

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

The increased interest in the study of women in management around the world is due to the increasing roles that women have taken in the labour market (Omar & Davidson, 2001).

According to Omar and Davidson (2001), this is partly because of the changes in the demographic, social and economic factors. Some of this research has been on the careers of these women (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005; Cook, Heppner & O'Brien, 2005).

Hall (1996, p.1) suggested that a career is a “series of life-long work related experiences and personal learnings”. According to Schreuder and Theron (2001), one of the meanings assigned to the concept of career, is that of career advancement (Figure 1). This is whereby a career is evaluated by the number of upward moves (promotions) during an individual's life. This meaning identifies the route (steps) that an individual has to follow in an organisation to advance (Schreuder & Theron, 2001). These are usually aspects that appear on a curriculum vitae. For the purpose of this study, career advancement will refer to hierarchical advancement, with a particular focus of advancing from middle management to top management. Middle management refers to a “group of managers extending from top management to those immediately above first line management. They implement the strategies of policies set by top managers and coordinate the work of lower level manager” (Van Fleet, 1988, p.33) and those in top management create the vision, culture and strategic direction of the organisation and are usually chief executive officers (CEO) and directors (Onsongo, 2007).

Closely related to the concept of career advancement is that of career success. Career success in academic research and popular literature is usually represented as something which can be objectively determined, and is measured solely through external criteria such as hierarchical position and salary level (Schreuder & Theron, 2001). But the concept of career success is subjective because people define success differently; this implies that the individual has their own appraisal of their success. Also related to career advancement is career development. Career development can be defined as “an ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterised by a relatively unique set of issues, themes or tasks” (Greenhaus et al., 2003 as cited in Schreuder & Theron, 2001, p.21). In this study, career advancement is regarded as a career aspiration, specifically aspiration for top management. Career aspirations refer to people’s dreams or desires for future employment (Powell & Butterfield, 2003). Also, this career advancement is a transition and hence the application of a transition theory to this study. Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman (1995, p.27) define a transition as “any event or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles”.



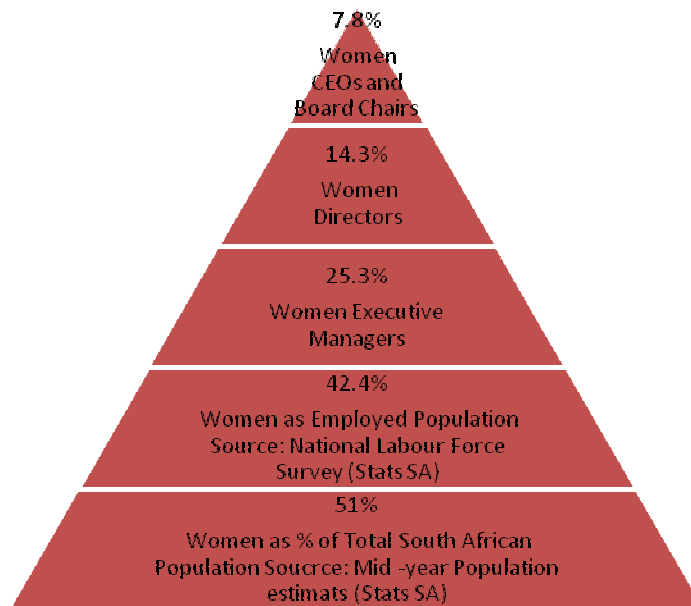
**Figure 1.** Constructs used in this research report

An example of a study on the career aspirations of women in middle management revealed that the majority of women who were in middle management aspire to eventually reach top management positions (Wentling, 1996). In contrast, Powell and Butterfield's (1981) study revealed that females demonstrated lower aspirations to top management than males. Powell and Butterfield (2003) repeated the study and still found that men still aspire to top management positions more than women. Researchers have since concluded that it is the glass ceiling those women in management face that deters their career aspirations (Omar & Davidson, 2001).

