant benefits can accrue to institutions and organisations, through incorporation and implementation of strategies that target and include diverse knowledge. Tsoukas and Shepherd (2004) specify that such strategies include taking account of the depth and volume of an organisation's knowledge pool and how this can facilitate strategic planning and decision making; underpin and inform action; signal changes in the environment and gauge the probability and un/certainty of expected and unforeseen events.

The concept of knowledge however remains open to subjective interpretation despite a variety of definitions, and requires further conceptual development. Evers, Kaiser and Müller (2009, p. 56) explain "knowledge is a general term that takes on different forms depending on the context." Moreover, while there are vast machineries of knowledge that generate data and information, there is limited and ineffectual use of instrumental knowledge in terms of relevant application of information and data in social, political and economic action with beneficial outcomes. In reflecting on the conjuncture of particular crises in the current moment, Clarke (2010) suggests we are encountering a failure to discover, stabilise and install a new 'spatio-temporal fix' (Jessop, 2002) that provides collectively optimal economic, political and social conditions.

This study surmises that implications of the current shift in trends towards knowledge have bearing on subsequent efforts to delve into and interrogate socio-cultural contexts, concepts and systems of knowledge use. The argument is that alternative social, political and economic formations are required to dislocate the central positioning and balance dominant and damaging ideologies. Within the specific context of women's knowledge systems and potential contributions women can uniquely make to leadership and transformative development, new evidence has highlighted the value of diverse intelligence in effecting innovative and creatively engineered solutions that can generate continuous and sustainable growth and development.

Due to unique contemporary conditions, and as ideas, information and knowledge become prime units of exchange, systems of diverse meaning have potential to provide renewed invigoration and influence, with positive impacts for the structures of social existence. Recent studies and analyses of the linkages between development and sustainability emphasise the value of diversity and knowledge as key nodes that can support sustainable advancement and prosperity. Fresh insight into ways of knowing that have been historically subjugated, may contribute to more holistic approaches to development and transformation that seek to transcend limitations of

existing structures in society, perpetuated by misaligned leadership practices and persistent patterns of power. (Ferguson, 1984) Barkin (2000) advocates, releasing the bonds that jeopardize the revitalization of human communities and cultures will allow for the creation of new institutions anchored in a collective sense of sustainability that includes diversity in all its dimensions.

Recognising more diverse social structures are necessary, DeVault (1996) discusses the essential requirement to forge a new social pact cemented in a multiple consciousness, in order to envision fresh approaches that have potential to resolve shortcomings of the status quo. Indeed, commitment to meaningful processes of socio-political transformation and the search for alternative resolutions to challenges of leadership, requires taking account of the legitimacy of diverse values and knowledge systems, traditionally analytically separated and largely ignored within dominant discourse.

A key concern however is that even as contemporary public discourse and concerns expand to include and involve the interests of more stakeholders, unequal contexts shaped by disparities between groups remains. As such, without specific attention to the categories, concepts and conventional understandings that shape this discourse, there is the discernible danger of obscuring the voices, marginalising the experiences and excluding the knowledge of certain groups. (DeVault, 1996)

Specifically, a key concern of the research is the extent to which gender equity is addressed within the strategic arena of organisational knowledge production and use. That is, to what extent are the lived realities, experiences and knowledge of women accommodated for within organisations particularly at leadership levels? Proceeding from the premise that tacit knowledge is triggered and brought to bear in response to a variety of stimulants emanating from the context, this research questions the extent to which contemporary organisational contexts are conducive to women's explication of knowledge and practical application of the principles, rules and norms that form a shared experiential repertoire – a women's knowledge system.

To what extent are alternative meanings, definitions, and conceptual frameworks accommodated within organisations towards exploring necessary and valuable facets or ingredients of good leadership, effective performance, and balanced socio-political transformation?

2.5 The Value of Equity and Diversity for Organisations

In the prevailing global business climate, organisations are increasingly confronted with the need to acknowledge, harness and manage diversity (Bagshaw, 2004). According to the EU (2005) companies are increasingly adopting diversity and equity policies and strategies for ethical, legal and economic reasons. A main impetus and catalyst for the development of equity and diversity strategies in organisations is the reality of changing demographics, driving organisations to consider a more diverse pool of talent in order to meet their recruitment needs. The notion of managing diversity is founded on the premise that harnessing and valuing difference will create a productive environment where varied talents are applied to meet organisational goals (Baghsaw, 2004). Examining good practices and business benefits of diversity and equity, positive outcomes highlighted by the EU include enhanced employee recruitment and retention from a wider pool of high quality workers, an improved image and reputation for organisations, and greater innovation and learning, leading to new products and services and enhanced market opportunities in potential new markets. The business case for diversity holds that it is a "long-term strategic business factor that has a significant impact on productivity, workforce motivation and innovation, market competitiveness, teamwork and customer loyalty." (Bagshaw, 2004, p. 154) Key points of the business case for diversity revolve around: cost reduction related to staff motivation, absenteeism and turnover; improved market access and customer service in increasingly diverse and globalised societies; talent retention, innovation and productivity.

At another level, societal values are impacting on business practices, with higher expectations of organisations' operational conduct and ethical behaviour in the workplace, promoting openness, inclusion, respect, collaboration and equity. As such, companies are increasingly aware of the ethical and values case for diversity and equity in organisations as a primary motive for implementing equality and diversity initiatives. In relation to issues such as equal opportunities, fair trade, ethical investment, environmental impact, relations with local communities, human rights and other social justice issues, organisations are more committed on a values basis and for ethical reasons. Additionally research indicates organisations that voluntarily institute diversity practices as a proactive response to social changes and realities, aim to go beyond compliance to legal obligations and aspire to become 'best in class.' Qualities of business leadership at this level are demonstrated by companies' ethical commitment to equity and diversity as a

progressive and values-based outlook on good management practice. The UN Convention on Human Rights in some instances is providing the principles to guide the way organisations operate internally, as well as how business is conducted with suppliers, customers, local communities and other stakeholders. Numerous diversity models have also been designed and applied by a range of business consultants in the field. For instance Bagshaw (2004, p.156) identifies "4 Cs of working with diversity" as: Checking and testing assumptions; Communicating empathy and respect; Creating a climate of inclusion; Challenging inappropriate behaviour.

Nevertheless, research has found in addition to the ethical dimension as the main impetus for companies to engage in diversity efforts, there remains a fundamental expectation that these efforts will produce tangible business benefits, in that harnessing diversity enhances business performance (Bagshaw 2004). That is, organisations are seeking to increase revenues, enhance customer satisfaction and improve their corporate image in line with societal developments and changes, as well as aiming to address issues of social exclusion and disadvantage faced by particular members and groups in society. (EU, 2005). Hearn et. al (2003, p. 233) caution however about the danger in replacing ethical values with purely economic concepts, in that the erosion of ethical practices may become less detectable and overshadowed by materialistic gains at the expense of issues of morality, justice and fairness. A relevant point for continued reflection then is what are the drivers of organisational change that beyond directly instrumental value, signal morally responsible and accountable change?

Allee (2003, p. 5) observes, "the diversity movement of the 1990s has expanded to embrace global diversity as we learn to work with and in different cultures around the world." At this contemporary juncture of increased cultural politics (Butler, 1990, p. 5) economic imbalances are under closer scrutiny and subject to popular debate, with increasing pressure to establish international policy solutions to resolve issues of collective global import such as poverty, trade, immigration, security, and the environment. At the same time, adverse reactions and divisive elements demote and destabilise multicultural ideals and associated perspectives of equity and diversity with negative repercussions for organisational environments and staff. (Bagshaw, 2004) For women in particular, and with reference to a main point of inquiry for the research, dominant

patterns of thinking tend to reinforce discriminatory and exclusionary organisational cultures that stymie diverse and specifically women's cognitive and behavioural agency.

Within an African context, the issue of equity and diversity in general and as reflected within institutions and organisations has specific historical connotations. It is widely argued that for the African continent in general the colonial condition has persisted even after flag-independence and the end of formal political direct-rule. Entrenched effects of colonialism continue to reverberate in numerous cultural and material ways, and are particularly evident in the form of continuing structures of control and skewed institutions and in international relations. The discourse of neocolonialism highlights the continued social, cultural, political and economic power asymmetries, imbalances and repressions that configure the current conditions of African nations. (Westwood & Jack, 2007; Young 1990, 2001)

Westwood and Jack (2007) put forward a case for meaningful inclusion of this discourse in the field of international business and management, in order to critically interrogate, and reconfigure, parochial and ethnocentric orientations predominant in these fields. Modern management theory, these authors argue, has been complicit in perpetuating colonising economic, socio-political and cultural hegemony framed in discourses on development and industrial modernisation. These discourses connected to and reflecting colonial interests have largely informed African contemporary institutional and organisational structures, systems and cultures. To arrest the encroachment of neo-colonialism, requires revealing the institutionalised apparatus and nature of exclusionary practices that continue to resonate with colonialism, and feed the socio-political, economic and cultural interests of the metropolitan centres of dominant economic and military powers.

Towards this end, the authors propose the resources offered by post-colonial theory as useful tools to interrogate and reconfigure the fields of business and management. Post-colonial theory is posited as a means for expanding space for knowledge systems that have been repressed, marginalised or silenced by the propensities of colonising nations, their institutions, cultures, discourses and knowledge systems. Through methodological interventions, post-colonial theory targets the limited and limiting assumptions, institutions and positioning of the dominant paradigm and seeks to radically overturn the basis of dominant ontological, epistemological,

methodological and institutional resources in ways that return agency to subordinated groupings (Westwood & Jack, 2007)

In post-apartheid South Africa, towards redressing past imbalances, national policies have been put in place to drive transformation in the country. Companies are obligated to meet regulatory standards and quota targets with regards to inclusion and equity, and legislative compliance is mandatory for companies seeking tenders particularly in the public sector. Across sectors however reflecting diversity is a prerequisite for acquiring clients and business. It is also important for organisations to avoid the financial costs and reputational risks brought about by litigation and employment tribunals as a result of non compliance with the national transformation agenda. In Kenya, ethnic dynamics as a result of historical encounters between groups continue to colour social, business and political interactions. The detrimental local and regional impacts of the post-election 2007 unrest, which was largely fanned along ethnic tensions, demonstrated the negative effects of ethnicity-based discordance on the economy of the region and the business functions and operations of the national and regional business sectors.

In a post-colonial, post-apartheid context therefore, there remains the imperative to examine what Westwood and Jack (2007, p. 255) refer to as "dynamic complexities of encounters of difference" their manifestation and expression in the socio-political, economic and cultural milieu, and impacts for knowledge, situated identity and the co-construction of collectively beneficial emergent potentialities. Contemporary conceptual shifts in the field of knowledge seem to be consistent with this commitment to include and account for diverse viewpoints. The concept of knowledge sharing itself implicitly acknowledges the limitations and partiality of any one perspective, knowledge system or world view to fully encapsulate or capture the multiple dimensions that make-up social reality. (Dei, 1998) Building on this key departure point of this thesis is the assertion that more diverse and gendered research would significantly add value in the re-configuration of organisational and larger social contexts.

Advocacy for gender equity is not focused solely on the interests of women as a special interest group, and contributes to broader collective expressing of concerns about society, shared and echoed by antiracist, social justice and anti-exploitation, ecology and peace movements, and other 'countercultures'. (Harding, 1991, p. 50; Imam, Mama & Sow, 1997) While feminism and the women's movement have a distinct approach to their subject – women/gender– the core

claims revolving around equity are applicable to diverse dimensions of social life. (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 528) As Connell (forthcoming publication in *Feminist Theory*) notes, feminist scholarship is interested in the majority world, formulating ideas that take global issues into account from a diversity of perspectives and with a commitment to social justice. Spivak, (1987) similarly proposes the gender/race/class nexus is valuable for understanding the disenfranchisement and marginalisation of particular groupings of people.

The value of diversity within an equity perspective where differences are accommodated on the basis of their contributory value and on the basis of a win-win standard supports the idea of a symbiotic rather than competitive shared existence. Bagshaw (2004, p. 154) discusses diversity as encompassing a "rich tapestry of skills, experience and ideas that come from the varying backgrounds that society offers today. This variety can bring a valuable resource for innovation, at all levels of the organisation." The focus is on what can be learned from diverse viewpoints and experience and how can the potential engendered by different backgrounds and variety of opinions and insights can be tapped most beneficially. Research has shown how to some extent, mixed-sex groups deliver higher levels of performance for organisations than groups more biased towards an all-male or all-female composition. (Wood, 1987)

Bagshaw (2004, p. 153) notes that resistance to diversity initiatives in organisations is usually associated with affirmative action initiatives that may give the impression of substituting one form of inequality for another which "favours previously unfavoured sections of society, such as minority ethnic groups, people with disability, and women in traditionally male enclaves." However in meaningful diversity, emphasis is not on reducing differences or creating limitations for some to accommodate others, rather it is in "preserving the best of what is different." (Bagshaw, 2004, p. 154) By extension, this involves taking the relevant steps to develop diverse potential and to beneficially harvest from diverse experience. Diversity initiatives therefore may be better understood as presenting opportunities for development at both personal and organisational levels. In order to avoid misunderstandings of the rationale for diversity initiatives, it is helpful to present a clear business and values case linking diversity initiatives to changing demographics and social contexts. Subsequently, there can be constructive engagement on the best ways to reach a win-win resolution whereby diverse perspectives are truly integrated so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. (Bagshaw, 2004)

This involves the need to question the prevalence of overarching and hegemonic perspectives, and shifting the standard to include feminine knowledges. This will not only level out unreasonable hierarchies of power and limit the control and oppression of women, but also support heightened functional societies by stimulating more inclusive and creative policy procedures and decisions to guide political action. (DeVault, 1996) Indeed, investing in the empowerment of women has indisputably proven to yield exceptionally high returns in terms of the systemic and positive advancement of families, communities and societies. (Blackden & Bhanu, 1999)

At a more individualized level, with reference to the rights and freedoms of persons, a pertinent question motivating the imperative to legitimize more diverse, and in this particular instance women's knowledge, is why "must women renounce what they can know about nature and social relations from the perspective of their daily lives in order to produce what the culture is able to recognise as knowledge?" (Harding, 1991, p. 48) In the study of knowledge, and towards understanding how codified knowledge could have, an effect on action, Hellstrom and Raman (2001) states that, the nature and conditions of utilization or application of knowledge is a distinctive research problem. Knowledge utilization researchers emphasize that 'using' knowledge is itself a process of knowing, and consequently, entails all the complications familiar to epistemologists. A key premise of the research and observations of this study builds on this point: by observing women's use of their knowledge, for example in decision-making, it may be possible to begin to discern the distinctive corner-stones of what and how women know, including the issue of whether any fundamental difference is manifest, with regard to dominant forms of knowledge.

In the knowledge-utilization literature, leading scholars in the field have made a distinction between instrumental and conceptual use (Weiss, 1980). The use of knowledge is not always necessarily in terms of direct, causal impacts on specific decisions or actions, i.e. instrumental use. Knowledge can have a more diffuse relationship in terms of its impacts on policy and practice, influencing through new concepts, frameworks, and world-views in as much as through discrete direct-impact findings. Hence, knowledge 'use' can be regarded as a longer-term process that is also constitutive of knowledge production itself. Knowledge is therefore also produced in

the context of its application, blurring the distinction between contexts of production and contexts of application. (Hellstrom & Raman, 2001)

While also contributing to the agenda of improving conditions for women's use of their knowledge, an additional and underlying theme in the research is the link between feminist/gender issues and issues of equity and diversity in general. The thesis makes an explicit link between the 'feminist' objective of gender equity specifically, and socio-economic, political and cultural issues of equity and diversity more broadly. Particularly with regard to the African context, such a linkage is useful in order to capture and portray the totality of issues that inform the organisational contexts of women in leadership.

The contributions of the research therefore relate directly to advancing the status and role of women in society specifically, as well as advancing issues of equity and diversity in general. The focus on women in the research, and the reference to gender issues and feminist approaches, is understood in its totality to denote a community of shared concern, rather than a standardised ideology. (Marshall, 1984, p. 12)

The overall value of the research therefore is nested in its contribution to how organisations may maximise on the full range of human resources available and their value as information and knowledge resources. It is argued that organisations can thereby expand their capacity to more effectively harness, create, produce and apply information and knowledge successfully within dynamic environments and towards sustainable socio-political transformation.

3. CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The content and sections of this chapter focus on defining concepts, considered a core aspect of the thesis. The following discussion outlines the main underpinning philosophical and political concepts applied to guide the research undertaken for the study. These constitute critical factors in the processes of exploration, analysis, identification and articulation of data and findings of the study and its inquiry.

At the outset, it was recognised that the fundamental categories and concepts pertaining to the study required consideration at several related levels. It was necessary to map a wide terrain of perspectives – on the broad and contested topics of socio-political transformation, knowledge, leadership, organisations, and women's representation and agency – to trace and pinpoint the main conceptual indicators directing the research exploration.

Key concepts informing the research revolved around:

Approaches to feminist epistemology – an overview of debates that question the basis of justified true belief, critique objectivity, and discuss situated knowledges and intersectionality;

The problematic category and concept of 'woman' – recognising that women are not a singular group, and the importance of acknowledging women's diversity in social location, experiences and concerns. Nevertheless, the discussion mentions the value of strategic essentialism and politicisation on the grounds of similarities, in order to counter discrimination rooted in points of difference;

The argument for the relevance and value of embodied experience as part of knowledge processes – exploring concepts that promote experience as a legitimate source of knowledge, and application of these concepts as a framework for accessing tacit levels of women's knowledge;

A discussion on gendered spaces and inequity – examining the ways in which social (public and private) spaces are gendered; the pros and cons of spatial segregation; and approaches to addressing the disparities in status, differentiated according to points of access, forms of participation and levels of agency in spatial arrangements and social spaces.

3.1 Feminist Responses to Epistemology

Epistemology is essentially the study of knowledge systems, the aspirations, assumptions and limits that inform, shape and bind these systems (Young-Eisendrath, 1988). At another level, "epistemology concerns the nature of what we know and how we know what we claim to know." (Fowlkes, 1987, p. 1; Cooper & Morrell, 2014) Hawkesworth (1987, p. 5) states that, epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with theories of knowledge and their application, constituting the "inescapable ground for methodology, the assemblage of techniques devised to attain knowledge."

For the purposes of the research, it was important to delve into an examination of epistemological issues and concerns from a feminist perspective, towards establishing a framework to guide the exploration of how organisations support or obstruct women's way of knowing at senior and leadership levels, and the implications of this for socio-political transformation. A key focus was the limitations posed by conventional and dominant epistemologies that tend to monopolise epistemic authority by marginalising and denigrating diverse ways of knowing. Feminist perspectives emphasise that in dominant theories of knowledge, the concepts of woman and of knowledge have been constructed in isolation, and women and women's ways of knowing have erroneously been devalued and neglected as starting points for or as the generators of knowledge claims (Harding, 1991, p. 121). A core critique of dominant epistemology is the wide scale representation of women, their perspectives and activities as inferior, deviant or invisible. Women are largely denied epistemic authority in naming and stating alternative worldviews or asserting how social arrangements may be altered to better reflect the interests and concerns that are meaningful for the betterment of women's lives. Feminist critiques and attempts made by the women's movement to counter and overturn restrictions imposed by the dominant paradigm of knowledge are presented. Specifically of interest and highlighted in the following discussion are main points of divergence from dominant epistemology with reference to the concept of objectivity and the notion of situated knowledge.

Discussing knowledge systems, Hearn, Rooney and Mandeville (2003) state that beyond collections of data and information knowledge systems are interlaced ideas and meanings that are inter-subjective in nature (in that these meanings are comprehended subjectively, and are derived and changed through interrelation with different subjective interpretations – as opposed

to being objective and stable therefore, knowledge systems are subject to considerable fluctuation/turbulence, and are transitive. Structural and functional imperatives of systems are influenced by environmental change and creative internally generated impulse.) The term knowledge system can be applied to nations, regions, industries, firms, and individuals.

The bulk of socially legitimated knowledge is inadequately directed towards improving the conditions for diversity, increased representation, equity and social justice for marginalised lives. In attempting to account for and remedy this situation, attempts to develop distinctively feminist theories of knowledge have arisen from a number of sources since 1970. Feminist epistemology is a diversity of approaches as opposed to a singular feminist theory of knowledge, and several feminist epistemologies have been articulated. Hekman (1987) elaborates on the notion of a feminist epistemology, as a "comprehensive radical movement that provokes disciplines to re-examine the foundations of their conceptions of knowledge and the methodologies on which those conceptions are based" (p. 65). Young-Eisendrath (1988) based on her work with women in psychotherapy, builds on the concept of a feminist epistemology, and develops categories of meaning that are better aligned with women's experiences of themselves and opposed to disparaging ideas of female persons as 'less than', which contribute to constructing the identity and work of women as inferior and discounts their knowledge. Young-Eisendrath's feminine epistemology emphasises the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge, by reversing and repealing received meaning, analysing gaps and blindspots in knowledge systems, and validating obscured knowledge from which new meaning can be extricated (Young-Eisendrath, 1988, p. 163).

A detailed commentary on the different approaches to feminist epistemology is outside the focus of the thesis. However key features of ongoing discourses that informed how feminist epistemological contributions have been incorporated and addressed as part of the present research are discussed. Generally, feminist responses to traditional epistemology share particular theoretical concerns, but also deviate in their emphasis on various concepts. Feminist epistemologies seek to foreground gendered power relations in the production, validation and application of knowledge and to destabilise the concepts, theories and social hierarchies that reinforce gender and other discrimination. Key interests of feminist epistemology theories are: the way gender influences the status and practices of epistemic agents and what knowledge is

legitimised; how gender features as a function in knowledge processes and analyses; as well the intersections between gender norms and ideals and the shape and structure of systems of knowledge and society.

The driving motivation and aim is to apply modes of thought and to learn techniques and skills that will enable women to better respond, manage and enhance the conditions of their lives in the context of systems and structures often designed and directed to benefit primarily the interests of dominant groups. (Harding, 1991) The aim is to "talk back in a spirited critique" (DeVault, 1996, p. 30) to conventional social constructs and systems of power and knowledge, with a view towards revealing and understanding the ideologically biased mechanisms and perceptions within which women and marginalised groups have traditionally been censored, ignored and excluded (DeGroot, 1991; DeVault, 1996). Two main points of debate and critique of dominant epistemological approaches were considered relevant for the research discussion here, namely, the discourse on justified true belief and a critique of objectivity; and situated knowledges and intersectionality,

As part of the research inquiry, attention was also given to points of similarity between feminist epistemologies and dominant approaches to epistemology, as well as with other 'knowledge movements', towards contributing to a broader perspective of knowledge that is inclusive of diverse worldviews and ways of knowing. At many levels for instance, consensus is broadening that rather than presenting a purely objective reflection of reality as per the traditional understanding, knowledge is contextually constructed and positioned in relation to available resources over time, impacted by such variables such as age, sex, race, culture, class, ethnicity, religion, amongst other factors. Emerging evidence suggests that in opposition to traditional understandings of knowledge as "disembodied, neutral, reified facts about the world" (Babbie & Mouton, 2005, p 4) ways of knowing are contingent on, constitutive of, and negotiated through social interactions, structures and institutions.

Post-colonial theory, which has particular relevance for the African context, similarly deploys theoretical resources and analytic practices to simultaneously reveal and disrupt the hegemonic and universalizing status of dominant knowledge systems. This involves locating and revealing the historical, political, cultural and ideological partialities and limitations of dominant knowledge, as a particular and not incomparable type of knowledge amongst a diverse range of

knowledge systems. From a post-colonial perspective, it is important to further interrogate the relations of power that contribute to the privileging of some knowledge systems over others. Post-colonial theorists aim to present a challenge to the flawed essentialising and universalising aspects of dominant knowledge systems, and question the presumption that presented ethnocentric categories and assumptions are accurate representation of a diverse world. The aim is to expose the localized specificities and biases of culture, ideology and politics that infuse the epistemological, ontological and methodological constructs, units of analysis and frames of interpretation of dominant knowledge. Moreover, theorists interrogate and challenge the orthodoxy of the epistemological, ontological and methodological commitments to which dominant knowledge systems strictly and conservatively adhere. (Westwood & Jack, 2007) Post-colonial Theory has its roots in the scholarly political activism of anti-colonial struggles, and names like Fanon, Rodney, James, and DuBois are amongst inspirational figures that have inspired core ideas in the field that revolve around the politics of autonomy and agency, representation and identity. (Westwood & Jack, 2007) The political and activist tone post-colonial theory has inherited is a point of critique however, often cited as reactionary and inflammatory.

Further, taking into account long histories of intercultural contact, it may be precipitate to assume dominant knowledge systems are culturally exclusive or isolated and locked in juxtaposition to alternative knowledges. In Africa's case, complex and colonial encounters between civilisations and different knowledges have resulted in a hybridised construction of knowledge. (Cooper & Morrell, 2014) That is, colonial and neo-colonial encounters are rarely unidirectional vectors of influence from the colonizer to the colonized. These encounters are also marked by usurpation and translation in ways that offer possibilities of amelioration and resistance for the colonized. (Westwood & Jack, 2007, p. 255; Bhabha, 1995)

Similarly, aligning feminist epistemology critiques and approaches to epistemology, to contemporary organisational trends, as part of the emergence of knowledge economies and societies, may offer a useful avenue and meaningful entry-points for exploration of possible spaces for diverse ways of knowing to flourish. Such an alignment may be in conjunction with areas of intersections and contribute to building existing knowledge theories, approaches and

models, as well as part of a process of de/reconstructing dominant epistemological frameworks as necessary.

i) *Justified True Belief and a Critique of Objectivity*

In debates on epistemology, key issues and questions have surrounded the concepts of belief (what beliefs are justified), truth (what constitutes true knowledge), and justification, (what methods of justification are valid). That is, what are the conditions and criteria applied to beliefs to justify them as true and therefore as knowledge? As part of this discourse, dominating approaches to theories of knowledge promoted and principally applied in the field of science – but also within various disciplines from political science and economics, to education, social development and business – have been challenged with reference to the essential philosophical tenets and informing base premises. Main criticisms have challenged the idea of the purported subjective impartiality of the individual human knower, and various perspectives have objected to the traditional view of knowledge as objective and dispassionate.

On this trajectory, the work of Sandra Harding (1991) provided a useful reference guide. Harding focuses on the field of science, however her critique spans a range of philosophical, social and political issues that have significant bearing for the research. The relevance of Harding's work for the thesis was considered with regard to her focus on the limitations and biases of the concept of objectivity as it is dominantly applied to generate and justify scientific knowledge, and her proposal for the expansion of this concept to include broader varieties of knowledge and ways of knowing. Specifically relevant is Harding's discussion on the imperative to more meaningfully include diverse voices, viewpoints, and the knowledge of women and other marginalised groups, in the constitution of social systems, structures and institutions. Harding critiques the dominance of theories of knowledge promoted by science and the scientific method and questions the assumptions that abstract individualism is segregated and autonomous from social, economic, and political influences and forces. She explains the supposition that subjects and agents of legitimate knowledge are socially anonymous, abstracted and isolated from particular historical social identities (related for instance to class, race, ethnicity and gender), can perpetuate antidemocratic repercussions with particular consequences for marginalised groups. "It is not only disciplinary power but also more general political power that is at issue" (p. 58). (For a detailed discussion on the politics and power motivated misuses and abuses of science, with

negative repercussions for women and different non-European ethnic groupings, see Reid, 1975.)[19] Linking the philosophical assumptions embedded in science to other fields and disciplines, Restivo (1988) highlights for example the complicity and facilitation of science in the rise of capitalism and its associated imperialist expansion, and thus illustrates the way epistemological traditions serve to propel particular interests.

Meta-epistemologies such as naturalistic epistemologies which study the scope of theories of knowledge, their assumptions and generalisations, have contributed to addressing limits in the field of knowledge and expanding the domain for diverse epistemologies. The naturalistic school of thought broadens epistemological discourse by directing analysis beyond testing the theoretical notions in bodies of knowledge, to the processes by which such knowledge was generated and acquired (Quine, 1969). As a meta perspective on theories of knowledge, naturalised epistemologies suggest beliefs can be determined and justified as true in terms of the conditions through which they are generated, as opposed to more normative and foundationalist approaches which stress that beliefs may be justified as true knowledge on the basis of sound reasons for such belief. Justification of the reasons for beliefs is predominantly based on appeals to rationality and/or empiricism. Naturalised philosophies are not opposed to scientific method, but rather encourage the application of empirical analysis to the processes of producing and legitimising knowledge. Simplistically explained, in naturalistic epistemology, beliefs can be justified as true knowledge on the basis of an appropriate causal history through which the belief was acquired or formed. As such a preoccupation of naturalised epistemology is to identify the most reliable conditions for the acquisition of information and that can characterise knowledge as true and justified (Klenin, 1998, 2005). Criticisms of this perspective however state that a focus on processes by which knowledge is generated and a description of the ways in which beliefs are formed are not sufficient to justify knowledge as true, and a normative focus on the value of knowledge needs to be maintained (Kim, 1988).

[19] The key point made by Reid (1975) is that in a mass culture, bodies of scientific knowledge, whether accurate or inaccurate, are public property and susceptible to misappropriation and distortion by politicians and policy makers, often with sexist and racist results. Scientific responsibility is called for to curb the capricious application and results of scientific inquiry behind a false screen of indifference. The implications of scientific research and findings need to be understood in terms of their full range of effects for the diverse and general public as opposed to isolated in a realm of detached knowledge.

Correspondingly, another seminal philosophical movement that has contributed to shifts in approaches to theories of knowledge is pragmatism. Sharing some of the propositions of naturalistic epistemologies, pragmatism has an added specific focus on the value of application of knowledge processes and the positive utility of the knowledge generated. The interest of pragmatists is the intersection between theory and practice and the linkages between theories of knowledge and socio-political environments. Emphasising the social contexts of epistemological claims, the idea of a certain truth is abandoned and focus is directed at how knowledge is gained through diverse experiences. A core claim of pragmatists is that knowledge is (in)formed by multiple experiential viewpoints. Additionally, the social environment is viewed as malleable and can be changed and improved through human agency and action. As such, the application of knowledge towards egalitarian reforms and action to modify and improve social landscapes is promoted (Whipp, 2013).

In pragmatist theories a cornerstone of appreciating knowledge in terms of its practical utility and value is emphasis on knowing as an active process linked to experience. In terms of true knowledge therefore, pragmatism is less concerned with justifying the accuracy of beliefs in terms of whether they correctly represent or correspond to a fixed objective reality. Rather, acknowledging the contingencies of knowledge with the social environment, plural beliefs and conceptualisations can exist, and what is considered true about knowledge is related to the processes of interaction within social environments from which values and ideas emanate. Influenced by the dynamism of social contexts, knowledge is also changeable (Duran, 1993; Seigfried, 1996). Pragmatist perspectives thus open spaces for diverse ways of knowing and doing that question and break away from hegemonic traditions which appear to uphold social power structures and the traditional status quo.

In agreement with this perspective, feminist pragmatist perspectives seek to promote processes and application of knowledge that contribute to social justice and positive change. According to feminist pragmatists knowledge is necessarily enmeshed in human endeavours, values, politics and bodies, and focus is given to questions of knowledge related to embodied living and experience as part of a complex web of context-based interactions. Reconfiguring understanding of knowledge as based in a social world and therefore also bound by societal limitations, feminist pragmatic epistemologies attempt to adhere to the goals of liberatory movements and affirm a

social ethic that mandates the empowerment of human agency to enhance social environments. Bridging theory and praxis, this epistemological approach advocates for the practical application of theories of knowledge for the betterment of personal and public experience, and the necessary changes required in achieving this. Additionally, pragmatist feminists assert sustainable social transformation is best shaped and enacted by taking into account the multiplicity of individual experiences and the plurality of social reality (Whipp, 2013).

Commenting on the pragmatist perspective, feminists further recognise that understanding knowledge and social reality in a pluralistic sense exposes hierarchies of knowing and relations of inequity, where legitimised knowledge is linked to the theories, methodologies and information of dominant cultures. Hence particular knowledges and experiences are privileged and have epistemological dominance in how society is shaped and organised (Schutte, 2000; McKenna, 2001). Considering the pragmatist-feminist perspective of knowing through relationships enacted through physical embodiment and the social environment, Sullivan (2001) corrects for the privileging of any particular experience or standard of truth. She describes knowledge as a flourishing transaction and active relational process through and among diverse embodied experiences. In this way more spaces for inquiry are opened incorporating multiple experiences and perspectives, and broadening possibilities for the (re)emergence, (re)generation and application of diverse ways of knowing (Rooney, 1993). Discussing dimensions of complexity and turbulence in contemporary international systems, Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville (2003, pp 234, 235) emphasise the increasingly fragmented nature of meaning environments as interconnectedness grows. As multiculturalism has become a feature of most societies multiple meanings and modes of interpretation challenge meaning systems that claim universal consensus. Meaning fragmentation is further not a feature isolated to ethnic, cultural, racial, gender difference, but manifests in a multitude of social and individual cleavages and divergences.

It is important to note however, that emphasising the tentative and impartial characteristics of knowledge and knowledge systems is not to stipulate a radical scepticism where due to universal diversity and relativity, no knowledge/knowledge systems can be established with general widespread applicability and certainty. Harding (1991, p. 140) cautions against opening the way to an absurd judgmental or epistemological relativism that denies the possibility in principle that any reasonable standards can exist for adjudicating between competing claims amongst

individuals and groups. Harding insists that in order to separate real knowledge from mere claims to knowledge standards are required for distinguishing between justified belief and mere opinion, "otherwise, might makes right in knowledge-seeking just as it tends to do in morals and politics" (p. 160). The question then becomes about the most suitable criteria that can offer an appropriate basis to determine the comparative worth of varying epistemological claims. That is, knowledge claims require critical evaluation and a precise account of their situated historicities in order to determine which social situations and relationships tend to generate the least biased knowledge claims. As Harding insists, while no one can tell one, perfect story about the way the world is, some stories can be shown with good evidence to be less partial and less false than others.

In conceiving of multiple ways of knowing, in addition to valuing diverse perspectives and beliefs, and supporting human agency in structuring society, feminist pragmatists promote a social ethics of collaboration, cooperation, interdependence and coexistence. Linked to the concepts of participation and democracy, hierarchies of power are rejected in favour of nurturing meaningful spaces for enactment and interaction of diverse ways of knowing. Such spaces may be generated by educational practices that seek to liberate diverse perspectives[20], offered by communities that celebrate diversity, and engendered by an emphasis on human agency as integrally connected to and not isolated from a relational community of diverse others. (Green, 1999; McKenna, 2001; Bagga-Gupta, 2007)

Closely linked to this emancipatory idea of knowledge is the values-based approach to knowledge, or virtue epistemology, which builds on the stipulations in both pragmatism and naturalist epistemologies that values and facts should feature in equal measure in criteria defining legitimate knowledge. As Klein (1998, 2005) explains, from this perspective true belief and knowledge is as a result of a virtuous disposition and positive intellectual characteristics of the knower. That is the state of knowers and how knowledge is known impacts upon what is valuable knowledge, linking knowledge for instance to wisdom and understanding, as well as

[20] E.g. critical theories and critical thinking practices

bringing into question certain practices in experimental science that wantonly cause harm and endangerment.[21]

ii) Situated Knowledge & Intersectionality

In seeking fresh answers to fundamental questions of epistemology, contributions of post-structuralist critical and cultural theories including feminism, should be noted. Hekman (1987) highlights pertinent aspects and notes significant implications of the convergence and similarities of anti-foundational/post-modern and feminist critiques. In particular, the post-modern movement questions the structure of knowledge positing that as opposed to a singular model of knowledge comprising the fundamental paradigm of all knowledge, multiple models of knowledge exist with foundations in society's multitude historical and cultural meanings and configurations. Additionally, similar to ecological systems, "knowledge systems demonstrate multiple causal pathways, and are influenced by a host of interacting factors" that determine different types, forms and possibilities of knowledge (Hearn, Rooney, & Mandeville, 2003, p. 26) As such, the assertion is that "knowledge is engaged, perspectival, hermeneutical, and pluralistic rather than absolute, monolithic, and abstract." (Hekman, 1987, p. 68)

Feminist scholars underscore that production of knowledge is a social activity and knowers are enmeshed in social relations that are historically and culturally specific. Knowledge claims are therefore socially situated and as a result of the socially situated character of knowledge, only a partial view of reality may be attained from any particular perspective or individual position.[22] (Harding 1991; 1993) Moreover, knowers may be positioned in one or more social groups and categories (Webb 1995, 84) that generally intersect along hierarchical indices of power. Rather than abstract and universalizable epistemic agents are constituted as particular subjects in relation to class, gender, race and background. As such, knowers are neither value-neutral or

[21] E.g scientific practices that involve animal testing which is often associated with cruelty to animals, or experiments and applications of science that compromise the environment; while the results of such knowledge acquisition processes may yield useful knowledge, the virtue of such knowledge can be rightly called into question on the basis upon which it was gained. A more controversial dimension of this discourse, is the human rights abuses and violation of diverse persons, on the basis for example of race and gender, in questionable practices under the guise of knowledge acquisition. (See articles on transgender people in Apartheid SA, and the use of unsuspecting black populations to test biochemical weapons) More currently is the relevant and ongoing debate on the acceptability of privacy violations in order to track and manage possible security and terrorist threats.

[22] The discussion here focuses on knowledge of material reality. Different limitations and possibilities may apply to ethereal, transcendental, spiritual knowledges. For noteworthy discourse on the shared and distinct parameters of material and spiritual knowledge, and the location of knowers with reference to each, see the contributions of Baha'i Faith scholars and scholarship e.g. John Hatcher, *The Purpose of Reality*

impartial, nor is the knowledge they produce disinterested knowledge. The challenge is to decipher and articulate the social basis of knowledge claims, and discern the boundaries of knowledge systems, and defining characteristics bodies of knowledge and ways of knowing. (Harding, 1991).

A particular focus of feminist epistemologies is the gendered knowing subject and the ways gender influences conceptions of knowledge and associated practices of inquiry, theory-building and justification. Additionally, the intersection of gender with other social distinctions and categories disadvantaged by dominant systems of knowledge and their forms of power, is an informing motivation of feminist epistemologies. A key goal is the reformation of flawed assumptions and conceptualisations that underlie negative gender bias against women, and the extension of this epistemological reassessment and reorientation for the collective benefit of marginalised groups.

Capturing a widely shared viewpoint, Young-Eisendrath (1988, p.165) posits that despite the collective majority of women and other diverse groupings of people, a western patriarchal perspective continues to dominate knowledge systems and decision-making arenas with control and authority over substantive resources. Critiquing the hegemony of dominating modes of thought, contemporary feminists, similar to the anti-foundational challenge argue for "a plurality of discourses" (Hekman, 1987, p. 68), in preference to one dominating model of knowledge. The "aperspectivity" of objectivity is revealed and criticised as a strategy of male hegemony, and associated with an epistemological stance that privileges male power, representations and constructions of the world from a male point of view. (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 537)

As feminist theorists argue, dominant epistemology and the associated conceptual schemes, theories and models of nature and society generated, have been chiefly informed by male experiences and activities in the public sphere, and correspond primarily with the interpretations and understandings of the world that men in elite classes and races develop (Beauvoir, 1970; Edwards & Ribbens, 1998). Critiques acknowledge that the subject of belief and of knowledge is historically located in a particular social situation, and that the subjective world of individuals' and their internal frames of reference inform processes of conceptualisation and action, and are bound to psychological, sociological, and historical assumptions. (Harding, 1991, p. 170) The claim is that epistemologies are based in beliefs that have been generated and gained legitimacy

within specific contexts thus resulting in 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988) which are culturally, socially and historically embedded. (Bhaskar, 1989; Violi, 1992, p. 121)

Additionally, neglecting to acknowledge tensions, complexities and inequalities present in social relations that form important factors in the foundations of knowledge may act to suppress different and diverse ways of knowing. (Shotter, 1993) Failure to acknowledge this "acts as an obstacle to a comprehensive treatment of women in...society, and obscures an adequate depiction of women's situation." (Hawkesworth, 1987, p. 5) A reliable picture of women's experiential location in gender stratified society, and of social relations between groups accorded unequal levels of status, requires alternative approaches to inquiry that challenge traditional assumptions and approaches. (Harding, 1991)

Fundamental questions remain however on the implications of acknowledging the possibility that multiple and diverse judgements and their underlying causal tendencies, may be regarded as equally valid. Debates around the complex notions of truth, belief and justification, which are central to epistemology, continue. Reflecting on the potential of feminism and the women's movement to generate less partial and distorted descriptions and explanations, Harding deliberates on how objectivity of research results can be increased and not detracted from, by politicised agendas and activism by and on behalf of marginalised groups.

Legitimising feminine ways of knowing of necessity includes the "work of excavation…to bring women in…to reveal the diversity of women's lives" (DeVault, 1996, p. 32) and make their legacy visible. Indeed across different academic disciplines, women have been and continue to be committed to redressing the balance of scholarly neglect, and to investigating and making visible the experiences of women as a unique group, in valid and relevant ways. (Hareven, 1976)

An important caveat to place however, relates to complexities and fragilities of the construct of woman as an integral idea within the concept of feminism. While questioning the dominant paradigm, feminist research studies and literature focusing on women leaders often repeat the error of blandly assuming that an exclusive group's definition and interpretation of leadership reflects or speaks to, a common leadership reality shared by a diverse collective.

3.2 The Limits and Functions of the Category Woman

In a contribution to the debate surrounding the issue of describing and depicting women as a volatile and diverse collective, Riley (1988, p. 91) speaks of a collective "in which female persons can be very differentially positioned…[while] for the individual, 'being a woman' is also inconstant." Butler (1990, p. 3) discusses the political problematique of the assumption that the term 'women' denotes a common identity or experience, with this troublesome term becoming a point of widespread contestation due to its multiple significations. Fraser (2001) observes that this unstable category is the object of feminism, without which the core objectives of the movement would be void. Riley (1988, p. 91) also emphasizes that "instabilities of the category are the *sine qua non* of feminism, which would otherwise be lost for an object, despoiled of a fight, and, in short, without much life." Haraway (1985, p. 65) adds that this construct of 'woman' is, "a fiction and fact of the most crucial and political kind." The necessary contradiction is that in essence then, the core belief of feminism, that the Self cannot be reduced to a singular identity,[23] is lodged in the problematic construct 'woman'. (MacKinnon, 1982)

Butler (1990, p. 1) critically considers the conceptual and discursive status of 'women' as the subject of feminism and the centre of the women's movement advocacy for visibility, legitimacy and political representation. Underscoring the ways language constructs categories of sex to support regimes of power, the subject of 'woman' is unsettled as a stable concept with increasing divergence "on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category." Butler highlights the contradiction inherent in the discursive constitution of a subject 'woman' by a political process that is supposed to facilitate the emancipation of this subject from relegation to restrictive categorisation. Feminists further reject fundamental dichotomies of thought, i.e. the subject/object, rational/irrational, reason/emotion dichotomies. "The concern is with how dichotomous categories, especially male/female, masculine/feminine, reason/intuition, objective/subjective have been used to structure thought and action hierarchically for the purpose of domination." (Fowlkes, 1987, p. 3)

This problematic includes a critic of some approaches to feminism, particularly associated with a

[23] Feminism as a movement aims to dislodge the claim that a eurocentric patriarchal self represents the general truth of reality for humanity. In dismantling this self however, the nature of the category woman, as a centre point for feminist discourse, has also come into question. See Riley 1988

western and middle to upper class brand of feminism, for frequently presenting investigations of particular groups of women's lives in terms that are falsely universalised. (Spelman, 1988) While questioning the dominant paradigm, the tendency in feminist research, studies and literature on women is often to congregate a diverse collective under an assumed common reality, defined by an exclusive group's interpretations. This precludes an examination of how different groups and individuals may offer different interpretations of common experiences. Aspects of feminism and the women's movement have been criticised as functions of particular race and class-privileged interest groups, whose demands are perceived as ultimately aligned with liberal and individualistic agendas, associated with limited definitions of women's personhood, and that undercut the attainment of meaningful change for wider groups of women. (MacKinnon, 1982)

Harding (1991, p. 173) notes that women differ in two significantly distinctive ways. Important differences are due to i) cultural variation ii) hierarchical power relationships between women in dominant and dominated groups. Furthermore, the category 'woman' is historically situated. Women in marginalised races, classes, sexualities, and cultures argue against a standard construct of "the feminine", or universal woman. Women are part of different races, class, sexual orientation, and culture. "Experiences, activities, struggles, and perspectives are accordingly different." Added to this, women's lives are "not just different from some generalised "men's" lives or...from the lives of the men in their own social group," but the gender relations of any particular group are also shaped and defined by how these groups relate to other groups with different race, class or cultural characteristics and features within the same environment. In terms of intersectionality, "gender relations in any particular historical situation are always constructed by the entire array of hierarchical relations in which 'woman' or 'man' participates." (Harding 1991, p. 14) Similarly Butler (1990, p. 3) states, "gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts...[and] intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities."

Discussing power differentials in the field of international development Evers, Kaiser and Müller (2009, p. 56) point out transnational relations and interactions, including transactions on knowledge, largely contribute to the production of locality, constructing target groups through policy discourse, strategies and programmes, on the basis of particular biographies, prescribed identities and particular forms and constellations of relationships amongst communities and

collectives. The way relations influence individual and group forms of representation is often under analysed. Connell (forthcoming publication in *Feminist Theory*) states that a deeper understanding of the "coloniality of gender" is required, analysing the significance of global processes for the meaning of gender, for instance for Africa, locating gender dynamics within imperialism and the continuing elements in postcolonial contexts.

That is, the way power relations are constituted is not unilaterally determining and may trigger responses ranging from resistance to the reproduction and incorporation of power-based configurations, to transformation of power dynamics. A comprehensive feminist approach needs to acknowledge that gendered experience is attributable to and often compounded by a multiplicity of context-specific dimensions, that cultivate diverse world views and voices. (Chow et. al, 2003; Ayman, 1993) Mapping women's experience, struggles and political agendas in postcolonial contexts, Bulbeck (1998) makes the case for a braiding of multiple and diverse feminisms on a widespread scale. As DeGroot (1991) asserts, an important task of any research analysis concerned with gender divisions, is to clarify the interweaving of gender with other inequalities in the structures and circumstances shaping women's lives. With relevance for the African context, it is important to address "the effect of external economic influences, of colonial and post-colonial interventions." These need to be discussed in terms of both structures and circumstances shaping women's lives, and also women's own sense of selfhood and perception of their situation, interests, and the real conflicting localities, choices or commitments which women have formed historically and in the present." (DeGroot, 1991, pp.120,122) affecting women's lives.

The observation that women's interests are not homogenous (Harding, 1991, p. 5) and the necessity to critically examine conflicting interests of diverse women, was echoed during focus group discussions for the research presented here. Respondents broadly agreed different approaches and levels of activism are required to tackle gender inequity in different organisations and environments. In general, debate distinguished between conventional and more radical approaches to gender equity, and made a distinction between strategies of women leaders that opt to veer away from, as opposed to abide by, the status quo. To quote a key senior respondent drawn from a private university in Kenya:

"the central challenge [for women's concerted efforts towards gender equity] is looking at the division of priorities for individuals and the group. We still have to make a business case, and for that we cannot all be outside, we also have to be inside respected institutions, and at a senior level too."

In terms of commonalities, what women share may be considered to some extent related to nature (sex), as well as to a larger extent, society (gender), and analyses of commonalities in women's conditions requirs social historical and cultural specificity. From this perspective, albeit limited, a notion of a "women's point of view", a theory of "common woman" in a "common language", where common refers to both ordinary and shared, may be conceived (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 535) without resorting to reification of women's 'natural' dispositions according to deterministic rationales. (Shield, 1982) Based on this, the women's movement is as a result of women identifying collectively to resist/reclaim their determinants and conditions as women without becoming gridlocked by a focus on resolving the nature/nurture dilemma. Applying the method of consciousness raising, feminism and the women's movement aim at the critical and collective reconstitution of the meaning of women's social experience, as women live through it, not on the basis of individual or subjective meanings and experiences, but as a form of collective social being. As a political practice, consciousness raising reveals gender relations to be a collective fact, and has unmasked the collective consequences for women of male power. (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 535) Doob (1957, pp. 157, 158) posits a similar point in his discussion of African contexts, noting that differences between societies are marked and strikingly apparent; yet alongside the uniqueness demonstrated by each cultural society are ample similarities and sufficient uniformity to support certain generalisations, and "to prevent the acceptance of a conclusion of futility resulting from relativity." Particularly in situations of dominance, certain uniform consequences can result from blanket demands or restrictions experienced by a collective, regardless of idiosyncratic background.

Despite contradictory legitimating and exclusionary effects, the subject of 'woman' or 'women' however is crucial for politics and for feminist politics in particular. (Butler, 1990, p. 2) Spivak (1993) advises, in order to return agency to subordinated groups, it is sometimes necessary to apply a "strategic essentialism" that allows the reclaiming of an "essential identity" as a temporary discourse tool and strategic device to negotiate and resist dominance and exclusion. The aim is to facilitate voice towards reasserting ownership of an authentic as opposed to imposed and misconstrued identity. (Westwood & Jack 2007, p. 254) As Edwards and Ribbens

(1998, p. 13) advise, “the challenge is to remain sensitive to the diversity, given the power of the hegemony.” The overarching category of woman therefore has utility as a discourse tool, yet continued awareness of how usage of this category represents or omits diverse experiences and realities is vital.

It is worthwhile to note here that concomitant with the assumption that a common basis for women’s identity exists cross-culturally, is the assumption that a single discernible hegemonic structure of male domination or patriarchy exists. Under this assumption however, concrete contextual realities of gender oppression are subsumed by an illusory notion of universal patriarchy. (Butler, 1990, p. 4; Elson, 1991) A criticism of feminist theorising is the assertion of “a categorical and fictive universality of a structure of domination” against which to counterpose “women’s common subjugated experience.” (Butler, 1990, p. 4)

Pertinent questions with regard to this framework therefore are whether the commonality among women is based on their shared experience of oppression, or if there is a domain of the specifically feminine where women’s cultures and resultant knowledge systems surpass and exist independently of their collective subordination and orientation to hegemonic male culture. In positing women’s common experience as a response to and in binary opposition to a dominant masculine epistemology, despite achieving a relatively stable and seamless category of women, nevertheless, the subject ‘woman’ remains constrained by “the representational discourse” within which it is situated. Such inherent contradictions – constituting a category woman in conceptual terms emanating from the same epistemological paradigm under critique – cannot be “ameliorated through an appeal to the category of women for merely ‘strategic’ purposes” in the advocacy for emancipation. At a fundamental level, such a categorisation reveals the limits of a politics of identity and cannot be representative of the full range of experiences that make up complex identities not restricted to a singular notion of woman- or man-hood. (Butler, 1990, p. 4) Indeed as Doob (1957) notes, theoretical and investigatory difficulties at this level include an inquiry into the nature and attributes of (western, white) man as the epitome and representative of the dominant subject and group in theory and society. Insights resulting from such an inquiry,

may further destabilise notions of a dominating singular masculine (Caucasian) prototype, and reshape the contours of discourses on social equity and justice.[24]

From another perspective on feminist thought, it is worth further considering here what Polly Young-Eisendrath (1988, p. 154) refers to as the "fally of individualism, the shared belief that people are by nature 'unique individuals'; that separate bodies endow people with separately unique and creative minds." Butler (1990, pp. 1, 3 & 5) questions the viability of 'the subject' as the principal candidate for representation, and liberation, and highlights the foundationalist fictions that support this notion, calling for a radical critique that veers away from the necessity of constructing individualised identity positions. Similarly, Violi (1992, pp. 125 & 131) discusses and points out how much of the literature on gender divisions is based on and rooted in larger sets of ontological assumptions which have predominated in the philosophical tradition of a separate, self-sufficient, independent rational 'self' or 'individual'." In opposition to this perspective, Violi (p. 125) offers the idea of a "relational ontology", a term borrowed from Baier (1993), which "posits the notion of 'selves in relation' or 'relational being', a view of human beings as embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations" and a "different understanding of human nature and human interaction so that people are viewed as interdependent rather than independent." (Tronto, 1995, p. 142) This is very similar to the African concept of Ubuntu. These perspectives offer concepts of a relational self in opposition to rational choice models and the tenets of neoclassical theory, which promote a doctrine of methodological individualism that posits individuals as the primary constituents and ontological phenomenon of society and the social world. (Sawyer, 2005, p. 195) To a large extent, alternative perspectives present bridging concepts from which to address yet avoid being strictly limited to the idea of a singular, individual-oriented category such as 'woman'.

[24] Interesting insights are emerging from growing studies of masculinity, which may prove essential to continued discourse on gender inequity. Particularly pertinent is the idea that men too are burdened by the dictates of patriarchy, and as such achieving gender equity is a process that extends beyond interpersonal interactions between women and men, and their structural bases, to a systemic review of the ways in which gender (and other aspects of) identities are prescribed (and proscribed e.g. in the case of homosexuality or transgender individuals in many cultures)

3.3 The Argument for Experiential and Embodied Knowledge

The core issue and insistence of feminist epistemological critiques is the importance to acknowledge women as 'knowers', as agents of knowledge and as knowledgeable actors with valuable contributions to offer towards a co-created and shared co-existence. Feminists stress the lives and experiences of women can provide a legitimate basis for knowledge and ways of knowing not necessarily reflected or accommodated in the knowledge claims grounded in the lives of men in dominating groups. That is, in stratified societies women and men lead lives that have significantly different contours and patterns, as embodied beings assigned different kinds of activities that influence and yield different knowledge. Women's life experiences present an equally valid and useful lens on reality. (Harding, 1991, p. 47; MacKinnon, 1982; Gouws, 2012).

Analysing the politics of everyday life and the gendered distinctions in the arena of daily interactions (Jaquette, 1976, p. 163) the argument is that legitimising women's experiences and lives as bases of knowledge can decrease partialities and distortions in dominant knowledge claims, which have been primarily based on the lives of men in the dominant races, classes, and cultures, and offer a critique of dominating epistemologies. (Harding, 1991, p. 121) As Falco (1987, p. xii) further observes, the challenge feminism presents is directed essentially at the fundamental forms of dominant thought – processes and methods of perception and cognition – that impact on values, ideologies and cultures.

From the perspective of feminist critics, women present a unique resource, and can contribute special points. This assertion is not concomitant with a claim that women as a single category have "inherent and universal ways of reasoning, attributable either to their different biology or to 'women's intuition'." (Harding, 1991, p. 68) Instead, it is the disjuncture between women's experiences and dominant conceptual schemes which underlie and have fuelled core issues challenged by the women's movement and motivating feminist research. The critique is that this gap and the illegitimatising of feminine cognitive styles, results in the exclusion, ignorance and distortion of women's lives within dominant patterns of thought, with injurious consequences for theory and practice alike.

As Hawkesworth (1987, p. 8) observes, this is not to relegate or reduce male and female gender to sex, nor to claim that hormonal and endrocrinological causes primarily account for, motivate

or mediate knowledge and action. Rather the assertion is that human activity, or "material life", not only structures but sets limits on human understanding, in that what individuals do, as a result of the spaces and opportunities afforded them, as well as the constraints faced, shapes and defines what is known. (Harding, 1991, p. 121) Analyses from various academic fields, point out that important contributions can be made to the growth of knowledge by examining the world from gaps between different frames of reference. (Bordo, 1987; Haraway, 1989) A focus on gender gaps therefore can benefit the growth of knowledge in terms of women's experiences, and also broader gender identity experience to offer a critical perspective on dominant conceptual schemes, knowledge and praxis that shape societal contexts. (Harding, 1991, p. 70)

Linking experience to knowledge is an idea widely expressed in various fields from cognitive psychology to simulation technology[25], and religious experience. Experientially based knowledge, is also referred to as procedural/imperative knowledge, implicit knowledge, tacit knowledge, and is generally associated with learning through doing, or knowledge based in action.

In other words, dominant conceptual schemes (re)produce conceptual forms that determine the social order, and a contested advantage of dominating social groups is the privilege to project particular experiences through the conceptual pictures constructed and enacted. The case is made that women have historically had less opportunity to conceptualise and theorise upon their experiences in ways that can critically contribute to explaining the world around us. Consequently, the unexamined conceptual world of women is a resource that has not been fully explored. (Harding, 1991, p. 70)

The idea is that women 'house' their ways of knowing, and that these may only become available for investigation, formulation and shaping as comprehensive alternative knowledge systems, once they have emerged. "From women's experiences of their own lives...we can clarify a new orientation...that does not obscure feminine/women's skills and intelligence in decision-making." (Young-Eisendrath, 1988, p. 165)

[25] E.g. virtual reality gaming technologies that seek to create virtual reality experiences for their users, in contexts where players have to experience and learn the context in order to progress through the game

Young-Eisendrath (1988, p. 153) has underscored the value of exploring and unravelling women's self-concepts and "concepts associated with female persons" towards validating women's experiences and authority to make claims to truths." She notes,

"women's experience of personal sovereignty – as intentionality and the knowledge that they act by free choice – is ambiguous at best, in terms of both their female gender identity and their location in social contexts. Because they are assumed to be less competent and less rational, they are also assumed to be less capable of self-determination... idealised passivity, lack of validation of female culture, and exclusion of women from the active life of community, all contribute to inhibition of women's personal agency." (Young, 1988, p. 164)

Aptheker, Bettina (1989) in *Tapestries of Life* discusses how the practice and routine of women's lives can reveal patterns of meaning women create and apply each day and over time as a result of and through their labours. The point is to suggest a way of knowing from the meanings women give to everyday activities. The assertion is that mapping the meanings women create and apply daily opens possibilities and potential to learn from these patterns, and offers a different way of perceiving and engaging with reality from women's perspective and lived experience.

Countering the assumed inferiority of women and their everyday lives which is pervasive in patriarchal knowledge forms (Young-Eisendrath, 1988: p. 155), Aptheker (1989) also discusses ways in which women's struggles to improve the quality of daily life and preserve a cultural heritage, constitute important strategies of political resistance to oppression and domination. With regard to other frontline concerns, it can further be presented that women's struggles to improve the quality of daily life contain approaches to sustainability at a micro level, that are relevant and applicable to issues of sustainability at a macro level.

Furthermore, as Narayan (1989) remarks, women may have an "epistemic advantage" through learning to conform and function, while also striving for visibility and voice within set parameters of public spaces, and at the same time retaining private ways of being in the domestic and personal spheres they inhabit. From this vantage point of within yet without the male paradigm, women's lives can offer basis for distinctive theory. (MacKinnon, 1982) In discussing types of acculturation, Doob (1957, p. 151, 152) advances the hypothesis that individuals stationed between different societies, cultures or social spheres, have greater exposure to and contact with diversity and difference, and therefore demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to others and a more nuanced understanding of their contexts. Greater contact with diverse others

increases adeptness to change and to learning new modes of functioning, both at the level of perception and practice, as well as increases problem solving capacity and the ability to ascertain multiple details and attributes of problem situations. This relates to the argument Harding (1991, p. 60) discusses, that the view from the perspective of the powerful is far more likely to be partial and distorted than that available from the perspective of the dominated for a variety of reasons. Dominant groups have vested interests in obscuring the unjust conditions that produce their privileges and authority, as opposed to subordinate groups' interests to reveal the conditions that produce their situation.

It is important to note however, that experiences of exploitation and suppression may not necessarily produce forms of resistance, and women's experience of their subordination may induce complicity as a means of negotiating their low level status. Raising women's consciousness of their condition therefore needs to account for the ways in which women are also complicit with male power. In order to properly confront male power, the extent of women's acceptance of their condition needs to be acknowledged, or such complicity will operate as a barrier to the possibility of resistance and change. (MacKinnon, 1982; Harding, 1991)

Butler (1990, p. 1) emphasises that by virtue of being subjected to and regulated by particular structures, the identities of women as subjects have been formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements and dictates of those structures. A neglect of this correlation can be politically problematic, when as a consequence, gendered subjects are positioned along a differential axis of power that substitutes one form of domination for another. In such a case, an uncritical appeal to a constrained construct of womanhood for the emancipation of women is self-defeating. Beyond exploring how women can be more fully represented, a thorough feminist critique needs to understand how women as a category and as subjects are produced and restrained by the structures of power from which emancipation is advocated.

MacKinnon (1982, p. 535) argues that "to know the politics of woman's situation is to know women's personal lives." The personal is political (Gouws, 2012) and it is within the personal, private, interiorised sphere where women's distinctive experience as women occurs. "Thus, to feminism, the personal is epistemologically the political, and its epistemology is its politics." In that sense, Edwards and Ribbens (1998, p. 13) state, women and men can "transform private knowledge into a more publicly based resistance, or at least a diversification and undermining of

a hegemony." In this process, a critical priority will be empowering, facilitating and supporting women, as embodied persons with a particular lived experience because of this embodiment, to make explicit, to conceptualise and to communicate their knowledge, in terms of the myriad cognitive, behavioural and structural avenues available. At the very least it is important not to underestimate or devalue the potential significance of "privately based everyday knowledge and ways of knowing" in favour of prioritising 'public knowledge'. (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998, p. 6)

As quoted from Apthekar (1989, pp. 43 - 44),

"the point is not to describe...or to represent a schedule of priorities in which some activities are more important or accorded more status than others. The point is to suggest a way of knowing from the meanings women give to their labours...to take the patterns women create and the meanings women invent and learn from them. If we map what we learn, connecting one meaning of invention to another, we begin to lay out a different way of seeing reality..."

That is, in focusing on daily and lived experience, "the epistemological base of everyday knowledge" can emerge from tacit realms as manifest in "the patterns women create and the meanings women invent each day and over time and in the context of their subordinated status to men." It may be added further that in contrast to a retreat to states of victimhood, women, and men, can seek to advocate and illustrate the strengths women can offer as a result of, and not only despite, their experience, thereby negotiating, overcoming and resisting their marginalised status.

Women need to articulate "the authority of their experience in order to claim the personal power of women's shared experiences and undo rationalisations around female inferiority within...society." (Young-Eisendrath, 1988: p. 171) Analysing gender status stratification, Blumberg (1984) ascribes the greater status value of men to the fact that in general male experiences, concerns and interests are privileged over those of females. On the other hand, women's lives are attributed meaning, and gain status in relation to and through comparison with men, mediated by various aspects such as control of labour, property and inheritance rights and extent of political participation amongst others. "Cultural messages about women's power must be unknotted and examined in terms of their gaps and blind spots." (Young-Eisendrath, 1988, p. 171) The aim is to seek definitions of womanhood not in terms of a negative lack of maleness, but grounded in a critical embrace of women's worlds, including the points of fracture that are a

product of the modes of subjection to, alienation from, and enforcement of male power. (MacKinnon, 1982)

There is also the insistence that, freedom as personal authority is the ability to make claims to truth based on personal experiences. Individual agency rests in this authority to make decisions about one's own life, in consideration of other's lives and the informing context. Female authority however is largely repressed and oppressed" as a result of the discrimination and prejudice against female gender identity. (Young-Eisendrath, 1988, p.1 65)

Marks (1996, p. 115) cautions however, that "researching into people's experience is fraught with epistemological and ontological dilemmas." For instance the idea that speech can be a "direct and immediate form of expression" is a notion that has received critique. "Social Constructionist theory has warned that giving our 'subject' a 'voice' involves the fantasy that it is possible to have unmediated direct knowledge of experience." Moreover, "giving primacy to interviewees' talk about their experience...suggests that their speech may refer to themselves as a unified authentic subject. This Cartesian subject, whose self-consciousness acts as a guarantor of meaning, is challenged both by versions of psychoanalysis and discourse analysis, which see the subject as being fragmented and constituted within language."

Additionally, from a post-structuralist stance, "the participant's 'voice' is seen as produced from what was culturally available to him/her, rather than from a private reserve of meaning." (Alldred, 1998, p. 156) Nevertheless, as Alldred (1998, pp 157 - 161) further states rejecting conventional ideas of knowing through personal identities need not entail diminishing the relevance of individual experience, nor relinquishing the possibility of political critique. Employing the voice metaphor in a qualified way, could provide ways of doing politics and research into women's ways of knowing without "grounding positions in reified identities." Alldred (1998, p. 161) suggests an approach that recognises the imperative of 'giving voice' to marginalised groups, yet acknowledges the metaphorical status of this 'voice', in order to avoid "complicity with the fantasy of unitary, logical beings whose experiences are stable, fixed by identity and internally coherent." Such an approach allows for individuals to be "multiply or shiftingly positioned and...could still link perspectives to social location" without an over reliance on the concept of identity. (Butler, 1990)

Edwards and Ribbens (1998, p. 13) add "without some representation, subjugated knowledges are likely to be ever more vulnerable and difficult to sustain." Women, and men, therefore need to construct social and collective forms of organisation that are more broadly representative and that can transform and modify dominant and largely exclusive forms of representation, and make more visible alternative models for structuring human societies that may be more equity-based.

A pro-woman orientation however, will also need to ensure that it does not reinforce stereotyped female roles and reduce women's options. The terms by which 'female' knowledge nurtured within the private sphere, becomes public knowledge should not be assimilated and defined by a dominant patriarchal lens. That is, women's behaviour may also reflect an alignment with the constraints of systemic oppression, as a mode of negotiating social reality. It is important therefore to remain sensitive to women's positioning and to distil the contributions to knowledge stemming from their experience. (Jaquette, 1976)

Harding (1991, p. 123) thus reiterates "it cannot be that women's experiences in themselves or the things women say provide reliable grounds for knowledge claims about nature and social relations. After all, experience itself is shaped by social relations." As Young-Eisendrath (1988, p. 159 - 160) illustrates, as a fact of survival in negotiating their low level status relative to men, women regularly surrender the validity of their personal authority. The resultant perceived acquiescence of female persons to male projections of their identity becomes a consensually validated basis for women's positioning in the world, and their continued socialisation into self-concepts informed by negative connotations of inferiority. That is, women and girls are compelled to "assume the validity of the concept of female person" as articulated and sustained by androcentric theoretical concepts and creations of culture and identity, and male biased structures, systems and institutions of society.

Fox (1977) for instance, discusses strategies of the social control of women revolving around confinement of women to particular domestic spaces and activities; regulation of women in their access to public domains; and normative restrictions where control is exercised through value constructs of appropriate womanhood and femininity. As a result, women's information or knowledge and their potential for power within either the public or private domains is restricted and thus subject to legitimation by masculine authority and power. In particular, social control through normative value constructs "operates through the mechanisms of shared values, norms,

and understandings – which are universally accessible to both sexes". In this way women can be complicit in their adherence to the norms of control and their "circumscription of women's potential for power and control." (Fox, 1977, p. 816) MacKinnon (1982) reinforces this point stating that through the process of consciousness raising, women's powerlessness has been found to be both externally determined, as well as internalised and the extent to which women's realities are a creation of male epistemology deserves attention.

3.4 Gendered Spaces and Inequity

Consideration of experiential knowledge and understanding lived and embodied experience as an intrinsic aspect of knowing (Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville, 2003) requires an analysis of performative spaces, the extent to which these spaces constitute and are constitutive of particular experiences, and the suitability for the emergence of knowledge.

The recommendation is to explore the manifestation of gendered spaces within organisational and institutional contexts, recognising that the spaces women occupy symbolise both the restrictions women face in society, but can also be a source of their resistance. Harré (1984, p. 65) explains that "persons are embodied beings located...in physical space and time" and that personal legitimacy is mediated – constrained or aided – by individuals' perceived right to occupy and be present in these physical spaces and time, as well as to participate in the naming and defining of collective reality, as these embodied beings.

Social theorists engaged in social constructionism as a theory of knowledge, underscore the relationships between embodied individuals and the connection of these collective interactions, with the shape and form of sets of meaning that are contextually embedded. (Geertz, 1980) Emphasis is on interpretive forms of inquiry, and the shared construction of reality as a dynamic and negotiated process.

Discussing public and private spaces, Edwards and Ribbens (1998, p. 8) state that "the concepts of 'public' and 'private', their uses, limitations and implications...are crucial to an understanding of both men's and women's lives." The particular context of their discussion is "industrialised Western societies," however it may be argued that similar distinctions, albeit referred to by different terms, are evident in other societies around the world, and in Africa. These authors

explain that "'public' and 'private' are tricky and ambiguous concepts," and it is valuable to analyse the meanings, features and enactment of these concepts in order to examine implications of how associated spaces are experienced by individuals in a variety of social contexts, as well as to explore the ways these concepts and spaces may be invoked or resisted at micro/individual level and at macro/structural and institutional level. Edwards and Ribbens (1998, p. 8) postulate that public and private sphere, spaces and locations are 'raced' and 'classed' as well as gendered. Indeed, what constitutes public and private the meanings such settings hold, and how they are experienced, is different for different social groups. Public/private social boundaries and associated meanings are dynamic, shifting constantly and over time according to social location, and in general reproduce social advantage for privileged groups.

With reference to gender, feminist scholars have shown how, frequently, distinctions between public and private spaces are aligned in society to practices that tend to restrict women to the private/domestic/internal space and marginalise them within public/professional/external spaces traditionally dominated by men. For example, public institutional and academic disciplinary knowledges are characterised in terms of stereotypically masculine terms involving "objective, abstract, detached, rational, neutral, broad, institutional epistemologies" separated from and considered superior to more feminine "grounded, subjective, involved, emotional, specific, detailed, daily or everyday forms of knowledge." (Edwards & Ribbens. 1998, p. 11)

In contemporary society for instance, schools and workplaces are commonly associated with socially valued masculine knowledge, while the constitution of a *sui generis* circumscribed domestic domain for the feminine, separate from the public or social world, typically ascribes an inferior status to female experience and knowledge.[26] This influences a corresponding unequal distribution of resources to these segregated spaces and perpetuates women's dependence on males to represent and speak for them in 'official' arenas, allowing status stratification to flourish.

According to Edwards and Ribbens (1998, pp. 8 - 9) the distinctions between public and private can be summarised to some extent as a contrast in concerns between:

[26] Harris, Olivia. "Households as Natural Units". In Of marriage and the Market pp 136-155

(i) instrumental and individualised achievement of goals (characteristic of the public)

(ii) concrete details of ongoing processes and connectedness with people (characteristic of the informal and private).

The authors caution however that while it may indeed be argued that "there is a qualitative difference in orientations, values and 'ways of being' within each sphere," nevertheless, these different ways of being – public, instrumental and individualised; private, relational and collective – cannot be simplistically identified by reference to physical locations of home, workplace, or government, nor simply mapped straight onto gender identities. The delineations between the public and private are not strictly precise, with process and connectedness also found in public spheres, and instrumentality and individualisation in private spaces.

Regardless of how distinctions between private and public are classified and described, the point to emphasise is that these concepts and the spaces represented are intimately linked to individual lived experience, and in society have moreover been linked to structural organisation of physical spaces, as well as codes of behaviour and practices of socialisation. Furthermore, the implications of different ways of being for forms of knowledge and ways of knowing are significant. (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998, p. 10)

Spain (1993) goes a step further to analyse gender status differences from a spatial perspective which emphasises not only the interplay between the public and private spheres, but also addresses the role and impact of the spaces these two spheres inhabit on gender stratification. The spatial perspective offers a deeper exploration of the physical context of habituated behaviour by combining the sociological focus on institutionalised patterns of behaviour with the architectural and geographical realities of spatial location. Convincingly, Spain states that understanding space as an avenue for gender stratification will illuminate subtle, often imperceptible mechanisms that operate to buttress men's status advantage over women. Additionally, emphasising space as a social construction highlights the potential for women to engage with the malleability of spatial institutions to improve their status.

The foundational premise is that both space and institutions are socially constructed, with social assumptions about proper relations reflected in the houses and buildings in which people live,

learn and work. These institutionalised spatial forms concurrently shape behaviour and perpetuate a legacy for future action which maintains the prevailing stratification system.

Focusing on gender stratification, the spatial perspective interrogates how spatial arrangements contribute to prevailing status distinctions, positing that the gender-typing of spaces in terms of the physical separation, in terms of geography or architecture, and in terms of the presence of women and men in various social arenas, reduces women's access to socially valued knowledge as well as socially devalues women's knowledges and ways of knowing by virtue of the spaces with which this knowledge is associated.

More succinctly, social systems are expressed and their resultant structural properties generated through individual agency. These social institutions simultaneously shape daily behaviour and activity in a dual reinforcing cycle. Spatial social institutions however, are not immutable but subject to adaptation according to the emergence of circumstances that incite societies to variegate how they shape and are in turn shaped by social institutions. Along these same lines, sociologists perceive gendered spaces as fluid, forming and becoming diffused to attain certain goals.

Such analysis contributes to the large body of work in feminist geography that similarly elaborates men's and women's differential experiences of certain spaces. There is support for claims by theorists that individuals are not only affected differently with respect to certain spaces, but those spaces can also be central to the constitution of individuals' sense of self, or subjectivity, including their agency and aspirant potential. Spaces therefore may be considered significant with regards to how they serve to define and consolidate meaning and action (Harris & Atalan, 2002).

As such, an attention to space as a function of gender relations, can contribute to engendering the types of social arrangements more supportive of equity, as opposed to discrimination. Linked to this, the role of resistance around space and the necessity to address social spaces as sites of inequity has been made clear within for example the liberation movement in South Africa. Occupying spaces reserved for 'whites only' was a main part of the resistance actions that eventually contributed to the end of unjust and discriminatory segregation laws. In apartheid South Africa, contestation around space and the existence and enforcement of racially specified

sites, places and spaces was a significant feature of the struggle against the apartheid state; and in a post-apartheid South Africa a largely celebrated fact is the freedom of movement of individuals across, and to occupy, different spaces. Indeed in Africa, the value of space, of land as a site of identity and the meaning and value associated with ownership, was a core contributor to the resistance movements against colonial rule in general.

Within the context of the research a core concern is to explore the ways in which organisational spaces, including their tangible and intangible aspects, facilitate or obstruct women's agency and ability to enact their knowledge at senior and leadership levels. At the same time, the potential for organisations to act as sites of transformation and as environments within which to nurture change towards gender equity is acknowledged. That is, the thesis aims to contribute to further explorations of the role that organisations can play in advancing agendas of equity, diversity, innovative organisational performance and sustainable socio-political transformation, by providing conducive contexts within which women leaders may better explicate and contribute their knowledge, both conceptually as well as in practice.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research aimed to explore the organisational contexts and experiences of women in senior and leadership positions. Acknowledging the socially and culturally embedded nature of issues of gender equity, as well as informed by an intention to honour women's knowledge systems and ways of knowing, the methodological approach of the research aimed "continually to turn to a wider context" and refer to complementary discussions and ongoing social discourses. Borrowing from Marshall (1984, p. 4) the aim was to "appreciate women's lives as wholes", while meaningfully exploring the constituent parts of their various roles which are closely intertwined. Towards this end, the wider context of the research included an understanding of "women's place in society" as well as aimed to understand "the qualities, motivations and priorities" women bring to leadership and to their work within organisations.

As Edwards and Ribbens (1998, p. 1) aptly note, regardless of the focus and topic, social research is a difficult and perplexing task, requiring sensitivity to issues at many levels. "Constantly intertwined within the research process [is] the interplay between theory, ways of knowing about the social world, and methodology and practice in qualitative research projects." In particular, research concerned with "'private' domestic, intimate and personal lived experience" is often challenging as a result of the "intermixed theoretical and practical dilemmas...that arise...especially where there is a concern with retaining research participants' 'voices' in the production of [the] research."

The research presented here was essentially based on a dual methodological approach to address two key aspects of the inquiry namely, to be primarily exploratory in nature, while simultaneously located in and based on a dynamic feminist methodology approach. The sections of this chapter will highlight the key defining features and aspects of Feminist Methodology and of Grounded Theory, as well as discuss the use of self-reflexivity as a useful tool to enhance the research process and data findings.

4.1 Feminist Methodology

At the outset, a Feminist Methodology was applied and developed in response to the observations and assumptions that much social research and scientific investigation sustains the systematic marginalisation of women. (Boserup, 1970; Elson, 1991; Imam, Mama & Sow, 1997)

Feminist researchers have examined the issues related to delving into and exploring 'women's matters'. Edwards and Ribbens (1998, pp. 1-2) in particular discuss how women's issues are relegated to "the margins between different social worlds". Traditionally, women and their concerns have often been "pushed out to the edge" of public, mainstream priorities and "placed at the edges, between public social knowledge and private lived experiences." Feminist or woman-centred research, is caught "'betwixt and between' dominant social and symbolic classification systems of public knowledge and less visible and vocal understandings found in the more personalised settings of everyday living" that often inform the contexts of women's lives. A key and shared concern of women researchers therefore is, "how to proceed in academic research when the theoretical, conceptual and formal traditions...are predominantly 'public' and 'male-stream'." The need to listen to women and understand their lives and experiences from their perspectives is a pivotal focus point and has been a long-standing concern amongst feminist researchers. (Viola, 1992, p. 120; Bell & Roberts, 1984; Roberts, 1981)

Hawkesworth (1987, p. 8) emphasises that with regard to feminist research, "questions concerning the level of analysis, the degree of abstraction, the type of explanation, the standards of evidence, the criteria of evaluation, the tropes of discourse and the strategies of argumentation appropriate for particular fields of inquiry must be considered in concrete situations." That is the methodological approach applied to capture women's experience, to some extent also needs to be based in, reflect and be of relevance to women's experience. To emphasise the point that woman-centred or feminist research requires a feminist methodology, Hawkesworth provides examples to illustrate the inadequacy of misapplied research methodologies, such as "cognitive practices appropriate for psychological analysis may not be appropriate for political and sociological analysis." (Hawkesworth, 1987, p. 8) To expand on this example, an analysis of gender bias at a psychological level, while valuable and plays a contributory role towards understanding gender inequity, is nevertheless not sufficient to address issues of gender bias ingrained into the political and cultural structures and traditions that influence society. In the

same way, Hawkesworth argues "hermeneutic techniques essential for an adequate interpretation of human action may be wholly inadequate to the task of structural analysis." (Hawkesworth, 1987, p. 8) That is, while understanding the forms of interpretation applied in any given context may indeed contribute to a broader and valuable understanding of the context, such an understanding does not in itself alter how that context is structured, and as such would be inadequate to achieve the structural transformation that is the goal for gender equity advocates.

The case being made therefore is that in order to adequately reflect women's experiences, the terms of the research have to some extent to be on women's terms. There is need in other words for a feminist methodological or feminist centred approach to research. Yet, as Violi (1992, p. 120) remarks "there are very few examples of how this general methodological principle can be practically operationalised within the actual research process" and as Mama (1997, p. 422) emphasises, particularly less so within African contexts, although this is changing. Connell (forthcoming publication in *Feminist Theory*) acknowledges that the bulk of feminist writing internationally is insubstantial with regard to theory, conceptual frameworks and methodology grounded in the global south.

While there is no fixed definition of a feminist methodology, central to feminist theory and method is a process of consciousness raising, through which the reality of women's condition is confronted by examining and analysing their experiences, and from this point instigating individual change and social transformation. MacKinnon (1982, p. 519) discusses the centrality of consciousness raising as "the major technique of analysis, structure of organisation, method of practice, and theory of social change of the women's movement." (See also McWilliams, 1974 and Harstock, 1975) The aim of raising consciousness is to uncover and concretely analyse the impact of male dominance from the perspective of women's collective experience. "By its nature, this method of inquiry challenges traditional notions of authority and objectivity and opens a dialectical questioning of existing power structures" including questioning women's own experience, and knowledge. (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 515)

DeVault (1996) loosely defines this approach as a core commitment to raise consciousness and awareness and to change theoretical practice, in order to address problems in standard social research that have made the ideological mechanisms that sustain women invisible. These goals are further elucidated below:

1- To make women visible in research by shifting the focus of standard research practice from men's concerns in order to reveal the locations and perspectives of women in terms of what has been ignored, censored and suppressed, and to reveal both the diversity of women's lives and the ideological mechanisms that have made so many of those lives invisible (as well as perhaps more importantly, the ideological mechanisms that have sustained the lives of women). The point is not only to know about women, but to provide a fuller more accurate account of society by including them.

2- To minimize the harm and control of women in the research process, in response to the observation that scientific knowledge sustains systemic oppression of women. A feminist methodology aims to level the hierarchies of power and control in research relations to limit negative consequences for women, and apply more inclusive procedures. Within the research study, the inclusion of self-reflexivity, the reiterative approach of grounded theory, as well as the flexible structure of the qualitative interview process, all aimed to address the issues and minimise the experience of subjective/objective divide.

3- To contribute to social change of value to women, or to actions beneficial for women. This criterion, while potentially a rhetorical slogan provides an outline, albeit indistinctly defined, that is useful in redirecting research practice away from the distanced procedures of much social research, towards possible alternatives to the systems of social domination that contribute to the marginalisation of women. The potential of this includes: changing theoretical and methodological approaches, and introducing new topics and areas of inquiry to raise consciousness and awareness around issues of inequity; stimulating and supporting political action, and steering policy towards relevant decisions beneficial to sustainable socio-political transformation.

In line with above, the research described in the current study aimed to deepen insight into the knowledge and experience of women, and to avoid inhibiting research processes that may have negative consequences for women. In practice during the research process, applying a feminist methodology included a consistent practice of self-reflexivity, including asking research participants to reflect on their experiences of the strategic interview processes and the research questions asked. This offered an avenue through which to review the impact of the research experience and to gauge how respondents related to their participation in the research.

4.2 Self-reflexivity

i) *An Overview of Self-reflexivity:*

The use of self-reflexivity has been identified as a useful though not sufficient avenue through which to acknowledge the complexities and inequalities of the subjective-objective divide in the research process. (Burke, 2005) Guba and Lincoln (1994) highlight that all research is shaped by the fundamental question of the nature of the relationship between the subjective knower and the objective known. Considering that research unfolds within specific contexts, and is also contingent on certain subjective determinants, it is important for the researcher to maintain self-reflexivity towards ensuring conceptual clarity. In other words, in contributing to knowledge, the researcher has a responsibility to examine the influence of their own interests and to make as explicit as possible, implicit theoretical assumptions and dispositions. (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996; Steier, 1991)

Marshall (1984, p. 12) emphasises the value of "a critical awareness of...[one's] own personal perspective, a knowing subjectivity." Violi (1992, p. 121) explains,

"reflexivity means reflecting upon and understanding our own personal, political and intellectual autobiographies as researchers and making explicit where we are located in relation to our research respondents."