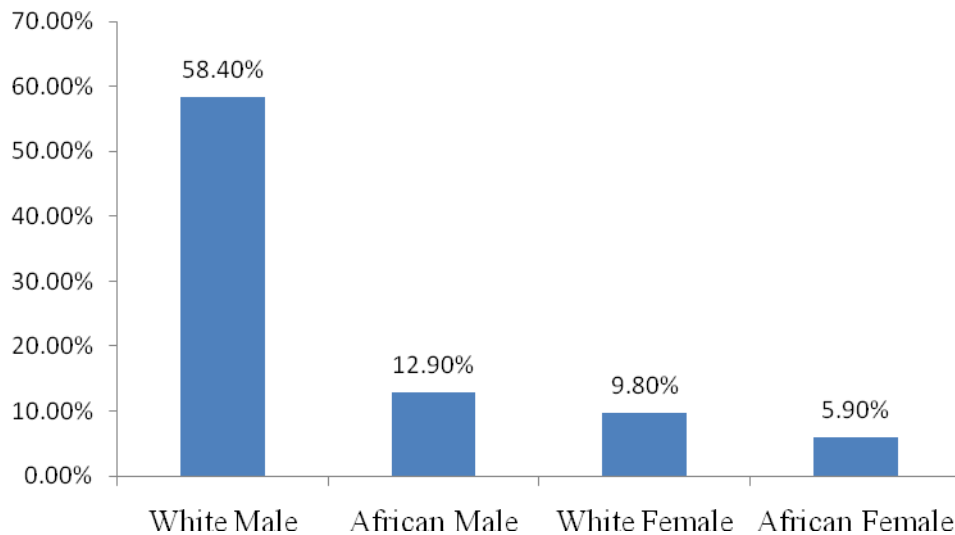
The glass ceiling effect "refers to the failure of women and other minority [or vulnerable] groups in climbing the corporate ladder despite seeing the top jobs, but still not reaching them due to discriminatory barriers" (Mathur-Helm, 2006, p.311). It prevents the progress of women to reach above middle management levels in organisations on the basis of their gender rather than their lack of ability to handle jobs at higher levels (Frankforter, 1996). In the 1980's the term glass ceiling was coined and has since become a very common term (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005). Since then, terms like sticky floors and concrete walls have been used to refer to similar and related obstacles that women experience in advancing their careers (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005). Catalyst (2004, p.3) reports that African American women have to deal with a "concrete ceiling" that is more dense and difficult to break in order to climb the corporate ladder. Therefore this study aims to investigate the barriers that are faced by black women in middle management in advancing their careers and their coping strategies.

## **1.2. Rational for the study**

This study specifically focuses on black women since during apartheid they were doubly discriminated against, both as women and as black people. Black women also represent the largest group in the population and yet they are under-represented in managerial positions. The 2008 results of the annual Census of the Women's Business Association of South Africa (BWASA) (Figure 2) revealed that women constitute 51% (aged between 15 and 65 years) of the adult population in South Africa, and 42.4% of the working population; however, they represent only 25.3% of all executive managers, 14.3% of all directors in the country and only 7.8% of women are CEOs and on board chairs (BWASA, 2008). Of the 1227 women executive managers in South Africa, 55.5% are white women and 29.7 % are black African women. The Commission of Employment Equity (CEE) 2007/2008 annual report also indicates that in terms of gender, females constitute 52.2% and males 47.8% of the national population. In terms of the economically active population, males constitute 54.2% and females 45.8%. The CEE (2007/2008) also reports that there are 58.4% of white males at top management and 12.9% of black African males at top management, as compared to 9.8% of white females at top management and 5.9% of black African females at top management (Figure 3). These statistics indicate that South African women are allowed access to management positions but only a few manage to get to the top positions of CEO's and board directors (Mathur-Helm, 2005). This to some extent provides evidence for the glass ceiling effect in South African organisations.



**Figure 2.** Census pyramid (From BWA South African Women in Corporate Leadership Census, 2008).



**Figure 3.** Percentage distribution of top management employees in South Africa by race and gender (From CEE 2007/2008).

South Africa also has a shortage of skilled managers (Daniels, 2007) and the inclusion of women in management is proposed to contribute to the competitive advantage of South African organisations (April & Dreyer, 2007). This is because most organisations worldwide are becoming less bureaucratic and moving towards collaborative styles of organisational structure where teamwork is emphasized to stimulate innovation and creative problem-solving (Booyesen, 1999). The managers that seem to be appropriate for these flatter organisations are those that listen, motivate, are caring and can encourage participation in others and these factors correspond with what is stereotypically associated with most females. This approach to management is referred to as feminine style and it is characterised by interactional, transformational and relationship-orientated style (Booyesen, 1999). Another point about the importance of women in management according to April and Dreyer (2007) is that there is large female consumer market and that around the world women supposedly contribute 80% of all buying decisions and therefore management needs to resemble the market it is working for. Therefore women in management have a lot of value to add to South African organisations.

From the above sections it can be seen that South Africa still does not have enough women in top management who reflect the population of the country. This could be due to some obstacles in their career paths. Therefore the effective assessment of perceived barriers to career advancement is crucial. In this study, an interview based on the framework of a theory will be utilised. This is to determine the prevalence (should they exist) and form of career barriers that may be faced by black women in middle management trying to advance their careers. The theory that is the basis of this study is Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Schlossberg's Transition Theory is proposed to provide a framework that will enable for an exploration of a variety of

barriers that women may face, as well as the coping strategies that they use. In doing so, this theory will assist with the practicality and methodology or means of assessing perceived career barriers.

According to Schlossberg et al. (1995), Schlossberg's Transition theory is applicable to all kinds of transitions and it is useful for understanding adult development. This study will attempt to apply this theory to women in middle management who are attempting to or are advancing their careers to higher positions like top management. From the literature reviewed, this theory has not been applied yet to individuals advancing their careers and specifically to black women in South Africa. Concerns have been raised with some of the traditional career development theories being applied to a South African context (Maree & Molepo, 2007). Such problems include research on these theories being primarily conducted on young, male and white participants and therefore most of these theories are largely influenced by western European and American worldviews (Cook et al., 2005) and therefore Schlossberg's theory might be an alternative to the study of career transitions because it is not a career theory per se, but rather a theory about the transitions of adults that can be applied to various types of transition of, which career advancement is but one.

The application of this theory to black women advancing their careers might serve to contribute to knowledge about black South African women's career development. There is limited research on these women because research on women in organisations is usually based on the assumption that matters or issues raised affect all women and the results therefore generalisable to all women (Karambayya, 1997). According to Naidoo (1997), it is a combination of continuous cultural and

social barriers like racism, sexism and patriarchy that restrict the upward mobility of South African women into top management. Mathur-Helm (2005, p.56) also revealed that for women to reach top management positions in South Africa is still rare because the corporate world finds it difficult to accept women “as professional equals”. Therefore, the current study intends to investigate the career barriers, if any, faced by black women in middle management in South Africa. Schlossberg’s Transition theory will be applied to the investigation of these barriers through a semi-structured interview that will be based on this theory. It is suggested that some of the issues that black female middle managers have to deal with stem from the sociopolitical history of these people; therefore the historical context of the study will be provided as well as the current situation of women in middle management. There have been some barriers that have been identified in the literature that hamper the advancement of women in their careers. These barriers and coping strategies will be discussed and they will later be related to the Transition Theory.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to present a review of how South African women joined the workplace and to also review the current status of South African women in the workplace. Some of the career barriers that have been identified in the literature of women's career progress will be discussed with a special focus on black African women. Schlossberg's Transition theory will also be considered more in-depth and coping theory will also be discussed. This chapter also presents the aims and research questions of the study.