The aim is to acknowledge and make transparent the significant role the researcher plays in assembling, analysing, interpreting and theorising data, and "the extent to which similarities or differences between researcher and researched in characteristics such as gender, race, class, age, sexuality or able-bodiedness influence the nature of the research relationship." (Violi, 1992, p. 121)

Self-reflexivity questions the social aspects of research that relate to, influence, and perhaps persuade the direction of the research process and viewpoint of the researcher. Towards addressing some of the concerns of a feminist methodology, self reflexivity helps to identify background assumptions that filter and may bias results of research; contributes to conceptualisation and design of research processes which account for the social embeddeness and personal positioning of the researcher; promotes data collection and interpretation processes that aim to produce reliable findings grounded in a transparent research process. (Harding, 1987; Maynard, 1994; Olesen, 1994) "Feminists...have argued that understanding and knowledge come

from being involved in a relationship with our subject matter and respondents, and not through adopting a detached and objective stance." (Violi, 1992, p. 122)

Narayan (1989) expresses scepticism about the detached and objective status of the research observer, producing "expert and superior forms of knowledge". She proposes instead, "a perspectival view of knowledge – that is, who you are, and where you are situated, does make a difference to the knowledge you produce." Subsequently, high measures of reflexivity and transparency about choices and decisions made throughout processes of research study is needed. It is important for researchers to remain continually aware of, and to confront questions about the nature and assumptions of their inquiry; the implications of practical choices for the research; and the aims and objectives towards which the research and the knowledge produced are directed. (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998, p.4) Oelsen (2007, p. 423) outlines that reflexivity involves: "full explanation of how analytic and practical issues were handled; examination of the researcher's background and its influences on the research; reflections on the researcher's internal moods (emotions, interests, concerns). Violi, (1992, p. 122) states,

"Indeed the production of knowledge must contain a systematic examination and explication of our beliefs, biases and social location. This reflexivity ensures that the politics underlying the methods, topics, and governing assumptions of our scholarship are analysed directly and self-consciously, rather than remaining unacknowledged."

The practice of self-reflexivity further encourages consideration of the impact the relationship between researchers and research respondents has on the research process and content. With reference to this relationship, the specific ways in which the researcher is positioned, either similarly to or different from the research participants, in relation to for example culture, class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, dis/ability, plays a role in the information and data exchange and sharing process. The profile of this relationship therefore needs to be taken into account, alongside attention to context. (Burck, 2005)

Edwards and Ribbens (1998, p. 3) address the issue of self-reflexivity in relation to the unequal status of different forms of knowledge, stipulating a key responsibility of the qualitative researcher, is to acknowledge the predominance of particular knowledge forms, and the peripheral status of others. That is, a requirement of Researchers is to distinguish between cultures and discourses that are peripheral and predominant knowledge forms. Moreover, researchers face the necessity to interpret the worlds and understandings of the Other into a

discourse or knowledge form that can be understood and accepted within dominant frameworks of knowledge and culture. As such researchers have a role to play as "interpreters" and this is the challenge of self-reflexivity. Edwards and Ribbens contend that even as researchers are apparent via self-reflexivity, this process can still be a tool and means by which the voice of respondents is subjugated, overshadowed by the presence of the researcher in the narrative. The authors argue this is an unavoidable and standard state of affairs in research, as the researcher is "inescapably at the centre of the research account." The preoccupation of self reflexivity therefore is to balance the status of the researcher as 'observer', and as subjectively involved in the research as a social 'subject'.

Applying self-reflexivity during research further entails sensitivity to personally emotional and intellectual responses to research respondents. The researcher considers and examines "personal assumptions, views, interests, biases and limitations" and how these might influence interaction with respondents, the interviewer/interviewee relationship and interpretation of respondents' responses. Additionally, "intellectual and emotional reactions to other people constitute sources of knowledge, and it is through documenting these processes that others and our selves come to be known." (Violi, 1992, pp 127 128) The underlying assumption is that the "blurred boundary between respondent narratives and researcher's interpretations of these narratives" may be better distinguished by giving attention to self-reflexivity in terms of: the social location of the researcher in relation to the respondent; examining the researcher's theoretical location and the role of their perspective in interpreting respondent responses. (Violi, 1992, pp 127 - 128) An awareness of researcher and respondent historical realities and social contexts grounds the research methodology applied in a culturally sensitivity approach to the research.

ii) Reflection Points of Applied Self-reflexivity in the Research Process:

During the research process, the fact that the context of the research formed the home context of the researcher (Kenya is home by birth, South Africa is home by residence) has its potential positive and negative implications. On the one hand, environmental familiarity facilitated establishing a comfortable rapport with respondents, and the flow of conversation was fluid without distinct disjunctures in contextual understanding and shared meaning. As a result,

receiving participants' responses to the strategic interview questions was an interesting and engaging, relatively comfortable[27] and meaningful content-rich process.

The intimate relationship of the researcher to the context, also couched the research process in a more personalised experience of learning about the cultural context itself, that touched on meanings of home, belonging and location. The opportunity to converse and explore ideas with senior African women yielded many insights of value about the history, current milieu as well as envisioned directions of development for women, communities as well as the larger informing contexts.

It was interesting to note, that the close contextual relationship shared between the researcher and the majority of research participants also evoked a discussion on this relationship. More mature respondents across the board voiced their appreciation for an opportunity to express their knowledge and share their experiences intergenerationally through the strategic interview. These respondents explained that they rarely get opportunity to self-reflect on themselves in the way the strategic interview process allowed, nor to interact intensely with women from younger generations and youth in general. Due to the pressures and demands of their professional lives, their attention is predominantly on achieving the goals, objectives and outcomes demanded of their positions, often resulting in isolation at a personal level from broader social contexts, limiting interactions across generations (with the exclusion of family and close personal networks) as well as reducing time and space for personal and self-reflections on experience, and standpoints.

This is a notable point to acknowledge as part of the findings of the research. That is, in endeavouring to create environments where women are more able to make explicit what they know, it is important to focus not only on the spaces they occupy, but also on the accompanying processes necessary to facilitate women's expression. In other words, facilitative spaces include spaces to freely reflect on, talk and share about themselves, and perhaps to interact and engage across generations. Particularly in context of an increasingly youthful population in contemporary African, there is value in increased interaction, sharing of experiences and

[27] Relatively comfortable - taking into account the formalities expected at leadership levels, and particularly with reference to African cultural norms of interaction with seniors – in age and status

knowledge exchange between women leaders and youth, towards mentoring and providing role models for the continent's future leaders and workforce.

Reflecting upon the research experience from the point of view of the researcher, particularly with regard to the relationship with the research respondents, a useful observation was that familiarity with the research context, largely diffused distinctions of difference between researcher and research participants. Any dissimilarities, such as age, profession, ethnicity etc. were easily managed according to shared cultural norms. For example, when conversing with women of an older generation, as the researcher it was useful to know how to best address them. On the one hand, being aware of these norms, made their influence on the research process more visible; that is how these norms influence and affect understandings and interpretations of events. On the other hand, being aware of and applying these norms also created an atmosphere of familiarity and ease with respondents, which facilitated the break-down of this same formal code as the interview proceeded. Consequently, the spaces for sharing and exchange became more expansive, exploratory and unbound, thereby allowing through this process, for the tacit knowledge of the women, to emerge through discourse and dialogue with the researcher. A key yearning was for the opportunity to continue these interactions in order to explore tacit levels in additional depth. As outlined in the limitations for the research however, time restrictions and associated obligations proved a limiting factor. Nevertheless, the willingness of respondents to participate in the research indicate possibilities for follow-up research, and extended engagement with women in senior and leadership positions in African organisations.

The value of a combined grounded theory and feminist methodology approach was particularly evident through this process, as it allowed for and accommodated for the redefinition of terms, concepts and meanings unfolding as a natural and integrated part of the research activities and subsequent findings. It is important to specify however, that this emergent process was especially strong during the one-to-one strategic interviews. To some extent, the focus groups discussions allowed for a similar experience, but to a much lesser extent, possibly due to the larger number of participant voices and therefore a larger number of differences, and intersection points of similarities, to negotiate.

Adopting a transparent and participatory research process also assists in dissolving the barriers between the researcher and the researched, by involving participants and inviting their comments

on the research process and during data analysis. Incorporating participants' knowledge, experience and voice into the design and implementation of the research (Chow et. al, 2003) may further help limit any significant absences in the data or misrepresentations of shared information. At another level, including participation as a key aspect of the research process conjoins with a main agenda of the proposed inquiry to support alternative ways of knowing, rather than perpetuate the status quo whereby the knowledge of the researcher is privileged.

It was interesting to note that, perhaps due to the nature of the study and the types of questions posed, in most instances, participants freely contributed their critical thoughts and perspectives on the inquiry and the research questions posed during the course of the interview, without the need for specific prompting in this regard.

On a conceptual level, respondents' commentaries revolved specifically around two issues, firstly probing the relevance of the research focus on the topic of gender equity. The critique here was that issues of gender equity may not be a key priority for leadership towards socio-political transformation, where other themes such as ethics and fiduciary responsibility may be more pertinent particularly within an African context. Secondly and conversely, respondents commended the research for accentuating the continued role for feminist advocacy in contemporary institutions and organisations.

4.3 Grounded Theory

At another level of the inquiry for this study, a Grounded Theory approach was considered to appropriately accommodate the exploratory dimension of the research.

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000, p. 154) describe exploratory research as exploring certain phenomena with the primary aim of formulating more specific research questions or hypotheses relating to that phenomena. In relation to this, Burck (2005) claims that Grounded theory is well suited to "discovery-oriented" data collection and analysis of "research in areas which are under-theorized." As such, Grounded theory was considered to support the research aims of exploring, at a theoretical level, the persistence of gender inequity in organisations, and the implications and repercussions for women's meaningful contributions to knowledge and leadership processes, towards sustainable organisational performance and socio-political transformation; at a practical

level, examining the characteristics of persistent gender inequity, identifying the obstacles, facilitators and strategies that shape women's participation in knowledge and leadership processes at senior organisational levels. Additionally, grounded theory offered a suitable method for the specific focus of the inquiry on the generally under/mis-theorised African context, towards informing and generating required relevant research based on appropriate questions, with pertinence for the growth and transformation needs and potential of the continent.

As Pidgeon (1996) aptly summarizes a grounded theory approach focuses on generating theory about processes grounded in the data, with the aim of developing original ideas and conceptual notions of social phenomena. The strength of this approach for researchers is the facility it provides to conduct contextually sensitive research and analyses, towards generating relevant theory that can in turn lead to relevant practice. Similar to feminist methodology, grounded theory is a contested method with a plurality of approaches. (Olesen, 2007) The contested nature of these approaches however enhances rather than diminishes their contributions. (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) Drawing on social constructionist principles, the presented guidelines for applying grounded theory by Charnaz (2008, p. 403) were particularly helpful for the research process, namely: "treat the research process itself as a social construction; scrutinize research decisions and directions; Improvise methodological and analytic strategies throughout the research process; Collect sufficient data to discern and document how research participants construct their lives and worlds." These guidelines dovetailed well with the self-reflexive component of the research process, as well as the requirements of feminist methodology.

At a more specific level of the discussion, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 177) a key focus in grounded theory is in "gathering data about what persons do or don't do in terms of action/interaction." As Violi (1992, p. 130) puts it, grounded theory is more interested in action/interaction, and less interested in persons. "Grounded theory seems less concerned with the processes of reflection and decision making which are key concerns of a voice-centred relational method of data-analysis, and quite instrumental in helping to shed light on the meanings, processes, relationships and contradictions which are central to...life."

On the other hand as Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 177) specify, the focus of grounded theory is on "the range of conditions that give rise to...action/interaction and...[their] variations; how

conditions change or stay the same over time and with what impact; also the consequences of either actual or failed action/interaction or of strategies never acted on."

Applying feminist methodology alongside a grounded theory approach intends therefore to offset a dominant emphasis on either the inner and conceptual frames of reference of respondents or their outer manifestation and enactment through action/interaction. That is, while a feminist methodological approach lent a critical and analytical dimension to the research, inviting the researcher and research respondents to engage in personal reflections on the process, this was well offset but a grounded theory approach which aimed to continually locate the data within the active context of research participants' lives as well as within the interactive space between the researcher and the research respondents. A key aim of applying a dual methodology therefore was to engender a reflective and critical as well as practical and relevant approach to the research process.

Additionally, a notable benefit emerging from the application of a dual methodological approach is the flexibility yielded. With particular regard to the combination of feminist and grounded theory, both allow for a plurality of research techniques combining qualitative and quantitative methods. As Miles and Hubermann (1994) acknowledge, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques and methods in a "hybrid" approach can successfully enrich theoretical contributions. Qualitative research aims to generate hypothesis rather than test them, and these methods often address open-ended and exploratory questions researching subjective experiences and processes. (Burck, 2005) Quantitative techniques however are applicable to testing hypotheses and "making visible" (DeVault, 1996) epistemological assumptions and details. While quantitative methods are sometimes necessary and may offer more persuasive data than personal testimony, nevertheless they cannot easily manage variability of data, limiting analyses to trends. Overlapping qualitative and quantitative techniques within a dual methodological framework complements the need for contextually relevant and feminist-oriented research that can generate fresh hypothesis grounded in rich and diverse data that is also quantitatively verifiable.

Within the context of this research study, a quantitative approach was applied mainly in the data analysis and interpretation phase, towards depicting and demonstrating the significance of key findings.

5. RESEARCH PROCESS DESIGN AND PLAN

The research plan and process was essentially flexible to facilitate the adaptability of the methodological approach. A key concern informing the design and implementation of the research was to avoid imposing controls and applying inhibiting procedures that may restrict the ease and fluency of the inquiry process. Redirection of the mode of questioning and reconfiguration of the data collection approach throughout the research activity helped to heighten the relevance and adequacy of the gathered information. (Curnan et. al 1998) The primary goal of the research design and plan was to target, facilitate and accommodate the emergence of tacit ways of knowing. That is, in seeking to understand more about women's systems of knowledge, it was essential that the research process itself presented an appropriate avenue and opportunity for women's own exploration of what they know.

In this way, the research aspired to adequately express and (re)present women's own sense of their selves, their contexts, their situation and their interests, with reference to the socio-political, economic and cultural realities of their lives, and in terms of the forms and types of transformation preferred.

The following tools, techniques and procedures were applied in the data collection process of the research:

5.1 Pilot Interviews and Test Questionnaires – Appreciative Inquiry:

Pilot Interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to test the feasibility of the interview format and are useful for monitoring the relevance, applicability and value of the questions formulated to explore the issues. (Burck, 2005) Similarly, test questionnaires are a useful tool to reflect on the interview process, and any significant discrepancies.

Pilot interviews and test questionnaires constituted the initial phase of the research, and aimed at investigating and determining the most feasible research technique to explore the core issues of the inquiry. Monitoring received feedback from respondents during the pilot activity, assisted in clarifying and further defining (Burke, 2005) strategic interview formats and research question formulation, in order to better interrogate women's ways of knowing.

Acknowledging "the significance of the respondent's own view of the world," (Canter, et. al , 1985, p. 112) was a main consideration of the research. As such initially, Appreciative Inquiry was considered as the core interview technique to achieve the aims of the research.

Appreciative inquiry is presented as a mode of research that "seeks to both generate theory and develop organizations" (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987) which matched the objectives of the research. As an organisational development method, Appreciative Inquiry focuses on enhancing organisational strengths as opposed to adopting a problem solving approach to address organisational weaknesses. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) discuss the appreciative mode of inquiry as "a way of living with, being with, and directly participating in the varieties of social organization we are compelled to study," in a positive way that "serves to nourish the human spirit." As a research method, Appreciative Inquiry offers the researcher a technique to "inquire beyond superficial appearances to deeper levels of...essentials and potentials of social existence."

An Appreciative Inquiry approach invites participants to dialogue and "share stories about their past and present achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, bench-marks, high-point moments, lived values, traditions, core and distinctive competencies, expressions of wisdom...The process involves interviewing the storytelling to draw out the best of the past, to understand what one wants more of, and to set the stage for effective visualisation of the future." (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Starvos, 2008, pp 3 - 4)

Gergen (1990) describes AI as a search for knowledge emphasising metaphor, narrative, language and relational ways of knowing. Cooperrider, Whitney, and Starvos (2008, p.3) provide a practice-oriented definition of AI as a "coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them."

The underlying precepts informing AI include an understanding that "the appreciative process of knowing is socially constructed." Additionally, the central principles and theoretical framework of AI are informed by the "idea that people control their destiny by envisioning what they want to occur and developing actions to move towards this end result." (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Starvos, 2008, p. 14) Other key ideas informing AI include[28]:

[28] Appreciative Inquiry Handbook: For Leaders of Change. David L. Cooperrider; Diana Whitney; Jacqueline M. Stavros (2008) Ohio: Crown Custom Publishing

- The social order at any given point is viewed as the product of broad social agreement;

- Patterns of social/organisational action are not fixed by nature in any direct biological or physical way; the vast share of social conduct is...capable of infinite conceptual variation;

- From an observational point of view, all social action is open to multiple interpretations, not one of which is superior in any objective sense. The interpretations favoured in one historical setting may be replaced in the next;

- Whether intended or not, all theoretical accounts are normative and have the potential to influence the social order. Therefore, all narrative accounts (including social theory) are morally relevant. They have the potential to affect the way people interact with one another. This point is a critical one because it implies that there is no such thing as a detached, technical, scientific mode for judging the ultimate worth of value claims;

- Value knowledge or social theory is, therefore, a narrative creation, not an aspect of the physical world. Social theory is not 'out there' in nature to be discovered through detached, value-free, observational methods (logical empiricism); nor can it be relegated to the subjective minds of isolated individuals (cognitivism). Viewed from this perspective, social knowledge resides in the stories of the collectivity; it is created, maintained, and put to use by the human group. Dialogue, free from constraint of distortion, is necessary to determine the 'nature of things' (social constructionism).

These core tenets of AI corresponded well and enhanced the dual (grounded and feminist theory) methodological approach applied within the research. More succinctly, Cooperrider, Whitney, and Starvos (2008, p. 14) explain:

"...knowing takes place through interaction with and within a social system. That is why AI views organisations as centres of human relatedness. Thus, by getting people to unite on a central theme or idea, AI allows people who share a related objective to project or construct their future – in this case, the future of an organisation."

For the purposes of this research, the central theme, context or situation uniting respondents was their positioning as senior women leaders in their organisations. The aim was to apply AI to this segment of strategic respondents towards receiving their views and ideas on the best

organisational configuration that would support their roles as leaders. The underlying assumption was that the issue of equity would be a shared objective between these senior women leaders.

Implementing AI occurs along a cycle of four processes of Discovery – appreciating the best of what is; Dream – envisioning new possibilities; Design – coconstructing and planning the future; and Destiny – innovation and sustained action.

AI was initially considered a potentially useful technique to apply in the strategic interview process of the research, specifically because of the flexibility it presents to accommodate particular issues of feminist research. Violi (1992, p. 129) has emphasised the need for woman-centred research to "focus on how the respondent experiences, feels and speaks about themselves," and how, in narrating their story, "the respondent perceives and presents themselves, and speaks about the lives they live and the worlds they inhabit." The AI approach with its focus on narratives and storytelling, was considered applicable for valuing the voices of women.

However, while the tenets and principles of appreciative inquiry largely informed the methodology of the research, nevertheless, the nature of questions asked as part of an AI approach were not considered sufficient for the outlined objectives of the research. Firstly, the type of AI questions appear appropriate for and conducive to women's explication of their experiences and related knowledge, nevertheless the open-ended and expansive nature of the questions invited respondents to share a wide range of reflections often beyond the scope of the research.

Additionally, the data yielded as a result of the AI process was deeply embedded in the personal interpretative spaces of the individual women interviewed. That is, in narrating their stories, respondents presented their own precise interpretations of their experiences. In delving into women's knowledge systems however, the attention of the research was directed not only in engaging women in a process of reflection upon their experiences, but also in a meta-process of reflection on how they interpret these experience, and the meanings they derive and gain from this process. A main concern in applying an AI approach therefore was how to value and authentically present women's own voices, while simultaneously isolating information about women's process of meaning-making, for the relevance of the research inquiry. Possible options to address this challenge for the data analysis process included presenting the findings of the

research in a story format, presenting women's stories as part of the text, as well as illustrating the process by which women derive meaning from the experiences recounted. This option however would require the extensive involvement of strategic respondents in the data analysis process. Time and availability of interviewees to participate in this process however was limited.

Consequently, after the pilot phase of the research, the data collection approach and interview questions were modified in order to more explicitly explore women's relationship to the external and structural spaces they inhabit. The informing reasoning guiding this decision was a need to articulate women's lived experience of contemporary structures and institutions, in terms of how they feel their agency is supported or obstructed. On the basis of this, it may be possible to better understand the context from which women are envisaging alternative modes of socio-political and economic organisation, and the processes of transformation required to achieve these.

From this point of view, the focus was on how women experience their professional contexts, and how these contexts may be transformed to offer a more flexible experiential space for women's expression and articulation of what they know. As the Appreciate Inquiry approach is well suited to a process of envisaging, the tone of the '4D' AI process was adopted in the final interview format for the research. It was considered important to allow women the space to imagine. However, this was accompanied by a more guided set of questions designed at inviting respondents to reflect on the informing bases of their imaginings. Essentially, understanding the gendered architecture structuring prevalent institutional cultures is vital to support attempts to alter such structures, and in order to provide concrete recommendations for change and transformation towards more equity.

5.2 Qualitative Interviewing – Strategic Interviewing Process:

Rubin and Rubin (1995) refer to Qualitative Interviewing as a semi-structured and fluid mode of questioning, designed as iterative and continuous, with each repeated cycle of data collection and analysis clarifying the research process. The flexibility afforded by qualitative interviewing processes was considered well matched and complementary to the informing Grounded Theory methodological approach of the research.

According to Burck (2005) grounded theory intersects with qualitative research interviewing, particularly with regard to the practice it espouses of using the data analysis of the initial interviews to moderate the research interview format in order to explore specific concepts more exactly and in more depth. This recursive and iterative process incorporates useful feedback that then informs and shapes subsequent research activities and contributes to relevance and accuracy of the inquiry process.

Using an interview format as a guide, questions are therefore mutable and open-ended encouraging interviewees to present their responses and share their knowledge through feedback, allowing space for a deeper exploration of principal meanings. (See Research Question Interview Schedule in Appendix)

It is useful here to reflect briefly on the research interview as a qualitative research tool. According to Brenner (1985, p.148) "Interviewing means quite literally to develop a view of something between (inter) people." The research interview has been described as an,

"interaction in which two or more people are brought into direct contact in order for at least one party to learn something from the other…the central value of the interview as a research procedure is that it allows both parties to explore the meaning of the questions and answers involved. There is an implicit or explicit sharing and/or negotiation of understanding in the interview situation." (Brenner, Brown & Canter 1985, p.3)

The research interview may then be suitably applied as a helpful tool of enquiry in the study of human actions and yield rich data for analysis and explanation. (Von Cranach & Harré, 1982) Consequently, the research interview was considered to be an amendable tool to apply within the dual feminist and grounded theory methodological approach of the research. Within an interview process, the explicit concern for and interactions around the research participant's knowledge and understanding, offers a useful avenue through which to: explore ideas and individuals' informing conceptual frameworks; legitimize the knowledge of each person; and minimize the traditional hierarchical divide between researcher and interviewee due to the intensive one-to-one interaction and situation. (Canter, Brown & Groat, 1985, pp. 83 & 86)

During the practical data collection phase of the research, a total of 104 respondents participated representing a total of 60 organisations in the education and business sectors in South Africa and Kenya. The 51 strategic respondents interviewed were responsive and engaging during the research interview process, and each interview was digitally recorded and subsequently

transcribed. Interviews were initially transcribed as single files, and subsequently combined into one main text (hermeneutic unit within ATLAS Ti) to facilitate the coding process.

Each respondent availed themselves for the necessary time to adequately and satisfactorily address the Strategic Interview Questions, and the responses and feedback received enriched the core content of the research. A key challenge in the Research Interview process however was maintaining the direction and focus of the interviews and discussions held, towards responding to the specific themes of the inquiry. The majority of the sampled interviewees are respected leaders in their particular professional fields, and have well honed perspectives in their respective areas of expertise and experience. In some cases therefore, the interview sessions deviated from the specific area of the research, and respondents tended to focus more on related areas of personal interest and concern. This occasional shift of focus and coverage notwithstanding, the Strategic Interview session discussions were didactic, often contributing to expanding areas of reference for this thesis, and adding critical ingredients to boost the integrative and diversity component of the findings.

As such, while there were certain strict parameters associated with the strategic interview process – the length of time allocated to each interview was a minimum of one (1) hour and a maximum of two (2) hours; and each interview entailed a discussion on all the research questions – a large amount of flexibility was allowed for the direction of the exploration. Such an approach was worthwhile as Marshall (1984, p.4) notes, it is valuable "continually to turn to a wider context...understanding the appropriate context or 'ecology' of a particular issue or topic." Thus, when discussions with participants appeared to deviate from the set interview schedule format, this was welcomed as an opportunity to identify additional issues and areas of relevance to the research inquiry, and in line with the grounded theory methodological approach of the study.

The sites and locations for the strategic interviews differed however it was endeavoured in each case to ensure venues were conducive to a comfortable, in-depth and engaged exchange and interaction with research respondents. Spaces included offices, meeting rooms, appropriate cafes, hotel premises (for travelling respondents), university grounds, conference venues and the residences of both the researcher and the interviewees.

It is acknowledged that some spaces might have offered more flexibility than others, however in relation to the formality of the researcher/respondent dynamic, this was not experienced as a significant variable or point of variance in the delivery of and discussions around the interview schedule. In one instance, overwhelming ambient noise from nearby construction works disrupted the interview process and it was not possible to complete the schedule of questions, nor to arrange an alternative meeting. In consultation with the research respondent, the formality of the interview process was relaxed and the conversation switched to an open-ended exchange on the main points of the enquiry - women's knowledge, leadership, transformation, and Africa, particularly African youth – and the respondent's connection to these issues and the ways in which each figured in her professional life as well as personal experience. The transcript for this interview of which only half was recorded, was nevertheless included during data analysis, however treated to a more nuanced analysis and level of rigour tailored to the informality of the interaction.

5.3 Focus Group Discussions:

In tandem with the participatory approach of the proposed research, focus group discussions held with key and strategic participants contributed to building dialogue around and between perceptions of the central research themes of leadership, knowledge, gender and socio-political transformation. In this way varied linkages and intersection points between these themes could be explored and better highlighted from the perspective of participants' personal perceptions, philosophies and beliefs on subject matters related to and surrounding the research topic area of focus.

The advantages of using focus groups are that participants are able to discuss the issues in question with each other, and there is opportunity for the group to explore emergent ideas in more detail through conversations. Applying a focus group approach was thereby considered for the forum provided to generate broader understanding and insight on the research inquiry questions "than would have been gained from interviewing all the participants individually." (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000, pp.110) Convening focus groups was further a convenient approach of accessing groups of senior women in convened forum spaces (See List of

Organisations in Apendix), thereby maximising on time availability of respondents that have full schedules and work calendars.

Additionally, focus groups provide an opportunity for participants to learn from each other, and in the case of the research, to collectively reflect on shared experiences and challenges. “This is very useful in action-research where part of the researcher’s goal is to help address a particular problem facing a particular group of people.” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000, pp. 111) Moreover, in many African cultures small groups are used to address concerns within the community, and this further motivated the suitability of using the focus group method of data collection.

A total of 9 focus groups were convened, 4 in Kenya with women mostly from business sector organisations, and 5 in South Africa with women mainly from higher education organisations. The focus groups were convened over a period of 18 months due to logistical requirements and availability of respondents. A total number of 53 respondents participated in the focus group sessions, and the size of the focus groups ranged between 3 - 8 participants. Similar to the strategic interviews, the length of group discussions was a minimum of 1 hour and a maximum of 3 hours, particularly for larger groups. Larger and extended group discussions included scheduled breaks and were structured in a workshop style including tools such as flip charts and worksheets to facilitate the discussion flow. The Chatham House Rule applied to all discussions, and participants were advised about confidentiality at the start and reminded at the close of each session. Participants were requested to sign a registration sheet of attendance indicating their organisation and position, as well as to signify their consent and agreement to participate in the research process.

In addition to the notes gathered from the focus group activities, group discussions were also recorded using a digital recorder. Having the focus group discussion notes as well as recording transcripts to refer to was useful in capturing the full range of the exchange between participants. However, a shortcoming was the fact that it was sometimes difficult to track participants’ contributions in terms of matching the comments made to the individuals that spoke them. This was a challenge during the data analysis process specifically with regard to recalling and accounting for the role of group dynamics in shaping participants’ responses.

5.4 Sampling Criteria:

Strategic sampling techniques were applied to access women in senior management and leadership positions in a range of organisations, particularly within the business and education sectors in Kenya and South Africa. Towards an extensive rather than intensive portrayal of women's experience and in order to account for the diverse localities women represent, a diverse as possible sample of respondents was sought in terms of organisational spread. (See Appendix for the list of 60 Organisations represented by and from which respondents were drawn) Additionally, a key consideration was the level of senior management considered. Senior management positions were considered across different portfolios (finance, operations, marketing, sales and services, human resources) and leadership was considered across different top levels (director, senior and chief executive, board).

It is important to note that in line with the literature, the majority of professional women within organisations tend to fill the ranks of lower and middle management, and as such there is a smaller sample population of women at senior and leadership levels. In some instances therefore, research participations may be considered to be located within senior-middle management (assistant director, senior officers and administrators, executive secretaries). These individuals were also included in the research sample group as senior management, to broaden the pool of respondents. Additionally, signalling suitability for inclusion in the research inquiry, women within these senior-middle management positions are often slated for promotion and as such have a vested interest, and are directly exposed to the challenges and demands of women in top positions within organisations. A marked distinction between leadership and management was also not applied, with the two terms used interchangeably to connote job positions at the top or in charge of central aspects of organisations. One research respondent commented on this delineation as faulty, emphasising essential differences between leadership and management. Slocum (2015) however quotes management consultant and educator Peter Drucker explaining that increasingly within the information economy, the lines between management and leadership are blurred as the emphasis has shifted to productively heightening the particular strengths and knowledge of each individual, and nurturing leadership capacity across all levels and portfolios to encourage initiative and innovation.

Table 1: Organisational Levels of Research Respondents

ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL	***ORGANISATIONAL POSITION & PORTFOLIO IN BUSINESS & EDUCATION SECTORS***
[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]

Table 2: Forums of Access to Women at Senior Leadership Levels in Organisations

Forums of Access to Women at Senior Leadership Levels in Organisations: Professional Opportunities & Organisational Networks	
Kenya	***South Africa***
- The DEPOT Courage To Lead Forums; - Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) Business Network; - Scezons PHEA/Ford Project on HE Harmonisation &Strategic Integration in Southern & Eastern Africa; - Professional Training activities	- HERS-SA Academy; - Conferences held at the University of Cape Town; - Graduate School of Business Professional Network; - Scezons Monitoring & Evaluation assignments, and Consulting Activities

Aside from organisation name and position, additional participant demographic information was not collected, with respondents profiled primarily in terms of their gender and positions of leadership in African based organisations. Personal details and information shared, such as marital status, children, place of birth etc. was at the discretion of participants in the course of their responses. Further while the sample group of respondents was multi-cultural and spanned up to 3 generations of women, responses were not marked according to these features. Future research may benefit from distinguishing responses according to more finite demographic criteria.

5.5 Research Interview Questions

The research interview schedule questions that formed the core of the practical research inquiry and field research phase of the study, were underpinned and motivated by the guiding concerns of this thesis, namely, *Women's Knowledge Systems and their Contribution to Leadership for Socio-Political Transformation.* The Interview Schedule detailing the research questions for the practical inquiry is included in the Appendix**.**

The research questions aimed to engage women in a discussion on their experiences, their understanding and their knowledge. The focus and approach of the research questions was designed and intended to investigate certain themes or criteria deemed relevant to exploring if women have the facilitative space to maximise on senior and leadership positions, and participate in knowledge processes. It is important to note here that these themes and criteria represent only a few of a wide range of possible options that could be used as measures and indicators for the purposes of this study.[29]

Within the parameters of the research area and focus, the general logic of the questions was to ascertain:

Women's motivations in and attitudes toward leadership, and the influential experiences and lessons that have been meaningful in informing how they lead; how women in senior and leadership positions engage and negotiate their professional spaces and aim to enact their

[29] There is a wide range of literature available that addresses the different types of categories and criteria that can be applied as measures and indicators of effective leadership

knowledge; what barriers or facilitative factors women in senior and leadership positions experience within their work contexts; and how these barriers and facilitators may be better ameliorated or strengthened respectively.

Questions one to four (1-4) were informed by and configured around an Appreciative Inquiry format, setting the tone of the strategic interview process, and inviting respondents to be reflective and share experiences meaningful at a personal level. The aim was to locate the personal experiences of women in organisational leadership as indicators signalling levels and the potential of transformation achieved, and continued challenges to gender equity and diversity. Questions enquired about core meaningful factors of leadership, high point experiences and defining moments of leadership, and the valuable lessons learned. From another vantage point, useful guidance received during the course of the research was the suggestion to establish a level of personal interaction with participants, and to avoid a detached theoretical discussion. In "probing the gendered nature of work and the knowledge systems that uphold [and oppose] such power differentiation...you want to make [the discussion] personal...To address the research question specifically, you need to engage deeply in the notions of gendered workplaces and the knowledge systems that uphold [and oppose] such differentiation, and this is a personal space." (April)[30]

Questions five to eight (5-8) focused on respondents' experience, capacities, skills, and abilities of leadership. The inquiry at this level was interested in ascertaining how leadership is perceived and understood; how interviewees interface with and relate to leadership; and how they position themselves as leaders. Themes explored at this level were related to collegial/subordinate relationships and interactions, which research has shown are significant aspects affecting leadership

Questions nine to twelve (9-12) were targeted at institutional level. The aim was to enquire into the contexts within which women apply their leadership and gain respondents' views and perspectives on the issue of institutional and structural barriers as well as promoters of gender equity. Key issues investigated were the strength and weaknesses of organisations in supporting women in senior and leadership positions; how such strengths may be augmented, and weaknesses ameliorated; as well as the role of leaders in contributing to greater gender equity in

[30] Professor Kurt April, Research Supervisor, *Feedback on draft strategic interview research questions.*

leadership. At this level, a key aim was to unpack tangible and intangible factors that impact on decision-making, as a main responsibility and indicator of effective leadership.

The research questions also explored recommendations for improved gender equity at senior and leadership levels of organisations.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In determining the most appropriate methodological approach for the research, a key concern was to ensure that the data collection, interpretation and analysis process was an integrated and flexible component of the research, and allowed for cooperative exploration of categories and concepts between the researcher and research respondents. The aim was to make as explicit as possible the conceptual systems of classification being applied by individuals during the strategic interview process, or at the group level during the focus group sessions.

Questions of how to interpret, analyse, and theorise upon the experiences and accounts of research respondents, remain a focal concern for qualitative researchers across disciplines. (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998) An understanding of the categories people use and how they assign concepts to those categories is one of the central clues to the understanding of human behaviour. As such, one of the important questions for many investigations is the nature and organisation of the concepts that people have specific to the issues being explored. Studies of subjective meaning by Szalay and Deese (1978) argue for a study of these meanings, the conceptual framework of constructs and the categories on which the respondent draws as the starting point and as crucial to the understanding of individual's actions in the world. It is further useful to recognise that "that world view is built around a pattern of categorisations." (Canter et. al, 1995, p. 112)

Utilising Atals Ti Software as a tool for organising and coding the data, participants' responses to the research interview questions presented key themes that constitute the substantial findings of this study. The themes of the research findings were also generated on the basis of the codes developed during the Atlas Ti data analysis process which subsequently informed the main categories of findings discussed.

During the initial stage of data analysis, the key challenge of the interview process, which as mentioned previously was maintaining the direction and focus of the interview discussions, became apparent. Namely, as a result of the dynamism of the strategic interview process, participants' responses during the data analysis process were not neatly aligned to the format of the interview schedule. Indeed as noted by Marshall (1984, p.4) in exploring the world of senior women in organisations, issues are not clearly bounded. Participants' responses were not linear

and would refer back to earlier questions, as well as anticipate questions still to be posed. The exploratory nature of the research questions may have contributed to the interrelated and intertwined nature of responses received. For instance, in recounting meaningful experiences that have influenced their roles as leaders, respondents might also make reference to key mentors as well as the institutional obstacles and facilitators they have encountered, essentially collapsing up to five research questions into one coherent and combined response.

Key cross-cutting themes of the research findings begun to emerge as a result of this interconnecting between issues and discussion points. The theme of 'The Importance of Socialisation' is a suitable illustrative example of a theme in respondent responses that combined and integrated several questions and concerns of the research.

For instance, in reflecting on one or two defining moments that have influenced how they choose to lead, one respondent made reference to a past event from their upbringing. In recounting the meaningfulness of particular past experience, the respondent made reference to how early educators – parents and teachers – are seminal mentors influencing applied agency in leadership. Elucidating on this point, the respondent made further reference to what they consider to be comparable forms of obstacles and facilitators limiting or advancing girls'/women's progress in both schools and professional/business organisations, as different types and levels of institutional structures with particular influence in progressive stages of personal and professional development. The importance of socialisation emerged as a crosscutting theme throughout this discussion, and was explicitly referenced by the respondent as a potent factor impacting on leadership and knowledge.

In other instances, the overarching themes of the research findings were not as explicit or apparent to detect. In this case, the codes generated from the Atlas Ti process and guided by participants' responses, were aligned to main issues, concepts and themes arising from literature addressing the research field of study. A suitably illustrative example is the theme of Cooperative/Collaborative/Relational leadership. In recounting their experiences and perspective on leadership, women largely did not explicitly relate to any specific leadership style. Rather the prevalence of this theme in the findings is as a result of linking and associating respondents' narrative with the definitions and categories identified in the relevant theories and literature in the fields of leadership and management. That is, while interviewees rarely explicitly referred to

their leadership style as relational, cooperative or collaborative, nevertheless, their descriptions of how they lead, as well as perceive and understand leadership, corresponded to the theoretical concepts and practical frameworks of this particular leadership style as defined by main literature and theories on leadership. It was therefore necessary and helpful to apply an iterative data analysis approach employing different stages of readings.

6.1 Readings in Data Analysis Process[31]

Towards enriching the data analysis process, alongside using Atlas Ti software, the following 'series of readings' informed engagement with the transcript texts generated from the strategic interview process, as well as focus group discussions. Violi (1992) proposes that treating and filtering collected data through various phases of reading avoids a simplistic reductionist process of data analysis where transcripts are dissected into aggregate themes that can obscure the nuanced complexities of received responses. The purpose of reading through the narratives of respondents with different lenses, is to shift data analysis "away from traditional 'coding', which implies fitting a person into a pre-existing set of categories...of the researcher or...established theoretical frameworks." (Violi, 1992, p. 134)

Reading One – General Reading: attention in the first phase of analysis, is reading the collected and transcribed data for the plot and overall narrative of research participants responses. The researcher engages with the text on general terms and the goal at this stage of reading is to ensure understanding and comprehension of the experiential anecdotes and stories shared by respondents.

Reading Two – Personal Reading: Reading for the Voice of the 'I': The attempt here is to listen to respondents' multi-layered voices, views and perspectives, and to read for the voices of the 'I'. Points of reflection and analysis in this stage of analysis is respondent voice their sense of agency; are there instances where the 'voice' of the respondent is also the 'voice' of the prevailing social or cultural norms, or the 'voice' of their religious belief system? Are these additional voices explicitly acknowledged by the respondent? Is the respondent aware of how their perspective, their sense of agency and voice, are informed by external influences, and which influences these may be? Through such a reading, respondents' individual voices can

[31] Informed by and adapted from Violi, (1992).

emerge, as well as indications and patterns of how larger collectives of voices influence and intersect with the individual's voice and agency.

On this note, it was worthwhile to observe that the majority of respondents were able to distinguish their own voice from the voices of others, as well as to make explicit the intersections between their own perspectives and their acquired perspectives, learned through their upbringing, education, as well as professional exposure and experience. That is, in articulating their responses to the research questions, strategic respondents were able to convey their own personal perspective and to speak in their own voice; acknowledge the prevailing or dominant perspective informing the specific point of discussion; as well identify points of linkage and divergence between their own view point and the view point otherwise touted as 'the norm'.

At one level, such meta-awareness of one's voice vis-à-vis the voices of others is a skill that might be expected from individuals in leadership positions. Nevertheless, respondents shared that learning to distinguish their own voice from the voices of others was a skill often refined, sometimes demanded, as a result of their occupying a leadership position and particularly for women. Furthermore, respondents discussed how in many instances, their authentic voice was smothered, silenced or overwhelmed by the dominant discourses. Some strategic interviewees related this to the nature of leadership which requires balancing many interest groups, stakeholders and voices. Other respondents were unequivocal in their opinion that such silencing is commonly related to prejudicial and discriminatory behaviour on the part of their male counterparts, or due to established institutional norms, again largely based on the behavioural customs of the majority male personnel.

Reading for the voice of the 'I' was therefore a valuable reading in terms of the research findings. Firstly, reading for the voice of the 'I' and how respondents' articulated this voice in relation to other informing voices in society, yielded a glimpse of the strategies women use to communicate what they know in terms of widely accepted discourse (with the claim being that discourse in itself is another gender biased societal structure). In some cases, respondents discussed how they negotiated and manoeuvred their perspective and points of view, by being aware of how to appropriately articulate themselves in their contexts; by learning 'the language of success' or 'the language of the boys' club'.