### **2.2. Historical Background (conditions pre 1994 and post 1994).**

According to Bernstein (1985), both black and white South African women lived in a society that was not only racist, but was also deeply sexist during the apartheid era. White women, who shared the right to vote with white men, who had access to higher education and resided in pleasant physical conditions, lived also in a sexist, patriarchal society. The women were absent from organs of decision-making and control in politics, in the economy and in the armed forces (Bernstein, 1985). However, the range and effectiveness of these restrictions varied greatly between the different population groups and the system of apartheid under which they lived, exercised differently decisive control over the direction of their lives. Despite their disadvantages relative to white men, most white women supported or actively helped to perpetuate the apartheid system which gave them privileges and benefits at the expense of the black majority (Bernstein, 1985). Therefore, apart from the racial privileges provided to white people by the discriminatory

legislation of the apartheid era, which resulted in preferential treatment and job reservation, it was also permissible to discriminate on the basis of gender, hence the prevalence of racial and gender discrimination in South Africa (Munetsi, 1999). Black women in South Africa are often cited as having been subjected to triple oppression because of their gender, race and class (Ngoako, 1999; Pretorius, 2006).

Black African women and white women contributed differently to the economy during the apartheid era. According to Bernstein (1985), women in general worked in the services sector, agriculture and manufacturing. Some women managed to work as teachers and nurses (Bernstein, 1985). For black women, who were the majority, domestic service and agriculture were their main sectors of work. The majority of African women who followed their husbands to the urban areas during apartheid years had no other form of employment because of the legal restrictions placed upon them. They were thus obliged into accepting domestic work from white employers. Domestic responsibilities of white women became the responsibility of the subordinate black women. The official statistics do not account for other sectors like the informal sectors. According to Bernstein (1985), beer-brewing and selling vegetables were the most common informal occupations for women.

Some women managed to get paid employment worked in factories. The work conditions were very poor and they performed strenuous work, worked long hours and were paid low wages (Bernstein, 1985). Most African women were located in the lowest paid and least skilled jobs in the food, clothing and textile subsectors. However, as time went by, many young white women

started to find clerical jobs which were better paid (Bernstein, 1985). African women then moved into positions which were occupied by white women. The trend then changed later, when white women started getting employed in supervisory positions and African women started working in clerical and sales. The trend has been that African women find an opportunity for progress in jobs out of which women of other racial groups have moved away from, and for which African men are not suitable (Bernstein, 1985). This is related to a phenomenon called ‘floating the colour bar’ which Crankshaw (1997) explains that it was a South Africa policy during the 1960s which aimed to maintain white supremacy by advancing Africans into semi-skilled jobs on the condition that their superiors were white. This was instigated by a shortage of white skilled labour force (Crankshaw, 1997).

Present day South Africa (post 1994) is on a mission to transform itself to gain respect globally and to promote the rights of all its citizens despite their race, gender, class and disability amongst other constitutionally inscribed rights. After the first democratic elections that took place in 1994, South Africa implemented the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 and affirmative action legislation as a system of national strategy to address the past inequities created by the apartheid era (Mathur-Helm, 2004). Affirmative action is a means to achieve employment equity through the concerted effort to train and educate previously disadvantaged people (Africans, Coloureds, Asians, Indians, as well as women and people with disabilities) and “to ensure the equitable representation of people from designated groups in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce” (Thomas, 2002, p.237). The aim is for these designated groups to be represented in positions in which they were previously not denoted (Motileng, Wagner, Cassimjee, 2006). After this, women’s issues such as their rights, equality, welfare and empowerment began to gain