The politics of language emerged strongly here as a possible point for expanded research. To what extent is the language of business, commerce, leadership, education more suited to the male gender than to the female, and what are the repercussions with regard to furthering gender equity? To what extent and how are women able to use and apply language as a tool to their benefit?

Reading Three – Reading for Relationships: During this reading attention is paid to how respondents speak about their relationships and the broader social networks within which they live and work. This reading defines the parameters of "justice and care concerns, rights and responsibilities, independence and interdependence, and issues of autonomy and connection" for the respondents. (Violi, 1992, p. 131) The researcher also reads for "relationships which women regard as positive ones in their lives...in which they felt able and willing to confide their thoughts and feelings...felt listened to, heard and supported, and...the relationships which women described as difficult and constraining...in which they felt silenced or rejected." (Violi, 1992, p. 132) In particular reading for relationships aligned to the research exploration of the role of collegial relationships, as well as the influence of broader levels of social interaction, in mediating the experiences and participation of women in leadership and knowledge processes in organisations.

Reading Four – Contextual Reading: Cultural contexts and social structures are the focus of this phase of reading. Analysis focused on the wide array of social structures and institutions that make up the broader social, political, economic, cultural, religious contexts and worlds that respondents inhabit and experience. The aim is to listen to how respondents describe structural and ideological forces as constraining and/or enabling; as 'personal' and 'private' or 'public; as facilitative of their triumphs or as the cause of challenges and difficult circumstances. In this reading attention is given to the ways in which women's accounts voice and/or reflect dominant and normative conceptions, for example through the use of moral terms such as 'should', 'ought', 'right', 'wrong', 'good', 'bad' etc. This reading indicated the places in the narrative where respondents are speaking in terms of or through the cultural norms and values of society.

The intention in including the above series of readings in the research data analysis process was to outline different voices, in addition to a thematically based analysis. The informing rationale was an acknowledgement that with regard to gender equity, having voice, and the use of this

voice in articulation and discourse are pertinent issues, often intricately interwoven with dominant structures and interests. Reading for the different voices emphasised the "multi-layered nature of narratives" as well as facilitated identification of new or challenging issues related to the status quo, i.e. issues that challenged socio-cultural contexts, presented new types of relationships, and offered a fresh perspective.

At the same time it is important to place a caveat on analysis and interpretation of data gathered primarily at a vocal level, through the strategic interview and focus group process as well as during the AI pilot phase. While it is a recognised practice to include body language, and nonverbal communication signals in data collection and analysis (for instance, researchers may note when respondent's folded their arms, smiled, or had a distinct change in their countenance in response to certain questions) such an approach was not applied for this research. Principally, the informing reasoning was the possibility that differently located interview venues may influence respondent's ownership of the space and therefore how they choose to hold and represent themselves. That is, home-based interviews may yield more relaxed body language than more formal office spaces or public cafes. Additionally, an analysis of non-verbal cues would require an account of cultural and situational variables beyond the scope of the outlined approach for this thesis. For instance, certain ethnicities are associated with more expressive behaviourisms than others, or women from particular industries display different body languages – it has been suggested for example that women in academia use their hands when talking, more than women in business, where such mannerisms are more negatively interpreted and not as tolerated in the corporate sector especially for women. As such the focus in data collection and analysis was isolated to the vocal responses recorded and with accompanying researcher notes on the general nature of the exchange.

As Doob (1957, p.156) cautions however, the relation of behaviour in real-life situations to verbal responses to an interview schedule is not uncomplicated, and there may be undetected and intervening psychological nuances that distinguish the narrative from the experience being relayed. In terms of the data collection process therefore, the research is limited to the information that the respondents were willing to explicitly share, and this it is assumed is filtered by a host of variables from the desire to preserve reputation, to the particularities of the interview and focus group moment, including the emotions at play, levels of fatigue, personal willingness

to be open and candid etc. It is not considered however that acknowledging and taking into account the interplay of various intervening variables in respondent's vocal responses, negates from the value or applicability of the data gathered, analysed and presented as findings below. Follow-up research may add to clarifying identified clusters of findings and further test variables to remove ambivalence, well as improve data, information and knowledge of women in leadership in organisations in an African context.

6.2 Issues of Relevance to the Findings

Within the wider context, broad issues related to contemporary economic and socio-political environments in Kenya and South Africa, and internationally, were considered influential factors in the research process.

The current political economic context of work and employment are important to note, particularly with reference to the contemporary international financial crisis and instability. Several current commentaries have noted the different impacts of the economic recession on men and women, and the related repercussions and implications (Rosin, 2010; Thompson, 2013). It is also worthwhile to take into account women's changing roles and place in society as a whole in order to appreciate the priorities, motivations and qualities they bring to their roles as leaders. Marshall (1984, p. 4) notes that women's various roles are closely intertwined and in order to understand women's lives as wholes it is important "to examine the diverse aspects and dimensions of women's lives." Therefore in exploring the obstacles and facilitating factors women encounter in senior positions or in their roles as leaders within organisations, it becomes imperative to discuss correlated and interrelated obstacles and facilitators women encounter in the institutions of the home, family, marriage, education system as well as cultural and religious contexts.

Within an African context, the wider cultural milieu is of particular consequence. That is, women's place within their cultural communities is a significant contributing factor to the opportunities as well as limitations faced in their aspirations towards leadership. Such opportunities for instance range from access to formal schooling education for girl children, to the paths of personal/professional development females viz-a-viz males are encouraged to pursue, as well as the availability of opportunities for women to pursue further education, skills

training and capacity building that would support their entry and retention at senior and leadership organisational levels.

In both South Africa and Kenya, wide-ranging issues of transformation and ongoing societal processes of transition, offered a conducive research environment for the inquiry. The research questions aligned well with current debates and discourse on issues of transformation and diversity in the socio-political and economic contexts of the two countries of focus. In post-apartheid South Africa the ongoing context of transition and transformation was a foundational reference point; and in Kenya the contemporary context of democratisation was a main reference point. With regards to the issue of gender equity, concerns with social justice and the need to redistribute current growth benefits to address past imbalances within both national contexts, has emphasised equitable representation and appropriate supporting legislation as important national agendas. The research process, findings and recommendations relayed are therefore couched within a prevailing context of socio-political transformation in both countries of focus.

The process of data analysis aimed to deliberate on and present the findings guided by the levels of inquiry and methodological framework outlined for the research study. The data content gathered was rich and in depth, with the exploration often reaching into diverse domains and arenas related to the research field of inquiry. While some areas of exploration were not immediately intended or explicitly targeted by the research questions, the information received was nonetheless found to be meaningfully interrelated and of relevance to the study.

Findings are discussed according to the key themes that emerged from participants' responses, and in line with the interview schedule format, in order of the research questions fielded. Primarily findings are depicted as key quotes from the transcribed and recorded appreciative inquiry sessions, strategic interviews and focus groups content. The intention has been to preserve the authenticity of respondents' voices, even as the quotes are anonymous (a list of organisations from which strategic respondents were drawn is included as an Appendix). While a large body of data was collected as transcripts from the interview process, key quotes have been identified through the Atlas Ti data analysis process, as well as isolated as particularly representative of a distinctive perspective. Alongside key quotes provided, relevant literature and ongoing discourse is referenced and discussed, as pertinent to locating the findings in current contexts and in relation to contemporary issues.

7. FINDINGS

The key findings of the research study are presented here as themes that emerged from participants' responses to the interview questions and through the data analysis process. Main clusters of findings refer to, personalised reflections on leadership; main intervening facilitators and obstacles at structural and cultural level of organisations; strategies of women in leadership; support requirements of organisations for heightened participation and improved performance of women in high level and strategic knowledge and leadership processes.

For the purposes of this study, the exploration was guided by three main criteria regarded as being significant for gaining a broad overview of women's experience in leadership within organisations. These were identified as, Motivations, Collegial Relations, and Decision-Making. These criteria were investigated and are presented as part of the findings of the research inquiry in terms of the following:

Questions tapping into women's motivations in leadership: This was considered a useful focus area for the strategic interviews because as Marshall (1984, p.23) notes, "a recurrent issue is whether women are really serious, and motivated (in the ways that men are) about their jobs." The "unequal legitimacy of women's different motivations" and aspirations towards work is implied in assumptions about what constitutes legitimate motivations, embedded in the literature examining priorities assigned and related to work. In particular, women's commitment to their multiple gender roles amounts to perceptions and judgements of low organisational commitment. Additionally, women are traditionally excluded from management jobs because of their maternity potential and the investments associated with child bearing and rearing. These evaluations present a double-bind for women workers, where women are considered less serious and less highly motivated than male employees because broader areas of their lives are included as priorities alongside and in some instances taking precedence over their jobs. (Marshall, 1984: p. 21-22)

Towards addressing this issue, the findings discuss women's self-image, self-perception and motivations. Stereotypes addressed include the misperception that women have low self-esteem, negatively self-evaluate and adhere to or alternatively extremely oppose societal gender stereotypes, in choices of whether and how to champion gender and equity issues. Findings relate

to the key motivations that give meaning to women leaders in their roles, and that influence and inform their attitudes, roles and styles of leadership.

Questions inquiring into collegial relations: Discussing respondents' relations at the work place was useful in deepening understanding of women's work contexts in terms of the impact of interpersonal professional interactions on their ability to contribute their knowledge and effectively lead. Judi Marshall and others have commented extensively on the importance of subordinate relationships for effective leadership performance. Marshall (1984, p. 18-19) elucidates for example how for women in particular, others' low expectations and negative reactions to their positions of seniority and authority within the workplace, despite theoretical leadership profiles similar to those of men, can undermine their ability to exercise formal authority fully and to perform optimally. Themes of interest in participant's responses revolved around the perceived legitimacy of women in senior and leadership positions in organisations, and how women leaders relate and exercise their leadership and power in relation to subordinates and colleagues.

Questions exploring decision-making agency: The aim at this level of the inquiry was to investigate decision making spaces and practices of women in senior and leadership positions in order to gauge the quality of women's participation and involvement. Examining obstacles and facilitators to women's capacity to engage with, make and implement decisions, as a main denominator of effective leadership, is useful for perceiving the occurrence of tokenism within organisations, as well as understanding the extent to which women may apply their knowledge in the practice of leadership. Discussing different levels and types of power, Oxaal and Baden (1997) have linked decision-making authority and the creative ability to solve problems to 'power to' which is associated to 'power within' characterised by self agency, self-confidence, self-awareness and self assertiveness. The extent to which organisational contexts are power enabling as opposed to power restricting in terms of empowering agency was a related investigation point of interest for the research.

Overall, findings indicate that facilitators and obstacles encountered by women in senior and leadership positions in organisations may be mainly categorised at a structural (tangible) level and cultural (intangible) level, referencing differences between heterarchical and hierarchical organisational forms, and the persistence of conventional norms of interaction that perpetuate

exclusive and competitive organisational cultures. Related to this, strategic respondents discussed strategies found to be useful and effective in negotiating and enhancing their leadership roles and contributions, and these strategies are presented under broad groupings addressing behaviour; communication; information; planning and leadership. Additionally, responses articulated by research respondents discussed the types of support women require to be effective leaders and to meaningfully contribute to knowledge processes. Findings here indicate the value of institutional and policy support structures and mechanisms, and specifically discuss mentorship and capacity building; professional and women's networks; application of innovative technology platforms; and time flexibility in working arrangements. The role of leadership in engendering accommodating spaces for women's performance in knowledge and leadership processes in organisations is reflected on with particular reference to, the benefits and features of learning and knowing organisations, including promoting diversity, innovation and creativity; the continued politicisation of gender issues; and the role of socialisation as a foundational determinant and seminal contributing factor to ongoing efforts to address bias and achieve equity.

The discussion of the core findings of the research proceeds as follows:

- Respondents' motivations, experiences and highpoints of leadership;
- The organisational facilitators and obstacles to women in leadership and senior positions in terms of organisational structures and cultures;
- Strategies women in leadership and senior positions apply to negotiate their organisational contexts;
- An exploration of suggested recommendations to improve levels of gender equity and to support women at senior and leadership positions within organisations, focusing on particular policy and procedural mechanisms;
- A discussion on the role of leadership, gender politics, and socialisation in enculturating conducive organisational environments that promote equity, diversity and sustainability. Features of learning and knowing organisations are reflected on in terms of benefits for the emergence of diverse and innovative knowledges, improved leadership and organisational performance, and in relation to broader processes of socio-political transformation.

7.1 High Points of Leadership[32]

The findings here are in relation to women's motivations in leadership, and emanate from research participant's responses identifying the aspects of their roles and work as leaders to which they assign and associate the most value. Participants were requested to reflect on and share one or two defining moments that influence and inform how they choose to lead. The intention was to set the tone of the interview process in order to invite open dialogue and sharing on respondents' personal experiences as key aspects of their tacit knowledge.

i) Merits of Leadership Roles and Work

Personal Characteristics Valued in Leadership

Reflecting on the characteristics that respondents valued in their roles as leaders, the following were the key findings:

Perseverance, strength and ability to overcome obstacles; achievement and realising potential; capacity to explore ideas and implement initiatives; ability to listen, resonate strongly with, "to feel" others/ empathy; adaptability to different contexts.

Key quotes included:

"my self esteem"

"my capacity for nurturing all who cross my path"

"my ability to balance my roles as a mother and a leader"

"I am always willing to strive to be on my path even when it is hard to do what is right for the moment."

"My boldness/bravery"

In responding to this question, respondents also referred to shortcomings, and the need to have more courage, to be more assertive as well as vulnerable was a recurring theme.

"Do we have the courage to go to the board and say that we may not be able to deliver next year as much as we have but long term this has the potential. So it's courage to go to the board and not feel that they will see less in you because you're delivering a smaller profit than in prior

[32] Research Questions 1-4

years. We can't always be super at the work we do, the times are tough and everyone is struggling with the right answers to the changing demands of the economy."

"The courage to go back and say I'm confused here, I need some help, I need some further guidance, I need to get clear on the purpose and the objective of what we're doing."

Another popular commentary from research participants was the need for women to be less apologetic about their ambitions and aspirations for success.

"I need the courage to stand more firmly by what I know. Not just to hold onto it for myself, but to speak it out, and to act on it boldly."

"I think that the courage to say no, I disagree, I'm doing it this way, it's going to be different depending on the issue at hand. But wherever possible I try to have that courage, to push ahead we my decisions even when they go against the grain."

"Do all leaders need courage? Do all organisations encourage courage in leaders, especially women leaders? The answer is, frankly not always, not really. If you're in circumstances that don't serve up adversity, that don't serve up fear, that don't take you out of your comfort zone, that don't require breaking through barriers, you know you can do quite well without courage. I think for women that's what they call being a token, or tokenism. Yes that's what it's called. But the points where doing what's right and doing what's easy, take you down separate paths, or where giving in to the barriers, is more tempting to do even if you're angry at them, than breaking through them, that's what takes courage. And when we have that, we pursue the path that is right for where we want to go, even if it's hard and not everyone will agree, or even understand."

"We need to talk more about our courage to one another, and to share about some of the courage that it takes to get where we are and what we have done wrong and did well along the way."

"We can teach and learn courage through our stories. At so many different tables, at meetings, lunches, conferences, I've heard things from women of not only where courage has been displayed in their leadership, in their lives, as leaders in their communities, in their work places, but also stories where it's been taught and learnt, and where as a result communities have been lifted to a higher level."

Core Meaningful Factors of Leadership

The key themes that research respondents cited, and suitable quotes to capture the general tone of responses on core meaningful factors of leadership are presented here. It was noteworthy that in the majority of instances, when reflecting on meaningful factors of leadership, participants continually referenced core meaningful factors rooted in their broader life roles, such as parent and spouse (referenced in the majority of responses), community member and adherent to a

particular religion/faith, as illustrated for instance in the following extract from a response shared by a senior woman leader in the public education sector in Kenya:

"Well to start with, we can talk about the religious life, because that has been a major influence for me in my role. And as you can see I'm old enough, which means I've seen how my faith in my life plays a role since many years ago. I remember in 1953, at that time here in Kenya there was the Emergency, I was young and I was teaching at a girls' intermediate school then. I was teaching young people, with the hope that I can come back and continue working with them, young people, teaching them. Then, I was disturbed by the fact that now during this time of Emergency the faith we received may be wiped out. But we need to conserve what we have learnt and known. So that was the motive which made me to go teaching young people, also to go to pray. Then, we received faith through the missionaries, and also education. So as part of the missionaries, I went to Europe at that time. I went to a teaching mission in Europe, to England and Italy, for my education, and this was also a main part of my religious formation. I went in 1953, I came back 1959. I was in Italy and England for the whole time. So in 1959 is when I came back and I was sent to work in Meru, to a school that was started in 1958. Now, just the other day we celebrated the golden jubilee of the formation of that school. It had just started then, with the very young ones coming from all parts of Kenya, now it's a big school, a big school there. When I took over there were about 28 children, now the population is in the hundreds. So I've been there from 1960, I took over as Headmistress from 1960 till 1987, I left in 1987, 27 years, although in between I kept some time to go study and then come back. I'm no longer there, some other people took over, and doing a good job. I still lend my advice when they call me in to do that. But that was my path in education, learning then teaching and then now being on the boards of different schools and in the local districts of the country. But what I did most of my life, was also my religious life. So that has been a good experience for me. To see the growth of that first school, and now others in Kenya, and to see how the pupils some of them became teachers, some lawyers, doctors, some of the pupils are even teaching there where they learnt. And you see how they have also grown as people, good citizens most of these people. For me, my faith has been very seminal in my roles as a leader."

Empowering others was a theme repeated by research respondents across sectors and in both case study countries:

"I like to take people's potential to another level where things you hope for actually happen. I like being witness to people's empowerment."

"Leadership is about the power of ennobling, of lifting people up; empowerment."

"In my leadership role I always try to remember the importance of empowerment and support of others. I mean leadership is not just about uplifting yourself."

"When you have the power of the focus on you and you use that power, not to amplify your own voice, but to amplify the voice of the next person, you get access to more experience, more knowledge that is better for the organisation."

Related to the value of empowerment, working with and garnering cooperation from others in terms of getting acceleration to accomplish goals and objectives was also identified as a core meaningful factor of leadership. This included having a sense of solidarity with peers and receiving gratification from working in a team and contributing toward team efforts. Women whose leadership roles involved teamwork and substantial management of employees, communicated that they valued being a leading member in their organisation in as much as they could set and represent the standard of performance for their colleagues and employees, and contribute to collective success. As one respondent remarked,

"I think it's very important in our industry [financial services] where we are catering to so many different variables, we may all have different ways of doing things but we have to put it all together and do what's best for the common good of the company and for all our teams."

Women who owned their own businesses, valued their leadership roles in as much as they felt they could set a good example as role models inspiring the aspirations of others. At another level, women who owned their own businesses greatly valued their work as leaders of their companies because of a sense of ownership and personal accomplishment.

"I think that by doing the work I'm in now, being a woman who is managing her own construction company, and I also have an interior design company, I'm inspiring people to step out and be innovative. Take the initiative. Leadership is about showing how latent potential and capacities in ourselves can be unleashed."

On the other hand, women who occupied senior and leadership positions in large organisations such as corporations in the private sector, government or higher education institutions, valued being leading members in their organisations to the extent that they felt they had an influence on strategic decision making, had a level of autonomy and independence in their management, and could effect change as required.

"For me, it really is all about showing the people who are responsible for the business at all levels, and also the beneficiaries, showing them what's at stake, what can be done to advance the business, how we can each support and help the brand along, and how we can all help the company. Then it feels right."

Finding the work meaningful in terms of personal and professional development was a core meaningful factor of leadership emphasised by interviewees. At a professional level, this included having goals and objectives to pursue, the existence of opportunity and the possibility of upward mobility. At a personal level, the "capacity to aspire and imagine new frontiers of

growth" is considered important, contributing to a sense of purpose and meaning for participants in leadership roles. That is, respondents referred to the need for their roles as leaders to enhance and not detract from their personal development. Several commentaries referred to the potential for leadership positions to place demands or encourage behaviours otherwise unhealthy for the wellbeing of their families as well as for their own sense of health and wellbeing. Examples included tendencies to over-work and dedicate less time to the demands of their families and children. Moreover, where leadership roles demand behaviours contrary to the personalities or sense of self of respondents, participants commented on a lack of connection to the position, with engagement in leadership tasks determined by expected outcomes with minimal intrinsic motivation.

"I like to feel purposeful. Then I can keep striving to deliver my best."

"I like to feel like I'm doing what it is I am supposed to do, that the vision and the purpose of what I'm doing professionally, aligns to my vision and purpose personally in my own life goals and ambitions."

"I want to work for perfection in my ongoing initiatives and even in change where necessary. When they offered me this position, I was very clear, I bring my whole self, and I won't play the game by dirty rules, even if that is the expectation of leaders to some extent. If leadership is about a culture of corruption, or subterfuge, then I am not that leader. And they said, good, come on board. And since I've been on board I have done my best to clean things up and bring my best self forward in my leadership."

"There's always more distance to travel, you can always take your work further, rather than just saying I'm here, I've made it. Leadership has meaning when it opens paths for growth and development, for you, your company and the employees. Leadership is the beginning, not the end of the good work."

Associated with maintaining a sense of direction as a core meaningful factor in leadership, participants significantly related this to being grounded and rooted in their African identities.

"Africa is my focus and I want to see it prosper, and this infuses my role as a leader with meaning."

"Knowing what the legacy is that I want to use my time with this company to be able to further. Especially in Africa where there is much work to do to build the societies we'd like to see."

"Feeling like I have something to offer. And it is valuable for many reasons. In this country, we can achieve our goalposts if we remember our history, where we've come from and where we're trying to go."

Often alluded to at this level was the issue of social justice, captured succinctly in the following quote:

"Social justice is a core factor that gives life to my work. You don't just chase wealth, but must restore balance through social justice by giving everyone the space to work on themselves and experience the fullness of life. Social justice is achievable but it takes a lot of work to get rid of selfishness by changing one's attitude and behaviour."

Finally, a minimal percentage of respondents valued the sense of prestige and social status associated with their positions in leadership. At this level, the core factor of meaning in leadership may be referred to as a driven ambition.

ii) Leadership Lessons Learned

Defining Moments and Experiences that Influence Leadership

Defining moments and experiences that influence leadership could be categorised along the following themes: socialisation and educational experiences; moments of self discovery and enlightenment; encouragement from others e.g. husband, family, mentors; a challenge to individual capacities or capabilities e.g. a challenge from subordinates or facing a challenging task.

A sizeable proportion of the lessons gained from women's experiences were related to an awakening in themselves about their own capacities and capabilities of leadership. These defining moments in women's lives boosted levels of self-confidence and expanded awareness of their potential. The following quote from a strategic respondent heading a professional organisation with offices in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, offers a suitable example of this:

"After the first coup d'etat in Uganda, I got a job in London so the kids could get an education. Afterwards, I worked for the UN and moved to New York. I made a home for my children and continued to pay for their education. Back in Uganda in the meantime I built a house so my children could feel grounded and have a home in Africa. We are uncompromising Africanists. The kids are unambivalent. They know they are not just working for themselves but they are also doing something for Africa in Africa...I learnt through my journey that I can overcome many obstacles, while still maintaining a sense of direction and location for myself and my family. I learnt about being strong, and I continue to lead this way. I might bend but I am still grounded and rooted. I am flexible and I have learnt about making fundamental shifts but...I have learned to be indestructible, not a victim. I know I bring this outlook to my work."

A large majority of high point experiences shared by interviewees were professional experiences. Particularly noteworthy, being positively acknowledged, entrusted with, and sanctioned in senior and leadership roles was a highpoint. The sense of achievement and gratification women felt as a result of defining moments in their lives that involved empowering others, also influenced leadership style. Women who were able to see the positive outcomes and benefits of investing in and raising the skills and capacities of others, continued to invest in the empowerment of others through their senior positions and roles as leaders:

"Training for Transformation implemented an Africa wide training programme, for women drawn from all over Africa. I was the Training Mentor for the Uganda group, and at the graduation ceremony that the women themselves had organised, I saw them open up...and become visible, each in their own moment...At the start of the course, they had seemed confused but their participation in the training empowered and transformed them. I witnessed them develop a belief in themselves that changed their lives...I loved seeing them 'take off' and I don't mind the time I spend in training and mentoring as a leader. It is my calling."

"The real test of leadership, isn't how much ambition you nurture within yourself, it is how much you can use in inspiring others, and that is key, to make sure that we bring the best out of our human resources."

A relatively smaller number of high point experiences were more personal, however the impact of these experiences related directly to the work lives and careers of respondents. As shared during a focus group discussion,

"Being a leader and being a mother, educating my children are my highpoints. The skills I learnt through motherhood, directly apply to my role as a leader. My ability to organise and keep time, to think ahead and plan, to communicate and transfer skills and knowledge."

"I really think it was my high school friends, the group I was socialised with during those crucial formative years. We all learnt how to lead together, through our roles in school as prefects, competing collaborating, doubting if we were worthy of the positions we had been given, and learning how to apply the authority we had. And when I look around today, almost all of us are in upper management, leading teams, leading companies. I think those years held many high points that I ride on today."

7.2 Experiences of Organisational Leadership[33]

The findings here related to respondent's experiences of leadership within their organisations. The intention was to explore respondent's practices of leadership, as well as to begin to examine women's work and leadership contexts, and their interpersonal interactions with subordinates, colleagues and mentors.

i) Interactions with Colleagues and Personnel

Research participants were asked to reflect on their interactions with colleagues. Questions explored how respondents relate to their peers and subordinates as leaders, as well as how respondents perceive their peers and subordinates to relate to them. In order to narrow the potential expanse of responses, strategic respondents were requested to focus on two main dimensions of their interpersonal interactions: examples of when they felt their leadership positively contributed to the professional environment, work outcomes and relations with employees; and examples of challenging situations faced in relations with colleagues and personnel in their roles as leaders.

Respondents shared numerous examples of positive leadership contributions to the work and professional life of their colleagues and personnel. The following constitute a sample of quotes to indicate the trend of responses received.

"My approach in work and life is always to ask, how are things working, are they working as well as they could? When things are not working, the fact that they are not working can trigger a decision point or action for myself, and I include others. But what can also trigger action or a decision is an understanding that things can work even better if we try something different. So I'm always striving, and I think this rubs off on those around me including my colleagues."

"As an adult educator, I empower people and like to see them move forward."

"I require people to work together and think together and collaborate and problem solve and I like to push them in this, and I think I contribute to their professional lives, and even their personal lives in this way."

"When I get peak performance and I can see the staff are challenging themselves in positive ways, then I like to think I have made a positive contribution, because all this is happening under my supervision."

[33] Research Questions 5-8

"I try to motivate my staff to stay at peak performance. I do this is by changing the criteria of performance from time to time. Because sometimes you'll start seeing someone slipping downwards in their work. But if you can help that individual by giving them a fresh focus, it helps to encourage them to achieve."

"Seeing someone's potential, and investing in that capacity, then at last where the person goes, ok I get what I need to do, and it's fine, I know I can do it, let me have at it, and they're going for their ambitions."

"I try to have a very open style of leadership and to encourage people to bring their best selves forward. I try to keep the lines of communication and the level of candour open so that people feel they can voice their views, share their opinions and offer fresh perspectives. I think this is beneficial to my staff, because it emboldens them, even ennobles them, to come forward, engage with me and the team, and to perform well."

The above is in line with ideas proposed by Jean Baker Miller that associates the increase of one's personal power with the enhancement of the power of others. As opposed to based on competition, "power is conceived as a renewable resource that is shared through cooperation, dialogue, and reflection." (Irwin, 1995, p.132) In this conception of power, the notion of agency is couched within community where the advancement of self is connected to the advancement of others.

Yammarino et. al (1997) distinguish female leaders as more attune to developing and building individualised and unique relationships with consideration to colleagues (Comer et. al, 1995) practising an affiliative style of leadership. (Goleman, 2000) Similarly according to Trinidad and Normore (2005) women tend to adopt participative and relational leadership styles in education and business spheres. Women are generally associated with a collaborative leadership style that emphasizes motivating others and partnering individual self-interest to the goals of the group, towards building consensus for a common purpose.

On the other hand, examples of adverse effects of respondents' leadership on the work environment and to personnel were also shared:

"I've got a concern with that one, and especially when you're working under pressure, you may have noticed that what happens is that the intention is there to motivate your team and lead them in a positive manner, but then you end up not achieving what you wanted to achieve. I mean, sometimes you are severe and harsh and impatient, but that is because of the time limits you're working under. But it's important to be able to manage that."

"Two managers one of them got demoted and the other one was semi-involuntarily let go because he couldn't live by my code. With me, either we're together, or you're out if I can help it. I'm not sure this is always the best way to be as a leader, even personally."

"There are times when consulting with my partners and we disagree on something or other, I know I can be more sympathetic to their side of things. Yet usually I will keep on challenging them and I can be quite inflexible. I don't think this is a great way of working for my partners, but I think that's also why I still have my job because I can be obstinate."

"I can instigate defensive behaviour in my colleagues by making them feel constantly under check, and I can micro manage, which is a barrier I think to more efficient work relationships."

A sense of isolation from their peers was also described by some respondents in a dynamic that may be akin to the experiences ascribed to women perceived to have token status. As one respondent commented,

"How being the boss looks from the perspective of us looking at somebody from outside their situation, is different from how it looks when you're the boss and the frontline person. Even if they think you were helped into that position, they don't know what it is like to be there and the struggles you have to face daily. It's easy to judge when you're not in the firing line from all angles. So my colleagues don't always understand where I'm coming from, and sometimes you can feel that interpersonal distance."

The Benefits of Collegial Environments

According to Rosener (1990) in her study on ways women lead, women more than men make effort to be inclusive and welcoming, and to create an accommodative and friendly work environment. Women leaders emphasize team-based approaches to achieving performance and strategic goals, and apply more adaptive leadership styles that are people-oriented, prioritising and encouraging collective participation.

In responses from research respondents, solidarity with peers was singled out as a contributing factor to effective leadership:

"The whole work ethic in our organisation is geared towards bringing the best out of us. And you can see it even in our higher managerial structures. There is a genuine interest in human resources, maybe because we work in the hospitality industry, but there is an interest in making certain that the best comes out of us."

"When their [co-workers] spirits are low, then my spirit is also dampened. I suppose I'm quite empathetic like that, and sometimes I notice that when the teams' performance is low, my

performance is low too. It could be the nature of the work I do that we work closely together and affect each other's performance, regardless of our positions. I don't know but my work relationships really do have an impact on me."

Likewise, negative attitudes of co-workers was highlighted as a particularly demotivating aspect of work cultures.

"Some of the things that you've got to face in mobilising teams back on the job are unbelievable, and the main challenges can lie here, with your people, your staff. Some of the times you really have to dig deep to give that boost, and sometimes the 'oomph' just is not there."

"Like, there were whispers, 'well, who died and made her the leader, who put her in charge, is she even the right person for the job?' That's the kind of preconceived belief nonsense that gets kicked off in the workplace sometimes before people even get to know you or see you perform, and I think especially if you are a woman - because people have pre-set beliefs about who you are, how you got your job, can you do your job and so on. Then you can decide if this is either going to motivate you or demotivate you, but dealing with that subtle antagonism, can take up a lot of time when your attention needs to be directed elsewhere."

A point for further research not included in the current study may further investigate issues such as sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace, which taint organisational environments for women. (Gouws, 2012) Increasingly, the interpersonal quality of work spaces and organisational cultures is a point of interest with regard to impacts for employee and leadership performance.

ii) Gender and Leadership

In framing the context and setting the tone for exploring the experience of women leaders within their organisations, it was useful to invite participant's views on a central premise of the research. Respondents were asked to reflect on and share their opinions on the issue of gender differences in leadership; that is, to what extent is gender a significant factor influencing leadership? Do women and men lead differently?

Responses to this question vacillated between strong opinions agreeing and disagreeing that gender is a significant factor influencing leadership.

Interviewees who disagreed that leadership is influenced by gender in general argued that such a claim encourages false assumptions, false perceptions and is a limiting perspective.

"That assumption is faulty unfortunately, it's like saying leadership is based on colour, or religion."

"Unfortunately that'll be absolutely total nonsense, total nonsense. What some women would want us to believe is, if I'm the one who is sitting where that leader is sitting, things will be better for everything/everyone, they will not, no. Because it's not based on your sex, no. It is based on your character as a person, and that is completely different from what your gender is."

As Young – Eisendrath (1988, p.60) notes, this response may be expected as "any women oppose the labels of female inferiority in contemporary life, and identity themselves with strength, competence and authority."

The insistence was that every individual has the potential to bring something unique and different to bear through their leadership in as much as every individual is different from the next in numerous ways not limited to a discussion on sex or gender.

Respondents of the opinion that women and men do lead differently were split between those who felt these differences were innate, and those who consigned these differences to a range of other external factors, such as socialisation.

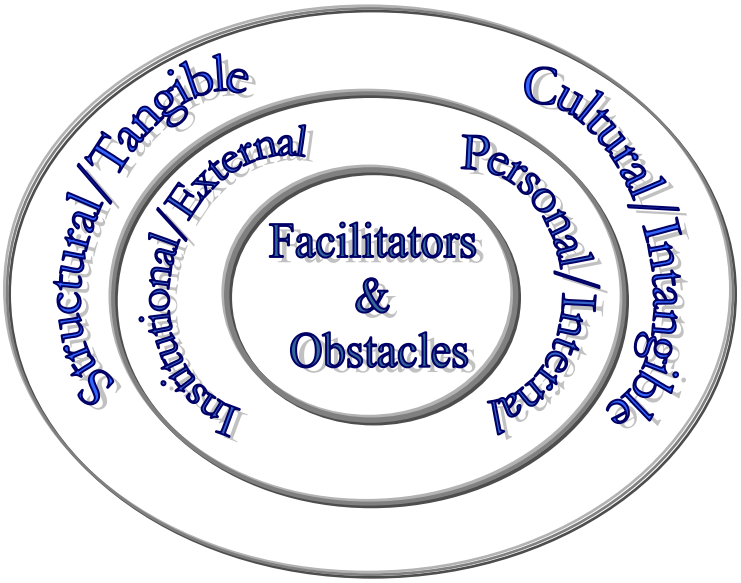
"Let me put it this way, very often you have someone come in as a leader from another industry for example, and they bring a whole other perspective and see possibilities, that those of us who've grown up in a business may not. It may challenge our definition of what's possible, or even our definition of what is successful. I think this applies for women leaders where in general these positions are dominated by men."

7.3 Facilitators and Obstacles of Women in Leadership

These findings respond to a main aspect of the research inquiry, namely, the organisational obstacles and facilitators that respectively impede or support the roles of women in senior and leadership positions.

Facilitators and obstacles discussed may be delineated broadly in two categories: structural/tangible and cultural/intangible. At a sub-level, responses focused on obstacles and facilitators within both the institutional/external environment, as well as personal/internal spaces. (See Sample Table of Facilitators and Obstacles in Appendix) As per the delimitations outlined for the research, the data analysis and interpretation process focused on the institutional/external level, principally discussing structural/tangible and cultural/intangible aspects of facilitators and obstacles of women in leadership.

Figure 8: *Types of Organisational Facilitators and Obstacles*



Additional research may be directed at a further investigation of facilitative and restricting factors for women in senior and leadership roles, with particular attention to women's inner capacities. Several respondents commented on the value of a focus on personal strengths as a way of "building up on what you have, instead of you having to start all over again to build up another way."

"And these [strengths] can be a roadmap we can use, and an opportunity to step up rather than get stifled by our old ways."

Similar to the categorisation of facilitative factors, the obstacles compromising women's roles in senior and leadership positions were identified at institutional/structural level as well as within and internal to women themselves, as individuals and as a collective. Further, obstacles were framed in relation to two main points of bias: on the one hand women are disadvantaged in attaining to male standards as a result of applied gender stereotypes/stereotyping; and on the other hand women are prevented from exercising alternative models of performance more reflective of female based experience, modes of learning and knowledge as a result of explicit and implicit forms of discrimination.

The following discussion summarises research participant responses with reference to aspects of organisational work culture and environment that impact leadership performance; as well as the influence and impacts of hierarchical versus heterarchical organisational structures on women's participation and agency in knowledge and leadership processes.

i) *Aspects of Organisational Work Culture and Environment that Impact Leadership*

Predominant Institutional Cultures

In discussions around the perceived weaknesses of institutions and organisations with regard to how they support female leadership, respondents made reference to prevailing restrictive and entrenched aspects of their institutional and organisational cultures. Respondents' responses focused largely on the challenges of negotiating what may be referred to as 'predominant institutional cultures.' Main themes that emerged were the existence of entrenched attitudes sustaining a set (exclusionary) status quo; and a highly competitive environment which complicates issues of gender inequity.

Referring to the challenge of shifting entrenched interests and groups, a strategic interviewee shared that in attempting to achieve meaningful changes in her organisation operating regionally with Eastern Africa, "there was a lot of parochialism that we had to overcome and parochialism across borders and if you like, parochialism within as well."
Similar comments included:

"It's an uphill battle against the status quo."

"Its [the culture] very steeped in the old ways."

"There are parts of the organisation where those old ways of doing things are sort of almost encoded in people's DNA, and your task as a leader is to begin to un-encode those practices."

"The challenge is that you are going to have people in your organisation that you say let's do things differently, and they immediately stick to the old way of doing things, and the challenge is that we need to have people move out of that."

"Sometimes it seems that it is less about the quality of your work, and more about negotiating the politics of the workplace and manoeuvring different levels of power networks."

Offering an explanation of this dynamic to some extent, Bagshaw (2004) discusses groupthink as a circumstance where consensus is valued more than quality decision-making, and resistance develops against alternatives that deviate from conventional interpretations and responses to events and eventualities. Lauring and Selmer (2012, p. 91) discuss social categorization theory (SCT) linked to the Similarity-Attraction Hypothesis (Byrne et. al, 1966) and to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982). The basic assumption is individuals will have a positive self-perception surrounded by similar peers, defining themselves and others in terms of group membership, more

than as individuals. Individuals are more likely to differentiate themselves based on salient attributes and detectable traits such as age, gender, race, compared with non-visible characteristics such as skills, education and perspectives. SCT also suggests that "preference for positive social self-evaluation stimulates an unconscious tendency to sort others" into less preferred social categories, seen in a negative light (Lauring & Selmer, 2012, p. 91).

SCT predicts similarity of demographic attributes has positive effects on group processes such as communication and knowledge sharing, which can lead to positive work outcomes (van Knippenberg et, al 2004). On the other hand however, high pressure for conformity within a team can obscure differences and objections, promoting an illusion of the group line as superior, and dismissing potentially beneficial alternatives and solutions as unworkable, sometimes with detrimental outcomes. Gouws (2012, p. 528) quotes Hassim and Walker (1993) referring to frustrations of "institutional deafness" particularly in environments that privilege male knowledge and expertise, imploring the need to learn to listen to the subaltern, and advocate for diversity in severely homogenous institutions.

At another level, respondents also highlighted competitive institutional cultures as challenging contexts that combine with gender prejudice to heighten experience of discrimination, and in some instances, hostility in the workplace.

"There is still a lot of internal competition."

"You're not told what's going on because at times people want to come to a meeting so that in front of everyone they come up with this great idea, and then everyone says 'oh, what a clever person', and they get the sole accolade, they have the one up on you."

The majority of respondents disassociated from the type of competitive ego required to successfully negotiate work place competition and responses included:

"When it comes to decision making, there is this view that to get anything done, it's about selling your recommendations to the people who are responsible for the commercial business, and it's about massaging egos. But if we're just stuck in this view that it's ego at the end of the day, we lose a whole perspective of how things can be done, and we limit the organisational culture. We remain stuck with everyone trying to schmooze with the right people, and as a woman, you're always a half step out when it comes to that."

Respondents acknowledged competitive organisational cultures are intensified by turbulent economic environments, and the need to maintain the profit bottom line:

"It's tough, and you might lost your job. I think that's the reason the trajectory of some of my colleagues who head other business units, is of getting into fighting for their piece rather than looking at what might they have to sacrifice in order to take the organisation collectively to the next level. Everyone is looking out for their own."

"The deal breaker, whether you get a thumbs up or thumbs down for your performance, is the financials. There's constant pressure to increase, at the very least maintain, financial gains."

"We still have to make a business case. Can you generate the required business? If not, move aside for somebody who can. There are no easy rides here."

"Your team's success and your success as a leader is going to be measured by the profit that you earn as a business unit at the organisational table. The rest is details."

"Fortunately because of the financials sometimes there is no resistance to change. Although sometimes some people might want to know what do they get out of that kind of a new set-up. But once it is explained that for example it will maximise our revenue, and bring other benefits that they can appreciate, then they can agree to go for it, and that's the primary driving point, whether you're a man or a woman leader: profit."

One of the strategic respondents elaborated upon this point, giving the example of African Leaders in the early post-independence decade of the 1970s. The respondent emphasised the pitfalls of simply substituting colonial rulers with African leaders, without also altering the systems and institutions of the colonial state machinery. The inherent structural biases geared to privilege a select few over the governed proletariat therefore remained unchanged and became redefined along lines of ethnicity in many cases, as opposed to race as was the norm during colonialism. As such, while there is a role for proving the capability of marginalised groups within dominant systems, for the sake of access and redress for example, such a role is not sufficient to achieve lasting and equitable change. It is not enough to substitute leaders, without also addressing the systems, institutions and structures of such leadership in ways that allow alternative and more collectively beneficial modes of leading to emerge.