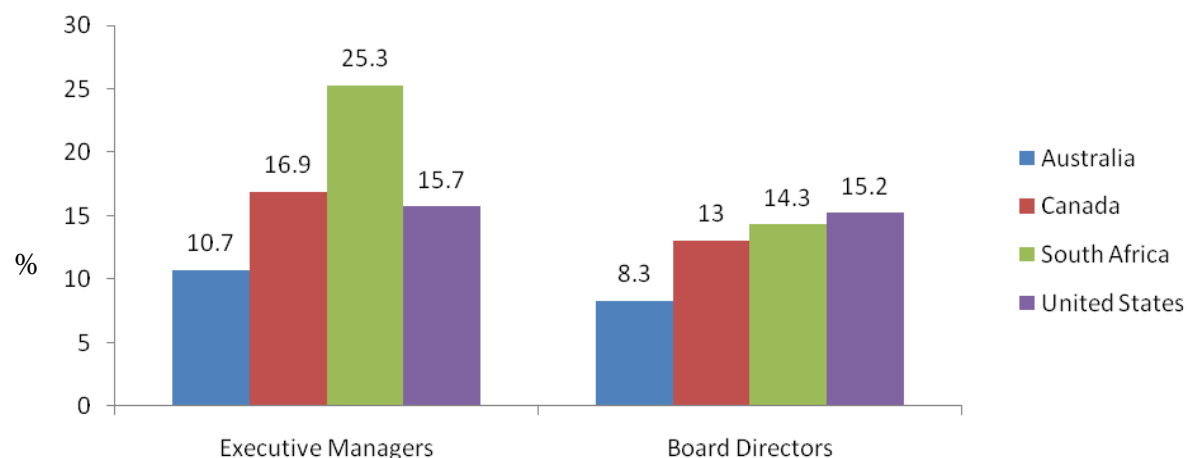
attention (Mathur-Helm, 2005). According to Booysen (2007), the first endeavors to achieve greater social justice and to redress past discrimination was through the Labour Relations Act of 1995, which took effect in 1996, then the Constitution of South Africa 1996 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997. These were followed by Employment Equity Act of 1999 (which was amended in 2004), which contained anti-discriminatory provisions, the Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act of 1999. According to Booysen (2007), the last two acts shifted focus away from Affirmative action appointment to the recruitment, training, succession planning and development of minority groups. These changes were followed by the institutionalisation of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Commission in 1999, and subsequent strategies and policies set by government to increase black ownership of business and increase black representation in management (Booyesen, 2007).

The achievement of employment equity and the implementation of affirmative action are not without challenges. Thomas (2002) highlights some of the challenges, these include token appointments in organisations due to the quest to meet employment equity quotas, the increased scrutiny of the employment equity candidates, lack of management commitment towards the process of transformation and the difficulty of the integration of employment equity candidates into established corporate cultures. Some people perceive affirmative action as focusing primarily on the need to address racial imbalances with organisations which has had the unintended consequence of marginalising gender issues (Booyesen, 1999; Mathur-Helm, 2005). However, it seems that employment equity efforts also have a positive effect. For instance, Motileng et al. (2002) reported that the five black middle managers in their studies viewed affirmative action

positive as a strategy that created employment opportunities for them, but they also indicated that there were some hurdles like stereotyping and resistance that came with affirmative action. Hite's (2006) study showed that black people were more supportive of affirmative action than white people. This implies that the expectation from black people is that affirmative action will benefit them. The factors discussed above have contributed directly and indirectly to the lack of women in managerial positions.

### 2.3. Women in management

Despite the tremendous strides that South Africa has made in the past few years in promoting and advancing women in the workplace, women are still under-represented in managerial positions (Mathur-Helm, 2005). South Africa as compared to some countries has made strides in promoting women to management positions. According to Catalyst (2008) women make up 25.3% of executive managers in South Africa, 16.9% in Canada, 15.7% in the United States of America and 10.7% in Australia. South African women constitute 14.3% of board directors as compared to 15.2% in the United States of America, 13.0% in Canada and 8.3% in Australia (Catalyst, 2008).



**Figure 4.** Percentage distribution of women in top management in different countries.

In all the countries, it seems that it gets tougher to reach to those top positions of directors. In South Africa, it also seems that women flourish in government and public sectors jobs, encounter more challenges in the private sector (Mathur-Helm, 2005). This could be a result of several initiatives by the government like the quota rule that 30 percent of those in parliament should be women and there is a commission on gender equality (Booyesen, 1999). It is evident from the introductory discussion on the census pyramid and the above discussion that the patriarchal ideology, based on the superior position of men, has yet to be overcome in both government and the corporate world.