"Look at our leaders, the first set of presidents, [Milton] Obote, [Julius] Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and Azikiwe, and...in Liberia...Sampo. The idea was that, in fact Nkrumah was called the Redeemer, we used to emulate west African people, because Ghana and Nigeria were the first people to become independent. However, for example Kenyatta was one of the most oppressive leaders in this nation, and whoever followed him followed the same trend. Nkrumah, Azikiwe, tried, Nyerere, same thing. The theory is, African leaders having suffered, having been done this and this and this and this, they are not likely to be oppressive like the Europeans. They're sympathetic to the poor, they're sympathetic to whatever, whatever, whatever. The evidence, the final result were a disaster, actually total disaster. Now, what women would want us to believe, is if I'm the one who is sitting where the leader is sitting, things will be better for

everything/everyone, they will not, no. Because it's not based on your sex, it is based on your character as a person, and that is completely different from what your gender is. If you go in to be a leader the same as all the leaders that came before, then there is nothing different, man or woman, African or European. You have to bring a genuine change and that capacity is not about your race or your sex or you ethnicity. You need to change the norms that say leadership is this and governance is that. But most leaders go in and they buy in to what is there already, and there is little change."

With regards to learning organisations, Choo (1998, p. 2) similarly notes that a key task for leaders is to discern and interpret the meaning of the most significant changes, and develop appropriate responses for the benefit of the organisation and stakeholders. For women in leadership however, restrictive institutional and organisational cultures actively hinder meaningful participation and engagement in crucial activities of sense making, knowledge creating and decision making that could propel organisations forward, and generate improved modes of functioning and operating. That is, gender biased norms within organisational environments limit and sculpt women's engagement within organisations to fit predefined norms, and therefore compromise women's leadership performance and potential contributions to change. As Irwin (1995) notes, feelings of alienation and docile acceptance and acquiescence can contribute to a sense of powerless agency to instigate change and transformation. Without equitable and adequate inclusion of women at senior and leadership levels, organisations will continue to forego opportunities to gain from different meanings women may comprehend from environmental scanning and sense-making, and related organisational knowledge and information processes. Subsequently, organisations will continue to overlook and discount the potential for women leaders to originate and generate unique knowledge that can contribute to identification of potentially wider ranges of decision making options available for successful gains.

Bagshaw (2004, p. 154) makes the point that in a world of accelerating change, traditional solutions may be inappropriate to new challenges, and as such the status quo needs to be questioned. Diverse perspectives and different points of view represented by diverse employees can be applied to "rethink primary tasks, redefine markets, products, mission, vision and values."

As Choo (1998, p.2) further explains, organisational capacity to adapt and thrive in a dynamic environment is immediately related to the goal of sense making, the ability of an organisation's members to construct a shared understanding of the organisation–purpose, vision, identity;

mission, goals and objectives/strategic plan. A resistant status quo that hinders women's participation in sense making and related decision making processes is by extension limited in its understanding, and compromises how organisations can optimally adapt and respond to unpredictable environments to attain long term goals.

With specific reference to decision making, strategic responses discussed limitations to choice options. Women in senior and leadership positions shared their perceptions that often decision making in their organisations occurs within a limited and pre-determined domain, and available choice options offer limited possibilities. Additionally, the structural and cultural biases limiting decision making functions, remain systemically in place and will require committed effort to alter and overcome beyond the resistance of interests vested in the status quo. Discussing organisational learning, Choo (1998, p.2) observes that a key challenge to learning is the ability of organisations to unlearn their past "to re-examine inherited assumptions and beliefs, or to question existing practices as the only viable alternatives." Research respondents acknowledged this particular challenge:

"It's really a challenge asking people to step out of their pre-conditioned beliefs. It could be that what you're asking in the decisions you're putting forward may challenge set definitions of what's possible, or even definitions of what is successful. The typical response is 'it doesn't feel right, not like the old way, the old way felt best,' and there is no openness to anything beyond the standard practice."

"You can see it in how they [colleagues] respond to you. You can tell they're thinking, 'I'm not even willing to have the dialogue with you, and I may say yes but I have no intention of following your direction'. It's like talking with our teenage kids, or for my daughter, she hit that wall at age twenty, where she would nod her head, but you would just see, it went in, it went out, and it was like talk to the rock. Your advice, suggestions, decisions, they fall on deaf ears."

"Getting a consensus around my decisions is the biggest challenge. The challenge of trying to get people to rally around the initiative, the challenge of broadening horizons of what is possible, and doing something different."

"I know when I recommend certain changes what I'm asking is uncomfortable, I know it goes against many of their [colleagues] predilections and prejudices, I know that some of them already disregard me because of the colour of my skin, others because I use my maiden name or because of the Family legacy they don't think I carry; I worked my way to be here, it wasn't handed to me. So to carry my decision through, it takes a lot of extra work, behind the scenes, talking and talking, politicking. Either I'm barrelling through, or I take time to do a lot of convincing, giving assurance that my decisions are sound and workable. There's a whole dance you have to go through just to get the legitimacy. And for all us who are time pressured, the difficulty is that takes time to do, but we have to invest that time if we want to shift the culture around us in a more positive direction."

“Absolutely there is resistance to my decisions. I mean this is why I can't just come in and say ok, here is the decision, and we'll begin to implement it and work towards solutions. That would be magic. Because there are complexities like this and you've really got to negotiate through it, prejudices, culture, belief systems and so on. The status quo as you call it is a deep well of entrenched attitudes and set codes of behaviour that you either emulate or struggle to shift.”

A commentary adding nuance to the discussion, posited that perhaps perceived challenges and resistance to change faced by women in leadership could partly be attributed to high expectations, ill matched to the nature and depth of changes required to achieve meaningful and sustainable gender equity within organisations:

“One thing that you also need to look at is what is the background, age, whether they are a seventy five year old chairman who would not like to venture into risky businesses, or maybe you're looking at a thirty five year old man, what are his interests in the business? What about someone who is the managing director with twenty years experience in the business, here you may be looking at entrenched interests. So these are the things that you have to address first and realistically.”

“Of course I understand there’s that sense of risk, which can trigger resistance, when you’re moving from the old to the new, giving up some things that aren’t working and going with something new. Yes, you want to stay comfortable, you don’t want to change. But I wonder, is resistance to change always inevitable? Maybe it’s how we women leaders approach it [change] that gives us this sense of resistance. I mean, women leaders are change agents by the very fact that there are few women leaders out there. When a woman enters into a leadership position, then that’s a change. But when we talk about change, we often think I’m going this direction, I’m going to change and go that direction, a 180% turn. It’s not that simple you can’t easily overhaul a set context. It’s actually much better if you just say I’m going to do one thing differently, I’m going to pick one thing in my organisation, or even in my life as a leader and do it differently, whether it’s my home life, my church, my community life, my job, one thing I’m going to do differently, and I’m going to be consistent at it, I’m just going to make up my mind, whether it’s having a tough conversation with somebody to puncture a prejudice, whether it’s having to set some boundaries and limits and say no to somebody, I’ll make that first change. And this little thing, is the change happening; it’s a million little things, at a million points, and that’s how change occurs. There isn't anything you could say as a new CEO, or as a new board member in a board meeting that is going to magically fix the business or shift business practices and processes that have been steadily in place before you arrived. It's a moment of change in a hundred other moments that eventually create that lift when you can see big change.”

At another level, the interplay and distinction between individual member behaviour and organisational culture was mentioned, reflecting on the extent to which individual member behaviour reflects and constitutes organisational culture; and vice versa, the extent to which organisational culture influences and condones individual member behaviour:

“It’s not always the case that it’s the whole organisational culture that’s resistant, there might just

be someone who is the problem. And maybe they don't know that they are the problem, and therefore, you are required to be able to communicate that information to that person, that actually they are the problem, and in my opinion that is where the organisational culture should be facilitative. What I'm getting at is that there is that aspect of intimidation that's there on an interpersonal level, maybe there's one individual that constantly shuts you down or undermines you in front of your colleagues, so how do you bridge that gap from an organisational culture standpoint? Because maybe the person who is supposed to have the issue, does not know, but then there needs to be norms within the organisational culture that allows for that negative interpersonal dynamic to be addressed properly. The fault with organisational cultures, is the inability to address individual member behaviours, and that is how the status quo is maintained."

"How do you bridge the gap where there is that aspect of intimidation and you can't speak your mind? I think if we're speaking realistically, traditionally there are a lot of people who feel that they couldn't speak, that doors are closed to management, that even if they went and spoke, if they were not victimised, what they said was not taken seriously."

"Perhaps we don't have the culture of respect, even between the levels, where people felt that what they had to say was valued. I believe it is changing but we need to acknowledge that that's where we're coming from, and that's what we're trying to change. We're on our way but realistically we have a lot of barriers to break down."

Exclusive Informal Cultures Within Organisations

In discussing predominant institutional cultures, it is essential to recognise that the formal organisation in terms of official positions and procedures is not the only system according to which individuals operate, and by which tasks are achieved and companies organised. To achieve comprehensive understanding of organisations, it is important to acknowledge "the part played by the informal organisation, a powerful and largely voluntary network of relationships and expectations, which supplements, often undermines, and sometimes completely contradicts, official structure." (Marshall, 1984, p. 93)

Exclusion from this informal system, which forms a significant part of organisational life, and can have adverse personal and professional repercussions for performance, advancement and status. It has been widely established that women are generally excluded from informal organisational networks. (Richbell, 1976) Marshall (1984, p. 93) explains that the popular phrase 'the boys club' captures the phenomenon that within organisations many informal transactions are carried out within exclusively male networks. Within this territory a level of cohesion and accord exists which women cannot penetrate and whose benefits women are excluded from. Beneficial facets of the informal system include informal channels of interaction that are conducive for transmitting information with impact for decision making and better job

performance; as well as access and induction to the implicit codes and norms that influence and govern the organisational milieu and practices that translate into organisational culture. Through the informal system viable relationships are established that supplement official interactions, and through which official work and performance is enhanced. When women are outside these informal networks and channels of information, they are less likely to notice "shorthand signs of suitability" or implicit criteria of performance that can increase their acceptability at senior and leadership levels and that can help their performance in formal terms. Studies of the consequences of exclusion from informal networks have shown it is harder for women than for men to utilise the capital of credentials they have accumulated in their careers in a way that ensures their equal advancement. (Harding, 1991, p. 30) This is because, informal transactions involve important and reciprocal exchanges of information, and individuals external to this private language, may be denied cooperation with job tasks and work-related issues, especially at higher organisational levels. Outsiders to the informal network are therefore not party to particular levels of influence. (Marshall, 1984, pp. 93-94)

"At different levels and in different parts of the organisation there are subcultures. In some areas it's different from others, better than others, in others more difficult to penetrate and get along."

"It can be difficult when you don't know the inner workings, because everyone else has these normal scripts they follow, everyone else behaves in the way they've learned they should do and they always know the right inner channels to help them reach the outcomes that they do."

"You don't have much of a clue about the history of relations among these different people, but you can tell there are connections, and there you are, and possibly you don't fit."

"Some people are invited into meetings, and understand what's going on and are in the plan ahead."

Likewise, Powell (1993, p.114) describes a process called boundary heightening linked to the existence of "male-oriented or exclusive social clubs, functions and activities, that women are discouraged from participating in, or are excluded as a rule". For women in senior and leadership positions, responses to such boundary heightening activities captured succinctly in the phrase the boys' club, are limited to accepting isolation and exclusion from the membership and benefits of these informal networks, or attempting to gain admission by playing by the rules, and opting to assume special 'insider' status, becoming one of the group as an exceptional or token member. As shared by several respondents:

"It's very isolating sometimes and you can feel quite distanced from interpersonal contact. You know there are people who I don't even know their names, but I know what they do in their departments. So when I walk past them in the hallway, I know what this person does, but not their name. Sometimes I even walk around just to say hello, and then I meet this person and I think, but I don't know this lady. I don't really have a network at work, I have an office."

In a focus group discussion on the dynamics of informal networks within organisations, several respondents mentioned that in general they felt like they were neither 'in' or 'out' in their positions of leadership; neither fully integrated in their organisations at their level of seniority as they are often excluded from spaces of influence, nevertheless, isolated from other women in similar positions and from their colleagues at other levels of the organisation. To quote one participant, this predicament is similar to being "on a tourist visa, not a permanent residency status" in that there is a sense that one is a "temporary visitor" in their positions.

As noted during a strategic interview,

"There are groups in our organisation that can be a bit clique-ish, then you start to notice that some people have got more know-how on the goings on than others, and that can be a bit demotivating in terms of a culture, because there is an element of some of us are in and others are out, and we're not all really set on the same path of goals. There are side lines and side activities and side wins that exclude some and not others."

Harding (1991, p. 30) notes that historical studies of the formal barriers to women's struggle for equity have been complemented by studies of informal barriers exemplified by, among others, the devaluation of work and contributions done by women, the exclusion of women from men's informational networks, and other informal discriminatory tactics. These studies have unveiled and critically examined formal and informal stringent barriers to women, and to a large extent have contributed to their slow decline, although significant gains are yet to be achieved that substantially challenge and destabilise entrenched exclusionary attitudes and practices.

Hierarchical versus Heterarchical Organisational Structure and Impacts on Leadership

Organisational structure was a main point in respondents' discussions on the facilitators and obstacles for women in leadership. Focus group respondents discussed at some length challenges of interaction – networking and problem solving, knowledge sharing and information exchange, and decision making, across hierarchical levels within organisations. Sentiments included frustration from a senior management perspective at resultant delays in moving initiatives

forward; and from a gender specific perspective, coupled with a sense of isolation from access to informal networks and channels of interaction.

Respondents discussed several limitations of hierarchical organisations:

"Organisations that look like this - hierarchical, top-down, and chain of command - and we've all lived in those kind of organisations. You know, so if this person down here has a problem, they go up here, if the problem doesn't get resolved up here, that person goes up to the top, and so on and so forth. But it's very inefficient, because if these two people down here are having a problem or have an idea, it all goes up to the top before it comes back down. And what about that poor leader at the top, whose constantly sort of dealing with this."

"Leadership and ideas can only come from certain individuals, there's bureaucracy and things are only ever done in a certain way, not because that's the best way, but because the person at the top says it's the best way."

"I think also out of an organisation chart, someone who is let's say sixth down the line, might have all the answers, but the leaders are the only ones who are supposedly at the level to solve issues."

With specific reference to processes of information sharing and knowledge exchange, it was remarked:

"You know you start with a piece of information, we're talking about let's have a better flow of information here, if something starts at the bottom, in a hierarchy it's very hard to get it up to the top and even out to the organisation, and this goes to a comment about the need for flexibility. If information, that contributes to knowledge, has to go all the way up here, and then to over there, and then a memo gets written, and that gets sent out, and then HR has got to look at it, Legal has got to look at it, and you know months go by, you lose the momentum to take timely action, and the creativity evaporates. I suppose this could also go to a comment about trust; you have to trust others' capacity to act in the best interests of the company without having to jump through hoops first before taking a decision."

A business consultant and leader in her own organisation shared:

"I've got an organisation I'm working with right now, and it's like a bicycle wheel, you know all the spokes go to the centre, to the CEO, everything goes directly up to him, and he's constantly working to sort things out. Even shifting to a more linear top-down structure where senior management is more involved, would be progress there. And what we're trying to work towards here in this organisation, is to go further than this, and to develop the understanding that nowadays people live and work in dynamic situations, and this organisation needs to acknowledge that in how it functions. Vesting too much at one level, in one person is not even wise. They've got to spread out and diffuse the power to make decisions and take action because right now it's too centralised and a lot of capacity is remaining unexploited."

Agreeing with this point, one respondent shared her company's decision to "flatten the organisation's hierarchy":

"Our company used to be run based on a hierarchy and one of the things that we realised is that there is tremendous potential that doesn't get tapped if we're working like this. Like we were saying before, we've got to break this, this doesn't work anymore in the business environment where you have to be able to tap all the skills and talent you have available to you in order to make it. But you've got people who've been professionally socialised to think in a top-down way and act that way, even though for a whole variety of reasons, working this way doesn't work anymore. And now imagine if you throw in the inter-generational shift into the mix. Sometimes these guys at the so-called bottom, they have all the technological know-how and it's so easy to ignore their suggestions on account of they are subordinates. In our company, we had to allow connecting points to bring out the expertise of our personnel. We empowered our personnel to step up, and opened up formal processes and structures within our operations for working and interacting together at all levels, for the best outcomes."

Acknowledging the value of a shift from heterarchical to hierarchical forms of organisations, participants commented:

"Also in traditional hierarchies, it's up to the boss at the top to think of everything, and then up to the managers to think of everything and so on. And today what we want, what we need in fact is that this kind of creativity is flowing through the whole organisation, reaching into the whole organisation. There are certain advantages of working in a molecular structure, there are certain benefits that that has for the business in terms of unleashing people's creativity."

"And that's the whole thing, because if you follow that chain-of-command organisational structure as opposed to being more molecular, of course that's going to be what happens; you're going to lose out on the power of the knowledge that you have, and the experts are not going to step up and tell you what they know."

A range of management studies have advocated for reshaping organisations to more suitably accommodate diversity and promote equity as well as to unleash innovation and creative capacity. Fluid, decentralised and flat organisational structures are promoted as intrinsically more open to diverse groupings, distributing responsibility widely and allowing for variety in leadership characteristics and behaviour (Marshall, 1984; Kanter, 1977) Conversely, the "intransigence toward change in hierarchical male dominated institutional cultures" has been exposed and criticised. (Gouws, 2012, p. 526)

Research respondents, however also cautioned against discarding hierarchical organisational forms altogether. Specifically, the predictability, stability and order offered by hierarchical organisations is valued. Focus group participants suggested that a hybrid approach incorporating the positive elements of hierarchical and heterarchical organisations might be the most suitable direction. Therefore where hierarchical and organised structures are unfitting and incapable of

adequately responding to high levels of complexity, alternative forms may be applied. (Baets, 2006, p. 52)

"No organisation is purely chain of command or purely molecular."

"Also in terms of these two structures that you have. If you have the molecular structure, people of the old school of thought might think it's inappropriate to disregard the hierarchy of the organisation which has brought many industries this far. How do you break that? I think this whole strict division between hierarchical and heterarchical structures needs to change."

"Your human resources group and your CEO they can put a structure in place in the hierarchical sense, but to really make that group to take hold, it's the equivalent of that ground organisation that has to be mobilised to really embrace it, and live it, and push for it, and campaign for it, and get out and make it happen."

"There is a myth that when it comes to building a high level of efficiency in an organisation, that the boss makes that happen, and the reality is in a molecular structure, the leader sounds the call, but it really is how we encourage, ennoble and uplift those around us that makes that happen, and is what accelerates our initiative."

"The misconception is that leadership can only work from the top down, and that knowledge cascades best in this way through the organisation. But the reality is that we need local champions, grounded networks reaching out to one another and mobilising folks, even within chain of command structures, to get leadership to yield results, and to get knowledge and information flowing."

With specific reference to transformation and change initiatives within organisations, respondents commented on the value of both heterarchical and hierarchical organisational forms.

"When you are working on change initiatives as a team or as an organisation, it is better if there is no organisation chart. I would say it is advisable, if just for a brief period, to assume a heterarchical way of operating, because in order for there to be successful transformation, everyone needs to be involved; you need to inform staff, invite feedback and take on suggestions for example, not to mention get useful ideas. In a heterarchical set up, experts can easily come forward because you are all on the same level working towards change that affects everyone, as opposed to having processes of transformation dictated from the top guys."

At the same time, it was noted,

"We have to understand people don't always want to change for many reasons, and sometimes, this change has to be commanded and resolutely sanctioned at leadership levels in order to take effect. I'm right now involved in an institution-wide change initiative at the university where I work, and I really value having the back-up of my senior managers, especially when I face obstacles implementing certain goals and objectives that might not be popular. I can see the value of a chain of command structure here, when institutional authority can take and enforce unilateral decisions in order to achieve necessary transformation."

While acknowledging the value of structural organisational change for added flexibility, participants mentioned that a main challenge for organisations is "how to begin the process of mobilising change towards more of what we call a molecular structure as opposed to a hierarchical structure for change." It was noted that organisations' specific characteristics, such as flexibility and adaptability to accommodate change, would influence and affect this shift.

A concluding observation at this level was the need for such adjustments in the balance between hierarchical and heterarchical organisational forms of operating, to be accompanied by a focus to promote requisite institutional cultures.

"So what we want to do is shift into the way most of us really think and work which is in a matrix. We're all interacting anyway even in hierarchical organisations, those of us who may be in this team over here for this particular initiative, are also in that team, and this team, and often in the nature of the work you have to interact with different departments, marketing, sales, finance, HR and so on. What it will ultimately require however for information and knowledge to flow more quickly and for efficient implementation of action, is that there is more ownership by individuals at all levels of the organisation."

Reflecting on the role of institutions, Scarbrough (2001) reveals several shortcomings of classical institutional forms based on hierarchy, and traces contemporary shifts towards less hierarchical organisational forms to the influential work of Burns and Stalker (1961) which substantiated the merit of 'organic' organisation structures as opposed to prevailing 'mechanistic' organisations.

With reference to dynamic knowledge processes, the assertion is that hierarchical structures are unfavourable as such processes tend to flourish in more fluid relational environments. This assertion is related to the fact that generally within organisations, "knowledge and expertise are dispersed throughout the organisation, and are often closely held by individuals or work units. There have been numerous accounts of organisations...not being able to locate the expertise that exists somewhere in the organisation." (Choo, 1998, p.2)

On the other hand, heterarchical organisations are particularly valued for their promotion of network forms of interaction, with potential to offer women more conducive contexts for leadership based on supportive knowledge processes. It was noted by a strategic respondent from the media industry,

"In organisations that are highly matrixed and complex, where you not only have departments, but you also have divisions that have to work together, it just underscores the importance of social networking."

Respondents views and recommendations were in line with various institutional changes that have contributed to creating favourable contexts for the emergence of new ways of knowing, working and leading.

In particular, a notable change is the decline of the professional bureaucracy, an organisational form based on well-defined and specialised professions. (Mintzberg, 1983) According to Ackroyd and Lawrenson (1996), a variety of organisational and technological changes have progressively dismantled bureaucratic organisational structures, (Ackroyd. & Lawrenson, 1996) including the process-based redesign of work through business process reengineering (BPR); the rise of interdisciplinary project-based team working; the 'marketization' and outsourcing of professional and skills-based work; (Whalley, 1986) and institutional innovations, such as the development of supply-chain relationships. (Womack & Jones, 1996)

These important changes have caused changes in inter-organizational relations. Organisations have become more network-oriented and less hierarchical in their structures and their relationships with other firms are more integrated. The monolithic, vertically integrated corporation has deliquesced into a much looser configuration of sub-units, joint ventures and alliances. (Lash & Urry, 1987) This has greatly challenged key organizing units for organisations and the professional division of labour within organisations.

7.4 Strategies for Women in Senior & Leadership Positions

In the discussion on facilitative factors and obstacles that can respectively support or restrict women in senior and leadership positions, respondents frequently conveyed that women have a choice as to how they respond to their contexts, and can be active agents in exercising this choice. Women in leadership positions seem to be well versed in experiences of discrimination encountered and languages of resistance generated in the climb to professional and personal success. In most cases, these languages are applied as political tools to gain access, meet certain interests or achieve specific objectives. In other minority cases, women respondents indicated a preference to maintain distance from explicit political agendas and feminist discourse.

Interviewees shared what may be termed as their strategies for maximising on or generating facilitative contexts, and overcoming the barriers they face. The types of strategies applied by women may be distinguished along the following lines: Behaviour, Preparedness, Leadership, Communication, Information.

i) *Types of Behaviour*

Behaviour here applies to the actions, characteristics and attitudes respondents promoted as advantageous for addressing issues and facilitating their roles in leadership. Various studies have commonly shown that when presented with unfamiliar or pressure situations, the automatic recourse for both women and men is to behaviours that match social stereotypes and general expectations of the traits women and men should display. (Powell, 2010) The reasoning is that in order to conform and win legitimacy, as well as to progress to higher levels of status, women and men will adopt the behaviours more readily accepted as requisites for advancement in their specific contexts, and as per general norms, these behaviours are generally consistent with gender stereotypes. Behaviours that deviate extensively from expected norms risk rejection by the team, colleagues and organisational members.

Across the board however, it is interesting to note that research respondents interviewed, recommended adaptability to accommodate different perspectives and approaches as the most beneficial and suitable response:

"We must always be able to vary and adapt our approach."

It is important therefore to investigate behaviour as a strategy of women in leadership towards ascertaining: what are the conscious and/or unconscious choices women make to acquiesce to or subvert expected gender-based behavioural norms, and what are the parameters or what provides the impetus for the choices applied? Further, to what extent do organisational structures and cultures confine women to particular stereotypical behaviours or facilitate a broader field of performativity?

Being confident and bold, as well as being assertive was a constant theme:

"The boldness to make a decision, to give directives and to implement moves."

"Don't be too cautious about taking risks. Take initiative to shake things up and turn things around."

While it was widely acknowledged that confidence and being assertive were crucial characteristics and behaviourisms that women should display, one strategic respondent cautioned that,

"There's a subtle difference, of confidence versus desperation, and when there is confidence, people are going to be more likely to tune in and take account of you. If you appear to be trying too hard, people can sense false bravado, people can perceive that you actually don't have the confidence."

Additionally, the importance of aligning with others was emphasised, acknowledging the value of conveying an attitude of collaboration rather than competition (Bagshaw, 2004):

"you have to have cooperation from other groups and units in [the organisation] in order to get acceleration and get tasks done."

"In terms of how your staff work together, this will depend very much too, on your behaviour."
"You need to know how to influence people."

The value of being respectful was closely associated with the theme of cooperation.

"The same kind of respect is what we've got to be showing up and down the ladder, and across employment levels. It's about having strength of character, and decency."

Related to this, the varieties of behaviours women referred to indicated an inclination towards situational and contingency leadership styles. Women however did not explicitly associate themselves with this type of leadership (as discussed below, women often referred to their preferred leadership styles or approaches as 'participatory' 'collaborative/cooperative', 'inclusive'.)

Despite this, respondents advised that as often required in their positions,

"Women leaders must also exercise their authority and be challenging, firm and uncompromising if necessary. If you're the boss, then you're the boss."

This response was further qualified by several interviewees,

"Being firm but with calmness, you know, don't be overly forceful or fiery or fierce. Just make your case plain and simple."

"If you've tried playing nice and you're still not getting the response you need, then the next step is beginning to shift into challenge."

"Flip into a problem solving mode, rather than a 'this means it's not possible' kind of mode."

"Don't be caught off-guard by obstacles. Continually address problems and seek to solve rather than avoid obstacles."

"Projecting a standard of excellence, and ensuring that even in one's behaviour, from whichever side of the spectrum, this standard is reflected."

In general, women's advocated behavioural strategies may be considered to consist of tactics aimed at simultaneously fulfilling, negotiating as well as rejecting the professional and personal role expectations of themselves as women in senior and leadership positions. Responses indicated that respondents aligned their behaviours to professional and personal role expectations in terms of fulfilment, negotiation or rejection depending on case-by-case dynamics, and where the overall intentions are to consistently portray leadership capability, maintain their authority (not be undermined), and meet one's objectives and interests.

ii) *Communication Strategies*

Communication strategies referred to women's ability to apply and utilise standard communication theory and practices to communicate the vision, mission and strategy of their portfolios. As one strategic respondent remarked, "you have to be an excellent, effective communicator to sell the vision and the purpose and to let people know what is at stake."

Communication strategies also related to how women managed their voice and determined how to appropriately respond to a range of situations. As one strategic respondent advised,

"You need to balance the way you are going to be heard, enough that as you're explaining what you're saying, people are willing to take the explanation and make the shift you need them to take in their performance."

Alluding to this, Bagshaw (2004) notes the benefits of linking new ideas and learning to the experience of the learner, including a quicker absorbency and integration rate of new information into existing belief structures.

Women leaders underscored that "how you choose to communicate in response to particular issues can make or break a situation. Sometimes you need to be very direct, other times a more passive approach is better suited."

"What we've got to be able to do as leaders is diagnose where somebody is and then target our communication most suitably so the message is clear."

"She didn't come and say 'I need this', she said 'we need', the company, and we need to realise the benefits of the initiative for the company, and we need your support. So because I felt important, I wanted to give my support."

"Focus on what is important, and avoid the stuff that is not important when communicating towards problem solving."

Other respondents remarked,

"Often communication is a persuasion game. It really is about saying the right thing to the right person so you can influence them and win the game."

"You can't just communicate, as in give information or share knowledge, you have to always sell your idea. You have to massage egos to get something done, that's the reality."

iii) *Information/Knowledge Strategies*

In applying information and knowledge strategies, women in leadership recognise the importance of demonstrating knowledge and understanding through the clarity and relevance of one's instructions, and being able to intelligibly convey the purpose, mission, vision and objectives of the organisation.

The ability to use information as leverage was also identified as a key strategy of how women may interact with knowledge/information in the workplace. The main idea promoted was that of using knowledge and information as a leverage point to "sell your ideas" to colleagues, teams, and higher levels of authority.

"Sometimes when you meet resistance to an idea, sometimes people might just want to know what do they get out of it, and you need to be able to explain to them how it is a good idea for them, and give them the information that supports the idea and that encourages them to also support the idea."

Access to information and knowledge related to best practice was also discussed.

"Case studies of other companies, and I would add, other companies that we respect, other companies that we hold in esteem. And what's worked for them in terms of making it happen. What could also work is case studies of companies who have not done it, and the difficulties that they've run into."

With reference to information and knowledge management, participants stressed the ability to classify, codify and organise knowledge and information in useful ways as a valuable skill.

"Like if somebody comes in with a new strategy, or has an announcement with some new information, you need to know how you're going to deal with it. What role does this new information or strategy play in the larger scheme of things, how does it fit into the map of where you want to go, and how are your stakeholders affected by this new information or strategy?"

The value of continuous learning and ongoing training e.g. through adult education was a popular theme. Related to this was the role of information and knowledge management practices, including management of human resources and catering to the training needs and mentoring of personnel. It is useful to note here that studies have shown increased professional training as a factor, diminishes actual and perceived gender differences in leadership style and behaviour (Bartol, 1976; Renwick and Tosi, 1978), and hence the increased value of continued training for of senior and women leaders, as a means of reducing, perhaps even removing the gender divide at leadership levels.

"Sometimes where we sit in an organisation, we don't get the whole rationale. So what we've got to be able to master as leaders, is what we call the art of interpolation. This is being able to fill in the rationale, even when we're not given the facts."

At the same time it is important to focus on what is important and useful and to be able to sift through, sort and distinguish what is and is not inconsequential information.

"In terms of tapping potential, it really is a matter of continuing to ask the questions, of continuing to seek the experts that may be of assistance, and being clear on the mission, knowing what the game plan is. Your role as a leader is making sure the right questions get asked, and don't let go of until they're answered, and the right resources get identified and brought in to address the issues at hand. Your role as leader is to ensure that others speak up and make their voices heard, but also as a leader to back off when there are other extraneous dynamics being brought in. You need to have a handle on things. And your role as a leader is to find relevant ways to go about doing things as quickly and efficiently as possible."

The value of continuous training has been highlighted therefore to augment the information and knowledge as well as skills and capacities of women in leadership. At an organisational level the value of training has been identified with reference to promoting successful diversity and equity

practices and related performance within organisations. In good practice companies, extensive training and staff development programmes are recognised as contributing to increasing understanding, performance as well as raising awareness of diversity including the implications of policy and legal compliance issues for recruitment, promotion and appraisal processes. (EU, 2005)

iv) *Planning and Preparedness*

Planning and preparedness had diverse connotations for respondents, including being forward thinking and strategic; managing expectations for oneself and others; and maintaining flexibility to adjust to different, new and changing circumstances.

Participants stressed that a key to success is "to be better prepared", to "make sure we have a plan", and to "understand that the first thing that is going to come back to you from what you put out there may not be positive. Be ready for anything."

Recommending ways to improve strategic planning and preparedness, several leaders counselled,

"You've got to read the signs and be prepared to adjust in different ways."

"Be prepared so that when the opportunity arises you can seize the moment."

"Know your business, have the relevant data, be aware of similar cases to back-up your initiatives, name the benefits, the precedents, explain the importance, the purpose, the value of your goals and your strategic and measurable objectives. It's important to connect all this stuff, and as a leader to be prepared to respond on all of these levels."

Planning and preparedness was further recommended, as an indicator of capability and ability that boosts legitimacy.

"Who are the players that you need to mobilise to play these different roles in your molecular team? Who are the players that you want to get lined up to support your initiatives, and then what combination of these roles, do you want them to play? Like if somebody comes in with a new strategy, or an announcement with some new information, what role are they going to be in, in the stakeholder map? You need to be able to answer this questions."

v) *Leadership Style*

Leadership styles most commonly indicated in responses from research participants may mainly be described as: cooperative, collaborative, inclusive, participatory/democratic, relational, consultative.

The emphasis was that leaders need the support of others, and valuing their contributions can build cohesion, encourage ownership of initiatives and strengthen commitment to company goals. Leadership therefore involves a commitment to empowering and uplifting others, as involving and including others further ensures that leaders have the requisite support to achieve desired aims and goals.

Leadership was referred to as a collective process, responsibility to others and motivational:

"I understand leadership to be a shared role as opposed to an individual role."

Leadership was also discussed as transformational, involving both assertive and authoritarian approaches, to be applied contextually as demanded by the situation.

"The boldness to act has to be evident, or else no one will take you seriously."

Leadership was clearly defined as a position requiring certain skills and capacities; access and success at leadership and senior levels therefore depend on the ability to discern what these skills and capacities are, and to acquire and/or reflect these abilities.

Overall, respondents approached their leadership as situational, and reiterated the importance of being flexible and adaptable in applied leadership style.

"So understand that we're going to constantly need shift into different roles as leaders. It's not a one size fits all equation."

"For many of us, we wear multiple hats depending on what the situation is."

"Leadership is a multiplicity of roles, that's the reality."

Related to the above, research participants agreed that for achievement of performance outcomes leadership requires a pro-active as opposed to reactionary approach. That is, "understanding that things can work better without requiring a crisis trigger point." The importance of taking initiative was significantly highlighted as a strategy of effective leadership at this level.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

As illustrated by the ranged of strategies applied to negotiate organisational contexts, women in leadership are appositely adept and proficient in applying various approaches to preserve their power and use their authority. These helpful strategies provide an indication of the ways in which women in leadership propel their knowledge and endorse their authentic self-expression within and beyond dominating cultures in their organisations.

Nevertheless, as Young-Eisendrath (1988, p. 171) states, women remain confined and controlled by the prevalent judgements of partriarchy that invalidate their power and knowledge as inferior. Under these circumstances, women leaders enact their ways of knowing and operate according to their knowledge systems in a mode of "rebellious freedom" in continued opposition to constant and debilitating restrictions. Therefore while it is commendable and important to recognise the ways in which women in leadership have adjusted to negotiate, benefit from and contribute to their organisational contexts, research findings suggest such efforts are insufficient to reap the full benefits of women's participation and involvement at senior and leadership levels.

The importance of requisite institutional and policy structures and mechanisms to support equity and diverse representation in organisations was highlighted as a critical component in support of women in leadership. Policy implementation was discussed as necessary, although not sufficient, towards instituting appropriate organisational environments. Despite implementation challenges related to organisational commitment and ineffective policy application, nevertheless formal policy structures and institutional procedures delineate preferred organisational contexts and contribute to driving change in organisations for the benefits of women in leadership.

8.1 Relevant Institutional Structures and Policy Mechanisms

The following recommendations discuss the value of, and provide suggestions towards ensuring, relevant institutional structures and policy mechanisms that would support and benefit women at senior and leadership organisational levels, toward applying their knowledge and experience in heightened performance and effective leadership. The themes discussed build on responses from participants, linked to ongoing discourses on the issues raised and are geared towards addressing

identified structural/tangible and cultural/intangible obstacles to women's knowledge and leadership in senior positions in organisations.

Recommendations suggested address,

- the value of mentorship and need for the continued provision of professional development opportunities for women in senior and leadership positions;
- the facilitative role of networks as helpful support frameworks of women in leadership, and as reflective of changing organisational and work contexts stimulated by increased connectivity and technological capacities;
- responses to the demands and requirements of women as valued members of the work force, who simultaneously have commitments to other social and family roles - as spouses, parents and community members. Recommendations address needs that relate to for example more flexible working arrangements; availability of work-from-home options; as well as other policy support arising from issues of maternity/fraternity leave etc.

Respondents noted that relevant institutional and policy support structures and mechanisms are compromised and hindered by a lack of sufficient awareness of the core issues. Subsequently, the need remains for continued examination of organisational contexts, and exploration of appropriate and requisite structures and policy frameworks and mechanisms to support the realisation of high performance organisational environments for women in leadership.

At the level of socio-political transformation and towards consolidating efforts to achieve gender equity, a more deeply entrenched policy system is required, linked to the international and moral climate of the wider women's movement (Freeman, 1975). Respondents discussed the need to reorient policy significantly and coherently across levels, from international mandates, to regional and national level policies, and at organisational level to heighten and streamline pressures for change. Integrated policy systems may coherently link the clauses of CEDAW for instance to policy on the right to equal opportunity in the workplace, and combine the interests and gains made by activists and policy advocacy groups at a broader level to interests and gains of women in organisations.

At another level, Marshall (1984, p.234) also advocates an entrepreneurial and self-employment drive for women as an alternative path to creating employment spaces more conducive to

women's daily realities, experience and knowledge capacities. "By creating their own range of job options, women can revise employment, investing it with their own meanings" more compatible with and authentic to women's shared values. Towards this end, and with particular interest for entrepreneurial women leaders, supportive policy frameworks and mechanisms may contribute to the creation and fashioning of alternative business and employment environments, and the emergence of diverse organisational forms.

Shortcomings of a policy approach related primarily to the perception of policies as static requirements, compromising policy design and implementation. Alternatively, attention to the relevance of policies for shaping institutional, collective and individual action, may stimulate a refocus on innovative approaches committed to achieving changes beyond theoretical reflections. The role of leadership in driving policy change was emphasised and this point is further discussed in the suggested recommendations of the research.

8.2 Mentors and Capacity Building

The value of mentors to women aspiring to as well as within leadership has long been established, with numerous studies consistently confirming the positive role of mentors in the successful careers of senior women. (Hennig, & Jardim, 1978; Roche, 1979) Women stand to benefit from mentors who can assist them with "necessary learning about organisational life and about themselves." The roles of mentors include "coaching the individual in aspects of the job, organisational life and career development strategies." (Marshall, 1984, pp. 106 & 107) According to Harding (1991, pp 28-30) the value of mentors is principally their contribution to demystification of and assistance with the negotiation of institutions and organisations and their cultures. Mentors can assist to increase awareness and consciousness of the more discreet dynamics, such as the 'unwritten rules' of social and professional environments, and can also be useful guides in the navigation of formal as well as informal interactions.

Research respondents acknowledged the valuable role of mentors and role models in their professional and personal development as leaders:

"My mentors really imparted to me experience, of people and organisations, something you can't read about in a how-to book, a policy document or memo. They talk to me about some of the courage and difficult choices that it takes to be in leadership and what they did well to succeed in their senior positions."

"If I was to be a little more specific, and say what is it about my mentor that I value, I would say it's her experience. Her ability to understand, resonate and offer sound advice, technically, strategically, but also from a personal point of view."

"What role models do, what my role models have done for me is to show that people have done it before, so I can do it. They are beacons of possibility."

"Mentors are important because they can tell us on the basis of actual lived experience what can be done, and we can rely on them to take us through it, you know different processes, changes. And this is helpful as opposed to losing time with trying to reinvent the wheel or figure things out solo. You have someone who's been in your situation and can recommend how to best deal with it, what's effective."

"I was lucky that at the right moment, the right person was in my life to kind of grab me and shake me. My mentor made a huge difference in my career progression because he opened my eyes and broke me out of my little silo. He showed me where my experience, although not articulated was the experience of many others, and I learnt I was not alone in my feeling of isolation. He raised me up and I've been able to keep going, chasing my goals, as a result of what I gained from our conversations."

Marshall among others, states that mentoring activities "are more important to women managers than they are to their male counterparts. Where women are excluded from informal systems based largely on male meanings, mentors can help them learn about this largely 'foreign' culture...Mentors...may also help tokens achieve acceptance into the dominant culture as individuals rather than as stereotypes, by bridging the gap between the two social types." (Marshall, 1984, p. 107)

As one respondent shared,

"I was the only female student in my graduate engineering class at university. My dissertation advisor was a mentor to me, a terrific person, who really valued me and nurtured me and that really gave me some of the strength to just deal with these guys, and that got me through my degree. I don't know how I would have managed without her. She talked to me not only about engineering, or my coursework, but also about how to handle this majority male class of my peers as the only woman. Believe me it was very tough, for all of us, the guys too, they didn't understand what I was doing there. I was a real challenge, but I'm good at maths."

Outside of their formal and professional contexts, many respondents also considered Family and relatives to have been core mentors in their life, particularly their parents, but including siblings and extended family.

"My mother taught me about values and belief and how to live positively."

“If this journey did not start with dad and mom, it would have been awfully hard to do it.”

“I had one of the most important people in my life as my mentors, my dad. He treated me like a human being from day one. As long as I can remember he always aimed to include me in any decision being made that affected me. He always encouraged me to have a voice.”