Apart from examining the patriarchy that is evident in management, it is also necessary, especially in South Africa, with its apartheid legacy, to investigate the effects of racism on black women in management. There is a vast difference between the representation of white and black female managers in South Africa, which takes a specific apartheid related character. The CEE 2007/2008 (Figure 3) reports that there are 9.8% of white females at top management and 5.9% of black African females at top management. BWASA (2008) revealed that of the 1227 women executive managers in South Africa, 55.5% are white women and 29.7 % are black African women (Figure 2). Black women, even though they are the largest population group in the country, are still under-represented in managerial and executive positions but are over-represented in service production and other low skilled jobs (CEE 2007/2008).

It thus seems that black women face a dual challenge, both as women and as black women or race and gender. The draft Employment Equity Bill (1997, p. 2 as cited in Booysen, 1999) shows that it was 5000 times more likely for a white male South African (the previously most advantaged group) than for an African woman (the previously most disadvantaged group) to be in top management. Prekel (as cited in Booysen, 1999) asserts that even if affirmative action were to be fully implemented with gender in mind, it would take decades for the effects of centuries of discrimination against black women, in terms of both gender and race, to be eliminated. Perhaps researchers can explore the situation and find quicker means to achieve gender equality in all levels of the workplace while, eradicating sexism and racism. According to Adler and Izraeli (1994), while both black and white women have experienced gender oppression, black women are further from the center of power. This is because historically, white women have had indirect access to economic, social and political power through their relationship with white men, white women were not subjected to racial discrimination and patriarchy seems to be stronger in the black culture than in white culture (Booyesen, 1999). Ngoako (1999) investigated the obstacles faced by black and white women in South African organisation in their career advancement. The results of her study revealed that both black and white females perceived a lot of resistance from both males and females to accept that women are capable of being in positions of authority. Some of the black respondents indicated that they had to deal with attitudes of males as well as that of white colleagues (race and gender issues). This is interesting to compare whether the situation has changed since then.

This situation is not unique to South Africa. According to Catalyst (2004), African American women experience double outsider status as compared to white women and African American

men by being excluded from informal networks with white women and white men. Catalyst (2004) also states that the biggest barriers African American women face are negative race-based stereotypes, frequent questioning of their authority and credibility and a lack of consistency in receiving institutional support and the case may be that this phenomenon will transcend to the South African situation. The next section of this research will be devoted to the discussion of some of the barriers that women and African women face.

## **2.4. Career barriers**

### **2.4.1. Stereotypes**

One of the issues that have been identified as a challenge to the career advancement of women is that of stereotypes. Stereotypes refer to “a set of attributes ascribed to a group and believed to characterise its individual members simply because they belong to that group” (Heilman, 1997, p.879). Gender stereotypes are thus attributes assigned to men and women simply by virtue of their gender (Ngoako, 1999) and race stereotypes are attributes assigned to people based on their race. Stereotypes are often inaccurate overgeneralisations which might not apply to the individual group members who are targeted, therefore becoming a basis for inaccurate reasoning. Stereotypes may lead to biased feelings and actions; they may also disadvantage others not because of what they are like or what they have done, but because of the group to which they belong to (Heilman, 1997).

Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) divide gender stereotypes into societal sex role stereotypes and occupational sex stereotypes. Societal sex role stereotypes are the different life roles, personality



characteristics and the acceptable behaviours that society has traditionally specified for males and females. Norms directing the approved masculine or feminine characteristics are clearly defined and agreed upon and become a powerful force in the socialisation of children (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). In terms of adult roles, men are expected to work and to be family providers. Women are expected to be nurturing wives and mothers who stay at home. In terms of personality characteristics, “men are expected to develop those associated with competency, instrumentality, and achievement, while women are to develop those comprising the “warmth-expressiveness” cluster, including nurturance, sensitivity, warmth and emotional expressiveness” (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p.30). According to Ngcongo’s (1993) survey, the criteria for a good woman in traditional African culture is one who cooks and does laundry for her husband, one who sees it as her husband’s right to make major family decisions, one who doesn’t argue with him and one who doesn’t want access to the benefits that he has.