“My older brother, he was my mentor. He’s built a successful business, and I’ve looked to him in my own growth.”

As women in senior and leadership positions, respondents were aware of the responsibility expected of them to contribute to the upliftment of other women in the role of mentors, as well as role models. A common argument is that female leaders have a responsibility to share information and knowledge gained from their experiences developing and growing their careers and professions, towards the empowerment and upliftment of other women, and also towards contributing to substantive changes that may then facilitate greater female leadership. Respondents were divided in their opinions about the responsibility of women in leadership to act as role models, which assumed a more passive connotation, or as mentors, which implied more active engagement with others. The key dividing issue was one of time and availability. On the one hand, respondents shared the view that their responsibility as role models is encapsulated by their pursuit of excellence in their positions of seniority. That is, by committing to performance excellence women leaders fulfil their responsibility as role models.

“If somebody has the confidence to stand up and lead, and especially if they’re a woman, they’re not only doing it for themselves but they’re also inspiring and ennobling other people too. Already by leading, and leading well, a woman is a role model.”

On the other hand, respondents were of the view that women leaders should actively mentor mentees.

“It starts with our example as centres of influence within our organisations, and as symbols of courage in overcoming difficult obstacles. There is the expectation that through our leadership we will inspire others as representations of change. At the same time, we’re being challenged to advance this change through the transfer of our knowledge and expertise to uplift and empower other women.”

“I think that it is also about, if this person has mastered some things, then maybe they need to be out teaching or mentoring or sharing that knowledge with other people.”

“I am a woman mentor for women from countries all over Africa...I love it when I can be of some assistance to them and what they are doing. I can see how through their participation in

mentorship programmes with groups of other women, they are 'getting it' and growing in their belief and confidence about themselves."

"As a Training Facilitator and Mentor I am involved in the training, empowering and transformation of personnel. I facilitate individuals to develop themselves in ways that can change their lives."

"One simply recognises that if we want a true change, even for ourselves, that we're going to have to ennoble or uplift those around us, and especially the women who have fewer opportunities."

There was the caution however that not all women leaders are going to be available in the same way, neither should they be obligated to play active mentorship roles. As incisively questioned in the following quote from a woman business leader in the telecommunications industry:

"Yes, ok, but are we ready to truly invest in somebody else's success? Are we ready to build that trust and that connection? Because that's what it truly takes if you want sustainable change. No band-aid solutions. If we're really invested in a woman and her growth and her professional development, you have to put that time in to raise her up, not just the temporary fixes of calling the client, delegating tasks to her, or providing her with opportunities, that alone won't help her grow into leadership. You also have to guide her through the paces of the internal stuff, build confidence, motivate, advise, listen, and that's what takes time."

There is a need therefore for flexibility in the methods women in senior positions may apply towards the empowerment of greater cadres of women towards leadership, as suggested by the following quote from a research respondent:

"I can only give an example of the need to be more flexible in our expectations of women in leadership, in that we are all not necessarily good in all areas. We've all got our weak spots, maybe we have not time, and we've got our strengths in certain areas too, which we can then utilise those strengths in the best way we know how. And we can still bring in others, for example maybe it is simply in the form of exposures, and providing opportunities through referrals, to others who have time? Perhaps, it is in the form of working together, hiring women to assist you and therefore have regular access to you? Or what we call 'a day in the life of' whereby then you're accompanied out there every now and again, and through this way you're sharing what it is that we know. There are so many ways, informal and formal, long term and very short term that we can use to empower other women without being locked into one way of being a role model or mentor."

There is need however to address the obstacles women face for example, in their attempts to obtain reliable mentors, as well as in their endeavours to be mentors themselves (Harding, 1991).

At the level of skills transfer, the gender of the mentor was not considered to be a considerable factor. That is, both women and men mentors can transmit valuable expertise.

"I'm often asked the questions, should women mentor women? The answer is yes obviously, but there's times you know when a man is the right mentor, because it's based on what do you need to learn, and if this person's got the skills to teach you, that's the only criteria, that's it. If they can teach you, and you're learning, and they can give you the kind of self confidence you need to get to the next stage of your life, that's all it needs."

A small portion of respondents shared the view that because of the role model component of mentoring, women might benefit more from female mentors who, beyond skills transfer, can also "show through their example what can be done." This point appears to relate to the aforementioned pertinence of embodied experience. That is, the implication of this view is that women may benefit more from female mentors because of their intimate and embodied experience of being a woman in the workplace. Women have exclusive access, as opposed to men, to an understanding of what it requires to succeed in the workplace as a woman. This further speaks to the continued pertinence of gender as a mediating factor in professional environments.

Access was also a key issue related to the gender of mentors. Respondents shared that in their experience as mentors, the groups of women they were mentoring had limited access to women mentors, and even less access to male mentors, if at all. A main challenge related to this was context, in that the professional circles of aspiring women did not intersect with enough frequency or at a substantial depth with the professional circles of men in leadership. As such, women seeking mentors have less opportunity to receive guidance from men. This was considered a challenge in so much as men may have the advantage of more extensive or influential networks than women mentors.

Another challenge with regard to access to male mentors was time, in that women mentors are perceived to be more willing to invest the time and energy in mentoring women than male mentors. This despite the fact that in general, women in senior positions are perceived to face more constraints and demands on their time relative to men in similar positions, as a result of their multiple gender roles. There may be several plausible explanations for the extra availability of female as opposed to male mentors for women, including perhaps that women may be are more vested than men in promoting gender equity and therefore acknowledge a responsibility to

uplift other women. Therefore women mentors are more available than men to mentor women, whereas male mentors may perceive their priorities to lie elsewhere. To quote one interviewee, "women have the great responsibility of growing other people."

Marshall (1984, p. 107) points out that a main factor contributing to women's limited access to suitable and male mentors, is the perpetuation of "powerful social norms [that] prohibit dominant group members from developing relationships with those in lower status categories." As such it is considered risky to the reputation of potential male mentors to appear to be committing time and attention to an activity otherwise largely devalued, and which may taint their own personal and professional status. It might be considered more worthy for example to commit effort to networking and interacting with male colleagues, than it is to mentor aspiring women leaders.

8.3 Networks

The growing importance of connectivity and interconnectedness has encouraged the establishment of networks and facilitated mutually beneficial relationships between network nodes, as individuals as well as institutions, organisations and firms. (Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville, 2003)

In their work on developing women's spaces, Harris and Atalan (2002) address the value of networks as a legitimate form and context of organisations. In the field of knowledge management and within management and organisation theory, current literature increasingly recognises and emphasises the functional role that networks can play in facilitating creative knowledge production processes (Scarbrough, 2001). Networks, ranging from social networks such as 'communities of practice' to IT networks such as Intranets or groupware, can be useful channels for sharing and exchange of knowledge between groups and individuals. By offering a conducive forum and space, networks can be a valuable mechanism for promoting and facilitating information, knowledge and learning processes. (Shapiro & Varian, 1999)

At a more foundational level, sociological theorists discuss networks as interconnected relations among social entities that form social systems and concrete social structures. (Fararo & Skvoretz, 1986). As Allee (2003, pp 7-8) claims, "the networked economy is not a myth" and there are "social networks, political networks, professional networks, and networks for communities and enthusiasts." Networks are formed for particular purposes, benefits and values provided for

participants, including in the interest of the public good, towards addressing and responding to complex social issues.

> "The centre is moving. It is moving from corporate hubs to more diffuse and distributed webs of business relationships and alliances spreading across the globe... The corporation itself is often organising more like a business network than a traditional company." (Allee, 2003, pp 7-8)

At one level, the value of networks can be viewed from a functional perspective where the value of network forms is expressed primarily in relation to instrumental significance, with set parameters, expectations and goals of participation. From this perspective, networks are an efficient means for transfer of knowledge from one context to another. At another level however, in addition to being a functional avenue for the capture and transfer of knowledge, networks can be transformative and play a role in reconstituting knowledge and creating change within their operational contexts. (Scarbrough, 2001) For women, such networks can create opportunities to forge alliances in opposition to the status quo, and to incubate fresh and alternative approaches to leadership and senior management within organisations. For women in senior and leadership positions, the value of networks is also the sense of community and solidarity created through the sharing of similar experiences, challenges and stories of success. (Gouws, 2012) Networks are particularly appreciated for their capacity to link dispersed senior women in leadership with few opportunities to interact in person, providing a forum for sharing skills and information, exploring avenues for personal and professional development, and mutual encouragement and support. (Marshall, 1984)

The institutional establishment of social and technical networks therefore can enhance conditions under which learning occurs, knowledge is produced, and fresh practices and approaches emerge. (Scarbrough, 2001) The challenge to institutionalised networks however, is often the lack of a sustained supportive infrastructure and appropriate funding (Marshall, 1984) indicating that within organisations the network form remains under utilised and the potential benefits of network arrangements is curbed.

Scarbrough (2001) further discusses the network as a logic and dynamic of societal change. Beyond offering a viable transactional space for knowledge transfer, another important aspect of network relationships is their structural flexibility and consequent aptitude to catalyse and accommodate social change in diverse contexts. Castells (1996, p. 469) also discusses the role of

networks as a source and faculty of social change, noting that "networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies." The current information technology paradigm provides the material basis for pervasive expansion of networks throughout the entire social structure, and "this networking logic induces a social determination of a higher level than that of the specific social interests expressed through the networks; the power of flows takes precedence over the flows of power."

Subsequently, and on this note, the drive to realise meaningful gender equity also needs feminists 'outside', (i.e. beyond organisational entities and leadership circles), to continuously undertake a critical examination and review of irregularities, in the fit between these social institutions and the broader context. Individuals within a given institutional culture and niche may be somewhat constrained in their vantage point to perceive direct connections between their professional activities and adverse, or even positive effects reverberating in the surrounding environment. Gaining this understanding from external stakeholders can enlighten how people internal to the organisation think about and organise their activity, on the basis of well informed intellectual, practical, and political choices. However in order for this symbiotic relationship between the outlined mindsets to yield positively, feminists within and without institutions and organisations need to collaborate and cooperate despite the occasionally contradictory aspects of their conjoined efforts. As frankly stated by a research interviewee reflecting on the divisive dynamics that can be evident between women with different levels of access to as well as within senior levels of organisations,

"It hits you when you look at this, that if we had supported one another we would be presenting a very precise case about our challenges, successes and needs, and not just punching holes in what we're each doing. So if you ask me, that is something that we really need to work on, supporting one another so that we get into the bigger goal together, so as opposed to seeing it as this is just a so and so thing, and they just want to get to success at the top, let's all get there. It is important that we come together."

Another strategic respondent succinctly commented that "I think it is turning around the divide and rule principal and saying divide and lead. We can each lead from our own areas, together."
As the full range of possibilities of a network society continue to manifest, so too will the areas that require monitoring, regulation and management. Additionally, it will be important to be circumspect with regard to which network forms are best suited to particular network types or bodies.

Knowledge development proceeds in networks of dense connectivity. (Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville, 2003)

i) *Community-of-Practice Approach*

Women's professional networks may fit into a Community-of-Practice approach within the field of knowledge-management, where the focus is on the practice of leadership, and the community is women in senior and leadership positions.

Advocates of this approach, advance 'Communities of Practice' as favourable forums for the explication and exchange of tacit knowledge, through the sharing of stories and experience. Communities of Practice may be broadly defined as an informal grouping of individuals linked together by exposure to and concern for a common class of problem. (Scarbrough, 2001) Evers, Kaiser and Müller (2009, p.56) discuss the role of epistemic communities in "talking about knowledge and doing knowledge" particularly in relation to the international development community where such collectives have greatly contributed to bridging the global to the local and enabling transfers of knowledge between differently located social groups.

The drawback of such a group formation exclusively for women however, is that it may impose limitations on the potential benefits that a community-of-practice approach can yield. More specifically, a community-of-practice approach can offer a conducive context for knowledge sharing and information exchange, towards generating appropriate responses to collective challenges. Limiting the pool and range of knowledge and experience within the community, by restricting such communities-of-practice to specific groups such as women only, may compromise the identification of optimal solutions. In other words, and in relation to a key finding of this research, after necessary political discourse and action to redress imbalances as a result of prejudicial inequities, it is crucial to progress on to a truly diverse exploration and construction of solutions to collective problems. This involves opening the source pools of knowledge and experience, including reorienting vetting mechanisms and 'tests of proof' in order to acknowledge diverse knowledge systems and ways of knowing as legitimate.

At the same time it is advisable to be cautious and avoid overstating the benefits of networks. While the fluid nature of networks makes them a valuable tool at many levels, nevertheless, networks remain susceptible to the types of discrimination, prejudice and practices of inequity

that taint other social institutions and structures. Therefore, on the one hand, it is not only important to appropriately match the network form to the network body, it is also important to remain vigilant that networks do not themselves become tools of oppression and marginalisation. To illustrate this point further, one may refer to the infamous 'boys' club' as one such network form that acts as a tool perpetuating the exclusion of women and other 'out-groups' from access to vital information and nodes of influence.

Various studies (Freeman, 1991; Nohira & Eccles. 1992) suggest that a main feature in the changing institutional and organisational context of work is the emergence of the network form as the "dominant logic of organisational development." (Scarbrough, 2001) Choo (1998) develops this idea further and refers to "a general model of organisations as 'knowing' communities in which sense making, knowledge creating, and decision making are integrated" in processes of information seeking and use that involve the "interpretation of ambiguous environmental changes...the replenishment of new knowledge for innovation and relearning...[and] selection and implementation of a particular strategy or course of action." (Choo, 1998, p. ii)

In discussing the value of the network form in contributing to alleviating issues of gender inequity, it is equally important to discuss the role of institutions in the formation of networks to support knowledge sharing and exchange. It becomes apparent, from an institutional perspective, that conventional forms of the division of labour are inadequate to manage knowledge. On the one hand, organisational changes as a result of technological advances have resulted in more fluid and 'dedifferentiated' divisions of labour, compelling organisations to adopt more flexible structures in order to adequately respond to global business trends. (Clegg, 1990) On the other hand, advances in communication of knowledge have tended to increase the rate of flow of information and knowledge. In this context, the dynamic connectivity of network forms possesses a critical comparative advantage for knowledge exchange and sharing, in comparison to more conventional organisational structures. The assertion is that network forms provide a rich environment, for interactions on knowledge. (Scarbrough, 2001)

As such, within this changing context, organisations are increasingly becoming well placed to facilitate and support the growth of networks with benefits for women in senior and leadership positions. Subsequent studies have expanded upon the role of inter-organisational and

professional networks in knowledge transfer, illustrating the value of networks for organisational performance. (Kreiner & Schultz, 1993; Appleyard, 1996) Symbiotically, these networks have the potential to provide valuable support frameworks for women in leadership, contributing to collectively beneficial gains. Networks may contribute to empowering women by offering spaces within which they can creatively collaborate to develop their leadership capabilities. A consistent sentiment from respondents, was the value of dialogue and discourse spaces that encourage and facilitate the sharing of information and experience.

The importance of spaces and mechanisms that focus on women for gender equity have been well documented particularly within the field of development. Much of the discussion indicates that spaces that target women and girls may be significant in increasing levels of participation in development initiatives, raising awareness of collective problems, encouraging team work and association, as well as strengthening the identities, self expression, and confidence of women. Additionally, women focused spaces can become incubators of women's knowledge. Harris and Atalan (2002) comment that men traditionally have dominance in delineating the parameters of gendered spaces, and these largely act as filters to women's ways of knowing. Further research is required on gendered spaces as manifested within networks, in order to assess the extent and modes of women's accommodation or resistance to male influences and controls.

There is a strong indication that with greater ability of women to associate with each other socially and professionally, they may eventually be able to alter their relative situation and status with respect to male counterparts. The assumption is that creating associational and network spaces has the potential to motivate and facilitate women to jointly address their problems, and collaborate to overcome their challenges. In other words, there is an implicit goal of creating, encouraging, or promoting spaces for oppositional gender politics. Women may better demand rights and oppose limitations through efforts to network, collaborate, and support each other towards overcoming obstacles and restrictions. (Harris & Nurcan, 2002)

8.4 Technology

In general, research participants valued technology as a favourable tool for boosting organisational performance, by maximising on available knowledge resources and offering a practical platform for addressing equity, diversity and representation issues and challenges faced by institutions and organisations operating in Africa.

Sharing on the process of implementing new technological software in her organisation, the CEO of a leading investment bank in the East Africa region commented on the value of technology for enhancing collaboration between diverse and dispersed teams:

"Somehow people look at technology as neutral, so it provides a neutral platform to work from. So what we did when we implemented the new software which is a new banking software, we looked at one implementation and said we're one bank, many countries. One implementation, all of us come to one location and let's implement and then we will switch on in the morning and switch off in the evening, and just one location, one set of people, no caste, no creed, no borders, no nothing, just skills sets technology. And that kind of brought about a lot of I would say change in mindsets for individuals, even at regional level for Tanzanians to say I can participate, Ugandans to say I can participate, and Kenya as well. But all in all technology allowed me to bring about the neutrality and move on past surface-level divides in the workplace. In that process what we achieved was efficiency, keeping costs down, bringing about centralised processing."

Slocum (2015) comments that technology innovations complement business creativity and supports process remodelling for improved outputs. Focusing on knowledge and information processing, Scarbrough (2001) elaborates that technology systems enable the abstraction and transfer of knowledge from specific contexts to others, and present a valuable tool for networks. The contemporary and pervasive application of IT as a tool for social media networks is ample illustration of the ways in which technology provides a widely applicable platform from and through which networks may associate and interact on a global scale.

In relation to the benefits and opportunities offered by technological advances, respondents also appreciated technology for the possibilities it presents for improved work performance and further professional development. As strategic respondents shared, technology broadens options by,

"Giving people a chance to no longer do mundane work, but you now have the opportunity to change your career, to redeploy, to become somebody, to become a manager at the branch and so

on because you have boosted your technology skills. So technology is an opportunity not a threat, but an opportunity to build careers."

"There are certain technology applications and software tools that helps us to do a better job, that saves the problem solving time and energy for tasks that we really ought to be problem solving on."

At a broader organisational level, the use of ICTs well aligned to suitable management structures strengthen organisational knowledge processes by facilitating dissemination and storage of information and data, as well as providing various tools to assist in knowledge and information utilisation and application. More cohesively linking information transfer to knowledge processes, current intuitive technologies aim to on the one hand contribute to the economic priorities of organisations by supporting such activities as risk analysis and assessments, strategy mapping and planning, scenario building and goal setting. On the other hand, up-to-date technologies seek to enhance the interactive user experience and fluid exchange of knowledge and expertise in creative platforms that encourage knowledge production and the shaping of new knowledge frameworks and architectures. That is, amongst a range of applications and value added services, ICTs can offer active and accessible sites, for use by for example communities-of-practice, for collective conceptualisation and distribution of knowledge. The latest virtual structures provide alternative spaces that permit connections across diverse localities to exchange on share experience, bridging the gap of otherwise geographically separated entities.[34] For women in senior and leadership positions, often singular and isolated, such spaces enable transactions that may contribute to the externalisation and explication of knowledge with women in similar positions spread internationally.

Technologies also have the capacity to collapse the divide between public contexts and personal spaces, with beneficial as well as negative outcomes. (Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville, 2003) Positively, work from home options which facilitate child rearing and support time flexibility needs for women, are made possible and greatly enhanced by technology. Negatively, technology may broaden the avenues through which the personal is overwhelmed, adding to, rather than relieving time pressures, work demands and a lack of privacy.

[34] With thanks to Morel Fourman and Gaiasoft for their insights into the values and uses of ICTs and intuitive software in organizational and collective knowledge processes, and particularly as a tool to tap, network and utilize diverse expertise.

Reflecting on the growth of ICT use in Africa, the useful role of technology in knowledge processes and development cannot be underestimated. Telecommunications is a rapidly expanding area with for instance an annual growth rate of 58% in cellphone use in Africa, particularly in the sectors of banking and agriculture.. Useful innovations that have the capacity to positively impact circumstances in Africa have been the result of the use of technology and information systems. In the field of international development the use of ICTS has been critical in engaging target communities and stakeholders in information exchange and sharing, as well as in knowledge creation and dissemination giving local knowledge a platform. Rural and farming populations for instance benefit from dissemination of information about crop market prices, weather information, as well as buyer and seller interactions using mobile phone technologies and through innovations such as M-Pesa.

At the same time however, it is important to recognise the limitations of technology. In particular, as Scarbrough (2001) observes, enthusiasm for technology often results in "standardized black-boxed 'solutions'" which are often indiscriminately incorporated within existing and "pre-specified managerial recipes for implementation." To be effective as a knowledge tool, application of technology requires adaptation to the contexts and circumstances of organisations. Furthermore, in the process of adapting relevant technologies to specific conditions, accompanying strategies may be necessary to facilitate and harmonise the interchange between complex and context-dependent knowledge processes and ways of knowing (tacit knowledge), with more rigid, and objectified forms of (explicit) knowledge conveyed and codified by technological applications (Scarbrough, 2001). Various studies show that the more knowledge is encoded and abstracted to facilitate knowledge sharing and transfer across different contexts via technology, the more challenging the task of relating this knowledge to the particularities of the contexts to which it is transferred. (Swan, et. al 2000) Sensitivity to questions of relevance remains an issue to consider in technology application and transfer.

Contrary to literature which focuses on the technical limits of technology in terms of for example the need to refine information codification and communication processes, (Wilson, et. al, 1994) ongoing research indicates that solutions may lie not only in perfecting technological processes, but also in manipulating the context within which such processes are applied. (Newell, et. al, 2000) Put differently, implementation of technology systems needs to be accompanied by and

assimilated into simultaneous shifts that seek to adapt and alter organizational process and practices, as well as social contexts. In this way, technology innovations have the capability to stimulate different forms of interaction, knowledge and information exchange and performance, and may influence and facilitate the emergence of new organisational and broader social culture and practices that support different ways of knowing.

A focus on knowing as a lived experience, leads to an understanding of KM practices which centres on changing the social context in which knowledge is interpreted and applied. (Scarbrough, 2001)

8.4 Time Flexibility

Though dependent on interpretation at the individual woman's level, the celebrated achievement of gaining access to senior and leadership levels for women is dampened by the difficult challenge of balancing work and motherhood as well as community related roles. The choice between career advancement and family as well as community based obligations has implications for women's performance, organisational/family commitments and personal/professional fulfilment. Marshall (1984, p. 23) states that among the obstacles towards attaining gender equity at leadership levels is the fact that practical difficulties of balancing several life roles and a wide web of responsibilities continue to hamper women's capabilities to pursue work interests.

Several coalesced factors compound the perpetuation of women's multiple gender roles. Essentially, there is still inadequate adjustment in the definition of women's roles and men's roles as members of communities and families in diverse cultural, socio-economic and political contexts. Hence, behind commendable advances towards the accession of women to previously unconventional occupations, in many instances inherent forms of inequality remain. Some persistent problems have been identified as the failure to equalise the burden of domestic labour and responsibility between the sexes. (Young et. al 1981) In effect the result of this is that although women may have obtained greater equality of opportunity in employment, they are unable to take full advantage of this advance, so that often gains in one direction do not translate into systemic achievements. MacKinnon (1982) questions the value of this version of liberation where women are free to work outside the home and attain to high achievements in contributing

their labour to the regime, while nevertheless remaining confined to traditional domestic roles where there has been little shift in the gender division of labour.

Research has shown that the pay gap between women who are not mothers and men, is significantly less than that between mothers and men. The relatively less earnings of mothers also disadvantages their children. (The Economist, 2010, p. 7) Furthermore, women working outside the home not only earn fewer wages, but also often have to perform a double shift in terms of formal and domestic task requirements. Bagshaw (2004, p. 154) notes that a key aspect of diversity in organisations is willingness to accommodate flexibility in working arrangements.

Marshall (1984) suggests that instituting flexible employment patterns could take various forms, including altering perceptions and generalised expectations of career progression and job performance criteria. For instance normative expectations of a successful career path may expand to take into account a shifting balance in the focus on professional and personal interests and activities during different phases. This may offer greater flexibility for parenthood alongside career responsibilities, as well as encourage broader pursuits such as travel, edification, health oriented rest and relaxation. Locating flexible employment patterns within a wider context of organisational meta-values can remove the unnecessary tensions between organisational effectiveness and holistic personal well-being.

i) *Family Support*

In context of flexibility of time, the broad-based issue of family support is cast and factored in with reference to a wide range of organisational mechanisms such as pertains to *inter alia,* parental/maternity leave, child care, or other necessary accommodations to women's reproductive and family roles.

Sociological theories of gender stratification have focused on gender status difference in the institution of the family, and the influence of economic organisation. The primacy given to women's reproductive roles and the emphasised importance of motherhood in many societies influence a division of labour, whereby women's responsibilities are accented in domestic tasks located in the private sphere of the home. This influences or outright determines women's options and priority of choices related to work outside the home and mediates their access and

positioning within male dominated public spheres, where the structures of formal employment privilege men. (Spain, 1993; Afshar, 1991)

Theories of gender stratification based on economic organisation are closely linked to this perspective, suggesting that the selective association of women with the domestic sphere reduces their probability of accessing high level jobs with demanding requirements and responsibilities, with negative consequences for their employment status and earning potential. Unequal occupational and wage structures shape gender differences in status, with asymmetry emerging when disempowered women, cannot directly contribute to the means of production and economic subsistence. (Scott, 1995) In support of this perspective, anthropological research has shown that women's status is lower in societies where the public and private spheres are highly differentiated, and particularly in non-industrialised societies, many women are relegated to the informal economy. (Rosaldo, 1974)

At another level, marxist-feminists argue that analysis of gender stratification should be based on the recognition of the link between public and domestic institutions, stating that in reality the public and private spheres reinforce each other, with neither institution exclusive or operating in isolation. The complexity of gender stratification is approached by examining how family structure and economic organisation as aspects of the same socio-cultural system, interact to produce different status outcomes for women and men in particular contexts. (Blaxall & Reagan, 1976) Specifically, attention is given to the interplay between patriarchy, effected foremost in the family, and capitalist economic relations and models, whereby men's dominance in the home is strengthened by their control of the most prominent, prestigious and lucrative jobs in the economy, and vice-versa. (Eisenstein, 1979) As a result of this intimate inter-linkage, aiming to ameliorate women's condition through increased participation and targeted support in the public sphere can serve to further entrench gendered roles and demands, as opposed to reshaping them.

Scott (1974, p. 214) cautions against accepting the multiple roles of women by according women special privileges to facilitate their functioning in these roles, without addressing the nature and performance of the roles themselves. As such allowing women time flexibility to attend to their roles as mothers, risks accommodating a domestic division of labour where the duties of women as mothers continue to outweigh those of men as fathers. The establishment of organisational mechanisms to facilitate women as mothers in senior and leadership positions cannot

meaningfully occur in the absence of an analysis of women's condition in the private sphere and requisite mechanisms to facilitate the role of men as fathers. Current alternatives of negating the role of women as mothers (with many women choosing not to have children in order to pursue their careers) and sanctioning women's roles as mothers (for instance shortening the working day to give women more time for household duties) offer superficial remedies to relieve women of the demands of their multiple gender roles. Acknowledging the importance of men sharing a greater portion of women's roles and work, Jaquette (1976, p. 161) notes, "the public/private dichotomy cannot be resolved until men are as responsible for 'women's [reproductive] work' as women are now seen to be responsible for 'productive work'."

Nevertheless, demand for female expertise and skill(s) and growing flexibility in the workplace is helping to alleviate some the gender role demands and contradictions. Several trends seem to favour women, not only as the more educated sex according to statistics, but also in the 'war for talent'. As a result, more companies are allowing flexible working patterns, and introducing facilitative technologies to redesign work in family-friendly ways to attract, support and retain female staff. (The Economist, 2010)

As Allee (2003, pp. 7 - 9) notes, advances in digitally enabled business capacities have increased out-of-office work possibilities accommodating working from home options, as well as options for world travellers. "Project team members can be scattered all over...collaborating and working together without ever meeting face to face." Illustrating the popularity of cyber-based work configurations, "IBM cites $100 million in savings annually from telecommuting and mobile work" and it is anticipated that enterprises will systematically re-evaluate work requirements and locations on the basis of the widening availability of technologies to facilitate efficiency of cyber working practices. Nevertheless, as Allee observes, "since Davidow and Malone heralded the arrival of the virtual corporation in 1992,"[35] the end of the corporation and the rise of the network has been repeatedly predicted, although not achieved.

An interesting question to consider is what is the role if any of gender stereotyping in cyber relational interactions? Is the potency of gender bias attitudes and behaviours as prevalent when relationships are mediated by cyberspace? Is gender bias more concentrated in physically

[35] Davidow, H. William and Malone, S. Michael, 1992. *The Virtual Corporation: Structuring and Revitalising the Corporation for the 21st Century*. Harper Business

combined spaces where face-to-face encounters are the norm and the 'embodiment' of women more visible? An interesting study might be to assess perceptions and/or experience of gender bias in cyber working networks vis-a-vis gender bias perceptions and/or experience in physically close and interactive professional spaces. Additionally, there may be implications for studies aimed at generating gender statistics. With the geographic dispersion of employee work bases, it may be increasingly difficult to access and ascertain experiences of women within geographically spread organisations.

9. THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP FOR GENDER EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

Primarily lack of support from senior leadership and higher levels of authority was stated as an obstacle faced by women leaders in organisations:

"You'll let's say, take initiative, be entrepreneurial, be proactive, but from the corporate office you'll see no support, and you'll get frustrated, because you'll be alone in your leadership, with very little back up support from on top when it really matters."

"Yes I know we can do better in terms of gender equality, but you know head office doesn't support it, you know how that is, they won't do it for us [women]."

Although the increased numbers of women in management positions is creating impetus for change at a senior level, the case is largely that for the majority of organisations gender equity as a priority is eclipsed and overshadowed by immediate bottom line concerns and business interests, heightened by international environments of economic and financial instability and insecurity. Suggested follow-up research may usefully benchmark organisational gender policies (the existence, formulation, content and implementation of gender policy), and examine senior leaders' viewpoint on the extent to which the need and/or will exists to adjust organisational and institutional structures and environments, to better accommodate women.

In a few instances, respondents acknowledged awareness of the need, and willingness to address issues of gender equity within organisations. Reasons for this included a desire to better utilise the knowledge and expertise of senior female staff, particularly within the financial services sector and insurance industry. As shared by a research participant,

"I think that the industry we're in has a lot of potential, I think we're in the right industry that can bring about that change. I think we also do have the right structures in place. We have effective policies, procedures and other structures that can allow people to move into their potential. The structures in place, the performance management system that's in place, the tools that are in place to look at this, those kind of things exist."

In general, respondents noted there may be willingness but a lack of sufficient awareness of core issues at hand, thereby compromising appropriate action in support of gender equity. This may manifest for example in the existence of gender equity policy, yet the content or issues addressed by such policy may be too vague or narrowly targeted; or where policies are adequate, there may be short gaps at the level of policy implementation. In light of this, the need remains for

continued exploration of ways to raise consciousness and awareness between female and male colleagues to better accommodate each other. Additionally, such accommodation will require appropriate contexts, in terms of requisite structures, policies and implementation frameworks to encourage and nourish different modes and diverse forms of performance representative of, although not exclusive to the categories of, men and women. That is, to achieve meaningful, as opposed to superficial change and adjustments to contemporary organisational contexts, the role of leadership is to promote diverse modes of performance and foster learning of new approaches to realise higher levels of innovation and creativity in response to increasingly complex and unstable environments. As Bagshaw (2004) notes, ensuring a diverse workforce in itself will not guarantee learning and innovation occurs. Rather diversity needs to be positively harnessed including managing the tensions arising out of diversity through processes of creative abrasion. On the other hand, where organisations' workforce and core teams are mostly homogenous efforts are required to inject diversity and variety to stimulate innovation and creativity, and to avoid situations of groupthink. Bagshaw (2004) suggests intra- and inter-organisational networking as well as knowledge and information sharing and exchange platforms such as seminars or guest speakers are opportunities to introduce different perspectives, ideas and an engagement with diversity.

As Doob (1957) mentions, in processes of behaviour change, individuals' predispositions are not sole determinants in the acceptance of behaviour and culture change. Rather it is the interaction of these predispositions with the informing context, including advocates for change, the features and attributes of the change required, and displayed intolerance and enforced repercussions for specific modes of unacceptable behaviour.

Outlining requirements for the success of diversity strategies in organisations, the role of leadership was identified as a key criterion by the EU Commission (2005). The important role of leadership for assuring diversity in the workplace included defining a clear case for action, building leadership commitment, establishing an infrastructure to support implementation, learning and applying lessons previously learned about effective change management processes towards heightened diversity, and communicating diversity and inclusion principles to staff, customers and company stakeholders as part of the core values of organisations. Leadership ownership and accountability for diversity goals strategically pegs and integrates diversity and

equity issues throughout the structures, systems and processes of organisations, from goals and objectives setting, to allocation of funding and resources, implementation and performance measurement and appraisal. Promoting gender equity and diversity at leadership levels therefore encourages wider organisational commitment to these issues as business-wide concerns, as opposed to the isolated preserve of discreet departments, units or offices e.g. diversity officers or human resources departments.

At the same time, involving employee representatives, staff networks or groups in establishing the purpose and objectives, planning, implementing and monitoring application of policy, is another prerequisite for successful implementation of diversity strategies. According to the EU, good practice involves participation from senior management as well as all levels of staff to secure and sustain organisational commitment to diversity and equity initiatives, as well as ensure distribution of the benefits of diversity to the full range of employees within the organisational working environment and beyond.

Bagshaw (2004, p. 153) links diversity to equal opportunity and positive action, while at the same time distinguishing it from both. Positive action is related to employment equity legislation in respect of recruitment and training opportunities towards promotion, "to facilitate the development of groups under-represented at particular levels or in particular areas."

Political intervention, in the shape of affirmative-action programmes does not rank highly as a popular option however. Critics largely view promoting people on the basis of their sex as illiberal and unfair, and argue that it stigmatises its beneficiaries, and perpetuates politics of differences. However, what are alternate ways to speed up equitable representation and improve the challenging lives of working women and their dependents? (The Economist, 2010, p.7)

Harding (1991, pp 48 - 49) offers a useful description of an approach discussing a "postmodernist standpoint" that is "committed to rethinking and reusing" some important notions from conventional approaches. That is, following the logic of standpoint approaches into postmodernist terrains, entails refashioning en route familiar but inadequate utensils into useful ones for everyday work that nevertheless contends with the "philosophy and democratic struggles of the present moment." From the critical mass perspective then, an important task is to fast-track the entry of women into organisations, however subsequently, it is important to work

with women that have been promoted and gained senior access within institutions, to assist in locating and tracking the trail of social relations linking what happens in more exclusive spaces with the social relations and patterns of interaction within larger society. In other words the challenge is to apply present tools and utilise current opportunities, however inadequate, in order to create potential for realising more substantive and fundamental change.

9.1 The Role of the Politics of Gender

A notable point of difference in responses from respondents was related to the perceived need for the gender equity conversation to continue. A repeated critique of the research was that it appeared to be placing women as a distinct and special group when the imperative is to move away from accentuating the status of any particular group, whether advantaged or disadvantaged. A minority of respondents were of the opinion that the time had come to shift debates on gender equity and affirmative action. (One respondent included race discrimination as another debate that requires a shift). This viewpoint underscored that politics around identity and equity often detract vital energy and focus away from other matters that are equally if not more pressing, and which demand a more professionally neutral, quality-based approach. In relation to the African context, such matters include instituting anti-corruption measures, addressing system and structural level faults with regard to service delivery and attending to issues of democratic governance.

Oppositely, the majority of respondents were in favour of continuing types of affirmative action in order to redress past and largely continuing discrimination. A quantitatively fair distribution of representatives from diverse groupings is required it is argued, as demonstrative of equal opportunity, as well as to maximise on the availability of diverse resources with positive benefits for organisational performance. At the same time, growing consensus is that numbers alone do not equal transformation, and it is the nature of representation that is important. As Bagshaw (2004, p. 153) notes equity and diversity as a numbers game will not win genuine commitment.

In either case, the issue of the value of the politics of gender remains pervasive and contentious both in theory and in practice. On the one hand the benefits of the politics of gender are difficult to refute. Harding (1991) comments that as a social movement, feminism and the women's movement have brought to the foreground of public discourse and social debate, the existence of

pertinent issues that were formerly unacknowledged, invisible and presumed features of social life. “The women’s movement removes blinders from our eyes, enabling us to see things that have always been there but were not visible to us earlier...Before the women’s movement, our eyes were covered; the women’s movement opens them for us.” (pp 62 - 64) As such feminist politics and the women’s movement have had historically momentous effects with wide spread impacts.

Essentially in socially stratified societies, the value of the politics of gender, or of politics around diversity and inequity in general, is the lens provided to notice and grasp obscured elements of social relations, and how these elements are reinforced within and buttressed by organisations, institutions and the socio-political and economic structures and cultures of society. Discussing consciousness raising as a main technique of the women’s movement, MacKinnon (1982) emphasises that it is through consciousness raising that different aspects of society become known as politics and as such come to be known in a different way.

Hence feminist politics is “a tolerable companion” and indeed “a necessary condition” of the struggle for social justice, for women specifically, as well as for disenfranchised groups in general. “Only through such struggles can we begin to see beneath the appearances created by an unjust social order to the reality of how this social order is in fact constructed and maintained.” (Harding, 1991, p. 127)

Researching into women in entrepreneurship in South Africa, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Report 2006 supports this agenda stating that without factual and reliable information on the status and profile of women, it is difficult to make a fair assessment of their representation and participation. In fact “it is questionable whether any organisation can play a meaningful role in the absence of reliable information.” (Maas & Herrington, 2006, p. 28) In other words, as Wallace and March (1991, p. 6) maintain, the primary practical requirement is for a better understanding of women’s roles, and incorporating these into policy and planning frameworks. In this process, it is imperative to consult with and listen to women and learn their needs.

Harding (1991, p. 64) adds that feminism can be available as a discourse and identity to any group of people because of its attitude toward the disadvantaged and its attempts to achieve

justice against domination. “Feminism...here is no more than what such people – men and women – who are concerned with issues of social justice and equality already do.”

As such there continues to be a role and imperative for the implementation of equal opportunity legislation and affirmative action employment programmes. Initially, these may facilitate entry-level access for women and other diverse groups. However, there is a further need to ensure discriminatory promotion practices are addressed with regard to top management positions. (See Schein, 2007)

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of a ‘politics of the oppressed.’ This theme was a pertinent point of discussion during several key interviews with strategic respondents. It is worthwhile to note some of the responses to this issue.

Primarily, there was the caveat that discourses on issues of oppression should not offer the main frame of reference for all other discourses. As explained by one respondent,

“Normally when people are oppressed they’re looking for a specific reason to just find that we can do better than those guys. Then you’re missing the key issues. You’re forgetting that life and work are about so many other things like quality of life, progress, growth. Instead people are caught up in issues of inferiority and superiority, and then we can’t move past that. Everything seems to be in reaction to or contained within that argument.”

Furthermore, the assumption that the oppressed by virtue of their experience as oppressed will contribute positively to projects of liberation, may be faulty.

“It was assumed that these people because they have suffered, because they have been oppressed, because they had been sat on and they know the suffering of that sitting on and that oppression, they are going to make better leaders. But I’m telling you experience has shown that this is not so. Often these oppressed people become the oppressors of others when you give them the chance.”

During a focus group discussion with interviewees in Kenya, specific examples were given to illustrate this point:

“A very good example, we were told, earlier in the year, or last year, if you vote for, give women 40% of the seats in the parliament, this country would be a much, much better country because women are sensitive to the young, youth, and sensitive to the poor. Now we did vote for 20 women, by their own right they got to the parliament. You would have expected, especially during the current debate of should we tax the MP [Members of Parliament], because you know they’re paid very much. Well you would have expected one woman, not even the whole 20 to say yes we agree, the poor are oppressed, we’ll give 1% or 2% of our monies. None of them,

absolutely none have said so."

The above observation is consistent with the fact that "more women in politics does not necessarily correlate with lower levels of corruption." (UN Development Fund For Women, 2008) Respondents broadened the Focus Group discussion to include other constituencies:

"We were also told if you vote for the youth they're going to be sensitive to the suffering of the people, whatever, whatever, they know about the difficulties and current challenges facing the population. The average age of the Kenyan parliament now is between 40 and 45. None of them have said, wait why are you giving me a million a month, it's too much, or why don't we better address the economic issues we see all around."

"The first mistake we make is to assume that simply because you know and have overcome the hardships of life you are better qualified, or are of a stronger moral character than others. But no you are not, in fact whether rich or poor, white or black, man or woman, we all have the capacity to be dishonest, we all have the capacity to be honest."

"Like Aroyo, in the Philippines, she's not any better than Markos. That's a good example too."

Respondents casually ruminated on the emotive reasons informing the perspective that individuals are better vested in resistance to unjust discrimination, and may offer better leadership as a result of having been at the receiving end of prejudice. The key assumption under question here was that an experience of oppression or domination may provide a higher moral ground as part of a resistance stance against dominating groups.

"The available emotions, maybe of indignation, injustice, suggest that people who have known hardship surely will work to alleviate the hardship of others. The available emotions want to tend in that direction, that suffering begets a noble character. The reality down the road however, does not always come close to supporting that in any way. We need to keep that in mind. Suffering alone, or being oppressed in itself, does not qualify you beyond certain levels. There are other important characteristics and qualities that need to be in place and that are not automatically in place because of an experience of oppression."

"We want to believe that it's true, that the hypothesis is true that people from difficult backgrounds or contexts are better qualified to bring about positive change. And perhaps the hypothesis seems true on the side of the oppressed people, because when you're being discriminated against you think 'if I was in that leadership position, I would do a much better job.' We all want to believe that hypothesis, and because our emotions are directed on that direction it's so easy to believe so, but the facts and history show that we need to re-test this hypothesis."

Similar arguments have been made in feminist studies and research that have observed the lack of concerted effort towards gender equity by women in senior and leadership positions, as well as by the gender equity machineries and offices instituted with this mandate. In many instances,

appointment of women to senior and leadership positions has been a politically correct response to public demands, without substantive transformative impact.

"It's not as easy as just being about people and making changes at the individual level. Being oppressed or discriminated against is not just about individuals' behaviour, but it's also about the institutions and structures that are in place which we all have to deal with. And when you get to the top of those structures and institutions, you are already automatically an oppressor no matter what you do, and there will be some people who will always see you that way even if you are trying to bring about a positive change. So whether you are a woman or a man, when you get to the top, to some extent, you have to play by the rules of the dominating clique, and then of course at some level you disprove the hypothesis, you cross over, or at best straddle the line between those you claim to represent and the contexts within which you are trying to represent them."

"What we're saying is whether you oppress people because of colour, whether you oppress them because of education, income class, or whatever, it's going to take more than promoting these people to bring equality and justice. We have to change the social contexts that are in themselves main factors of discrimination against masses of people."

Despite the above pertinent cautions however, it was agreed that politics of social equity nevertheless make positive contributions to the growth of knowledge. As Harding (1991, pp.64, 65) aptly notes, movements of social liberation enlarge the vision available, positively impact the growth of knowledge and usefully effect social values. There are benefits therefore of yielding the spaces demanded for expression and critique, and these become clear in the plethora of new thought, fresh ideas and perspectives that can inform alternative approaches to common realities.

It is indeed important to recognise the role social movements can play in shifting social values. Indeed an understanding of the power of social movements to shift social standards is not particularly new, nor outdated. The use of mass social protest mechanisms as a means of expressing dissatisfaction with the current social order, and contemporary events in the Middle East are a good showcase of this point, is a continuing reality that illustrates the widespread awareness of the impact social movements can have on instigating change in societies. It is interesting to note the points of linkage between these ongoing social protest movements and the changes in social values these movements are based in as well as have the potential to provoke.

Indeed it may also be further added, that it would be a great loss to abandon either of these approaches, as each contributes to achieving the aims of gender equity. Firstly, the business-as-usual 'add-on' approach contributes to the growth of a critical mass of women in the

organisational workplace. Their presence can trigger or influence substantive changes that can benefit the larger cause of the women's movement, as well as the organisational entities that they work for. As one woman commented during the research interview, "if there are more women in the workplace we can succeed to overcome prejudicial attitudes, because we will have that force, that power." Secondly, the argument for more substantive transformation in support of gender equity is also important. Adjusting institutional structures, policies and processes, as well as cultures and environments, to better reflect the diverse needs of constituents, is imperative for the sustainable growth and advancement of societies. As such, feminist critics who are most active in supporting efforts to get more women into business/science/leadership positions, have a vital role play. There are important reasons to want more feminists in these social and professional spaces. We need feminists in the existing institutions for many reasons: to blow the whistle from within on the failures of these institutions to adhere to their often expressed principles and policies of equity and impartiality; to gain for women access to the status and authority in the larger society that such positions bring; where possible, to explain what women need to know about the regularities and underlying causal tendencies of nature and social life; and to generate, within equal opportunity justifications, projects that are specifically in women's interests. (Harding, 1991, pp 75 - 76)

Equally, feminists devoted to achieving more fundamental changes in the structures of institutions and society can benefit from having more women 'added to' predominantly male dominated areas. In line with the agendas of feminists who oppose the business-as-usual approach, women who have gained entry at senior level can apply their talents and energies to promote more substantive advances for gender equity. As stated by one strategic respondent,

"They [women in senior levels in organisations] are the ones that have the information about how the purpose needs to be achieved. They are going to be the ones with the expertise about the best way and most efficient way of how to do it [strategically advocate for issues of gender equity]. If none of us are senior in those organisations, where are we going to be?"

i) *The Need to Change Mindsets*

Research participants consistently emphasised that a significant aspect of the change required relates to the need for individual enactment of change at the behavioural level. As Hearn, Rooney and Mandeville (2003) mention, meaningful transformation towards gender equity and

diversity in general will require change beyond indicators of social demography and levels of employee diversity in enterprises. Phenomenological shifts in subjective meaning and inter-subjective interactions are also required to destabilise ingrained relations of inequity that manifest in such distinctions as the powerful and the subordinated, the haves and have nots.[36] Relatedly, a viewpoint shared amongst respondents was that sustainable and meaningful change is ultimately linked to deeper personal change in terms of gender and perceptions of difference. As succinctly stated by a strategic respondent,

"the point I would like to make here is, I think it's all about the old mindsets and it's about shifting people from where they are and transferring their minds. It's actually about the mind, after which follows behaviour."

Expressing a similar viewpoint, another strategic respondent shared that,

"it's an issue of perception, what we see. People are likely to pass a judgement on what they perceive, and unfortunately ninety percent of us pass judgement on physical appearance, like how you're dressed, or how you look, that's how I perceive you. That woman is nice, she's beautiful. That guy dresses nice, he must be smart. But he might be the murderer, she might be a first class villain, but what I perceive, what I see in my perception is mainly likely to be what I'm going to pass the judgement on. A lot of people are like that. So women are not always perceived as leaders, and men are. We'll need to change that perception if we want to make a real difference."

Research participants stressed that the need to change mindsets and alter perceptions is not limited to a discussion of male discriminatory attitudes, but encompasses the need to also expand the identities of women and girls. For instance, a variety of data on issues of health and mortality illustrate the limitations and consequences of restrictive masculine and feminine roles. (Kaplan et. al 1991; Verbrugge, 1985 & 1989)

"Our minds are set into a certain way. If you go in a man's world, or if you go in a white man's world, unless you behave this way, it's not going to happen. But that's not true. It's not true that if I'm a woman and I don't behave this way, it's not going to happen for me. Or if I'm a black person and I don't behave this way, I'm not going to reach my goals either. You end up living half of your life on that seat, proving that because I'm a woman I have to bend and shape myself to fit. But you don't need to prove anything. You just need to prove I have the capacity, I can do it. End of the story. A brilliant, fantastic, professional person. But we don't allow you to do that,

[36] Phenomenological shifts, meaning changes in the structures of perceiving and understanding experience and consciousness of self and others. That is, the need to change how we experience, perceive and understand self and others. These phenomenological shifts - changes in the way meaning s allocated to subjective and inter-subjective experience - may range from perception, thoughts and emotion, to memory, imagination and bodily awareness, including embodied action and language.

and maybe even yourself back in that little chamber where it's hiding you don't believe it either."

As articulated by Lipman-Blumen (1983) the need then remains for a feminism that advocates for the continual analyses of the values, ideals, ideas and resources connected to women, their vitality, agency and activities. These analyses must seek to liberate constricting perceptions of women, and provide a persuasive counter position to dominating and 'inferiorizing' beliefs and the discriminatory practices they imbue. A bold statement can be made that without a feminist epistemology through which to examine and critique the knowledge received about female selves, women and girls will necessarily remain compromised and bound by their subordinated status within patriarchal society (Young-Eisendrath, 1988). Furthermore, unless more attention is directed at transformation and improvement of the organisational (and social) contexts within which women aim to apply their knowledge, tangible (structural) and intangible (cultural) features will continue to present obstacles to the emergence, explication and enactment of what women know as well as other diverse forms of knowledge.

It is important to reiterate that in discussing change at the level of knowledge systems the task is complex, involving both a material focus (for example issues of quantitative representation and access within relevant structures and at requisite levels) as well as cognitive and perceptual shifts in beliefs, values, sentiments, awareness, attitudes, emotions. (Chia, 1996) Hearn, Rooney and Mandeville (2003) expound on the phenomenology of knowledge systems which drives processes of self-referencing, self-organisation and self-transformation to enable cohesion, innovation and adaptation of knowledge economies and societies. Alongside shifts in knowledge systems related to new technologies and expanded capacity to process and manage data and information, are phenomenological shifts at the levels of awareness and consciousness, demonstrated by changing consumer sentiment, voter patterns, capital market behaviour and the themes and content of popular media.

It could be tentatively argued that consensus is growing across fields and disciplines that at the very least the purposes and the pursuit of knowledge should be guided by agendas that seek to improve the collective lot of humanity. Where morals and ethics form the foundation of knowledge enterprises. Bagshaw (2004) positively notes that in general there is the awareness of the need for change at the personal level, nevertheless defensive stances may be triggered where

the understanding of such change is shaped by a win-lose perspective, or presented in terms of a moral superiority that may be perceived as condescending.

The challenge remains how to best address and achieve much needed change "within the existing formations of our society (foundations, universities, health-care systems, the economy, and so on), which are not diversified, are uncooperative, hierarchical, authoritarian, and nonparticipatory." (Harding, 1991, p. 173) That is, a key question is what types of favourable conditions are required for learning new and adapting old modes of specific behaviours and general dispositions, in a manner that is essentially irreversible and becomes solidified at the level of performance, and even at the deeper levels of identity and personality characteristics? (Doob, 1957) The following discussion discusses learning and knowing organisations and cultures as conducive for shifting and instilling new behaviours and modes of interactions in employees, with repercussions for broader social life, and as potential environments to act as points of meaningful change and transformation.

9.2 Learning and Knowing Organisations

Within a swiftly changing environment, rapid advances in technology, demographic and geopolitical shifts and the globalisation of the world economy lead to increased complexity and uncertainty. Organisations are increasingly required, to anticipate changes, respond proactively and adapt effectively to unpredictable and volatile conditions. (Choo, 1998, p. xi) Global movements in economies and populations, to climate change and crises of poverty, and heightened international insecurity linked to terrorism, have fundamental impacts for how organisations structure and value work and shape internal and external organisational contexts. The need to remain socially and environmentally responsible and alert to security threats, as well as the changing nature of work facilitated by revolutionary technology platforms, has impacts for how contemporary organisations function and operate, and are structured to maintain relevance and guarantee performance. (Marshall, 1984; Dervitsiotis, 2008)

For organisations, response and adaptation capabilities are directly related to organisational resources capacity and the ability to innovate contiuously. Research respondents were acutely

cognisant[37] of the need to develop appropriate organisational responses to remain relevant within the reality of rapid and unpredictable change in the macro environment:

"How do we make sure that organisations get functionally better, and that we're re-examining the systems, processes and procedures that suited us yesterday, and saying maybe we've got to rethink this because that was yesterday's business reality and not today's."

At a more individual level, one business leader acknowledged,

"The instincts that got me to where I am, are not going to get me to where I need to go. If I'm going to be successful in where I want to go, I've got to re-condition some of my instincts. So we can look at this and say, okay we've got certain instincts to over-analyse, to be risk averse, we know that's been the conditioning, and now we've got to take the organisation to the next level. What's the learning that we've got to go through so that we take our capabilities to the next level?"

That is, the success of contemporary organisations is determined by the capacity to continuously learn and apply creativity and intelligence to build generative, innovative and tactical solutions to endemic challenges (Hall 2007). Choo (1998) elaborates on the concept of learning and knowing organisations as organisations engaged in creating, organising, and strategically processing information in order to generate new knowledge. In this way, "the knowing organisation is effective because it continually evolves with its changing environment, refreshes its knowledge assets, and practices vigilant information processing in its decision making" (Choo, 1998, p. xii). As noted by a strategic respondent, continuous organisational learning is about,

"Taking the time for questioning and it's really about how are we going to lift ourselves. Maybe that principle or that guideline was good then, five years ago, even two years ago, maybe it doesn't look fine now. There's nothing wrong with taking a look at it and saying you know we kind of keep hitting our heads on the same wall here, and am I the only one who is doing it? Then you say alright, well let's go back to the source, take a look and see what we can learn to fix the problem. It's time to know why something is not functioning and to make an adjustment."

According to Nonaka (1994), there are two important steps in interpreting external contexts and aligning organisational activities and strategic development with emerging knowledge, opportunities and constraints: i) analysing organisational capability to interact with and

[37] This awareness could have been fuelled by the context within which the research was undertaken, specifically the 2008 international financial recession, and more particularly the unstable state of Kenya in the wake of post-election unrest, and in South Africa the untimely resignation of President Thabo Mbeki signalling a substantial rift in the ruling ANC political party leadership.

efficiently process information from the environment; ii) assessing the means by which organisations create and disseminate information and knowledge.

Of significance are the intersections between the experience of people and the knowledge they carry as a result, and organisational strategic goals. By tapping into the potential inherent within human resource capacities organisations can learn how to best respond to external environments towards achievement of goals. By implication it may be argued, diversity-oriented organisations offer richer contexts for interpretation and learning, and a broader pool of talent and experience to generate innovative responses and solutions. (Bagshaw, 2004)

During the research interviews, especially in Kenya, respondents emphasised that the necessity to continuously learn ought to apply to leaders at all levels across sectors. Emphasis was made on the public sector:

"Leaders need to accept that we need revitalising. We need to explore new ways to inspire and motivate our people and to achieve our aims, if we are going to come out stronger during this most challenging, immediate future for the economy and the country [Kenya]."

This sentiment is echoed by Baets (2006, p.38) that alongside the existence of relevant instruments and operational mechanisms to encourage organisational learning, a learning manager/leader is best placed to be "the inspirer and the creator of good conditions for others", emphasising the pertinence of continual personal and professional development of leaders, on a path of self-mastery.

Emphasising mastery as an impetus for learning and change, a strategic respondent shared,

"I think also one way of staying right up at sustainable peak performance level, is by initiating changes from time to time. Because if one is right up there, and they know the ways or are meeting all the criteria of being right up there, after mastering your tasks and doing this for a long time then you start slipping into comfort. But if change happens, then you refocus, and somehow look at things differently and continue to push yourself towards excellence."

As another research participant stated,

"there's always further to go, taking it further, rather than just saying we've made enough money. Set up new goal posts, seek challenges, explore new terrain. Learn and change."

It is useful here to mention two perspectives of knowledge management relevant to this study, namely the cognitive perspective of knowledge management and the community view. The

cognitive position tends to emphasise IT as a central characteristic and feature of knowledge management. The community view focuses on management practices related to the social and organizational context in which knowledge processes occur. The overall aim of both the cognitive and community models is the effective management of knowledge resources for the benefit of organisations. The approaches differ however in their mode of knowledge work, with the cognitive perspective emphasising the codification of tacit knowledge, while the community view supports more story-telling and experiential sharing practices. (Scarbrough, 2001) In both approaches, organisations benefit from improved collaboration, cooperation, communication and coordination. The improved quality of interactions can contribute to innovation, creativity and profitability.

i) *Openness to Change*

Respondents stated that organisational environments where there is willingness to see and enact change provide motivational contexts for leaders to drive initiatives unrestricted by outdated beliefs, norms and operational procedures. Work environments that are open to change encourage innovative leadership and fresh approaches, and such environments may be more welcoming and conducive to women leaders as symbols and agents of change. To quote a few respondents:

"The things that differentiate and distinguish our organisation as effective and as one that can execute change, as opposed to being one of those organisations that get stuck and find it hard to move, really motivate me as a female leader."

"We're all committed to making it in our organisation, even if we have a lot of reservations about our challenges. So I'm entrusted and really given quite a lot of latitude, regardless of whatever misgivings, to do what I think is best here at the top. We're not afraid to change as an organisation and this motivates me to think expansively about my leadership, outside of the standard dos and don'ts."

As a particular aspect of work environments, openness to change was also found to positively motivate leadership in that such an organisational culture also tends to welcome initiative and creativity, which as discussed as part of these findings is a key requisite for the success of women leaders.

Discussing requirements for good diversity practices in the workplace, the EU Commission (2005) notes that successful diversity strategies need to overcome and override discriminatory

attitudes and behaviours in the workplace which are the most common opposition and challenge to promoting diversity in organisations. The EU suggests that to address this issue, good practice companies need to approach diversity as a culture change process that extends beyond application and enforcement of policy into the arena of promoting diversity principles and values.

In discussing behaviour and attitude change in employees, it is important to consider a spectrum of variables from the psychological nature of attitude and behaviour change (Doob, 1957), to the general state of the learning environment within the organisation. This relates to such factors as personality traits, the function of the behaviour and attitude in relation to the individual's membership to larger social groupings, and its capacity to satisfy significant drives, as well as the availability of, or access to the skills, opportunities and incentives related to learning and adjusting to new attitudes and modes of behaviour. A variety of mechanisms therefore, or a certain cultural mileu and informing dynamic has to be in place to encourage substantial change in the psychological predispositions and material traits that make up modes of behaviour and attitudes.

Allen (1994, p. 583) further cautions against strict adherence to any particular forms and systems of knowledge recommending that there is wisdom in recognising the limits to knowledge, suggesting the aim is to understand the significance of processes of change and transformation as the true basis for sustainability.

ii) *Receptive Cultures and Learning*

Respondents discussed the value of learning and receptive cultures from both a negative and positive viewpoint. On the one hand, learning cultures were generally described as open, creative and innovative, accommodating diversity and allowing the voicing and expression of different perspectives. On the other hand, respondents working within more closed organisational environments discussed the challenges of negotiating insular cultures.

Respondents celebrated working in organisations where the work environment was perceived to accommodate difference:

"It is very dynamic, there is always something new, something different."

"Sometimes from the corporate office you'll see practices that don't make good business, and this isn't motivating. What is motivating is that you can suggest and recommend alternative courses of action without fear of reprisal. We must be accountable at every level and we all need to be able to hear and receive critique on how we do things, and be open to different ways of doing things if these might yield better for the company."

Research participants also referred to characteristics and features of organisational cultures and structures that may be considered to echo and be in alignment with common definitions of learning organisations. In particular, respondents discussed the need for organisations to maintain "a sense of discovery" and suggested that learning cultures within organisations might encourage companies "to not just get stuck in an old way but take up the challenge to continually appraise what they're doing and find better ways of operating."

Cultures of learning were further associated with bringing a sense of dynamism to organisations, with positive benefits for overall performance:

"If we're learning then we're re-thinking. We're taking a new look at our processes. I mean we're thinking about how we operate, we're asking what is the need to do this or that? Are these processes in service of anything or are they inefficient and perhaps even compromising where we're trying to go?"

Conversely, respondents discussed the challenges of negotiating insular organisational environments and working within more closed cultures:

"We spend a lot of time in arguing about what we ought to do that really chews up a lot of our time for planning and actually doing. The thing is, the chair of our board has been there for coming onto thirty years, he's seventy years old now. Then we also have these newer members that are full of drive and ideas. Our meetings sometimes are a real uphill battle trying to negotiate the impasse between these two sides. And of course in the meantime you're encountering a lot of conservative, sometimes gender insensitive ideas on one side, as well as some new, sometimes quite risky ways of doing things on the other side, which can both similarly challenge your position as CEO. I think it would be best to find some middle way, and release everyone from having to negotiate between interests that compromise one party or another, or someone will have to lose."

"It's the preconceptions that we all have, the ones that can create false divisions and distinctions, that we have to deal with in our organisation. We're so stuck in our ways. Things are seen and understood a certain way and that's it. Everything fits into set categories that are not on the table for discussing or reconfiguring."

Establishing cultures of learning within organisations was a highly favoured recommendation particularly with regard to the spaces allowed for creativity and innovation, and in general

respondents associated this as primarily the role of leadership to encourage and promote. David Slocum, of the Berlin Centre for Creative Leadership, comments however that pairing leadership with creativity may initially appear as a paradox, in that generally "creativity is chaotic and unrestrained while leadership is orderly and controlling, and setting the two together makes for an uneasy, potentially volatile combination." (Slocum, 2015, p.1). Creativity manifests unpredictably and innovations in knowledge, discoveries and new ideas often appear unorthodox, in juxtaposition to conventionality and the exigencies of corporate planning requirements and constraints to minimize risks and enhance commerce. Business enterprises however benefit from creative, imaginative and innovative initiative, and increasingly organizations are embracing creativity and innovation as contributory factors for sustaining successful performance. Slocum (2015) notes that beyond the standard application of creativity to brand and marketing communications or new product and service offerings, positive impacts have been generated through innovations in organizational processes and structures, and the creative reconfiguring of traditional functions and team roles. Applying original thinking to envision and attain to new horizons benefits stakeholders and shareholders. Creative leadership encourages authenticity, expressions of diversity and envisaging different possibilities, and emphasizes openness and co-creation. Criticism of the raised profile of creative work and talent has cautioned however against the monetization of creativity and innovation, arguing that a focus purely on the economic value of these activities constrains processes of exploration, experimentation and discovery

Nevertheless, some form of organizational structure to provide stability, security, discipline and focus is also required to efficiently hone innovation and creativity (Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville, 2003; Howkins, 2001) Furthermore, the relationship between creatives and organisational directives can be more fluid rather than oppositional. (Slocum, 2015) Organisations for instance may opt to allocate a specific physical space for creativity and innovation[38] or encourage cultures that nurture "possibility spaces" (Allen, 1997, p. 90) where the range of potential different strategies and behaviours of the different actors present can be explored fittingly in relation to decision making and resultant actions. Respondents recognised cultures of learning within organisations as more open and receptive to diverse expressions of

[38] For instance the Solution Space and Innovation Hub at the University of Cape Town, Graduate School of Business

creativity and innovation, and that further strategic prioritising and decision-making can harness and deploy creativity to generate positive opportunities and outcomes:

"Absolutely, a culture of learning would be positive. And if that's a culture that we establish, then it becomes much easier for people to get their voices heard and for people to share what they know. Then we can all learn from each other and do better, and this will have benefits for the company."

Similarly, other comments were:

"I think also in our organisations we simply follow the organisation chart. Someone who is let's say sixth down the line, might have all the answers, but the leaders are the only ones who are supposedly at the level to solve issues. If there is a learning culture, then maybe the people with the answers will be expected to speak up more, and they will be welcomed to do so by the leaders. The organisation will be interested in learning from its people all the way down the line."

"You can be a top achiever in whatever you do, but there comes a time when we all need to learn."

"But what it [a culture of learning in organisations] also requires of individuals, is that there is more ownership, at all levels of the organisation."

"If you have an organisational culture that promotes learning, you can maximise on what your human resources have to offer."

An undercurrent theme was the notion of emergent structures, connoting the influence of events on emergent structures and different types of systems. Phenomena and system dynamics influence and affect paths of change in a contingent and emergent fashion. Naming some other benefits of establishing organisations that are open to learning, a strategic respondent mentioned, "that if there is a great idea it doesn't just boil out because there are structured ways of developing ideas and the company is open to new ways of doing things in order to develop." From a more long term viewpoint of the possible benefits of learning organisational cultures, an additional comment was that,

"In the planning and thought process of where you're looking to take your business, it's about thinking future, thinking different of what people were doing before, and thinking what's possible, and where can it give us the maximum value and advantage in the future? This planning for the future can really be helped by a culture where people are always learning and thinking about where they have been, where they want to go and what they need to do for that."

Focus Group discussions also dwelt on how learning cultures within organisations encourage

colleagues to work together in new ways, possibly in more collaborative and less competitive ways,

"I think if we're learning together we encourage one another, and also support each other in our ideas, making sure we've helped look at all sorts of questions that might be asked, so that the data we're building, the case we're building has really looked into all options."

With reference to this Bagshaw (2004) mentions the need to build trust and credibility amongst colleagues and at leadership level.

Another statement was that learning cultures are about,

"Using your resources, seeing who your experts are, somebody with the knowledge required in a particular area. That is, you pull people together and you say ok, we want to build, here's our vision, we want to go this direction, we want to try to accomplish this thing, who has the knowledge of that? Has somebody dealt with it in another company? Do you have other experience? What can you do, you know, let's bring to the table and just sort of throw some ideas around, and not every idea is going to be brilliant, but if it gets you sort of into the realm of starting to think together. And I think that's where, if you create some of those forums, not just at the managerial level in the company but at other levels, you can say let's put some people together in a room, frontline people and ask them you know, how can we be more efficient here, or are we missing opportunities, or what can we do?"

The idea of creating in-house organisational forums for knowledge sharing, information exchange, and brainstorming was popular within the Focus Group:

"Because then the people who actually are the experts in the organisation, even if they are not appointed leaders can just come and it can be a free flow of talking with no structure, no positions or hierarchy. Of course, still we need a structure at a later stage, but in that kind of a discussion, you may just need the people to throw their ideas, let them talk. You will find that people have got the answers."

It was noted however, that establishing learning cultures within organisations does not preclude competition. Indeed knowledge is gaining credence as a valuable asset, and with the power that can be gained from exclusive information, it cannot be assumed that collaboration will be viewed as a more favourable option than competition. As aptly stated,

"Just because you're somebody who has got some knowledge, it doesn't mean that now you start sharing it. Why should you?" Another comment emphasised that "the issue, its not the science, knowledge, not the data, information, but the way people are acting. Regardless of what you know or don't know, the defining part is your behaviour."

The benefits of a competitive culture were also discussed with reference to this point,

particularly with the role competition can play in motivating optimum performance, and can boost learning: “you’re getting peak sustainable performance. People are challenging themselves in good ways, frequently.”

The need for positive competition was also mentioned, where the aim is to strive for excellence, and commitment is to high levels of quality overall.

In a similar vein, Bagshaw (2004) discusses the benefits of creative abrasion where contrasting viewpoints can stimulate creativity and innovation to bring variety and fresh ideas. Tensions arising from differences of opinion need not precipitate conflict or negative dynamics of competition, and teams and organisations can benefit from contesting ideas. Tools such as humour and the use of creative media techniques, and available spaces for frank and candid discussion without fear of reprisal are mentioned as approaches that can mitigate against group-think cultures where competition can be stifled, and uniformity is promoted rather than difference. Bagshaw recommends for example that specific meetings can be convened where checking and as necessary rethinking decisions is a principal item on the agenda.

Despite the benefits, it is important to note however, that as cautioned by Senge (1990) organisations may be hindered by learning disabilities that compromise the development and growth of learning organisational cultures and knowing organisations. In such instances it may be helpful to undertake an organisational environment audit that aims to gauge current issues and establish examples of good practice to be built upon. (Bagshaw, 2004)

9.3 The Importance of Socialisation

While the research did not delve into the individual-level psyche domains of gender relations, the critical necessity of addressing issues of inequity at this level was continually highlighted by research respondents, and as such the importance of socialisation was a noteworthy response to the research inquiry. Towards contributing to fundamental shifts in gender relations, socialisation was mentioned as an important cornerstone of change, and a key denominator for understanding “why and how men and women arrived at their current relationships, distribution of roles, characteristics and relative power.” (Marshall, 1984, p. 10) The importance of addressing socialisation as a base and foundation from which gender equity initiatives may truly advance,

includes the value of uncovering the functions it serves and the forces and values it contributes to holding particular arrangements in place. Harding (1991, p. 168) argues for the value of thinking critically about how beliefs are formed and why they are adopted, towards generating conducive institutional and social contexts that perpetuate "less false rather than more false beliefs." Similarly, Mama (1997, p. 61) encourages an interest in the ways "individuals become 'cultured' or 'socialised' in various locally and historically specific ways." How individuals acquire particular traits and characteristics to become of a particular class, gender, religious, ideological or racial identity, and how culture is (re)produced, transformed and transmitted is a worthwhile investigation. As Harding (1991, p. 14) notes, it is meaningful to contextually explore the different meanings and practices that accumulate in the lives of women located at particular historical and contemporary intersections of race, class, culture, ethnicity, religion, etc. As such, reference to women's knowledge systems implies multiple relationships between women and knowledge determined by multiple cultural configurations of womanhood and knowledge.

It is worthwhile here to draw a link between socialisation and the perpetuation of sex-role stereotypes which act as key mediators of gender relations. According to Sharpe (1975) many of the lessons taught and learnt during childhood socialisation involve instructions in sex role requirements. Similarly, Shields (1982, p. 786) emphasises that observed sex differences cannot be considered simple manifestations of biologically based tendencies, and environmental interpretations may offer more persuasive explanations, pinpointing a variety of external factors and complex sets of circumstances that "impel and compel the child to assume a behavioural repertoire socially appropriate to gender." Such sex and gender-roles are normative, providing "helpful guidelines about appropriate behaviour. They also act as constraints to individual freedom." (Marshall, 1984, p. 28) Fox (1977, p. 817) discusses how normative restrictions that construct ideals of appropriate womanhood contribute to the "loss of female talent produced by channelling women into jobs that fail to use fully or use at all the full range of skills and capacities that women possess."

Marshall (1984, pp 26 - 27) captures the continuing strong role of gender-role stereotypes in her observation that although "we know stereotypes are ill-founded [and] they are not an adequate excuse for excluding women from management, stereotypes are not, however, so easily dispensed with". Beyond participant's explicit statements on the critical need to address gender

stereotypes through socialisation, the research findings show that respondents continually encounter and negotiate as part of their leadership strategies, ongoing stereotypes that are at odds with the configuration and experience of their personal and professional lives and their resultant knowledge. Marshall goes on to discuss the "nature, power and implications of sex role stereotypes" describing sex role stereotypes as "essentially social creations." As "the meaning assigned to being biologically female or male" sex role stereotypes have "a profound impact on core aspects of individual personality. As gender is a more central foundation of identity than most (if not all) other characteristics, sex roles have a commensurately significant influence on who we are, how we behave, how others see us, and how others behave towards us."

Stereotypical assumptions take root and become pervasive if they remain unchallenged (Bagshaw, 2004). Respondents recognised that at the level of deep-seated assumptions of personhood, the removal of distorting perceptual filters that shape how self and others are understood, is a process best initiated from childhood.

"These are the logistics you need to deal with more than the gender, and more than the colour, that we need to train our children, boys and girls that you are a person, and you do have responsibilities by the way, as a person. Not your sex, you as a person."

"Our children must grow up of, both sex knowing I am a Human Being first, I am a woman second. But in our society, you are a woman first, and whatever else you are second. That emptiness inside you is not going to go away because you are sitting as a Managing Director of whatever company. It won't, or you're a professor at the University of Nairobi. It isn't going to go anywhere, it's not going to go."

"So it's actually a process, and this process does not start at degree level or at PhD level or whatever, and it's not because of your gender, it's your sense of self worth. Who am I as Nyambura, who am I as Njeri? If that self worth is not in you, it doesn't matter whether you are a boy or girl, it's not going to happen. I told you the other day, boys here are more lost than girls. So it's not a sex issue, no. Our boys are being very bad, actually very, very bad, so it's not a gender issue. There is a gender issue somewhere, but if you separate how you're going to raise them from the top, this way, the gender issue is not going to be at the top. There is something else we have destroyed other than your gender, and that is the feeling of worthiness of you as a person which has nothing to do with your sex."

Supporting the transformative potential of a focus on socialisation, a range of studies promote the thesis that minimal aspects of human development or behaviour are "preprogrammed" or stimulus-bound by deterministic forces in any direct physical or biological way. In this sense, social norms are open to continuous revision, alteration, and advancement (Cooperrider &

Srivastva, 1987). This recognition has important impacts for the issue of gendered socialisation, in that men and women, are not pre-programmed to behave in certain ways, and to a large extent social existence is situated in a symbolic realm.

A key question as raised by one respondent is, "How do we deal with communicating the values here? How do we deal with transmitting the learning of self?"

A key finding of this research, has been that beyond facilitating spaces where women can bring their tacit knowledge to bear within their leadership roles, institutions can further contribute to transforming socialisation norms in the broader environment. Increasingly, organisations have a responsibility to manage and are held accountable for their impacts on communities and the surrounding society. This offers a conducive context to grow the potential for business and professional organisations to play a more frontal role in shaping society, alongside traditional religious and educational institutions, which have a decided influence on socialisation norms. Places of worship, individuals' homes and residences, and workplaces are key spaces that inculcate and mutually reinforce cultural values and morals frameworks.

An acknowledgement of historical (or sociological or cultural) relativism is useful as different social groups tend to have different patterns of practice and belief and different standards for judging them; these practices, beliefs and standards can be explained by different historical interests, values, and agendas. Appreciation of this variety is especially critical as preconceived schemes and interpretations, including those applied in liberatory efforts can exclude less-well-positioned voices, and distort elements that are anomalies in familiar schemes. Acknowledging different voices, diverse values and interests, can enlarge the collective vision, counter persistent inequity and promote sustainable and collective prosperity. Moreover, acknowledging historical and sociological facts mediates but does not eliminate grounds for assessment and judgement between diverse patterns of belief, social practices, values, and their outcomes/consequences, in order to establish broad legitimacy, relevance and adequacy. (Harding, 1991, p. 152 - 153) Relative and critical preoccupation with diverse practices of socialisation is complementary to addressing the multiple forms of perpetuation and transmission of norms and values that influence and shape the construction of gender, difference and inequity.

According to Lipman-Blumen's (1983) analysis of gender roles and power, a main belief that hampers articulation of a feminist knowledge system, is that men control the knowledge and major resources necessary to direct daily life through dominant political, economic and cultural forms. As this research has shown, while larger numbers of women are successfully penetrating bastions of male exclusivity, obstacles still remain on the path to gender equity. Current core issues appear to revolve around the culture of structures, systems and process which are more reflective of a patriarchal standpoint but which women, who have gained access to these spaces, are still required to manoeuvre sometimes even at the expense of their own truths. At another and perhaps more entrenched level, the ingrained and imbedded nature of individual bias, grounded in processes of socialisation and misinformed perspectives continues to be a main challenge to gender equity. As noted by a strategic respondent,

"So there is so much in our education system, at home, wherever, which makes that issue [socialisation] a major issue more than you're male or I'm female. If we deal with that the rest of it will start falling into place. And you do not have to lose your quality as a woman because of that freedom, no. So basically that's my thought on the issue, that we need to deal with gender issue, we need to deal with colour issue, there's something missing, definitely missing. We need to deal with people."

10. CONCLUSION

Low numbers of women in senior and leadership positions despite increasing levels of entry and participation in the workforce, signal persistent issues of bias in relation to equal access, opportunity and agency in professional environments.

The practical aim of the research inquiry was to identify facilitative nodes and barriers, which respectively enhance or impede women's contributions to knowledge and leadership processes within contemporary organisations. The focus was on the experience of women in senior and leadership organisational positions, particularly in regard to motivation, collegial relations and decision making, as well as on the strategies women in leadership apply to negotiate organisational contexts. In identifying women's daily organisational experience and lived strategies, the intention of the research is to offer an experience based and grounded context for deeper explorations into persistent bias and inequities, towards engendering greater understanding and more effective responses to organisational structural and cultural obstacles and facilitators of women's knowledge and leadership at senior levels.

Findings indicated both tangible, structural aspects of organisations (such as the features of heterarchical and hierarchical organisations) as well as intangible, cultural aspects of organisations (such as network relationships and interactions) that support or constrict women in senior and leadership positions. Strategies of women in leadership to negotiate organisational environments are also presented in relation to, behaviour and conduct; communication practices; information access and exchange; planning and organisation; styles of leadership. Findings additionally discuss and suggest possibilities and recommendations for ameliorating organisational obstacles and strengthening facilitative aspects, including flexible organisational and work environments; promoting knowing organisations and learning cultures; instituting specific policy measures and mechanisms to support the role of women in leadership (e.g. mentorship, training, networking forums; family support).

Questions for continued research and exploration however remain the need to investigate reasons women are consistently underrepresented despite demonstrating adequate leadership ability, and the contextual factors and predominating influences that limit women's performance, and prevent the emergence of alternative and diverse forms of knowledge, leadership approaches and

possibilities for enhanced socio-political transformation. A main claim is that the root of various social stereotypes that impact on womens' attainment to and levels of agency within senior and leadership positions, is in processes of socialisation. Marshall (1984)

The question of change at individual behavioural and perception levels is a rich field of inquiry spanning numerous disciplines from psychology to education, politics to theology. As observed by Young-Eisendrath (1988, pg 155) "changing thinking about inferiority-superiority and dominance-submission" requires disciplined practice of thought and action that constantly examines informing assumptions and motivations. While change may be addressed initially at the level of action (through structural, systemic and procedural processes), then followed by the level of thoughts, motivations and assumptions, it is important to note that changed action may not guarantee or necessitate re-conceptualisation. Processes of individual and internal transformation are therefore also critically required, noting the dual interplay between individuals' perceptions and behaviours that shape societal structures and realities, in as much as societal structures mould individuals.

At the level of the research theoretical inquiry, the aim was to explore the potential of women's contributions for expanded and alternative epistemologies, theoretical frameworks, and conceptual and practical models of leadership, organisation and socio-political transformation. The interest of the research here responds to the growth in popularity of knowledge as a productive factor, and increasing awareness of the benefits of harnessing and managing knowledge resources for successful organisations and prosperous societies, in environments of heightened connectivity, change and uncertainty. In this context, diversity is considered to promote innovation and creativity as key knowledge assets and distinguishing features of profitable ventures, and to contribute to the pool of available talent for an enriched organisational and societal knowledge base. The contemporary focus on the value of knowledge and benefits of diversity present an opportune avenue and point of entry through which to address women's underrepresentation at leadership levels, and resolve persistent levels of bias and inequity.

In context of Africa, a key motivation of the research is the need to transcend historical limitations and maximise on the full range of resources available to maximise on current processes of emergence. Overcoming inherited norms and practices of discrimination demands a focus on equity and diverse representation for successful and optimal organisational

performance. Additionally, current optimism related to economic development and processes of democratisation, and renewed engagement with potential and possibilities for sustainable growth, have presented organisations in Africa with conducive contexts to act as agents of socio-political transformation, while simultaneously positively positioned within favourable markets. While cautioning that challenges persist, the UN Secretary General asserts that "Africa's overall trajectory is clear", and "Africans are writing a new narrative in their history" as a more stable and prosperous continent emerging with greater prominence on the global stage.

Conclusions of the research theoretical inquiry underscore the importance of continued efforts to achieve greater equity and diversity at leadership levels for enhanced organisational outcomes with positive repercussions for socio-political transformation. At a theoretical level, findings support both a business and values case for diversity and equitable representation in organisations.

At the outset, the challenges presented by the core concepts applied in the inquiry were addressed, in particular acknowledging multiple feminisms, with analyses reflecting the lives of different historicities and groups women. However, it was important to adhere to particular definitions in order to delve into issues of equity and discrimination within the specific context and focus of the research. Overall, the need to specify the working definitions of complex and contentious concepts such as sex and gender remain, in order to create a facilitative and workable context for the research. Further research could explore assumptions around whether gender equity continues to be a priority issue to address in relation to current shifts of focus increasingly towards issues of diversity.

10.1 Potential Contributions of Women to Leadership and Socio-Political Transformation

The high significance, preoccupation and concern of women in leadership with the issue of social justice suggests that regardless of restrictions, limitations and shortfalls of their actions, women leaders apply a mindset dedicated to standards of ethical leadership, accountability and legitimacy. Women's commitment in general to issues of social justice suggests that at the very least, the concern that a focus on gender equity may detract from more pertinent concerns related to socio-political transformation in Africa, may be addressed.

In Africa as well as further afield, crises of leadership has been a permeating theme within the socio-political and economic milieu, demanding resolution in order to attain critically required sustainable and equitable development and advancement for societies. This thesis posits that enhancing women's leadership can contribute to the search for innovative and sustainable solutions and approaches to African challenges, with positive global outcomes.

A key critique of African leaders has been poor leadership practices and irresponsible mismanagement of resources. In a context where interests of power often take precedence over issues of social justice, a potential contribution of women to leadership may be raised awareness of issues of social justice, towards greater prioritisation of resolutions, and establishment of effective institutional mechanisms to achieve equitable growth and sustainable socio-political transformation.

Within an organisational context, women's awareness of their roles and responsibilities as a privileged and select few number of women in leadership, appears to combine with an awareness of issues of social justice, with the effect of creating and providing a means of checks and balances. Under combined pressures of performance and representation, women appear to be more restricted in terms of their manoeuvrability to ill-perform in their roles. The implicit connotation here is useful to note. That is, the preoccupation of women leaders with issues of social justice may not necessarily be a function or indicator of a higher moral or ethical intelligence, or uniquely high capacity for leadership. Instead, women's experiences within the workplace are such that a heightened awareness of their responsibilities to represent as well as to perform excellently, acts as a check and balance to mismanagement and poor leadership. Such a commitment to displaying appropriate behaviour and actions, as an integral aspect of how women leaders understand, view, and enact leadership is a potential contribution of women leaders.

To gain substantively from the contributions of women however, and to appreciate and learn the skills and intelligence women have developed, meanings given to concepts such as leadership, social power, authority, competence, knowledge etc. need to be expanded and released from conceptual categories and restraints that reproduce negative bias in society. That is, there is need to reconstruct meanings and their applications, to better reflect female experiences and lived realities, and in order to discover alternative models that may contribute to a new vision and

understanding of human capacity, acknowledging diverse systems shape collective existence. (Young-Eisendrath, Polly. 1988, p. 171)

Concern for the continued marginalisation, subjection and exploitation of women has provided impetus for the steady growth of feminist research and other related women-centred and directed scholarship problematising women's experience. The main agenda is to rectify the unequal balance of status and decision-making power and control in the relations of men and women – in the household, in the workplace, in the community, in government and in the international arena. The stipulation is that this will not only improve the developmental progression and equitable transformation of societies, but also ensure a more sustainable future grounded on an alternative and shared basis of co-existence.