The psychological means by which children learn gender stereotypes and develop sex-typed characteristics include reinforcement and punishment modeling, and the adoption of rules, schemas, or generalisations based on the observation of other people or as they are taught by others (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). These mechanisms operate through the influence of parents, teachers, and the media. Young girls are usually not socialised to prepare for career pursuits or to develop the characteristics and competencies necessary for such pursuits (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). The differential socialisation of young boys and girls in African families limits equality of opportunity for girls, even when they become women. As adults, of those women who manage to enter the labour force, their time has to be divided between work and home, yet at work they compete with men who do less at home (Ngcongo, 1993).

Occupational stereotypes refer to the normative views of the appropriateness of various occupations for males and females as well as the view of the appropriate behaviours that are acceptable for men or women at work (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). In South Africa there is a division of labour according to stereotyped gender roles (Booyesen, 1999). According to Naidoo (1997) women occupy a significant majority of the so-called 'pink-collar jobs'. They comprised 96% of the registered nurses, 90% of occupational therapists and radiotherapists, 86% of social workers, 79% of hairdressers, 67% of teachers and 96% of domestic workers (Naidoo, 1997). The men tend to occupy the blue collar jobs. The masculine stereotypic occupations are highway maintenance worker, heavy equipment operators, engineers, etc. Women are slowly moving into some of these male dominated fields. In South Africa as well, women are slowly moving into management positions. But, societal perspectives and moreover, men's perspective towards women, have not changed. Traditionally, the role of provider was associated with power and men, but now that women are beginning to become providers for their families, the stereotypes of power have not shifted to them. Instead, women are still perceived as beneath men (Mathur-Helm, 2006).

Stereotypes become a problem for women when they hinder their selection into positions and deter their promotion into higher positions like top management. For example, while men are described as decisive, independent, rational, objective and self-confident, women are described as indecisive, dependent, emotional, non-objective and insecure (Heilman, 1997). The American Psychological Association stated on the basis of five decades on sex stereotyping research, that the

evaluation of women's work performance is commonly attributed to factors not relating to ability or competence (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005). This has a vital effect upon women's career progress and organisational rewards. In a study by Martell, Parker, Emrich, Crawford and Swerdlin (1998), whereby they investigated sex stereotyping in the perceptions of executives, an inventory on the attributes that are believed to be characteristic of successful top managers was developed and the participants, 123 male managers, rated each one of four groups: women middle managers (MM), men MMs, successful female MMs and successful male MMs. The results indicated that stereotypically male attributes were perceived to be necessary for being a successful executive. The results provided support for sex stereotyping on the qualities related to successful executives. Martell et al. (1998) suggest that the findings help to explain why few women executives exist. It was demonstrated that women in middle management are perceived to be lacking what is needed to succeed as an executive. This perception may have a negative influence on performance ratings and promotions (Martell et al., 1998).

Powell (1993) suggests that whilst women may exhibit the same behaviours as men, gender stereotyping results in their leadership style being seen very differently to that of men. This is mostly the case when the leadership style demonstrates the dominant characteristics often seen as the hallmarks of effective leadership. For example, behaviours such as assertiveness which attracts praise in male leaders are often reinterpreted in less favorable terms when exhibited by female leaders. Assertiveness in the male becomes domineering in the female and while confidence may be seen as a necessary component of leadership in males, women may be accused of overconfidence. Oakley (2000) refers to this phenomenon as a double-bind which refers to a situation in which a person cannot win over no matter what he or she tries. Gyllensten and Palmer

(2005) report that there are conflicting expectations of women in the workplace. On one hand they gain approval if they convey traditionally female characteristics such as warmth and expressiveness, but on the other hand, they must behave in an individualistic power-centred manner if they want to succeed professionally. This uncertainty about what constitutes appropriate behaviour to advance one career, and how it is perceived, can result in loss of self-confidence for women in management or those aspiring for management roles (Powell, 1993). Also, it seems that those women in male-dominated environments and organisations that are led by men find it more challenging to input into the organisations or to have their voices heard (Oakley, 2000).