While acknowledging the instability and limitations of the analytical category 'women' (Gouws, 2012) the preceding research discussion has explored women's experiences, gender equity and the women's movement as political tools that can be used to integrate women into male dominated and exclusive structures and systems of society. Engagement in the discourse for gender equity is necessary and effective in achieving gains for women, and political struggles entail learning how to criticise dominant conceptual schemes from the standpoint of women's activities. It has been suggested that through politicised mobilisation women get the chance to confront the depth and extent of masculine privilege and foreground their experiences, voices and lived realities. While acknowledging conceptual limits, 'women's experiences' and 'what women say' provide a lens through which systems of gender bias may be exposed, and the fundamental character, internal relations and structure of these systems and institutions revealed. Feminist politics aims to target enduring and tenacious sources of bias and discriminatory power, as well as the inherent weaknesses and entry-points for change and transformation. Addressing underlying causal tendencies of unequal gender relations in different historical and social forms is a crucial step to de/reconstructing knowledges.

While recognising the value of the politicisation of gender, it is also important to acknowledge the shortcomings of this approach, in particular the potential to limit the discourse at particular levels of interaction and exchange, and as such to garner limited responses. Band-aid and superficial responses include tokenism and other basic quota-filling measures aimed at adhering to legislation and being politically correct, without instituting substantive transformation towards

diversity and equity. Additionally the perceived confrontational tone of the politicised approach has the tendency to isolate stakeholders who disassociate from the intensity of the discourse. As Bagshaw (2004, p.153) comments, "to engage hearts and minds it is important that everyone see the benefits for their own working [and personal] lives."

There is need for deeper investigation and more balanced exploration of levels of gendered status stratification, the *raison d'être* of these differences, and ways to dismantle them, in order to cease, reduce or alleviate more enduring and latent inequalities. Subsequently, new connections to bridge the enduring and stratifying cleavage between men and women in society may be discovered, and a liberatory framework of social transformation and organisation built. (Chow et. al, 2003) Towards this end, the functions of feminist scholarship and politics is the critique of existing limiting and limited theory, the reconceptualisation of guiding concepts and the expansion of legitimated and relevant knowledge bases to facilitate the potential contributions of women's knowledges. The role of leadership exercised by either gender at all levels is to facilitate the realisation through action of women's alternative way of doing things. The value of concrete steps cannot be underestimated at policy level and in implementation. While it will take time and concerted engagement to shift heavily entrenched perceptions, reinforced practices, and established structures, incremental gains for example through improved maternity and paternity leave policies and the availability of child day care facilities, or a flexi-time culture of work, may relieve women's multiple gender role commitments and allow manoeuvrability to meet professional demands. Other recommendations suggested in the research include establishing mechanisms to facilitate women's networking and active knowledge and information sharing and exchange, such as communities of practice. Such tangible initiatives can strengthen efforts to address more latent and intangible aspects of gender discrimination and inequity which may be slower to change. The emergence of alternative and possibly more broadly and diversely suitable organisational structures and cultures may be the outcome of mentioned and recommended changes above, which may further cumulatively and substantially shift current and persistent dynamics of inequity, to influence and make possible the realisation of truly diverse and representative systems. (Mihata, 1997; Hodgson 2000)

Men and women can both lose their blinders as they learn from the unspoiled vision and fresh perspectives the women's movement provides. Moreover, it may not be necessary to directly

engage in the politics of the women's movement in order to increase the kinds of benefits that the movement brings. (Harding, 1991) Feminists have "sought to redefine the very essence of humanity as an inclusive rather than an exclusive concept" (Falco, 1987: p. xi) as a necessary condition if concrete situations are to be transformed and radical changes of consciousness to occur. (Irwin, 1995, p.134)

At a socio-political level, scholarship has shown that no true democracy or social economic development can be achieved without people's true participation, including the equal involvement of women and men at all levels of decision-making and in all spheres of life. (Karl, 1995) The primary assertion is that ignoring diversity in general (i.e. in terms of a range of identity factors such as race, culture, ethnicity, age, religion etc.) and particularly at this fundamental level (with specific reference to gender diversity), leads to functional inefficiency and compromises the achievement of targets and the attainment of goals. (Joseph, 2005 & Cox, 1993) Indeed, the potential of humanity to develop is limited or enhanced primarily by collective capacities to construct meaningful agreements that allow for the sustained enactment of collective life. (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) The exclusion or ineffective application and integration of diverse perspectives and ways of knowings can heavily compromise the quality of such collective life.

The moot point and observation is the importance of acknowledging the diverse assets and legacy inherent in the totality of human experience, in order to ensure strong, democratic, participatory and sustainable growth and progress. In many instances however, inherent forms of inequality remain embedded in the prevailing paradigm predicated on the tenets of patriarchy. This has negative implications for future sustainability, and at a fundamental level compromises any agenda for achieving the goals of equitable transformation grounded in social and economic prosperity. (Baden & Milward , 1997)

The call is to close the gap with more sustained attempts to move beyond limiting practices informed by discriminatory worldviews based on incomplete understandings and isolated theoretical analyses of social, political, economic and psychological realities. As global risks and threats intensify with widespread reach, the challenge to search for and apply appropriate forms of knowledge is increasingly pertinent. (Evers, Kaiser & Müller, 2009)

The old ways are dissolving and the new is emerging – presenting fresh contexts for exploration and discovery with potentially beneficial outcomes. (Wheatley, 1992) There is still ample room for what Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) refer to as change of the "second order" where organizational paradigms, norms, ideologies, or values are transformed in fundamental ways. Watzlawick et. al (1974) Connell (forthcoming paper in *Feminist Theory*) claims that an alternative structure of knowledge is already emerging that can reshape the global terrain, particularly with reference to feminist theory and practice.

At a specific level, a case has been made for the role of women's voices, and feminist perspectives towards attaining valuable and sustained socio-political transformation. In particular, as "one among many counter-cultural voices" (Harding, 1991, p.156) feminism has potential to promote and advance the claims of diverse, categories, groups and collectives of individuals, as representative of a shared 'peripheral' stance. In this scenario, as advocated by Harding (1991, p. 140, 156) the fundamental tendencies of various countercultures permeate one another in order for each movement to succeed. "The consistent critique from the voices of women, Africans, and other developing country regions" can in this way continually challenge the assumptions of epistemological traditions that defend a dominant and active stance, often at the expense of other intellectual traditions and societies. Furthermore, in order for each movement to succeed and enact important change, such a scenario would require "a commitment to acknowledge the historical character of every belief or set of beliefs" and a commitment to cultural, sociological, historical legitimacy.

At the same time, it is important to remain cognisant that the emergence of knowledge and its systematisation is often an unpredictable process. "Knowledge systems demonstrate multiple causal pathways, and are influenced by a host of interacting factors that come together to determine different patterns" and formations. (Hearn, Rooney & Mandeville, 2003, p.236) Nevertheless, within this context, and particularly within the African region, there is promising potential in addressing institutional and structural spaces and features that serve to constrain, or yield possibilities for altered gender and diversity dynamics. In this process, women's experiences may provide a broadened knowledge and value base, and may offer better possibilities for alternative and sustainable, collectively beneficial forms of leadership, organisation and larger processes of socio-political transformation.

APPENDIX

PhD RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Women's Knowledge Systems and their Contribution to Leadership for Socio-Political Transformation

1. What do your value most about:

a) Yourself as a leader?
b) Your work and being a leading member in your organisation?

2. What core factors give life and meaning to your work and leadership role?

3. Reflecting on your life, can you share one or two defining moments that influence and inform how you choose to lead?

4. What has been a high point experience for you in your role as a leader? What did you learn?

5. What aspects of your work environment and organisational work culture,

a) Motivate you as leader and specifically enhance you leadership role?
b) Demotivate you as a leader and constrain your leadership role?

6. Can you give two examples when,

a) You feel you made a positive contribution to the work and professional life of your colleagues through your leadership
b) You feel you may have adversely impacted on some of your colleagues through your role as a leader.

7. Have you received, or still receive any leadership training, or learnt from a leadership mentor? What influence has this had on your leadership style, and how you lead? Do you think the gender of your mentor is a key or minor factor in his/her ability to mentor and/or influence and affect your success?

8. In your opinion, is gender a significant factor influencing leadership? In other words, do women and men lead differently? Please give two or three reasons explaining your view.

9. What do you think are,

a) The strengths of your institution in terms of supporting female leadership, and in your view, how can such strengths be augmented and enhanced?

b) The weaknesses of your institution in terms of supporting female leadership, and how can these weaknesses be ameliorated and mitigated?

10. In your view, do women and men have equal access to,

a) Information systems and knowledge structures such as schools, universities, companies, government, that can nurture their potential as leaders?
b) Professional networks, clubs or social groups that can facilitate and support their leadership role and work?

11. In your opinion, should women in leadership positions be more supported in their roles as leaders? If so, how?

12. In your opinion, what should the role of leaders be in assuring gender equity at leadership level?

Njeri Mwagiru
PhD Research in Business Administration
Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town
Student No.: MWGNJE001

APPENDIX - Summary Table of Identified Facilitators and Obstacles: Institutional/External and Personal/Internal*

[illegible]

FACILITATORS		STRUCUTRAL/TANGIBLE & CULTURAL/INTANGIBLE FACTORS	OBSTACLES	
Institutional/External	*Personal/Internal*		*Institutional/External*	*Personal/Internal*
[illegible]	[illegible]		[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]		[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]		[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]		[illegible]	[illegible]

[illegible] *A delimitation of the research was the decision to examine organisational structural aspects of facilitators and obstacles, as opposed to an in depth exploration of personal levels of experience and interpretation (See Section on Limitations and Delimitations of the research). This delimitation was enacted in the data analysis and interpretation process, and is reflected in the content portrayal of the findings, which principally discuss and address organisational structural/tangible and cultural/intangible aspects of facilitators and obstacles for women in leadership.*

Njeri Mwagiru PhD Research Thesis

APPENDIX

List of Organisations from which Research Participants were Sourced

SECTOR	ORGANISATION/BUSINESSES/ UNIVERSITIES	COUNTRY
PRIVATE SECTOR - BUSINESS INDUSTRY		
Tourism & Hospitality		
	Windsor Golf Hotel & Country Club	Kenya
	Masai Mara Serena Safari Lodge, Kenya	Kenya
	Mombasa Serena Beach Hotel & Spa, Kenya	Kenya
	Nairobi Serena Hotel, Kenya	Kenya
	Kilaguni Serena Safari Lodge	Kenya
	Sweet Waters Tented Camp	Kenya
	Samburu Serena Safari Lodge, Kenya	Kenya
	Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge, Kenya	Kenya
	Serena Hotels, Headquarters, Nairobi, Kenya	Kenya
	Kenya Airways	Kenya
	Morgenthau Wine Estate	South Africa
Media Industry		
	Nation Media Group	Kenya
	VisionQuest	South Africa
	Nation Media Group	Kenya
	Royal Media Services	Kenya
Telecommunications & I.T Industry		
	Safaricom	Kenya
	MTN	South Africa
	Orange	Kenya
	Smart Connections	Kenya
	Inform Systems	South Africa
Financial Services		
	Renaissance Capital	Kenya
	Kenya Commercial Bank	Kenya
	Diamond Trust Bank (DTB)	Kenya
	Standard Charted Bank	Kenya
	Equity Bank	Kenya
Insurance Sector		
	APA	Kenya
		pg. 239

Small -Medium Businesses (SME) & Consultancy Firms		
	The DEPOT	Kenya
	Galana Oil	Kenya
	Kenya Sweets Ltd.	Kenya
	Lowe Scanad	Kenya
	White Rose Drycleaners	Kenya
	Palm Tyres	South Africa
	Red24	
	Sithabe African Crafts	South Africa
Professional Organisations		
	Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI)	Kenya
	Potentia	South Africa
EDUCATION SECTOR		
Universities		
	University of Cape Town	South Africa
	University of the Western Cape	South Africa
	University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa
	Stellenbosch University	South Africa
	Cape Peninsula University of Technology	South Africa
	Walter Sisulu University	South Africa
	Walter Sisulu University of Technology and Science	South Africa
	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	South Africa
	University of Zululand	South Africa
	University of Pretoria	South Africa
	Tshwane University of Technology	South Africa
	UNISA	South Africa
	University of Nairobi	Kenya
	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology	Kenya
	Kenyatta University	Kenya
	KCA University	Kenya
	Durban Institute of Technology	South Africa
	Rhodes University	South Africa
	Monash University	South Africa

Higher Education Institutons (HEIs)		
	HERS-SA	South Africa
	Institute of Security Studies	South Africa
	Tertiary School in Business Administration (TSiBA)	South Africa
	Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA)	Kenya
	United States International University (USIU)	Kenya

REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ackroyd, S. & Lawrenson, D. (1996). Knowledge work and organisational transformation: Analysing contemporary change in the social use of expertise. In R. Fincham, R. (ed.), *New relationships in the organised professions*. (pp. 149–170). Aldershot: Avebury Press.

ADB, UNDP, OECD. (2015). *African economic outlook report: Regional development and spatial inclusion.* www.africameconomicoutlook.org

Allen, P.M. (1994). Coherence, chaos and evolution in the social context. *Futures*, 26(6), 583–97

Allen, P. M. (1997). Modelling the co-evolution of communications and socioeconomic structure. *Prometheus*, 15(1), April, 83–100.

Ampofo, A.A., Beoku-Betts, J. & Osirim, M.J. (2008). Researching african women and gender studies: New social science perspectives." *African and Asian Studies* 7, 327-341.

Anderson, L. R. & Blanchard, P. N. (1982). Sex differences in task and social-emotional behaviour. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology.* 3, 109 – 139.

Appleyard, M. M., (1996). How does knowledge flow? Interfirm patterns in the semiconductor industry. *Strategic Management Journal,* 17, Special Issue, 137–154.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (1998). *Key concepts in post-colonial studies*. London: Routledge.

Ashe, F. & Treanor, L. (2011). Situating the subject: Gender and entrepreneurship in international contexts. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship,* 3(3), 185-199

Ayman, R. (1993). Leadership perception: the role of gender & culture. In M. Chemers & R. Ayman, R. (eds.) *Leadership theory & research*: *Perspectives & directions.* San Diego: Academic Press.

Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. with contributions from P. Vorster & B. Prozesky. (2005). *The practice of social research.* South Africa: Oxford University Press.

Bade, O. (1989). *The IMF, the world bank and the african debt: Social and political impact.* London: Zed Books.

Baden, S. & Milward, K. (1997). Gender, inequality and poverty: Trends, linkages & policy implications. *IDS Report*, 30. Sussex Institute of Development Studies.

Baets, W.R.J. (2006). *Complexity, learning and organisations: a quantum interpretation of business*. London: Routledge.

Bagshaw, M. (2004). Is diversity divisive? A positive training approach. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 36(4), 153 – 157.

Baier, A. C., (1993). What do women want in moral theory? In M.J. Larrabee (ed.) *An ethic of care: Feminist and interdisciplinary perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Barreto, M., Ryan, M.K. & Schmitt, M.T. (eds.) (2009). The glass ceiling in the 21st century: Understanding barriers to gender equality. *American Psychological Association,* Washington, DC.

Barkin, D. (2000). Wealth, poverty & sustainable development. In J.M Harris, (ed.) *Rethinking sustainability: Power, knowledge & institutions*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Bartol, K. M. & Butterfield, D. A. (1976). Sex effects in evaluating leaders. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 61.

Bartol, K. M. 1978. The sex structuring of organisations: A search for possible causes. *Academy of Management Review,* October.

Baruch, G.; Barnett, R.; & Rivers, C. (1983). *Life prints: New patterns of love and work for today's women.* New York: McGraw-Hill.
Bass, B. M. & Avolio, B. J. (1994). Shatter the glass ceiling: Women may make better managers. *Human Resources Management*, 33 (4), 549 – 560.
Bassi, L. J., (1997). Harnessing the power of intellectual capital. *Training and Development.* 51, 25–30.
Bereiter, C.. (2002). *Education and mind in the knowledge age.* NJ: Erlbaum.
Bereiter, Carl. (2002). Design research for sustained innovation. *Cognitive Studies, Bulletin of the Japanese Cognitive Science Society,* 9, 321 – 327.
Blackden, C. Mark & Bhanu, Chitra. (1999). Gender, growth & poverty reduction. *World Bank Technical Paper No428.* Washington: World Bank.
Blaxall, M. & Reagan, B. (eds.). (1976). *Women and the workplace.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.
Bless, C., & Higson-Smith, C. (2000). *Fundamentals of social research methods: An African perspective.* Cape Town: Juta.
Blumberg, R.L. (1984). A general theory of gender stratification". In R. Collins (ed.) *Sociological theory*, (pp 23-101). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Booysen, L.A.E. & Nkomo, S.M. (2010). Gender role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics: The case of South Africa. *Gender in Management: An International Journal,* 25(4), 285 – 300.
Boserup, E. (1970). *Women's role in economic development.* New York: St. Martin's Press.
Briedenhann, J. & Wickens, E. (Unpublished paper) *Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods in evaluation related rural tourism development research*.
Broverman, I. K., et al. (1972). "Sex-role stereotypes: A current appraisal." *Journal of Social Issues,* 28, 59-78.
Brown, M. & Ralph, S. (1996). Barriers to women managers' advancement in education in Uganda. *International Journal of Educational Management,* 10 (6), 18-23.
Burck, C. (2005). Comparing qualitative research methodologies for systemic research: The use of grounded theory, discourse analysis & narrative analysis. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 27.
Byrne, D.E., Clore, G.L.J. & Worchel, P. 1966. The effect of economic similarity-dissimilarity as determinants of attraction. *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology Quarterly*, 4(2), 220-224
Campbell. C. (1989). Job analysis for industrial training. *Journal of European Industrial Training*. 13 (2). 1 - 58.
Canter, D.; Brown, J.; Groat, L. (1985). A multiple sorting procedure for studying conceptual systems. In M. Brenner, J. Brown & D. Canter (eds.) (1985). *The research interview: Uses and approaches*, (pp 79-114). London: Academic Press.
Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society.* Oxford: Blackwell
Charnaz, K. (2008). Constructionism and the grounded theory method. In J.A. Holstein & J.F. Gubrium, *Handbook of constructionist research, (*pp 397 – 412). NY: The Guilford Press.
Chia, R. (1996). The problem of reflexivity in organizational research: Towards a postmodern science of organization. *Organization*, 3,(1), 31–59.
Choo, C.W., (1998). *The knowing organisation: How organisations use information to construct meaning, create knowledge, and make decisions.* NY: Oxford University Press.

Chow, E.N-L, Fleck, C., Fan,G-H., Joseph, J., Lyter, D.M. (2003). Exploring critical feminist pedagogy: Infusing dialogue, participation & experience in teaching & learning". *Teaching Sociology,* 31, July.

Clarke, J. (2010). After neoliberalism? Markets, states and the reinvention of public welfare. *Cultural Studies*, 24(3) May, 375-394.

Clarke, J., Newman, J., Smith, N., Vidler, E. & Westmarland, L. (2007). *Creating citizen-consumers: Changing publics and changing public services*. London, Sage.

Clegg, S. (1990). *Modern organization\s.* London: Sage.

Cohen, B. (1997). *The edge of chaos—Financial booms, bubbles, crashes and chaos*, Wiley, Chichester.

Comer, L.B., Jolson, M.A., Dubinsky, A.J. & Yammarino, F.J. (1995). When the sales manager is a woman: An exploration into the relationship between salespeople's gender and their responses to leadership styles. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 5(4), 17-32.

Cooper, B & Morrell, R, (eds.) (2014). *Africa-centred knowledges: Crossing fields and worlds.* Suffolk: James Currey

Cooperrider, D.L. & Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organisational life. *Research in Organisational Change and Development,* (1), 129 – 169.

Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D. & Stavros, J.M. (2008). *Appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change*. Ohio: Crown Custom Publishing.

Cox, T.J. (1993). *Cultural diversity in organisations*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Curnan, S., LaCava, L., Langenburg, D., Lelle, M., & Reece, M. (eds.) (1998). *W.K.Kellogg foundation evaluation handbook.* Michigan: WK Kellogg Foundation.

Davidson, M.J. & Cooper, C.L. (1992). *Shattering the glass ceiling: The woman manager*. London: Chapman.

DeVault, M.L. (1996). Talking back to sociology: Distinctive contributions of feminist methodology. *Annual Review Sociology*, (22)

De Groot, J. (1991). Conceptions and misconceptions: The historical and cultural context of discussion on women and development". In H. Afshar, (ed.). *Women, development & survival in the 3rd world.* London: Longman.

Dei, G.J.S. (1998). Why write back?': The role of afrocentric discourse in social change. *Canadian Journal of Education* 23(2), 200-208.

Denmark, F. L. (1977). Styles of leadership. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 2 (2)

Doob, L.W. (1957). An introduction to the psychology of acculturation. *Journal of Social Psychology* (45), 143 - 160.

Drucker, P.F. (1993) *Post-capitalist society.* NY: HarperCollins.

Eagly, A. H.; Karau, S. J. & Makhijani, M. G. (1995). Gender and the effectiveness of leaders: A meta-analysis." *Psychological Bulletin*, 117 (1), 125 – 145

Eagly, A. H. & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence." *The Leadership Quarterly*, (14) 807 - 834.

Edwards, R. & Ribbens, J. (1998). Living on the edges: Public knowledge, private lives, personal experience." In J. Ribbens, & R. Edwards, (eds.). *Feminist dilemmas in qualitative research: Pubilc knowledge and private lives.* London: Sage.

Elson, Diane, (1989). The impact of structural adjustment on women: Concepts and issues." In O. Bade, (ed.), *The IMF, the World Bank and African debt, Vol. 2.* (pp. 56 – 74) New Jersey: Zed Books.

Elson, D. (ed.) (1991). *Male bias in the development process*. Manchester: Manchester United Press.
Eisenstein, Z. (ed.). 1979. *Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
European Commission (EU) (2005). *The business case for diversity – good practices in the workplace.* Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities
Evers, Kaiser, & Müller. (2009). Knowledge in development: Epistemic machineries in a global context. *International Social Science Journal*, (195), 55 – 68.
Ezell, H. F; Odewahn, C. A.; & Sherman, J. D. (1981). The effects of having been supervised by a woman on perceptions of female managerial competence. *Personnel Psychology.* (34) 291 – 299.
Falco, M.J. (ed.) (1987). *Feminism and epistemology: Approaches to research in women and politics*. NY: The Haworth Press.
Ferguson, K (1984). *The feminist case against bureaucracy.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Fondas, N. 1997. Feminization unveiled: Management qualities in contemporary writings. *Academy of Management Review*, 22 (1), 257 – 282.
Fox, G. L. (1977). 'Nice girl': Social control of women through a value construct. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 2(4), 805 – 817.
Frank, T. (2001). *One market under God: Extreme capitalism, market populism and the end of economic democracy*. New York: Anchor Books.
Fraser, Miriam (2001). Visceral futures: bodies of feminist criticism". *Social Epistemology* 15(2).
Freeman, C. (1991). Networks of innovators: A synthesis of research issues. *Research Policy, (*20), 499–514.
Frenkel, M. & Shenhav, Y. (2006). From binarism back to hybridity: Decolonizing management and organization studies. *Organization Studies*. 27(6), 855 - 876.
Friedman, T. L. (1999). *The lexus and the olive tree: Understanding globalisation*, Random House, New York.
Geertz, C. (1980). Blurred genres: The refiguration of social thought." *American Scholar*, (49) 165 – 179
Gergen, K. (1978). Toward generative theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* (36), 1344 - 1360.
Gergen, K. J. (1990). Affect and organization in postmodern society." In S. Srivastva, & D. L. Cooperrider, (eds.). *Appreciative management and leadership: The power of positive thought and action in organizations* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.
Gill, R. (2006). *Theory and practice of leadership.* London: Sage Publications.
Goleman, D. (2000), Leadership that gets results. *Harvard Business Review*, March–April, 78–90.
Gouws, A. (2012). Reflections on being a feminist academic/academic feminist in South Africa. *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal,* 31(5/6), 526-541
Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N.K Denzin, & Y.S. Lincoln, (eds). *Handbook of qualitative research.* London: Sage
Hall, V. (1996). *Dancing on the Ceiling*. Paul Chapman Press: London.
Haraway, D. (1985). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism & the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3).
Harding, S. (ed.). (1987). *Feminism and methodology.* Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Harding, S. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
Harré, R. & Secord, P,F. (1972). *The explanation of social behaviour.* Oxford: Blackwell
Harré, R. (1984). *Personal being*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Harris, L.M. & Atalan, N. (2002). Developing women's spaces: Evaluation of the importance of sex-segregated spaces for gender and development goals in southeastern Turkey (Southeastern Anatolia Development Project Teaching Literacy and Business Skills to Women). *Kadin/Woman* 3(2) Dec, 17-30.
Hawkesworth, M.E. (1987). Beyond methodological nonism." In M.J. Falco (ed.). *Feminism and epistemology: Approaches to research in women and politics,* (pp 5 – 9). New York: The Haworth Pres.
Hearn G., Rooney, D. & Mandeville, T. (2003). Phenomenological turbulence and innovation in knowledge dystems. *Prometheus*, 21(2), June, 231 – 245.
Hekman, S., (1987). The feminization of epistemology: Gender and the social sciences. In, M.J. Falco. (Ed.). *Feminism and epistemology: Approaches to research in women and politics.* New York: The Haworth Press.
Helgesen, S. (1990). *Women's way of leading*. New York: Doubleday.
Hellstrom, T. & Raman, S. (2001). The commodification of knowledge about knowledge: Knowledge management and the reification of epistemology". *Social Epistemology, 1(3), 139-154.*
Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organizational ladder. *Journal of Social Issues*, (57), 657 - 674.
Hodgson, G. M. (2000). The concept of emergence in social science: Its history and importance. *Emergence*, 2(4), 65 – 77.
Hooks, B. (1990). *Yearning: Race, gender and cultural politics.* Boston: South End Press.
Hountondji, P.J. (1997). *Endogenous knowledge: Research trails*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
Hountondji, P.J. (2002). *The struggle for meaning: Reflections on philosophy, culture and democracy in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
Howkins, J. (2001). *The creative economy: How people make money from ideas*, Allen Lane, London.
Imam, A., Mama, A. & Sow, F. (eds.). (1997). *Engendering social sciences in Africa*. CODESRIA
IMF 2016. *World Economic Outlook Update, January* www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/update/01/
Irwin, R.L. (1995). *A circle of empowerment: Women, education and leadership*. NY: State University of New York.
Joseph, J. (2005). Building a more perfect union: Celebrating differences to create unity". *The Journal for Convergence.* 6 (2). Johannesburg: Axius Publishing.
Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation.* NY: Basic Books.
Kaplan, R. M., Anderson, J. P., & Wingard, D. L. (1991). Gender differences in health related quality of life." *Health Psychology*. (10), 86 – 93.
Karl, M. (1995). *Women and empowerment: Participation & decision-making.* London: Zed Books.
Kelly, J. A., Wildman, H. E., & Urey, J. R. (1982). Gender and sex role differences in group decision-making social interactions: A behavioural analysis." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology.* (12), 112 – 127.

Kezar, A. (2000). Pluralistic leadership: Incorporating diverse voices". *The Journal of Higher Education.* 71(6).
Kreiner, K. & Schultz, M.. (1993). Informal collaboration in R&D: The formation of networks across organisations. *Organization Studies,* (14), 189–209.
Kreisberg, S. (1992). *Transforming power: Domination, empowerment and education*. NY: State University of NY press
Lash, S. & Urry, J. (1987). *The end of organized capitalism.* Cambridge: Polity Press.
Laszlo, E. (1992). Information technology and social change: An evolutionary systems analysis." *Behavioral Science*, (37), p. 240.
Lauring, J. & Selmer, J. (2012). Knowledge sharing in diverse organizations. *Human Resource Management Journal* 22(1), 89-105
Lee, C. (1994). The feminization of management. *Training*, November, 25-31.
Lipman-Blumen, J. (1983). *Gender roles and power.* Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press. Quoted in P. Young-Eisendrath, (1988). "The female person and how we talk about her." In M. Gergen (ed.). *Feminist thought and the structure of knowledge.* (pp 152 – 172). NY: New York University Press.
Louca, F. (1997) *Turbulence in economics: An evolutionary appraisal of cycles complexity in historical processes*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social systems*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Maas, G. & Herrington, M. (2006). *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: South African Report*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship.
MacKinnon, C. (1982). Feminism, marxism, method, and the state: An agenda for theory." *Signs,* 7(3), 515 – 544.
Madhok, S. & Rai, S.M (2012). Agency, injury and transgressive politics in neoliberal times. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society,* 37(3), 646 - 669
Marcus, G. (2006). Leadership & development: The case for leading by serving". *The Journal for Convergence.* 6(4). Johannesburg: Axius Publishing.
Marks, D. (1996). Constructing a narrative: Moral discourse and young people's experience of exclusion. In E. Burman, G. Aitken, P. Alldred, R. Allwood, T. Billington, B. Goldberg, A.J. Gordo-Lopez, C. Heenan, D. Marks, & S. Warner. *Psychology, discourse, practice: From regulation to resistance*. London: Taylor and Francis.
Marshall, J. (1984). *Women managers: Travellers in a male world.* Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
Mason, A. (1997). The response of fertility and mortality to economic crisis and structural adjustment policy during the 1980s: A review. In G. Tapinos, A. Mason, & J. Bravo. *Demographic responses to economic adjustment in Latin America*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Maynard, M. (1994). Methods, practice and epistemology." In M. Maynard, J. & Pruvis (eds.) *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective.* London: Taylor and Francis.
Mbigi, L. & Maree, J. (1995). *Ubuntu: The spirit of African transformation management.* Pretoria: Knowledge Resources Pty. Ltd.
Mbigi, L. (1997). *Ubuntu: The African dream in management*. Pretoria: Knowledge Resources Pty. Ltd.
Mihata, K. (1997). The persistence of 'Emergence'." In R.A. Eve, S. Horsfall, & M.L.Lee. (Eds). *Chaos, complexity and sociology*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis.* California: Sage.
Miller, J.B. (1976). *Toward a new psychology of women.* Boston: Beacon Press

Mintzberg, H. (1983). *Structures in fives: Designing effective organizations.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall

Mkandawire, T. & Soludo, C.C. (1999). *Our Continent, our future: African Perspectives on structural adjustment.* Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

Molm, L.D. (1985). Gender & power use: An experimental analysis of behaviour & perceptions". *Social Psychology Quarterly.* 48(4).

Morgan, G. (1997). *Images of Organization*, Sage, London.

Mudimbe, V.Y. 1988. *The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy and the order of knowledge.* London: James Currey

Mulgan, G. J. (1997). *Connexity: How to live in a connected world*, Chatto and Windus, London.

Muntemba, S & Blackden, C.M (2000). *Gender & poverty in Africa.* Nairobi: Conference on Poverty Alleviation in Africa

Mwagiru, N. & Mwagiru, N. 2006. Lifting, learning, leading: The voices of women in higher education". *The Journal for Convergence.* 7(2). Johannesburg: Axius Publishing.

Narayan, U. (1989). The project of feminist epistemology: Perspectives from non-western feminists." In A.M. Jagger, & S.R. Bordo, (eds.) *Gender/body/knowledge: Feminist reconstructions of being and knowing.* New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Newell, S. Scarbrough, H. & Swan, J. (2000). Intranets and knowledge management: De-centred technologies and the limits of technological discourse." In C. Prichard, R. Hull, M. Chumer, & H. Willmott (eds). *Managing knowledge.* London: Macmillan.

Newman, J. & Clarke, J. (2009). *Publics, politics and power: Remaking the public in public services*. London: Sage.

Ngũgĩ, wa Thiong'o. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Oxford: James Currey.

Nohria, N. & Eccles, R. G. (1992). *Networks and organizations: structure, form and action.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Nonaka, I. (1994). A dynamic theory of organizational knowledge creation. *Organization Science* 5 (1), 14 - 37.

Nonaka, I. & Takeuchi, H.. (1995). *The knowledge-creating company: How japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation.* NY: Oxford University Press.

Norton, R., (1993). Ethno-nationalism and the constitutive power of cultural politics: A comparative study of Sri-Lanka and Fiji." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 28 (3-4), 180-198.

Nyberg, D. (1981). *Power over power.* NY: Cornell University Press.

Olesen, V. (1994). Feminisms and models of qualitative research." In N.K. Denzin, & Y.S. Lincoln, (eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* London: Sage.

Olesen, V. (2007). Feminist qualitative research and grounded theory: Complexities, criticisms, and opportunities." In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (eds.). *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory.* (pp 417 – 435). London: SAGE Publications.

Olsson, S. & Walker, R. (2003), Through a gender lens? Male and Female executives' representations of one another. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 24(7), 387-396

Oxaal, Z. & Baden, S. (1997). Gender and empowerment: Definitions, approaches and implications for policy". *IDS Report (40)*, *October*. Sussex: Institute of Development Studies.

Pidgeon, N. (1996). Grounded theory: Theoretical background. In J.T.E Richardson (ed.). *Handbook of qualitative research methods.* Leicester: BPS.
Poli, R. (2016). The discipline of anticipation and future studies. *Anthropocene Dialogue Series, April 2016 event hosted by the Association of Professional Futurists and the Centre for Complex Systems Transition.*
Powell, G. N. (1993). *Women and men in management*. 2nd edition. London: Sage.
Radelet, S. (2010). *Emerging Africa: How 17 countries are leading the way*. Washington DC: Centre for Global Development.
Rai, S. (2002). *Gender and the political economy of development.* Oxford: Blackwell.
Richbell, S. (1976). De facto discrimination and how to kick the habit. *Personnel Management,* 8(11)
Rikowski, R. (ed.) 2007. *Knowledge management: Social, cultural and theoretical perspectives*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing.
Riley, D. (1988). *Am I that name? Feminism & the category of woman in history*. London: Macmillan.
Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa.* Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House.
Rooney, D. & Hearn, G. (1999). The zone of entanglement: Change, non-change and the new managerial ideology of ephemera', *Foresight*, 1(2) 141 – 51.
Rosaldo, M.Z. & Lamphere, L. (eds). (1974). *Women, culture, and society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Rosen, B. & Jerdee, T. H. (1973). "The influence of sex-role stereotypes on evaluations of male and female supervisory behaviour." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, (57).
Rosen, B., Miguel, M. & Peirde, E. (1989). Stemming the exodus of women managers." *Human Resource Management,* 28 (4), 475 – 491.
Rosener, J.B. (1990). Ways women lead. *Harvard Business Review*, (68), 119-125.
Rosenau, J.N. (1980). *The study of global interdependence: Essays on the transnationalization of world affairs.* London: Francis Pinter Publishers
Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, R.S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing*. California, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
Sawyer, K.R. (2005). *Social emergence: Societies as complex systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Scarbrough, H. (2001). Knowledge a` la mode: The rise of knowledge management and its implications for views of knowledge production. *Social Epistemology.* 15(3), 201 – 213
Schein, V. E. 1973. The relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, (57).
Schein, V. E. 1976. Think manager – think male." *The Atlanta Economic Review,* March-April.
Schein, V. E. 2001. A global look at psychological barriers to women's progress in Management. *Journal of Social Issues*, (4), pp 675 - 688.
Schein, V. E. (2007). Women in management: Reflections and projections. *Women in Management R*eview, 22 (1), 6 – 18.
Schumpeter, (2010). Womenomics. *The Economist, 394(8663), January 2-8*
Schwartz, F. N. (1992). Women as a business imperative. *Harvard Business Review,* March – April, 105 – 113.
Scott, C.V. (1995). *Gender and development: Rethinking modernization and dependency theory*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shabaya, J. & Konadu-Agyemang, K. (2004). Unequal access, unequal participation: Some spatial and socio-economic dimensions of the gender gap in education in Africa with special reference to Ghana, Zimbabwe and Kenya. *Compare,* 34(4), 395 – 424.

Shapiro, C. & Varian, H. 1999. *Information rules: A strategic guide to the network economy*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press

Shane, S.A., Venkataraman, S. & MacMillan, I.C. (1995) Cultural differences in innovation championing strategies. *Journal of Management*, (21). 931–952.

Shepherd, E. & Watson, J. P. (1982). *Personal meanings.* Chichester, UK: Wiley

Slocum, D. (2015). The rise of creativity as a key quality in modern leadership." *Forbes, http://www.forbes.com/sites/berlinschoolofcreativeleadership/2015/01/27/the-rise-of-creativity-is-a-key-quality-in-modern-leadership/*

Smith, K. (1995). Interactions in knowledge systems: Foundations, policy implications and empirical methods." *OECD STI Review*, (16)

Somers, M. (2008). *Genealogies of citizenship: Markets, statelessness and the right to have rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spivak, G.C. (1987). *In other worlds: Essays in cultural politics*. New York: Methuen

Stacey, R. D. (2001). *Complex responsive processes in organizations: Learning and knowledge creation*, Routledge, London.

Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (1983). *Breaking out: Feminist consciousness and feminist research.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking out again: Feminist ontology and epistemology.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Steier, F. (1991). *Research and reflexivity.* London: Sage.

Still, L. (1994), Where to from here? Women in management. The cultural dilemma, *Women in Management Review*, 9 (4), 3-10.

Strauss, A. L. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. London: Sage.

Swan, J.A.; Newell, S.; & Scarbrough, H. (2000). Networks and networking. *Journal of Knowledge Management,* (3), 262–275.

Szalay, L. B. & Deese, J., (1978). *Subjective meaning in culture: An assessment through word association.* Hillside, NJ: Erlbaum.

Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual Review of Psychology,* (33), 1-39

The Economist 2010, Vol. 394, No. 8663, January 2-8

Trinidad, C. & Normore, A.H. (2005), Leadership and gender: A dangerous liaison? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 26 (7), 574-590.

Tronto, J. (1995). Care as a basis for radical political judgements." *Hypatia*, 10 (2), 141-149

UN Development Fund for Women. 2008. *Progress of the world's women 2008/2009: Who answers women?* NY: UN

UNDP 1995. *Human Development Report 1995*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

USAID, NDI & Federation of Women Lawyers. (2013) Report. *Key gains and challenges: A gender audit of Kenya's 2013 election process.* www.ndi.org/files/Kenya-Gender-Audit-2013-Electoral-Process.pdf

Van Knippenberg, D., De Dreu, C.K.W. & Horman, A.C. (2004). Workgroup diversity and group performance: An integrative model and research agenda. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89(6), 1008 - 1022

Verbrugge, L. M. 1985. Gender and health: An update of hypotheses and evidence." *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour.* (26), 156-182
Verbrugge, L. M. (1989). "The twain meet: Empirical Explanations of sex differences in health and mortality." *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour.* (30), 282-304.
Verna, A. 2003. *The future of knowledge: Increasing prosperity through value networks*. Burlington, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.
Vinniecombe, S. (2000). What does "commitment" really mean?: Views of UK and Swedish Engineering managers. *Personnel Review*, 29 (2), 228 – 254.
Violi, P. (1992). Gender, subjectivity and language." In G. Bock, & S. James, (eds.). *Beyond equality and difference: Citizenship, feminist politics and female subjectivity.* London: Routledge.
Wallace, T. & March, C. (1991). *Changing perceptions: Writings on gender & development*. Oxford: Oxfam.
Wanjala, B. & Were (2009). Gender disparities and economic growth in Kenya: A social accounting multiplier approach. *Feminist Economics*, 15 (3), 227 – 251.
Watzlawick, P., Weakiand, J., & Fish, R. (1974). *Change: Principles of problem formation and problem resolution*. New York: Horton
Westwood, R. I., & J. Gavin, (2007). "Manifesto for a post-colonial international business and management studies." *Critical Perspectives on International Business*. 3(3)
Whalley, P. (1986). *The Social Production of Technical Work.* London: Macmillan
Wheatley, M.J. (1992). *Leadership and the new science: Learning about organisation from an orderly universe.* Berrett-Koehler
Whitehead, S. (2001), Woman as manager: a seductive ontology. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 8 (1), 84-107.
Wilkinson, S. & Kitzinger, C. (eds) (1996). *Representing the other.* London: Sage.
Wilson, F., Desmond, J., & Roberts, H., (1994). Success and failure of MRPII implementation. *British Journal of Management,* (5), 221–240.
Wilson, K. (2007). Agency. In G. Blakeley & V. Bryson (eds.), *Impact of feminism on political concepts and debates,* (pp 126-145) Manchester: Manchester University Press
Womack, J.P. & Jones, D.T. (1996). *Lean thinking: Banish waste and create wealth in your corporation.* London: Simon and Schuster.
Wood, W. & Karten, S. J. (1986). Sex differences in interaction style as a product of perceived sex differences in competence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. (50), 341 – 347.
Wood, W. (1987). Meta-analytic review of sex differences in group performance. *Psychological Bulletin*. (102), 53 – 71
Yammarino, F.J., Dubinsky, A.J., Comer,L.B. & Jolson, M.A. (1997), Women and transformational and contingent reward leadership: a multiple-level-of analysis perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40(1), 205-222.
Young-Eisendrath, P. (1988). The female person and how we talk about her." In G.M., McCanney (ed.). *Feminist thought and the structure of knowledge.* (pp 152-172) NY: New York University Press.
Young, K., Wolkowitz, C. & McCullagh, R. (1981). *Of marriage and the market: Women's subordination in international perspective*. London: CSE Books