Catalyst (2004) reports on race stereotypes faced by African American women. It seems that there are stereotypical assumptions about the competence and skill of African American women, questioning of their authority and credibility. These women describe stereotypes about being confrontational, which they perceive as based on interpretations of their direct communication style (Catalyst, 2004). Burlew and Johnson (1992) found that African-American women in non-traditional careers such as law, medicine or engineering reported racial and gender discrimination, colleagues questioning their competency and limited access to political influence or power as barriers to their career success.

In South Africa, Luhabe (2002) reports that black managers experience aversive racism. This is a more subtle form of discrimination that can sometimes occur unconsciously (Hite, 2006). Luhabe (2002) describes a number of ways that aversive racism manifests itself. This includes the ‘scandalous paradox’ which occurs when white people have fear and anxiety of their privileges

and entitlements being taken by black people as they approach top management positions. She also included the 'exception to the rule' phenomenon. This occurs when at first, black manager's authority and competence is acknowledged because he or she is viewed as different from the other black people but when the black manager makes a mistake, he or she is instantly ignored. Related to this is the 'heightened scrutiny' that black managers experience who are mostly in white dominated organisation. This leads to pressure on black managers to perform exceptionally all the time. Black managers also experience their initiatives being undermined, from both black and white subordinates and from their superiors. Lastly, aversive racism may be through the perception of black people as arrogant if they do not seem grateful for the opportunities given to them. In Booyens (2007) case study on black managers in a bank, there was perceived tokenism of the black employees. The black employees were not fully integrated into the organisation because they were given little responsibility and decision making authority. The black managers were often reminded that they are affirmative action or employment equity results and were therefore perceived to be incompetent by some whites (Booyens, 2007). But there is not a lot of research on the experience of race stereotypes for women in South Africa, the literature is concentrated of gender stereotypes.

#### **2.4.2. Multiple Roles**

As the number of dual-earner couples are rising (Gyllenstein & Palmer, 2005), changes from the extended family structure to nuclear families, the enormous increase in single parent families, as well as the increase of women in the workplace occur, the potential role conflict in women's lives has also increased, particularly, conflict between the dual demands of career and family (Ngoako,

1999). Role conflict occurs when two or more contradictory roles have to be simultaneously fulfilled (Redelinghuys, Botes & De Wet, 1999). Despite the changes in family structure and women labour force participation, there has only been a slight change in the responsibility of domestic chores. Women are still responsible for the majority of domestic chores. Also, women more often take on other family-related roles such as caring for elderly parents, taking care of children's extramural activities ('soccer mom') or finding appropriate childcare. Naidoo and Jano (2002) also add that gendered expectations of domestic, social and child care for women puts increased pressure on female managers who already work long hours in demanding jobs. From their extensive literature review on the stressors of women in the workplace, Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) reveal that women are particularly likely to suffer from role overload and that career-family conflict is one of the main sources of stress for working women. They also found that female managers reported greater pressure than men from work and home stressors.

In her study, Mafora (1993) found that the segregation of tasks according to sex role norms still exists in many African households and this results in working women often enduring a disproportionate share of household responsibilities. Naidoo and Jano (2002) in their study that examined and contrasted the level of role participation, commitment and value expectation that dual-career women in South Africa invest in contending work and family roles, found that women managers participate more in their work role, however they indicated that their commitment lay with their home and family roles and they showed greater value from the home and family role. The sample of this study constituted 93% white respondents. Mathur-Helm (2006) also found that family obligations is the most apparent barrier in professional women's career in South African

banks, with some women even declining offers to join top management so that they can fulfill their family obligations.

The research on multiple roles has been ambiguous as it has been suggested that multiple roles can also affect to well-being, instead of the stress described above. According to Rodin and Ickovics (1990), multiple roles increase possible resources and rewards, such as different sources of self-esteem and social support. However, it is pointed that not all roles are good for women, and that the nature and the quality of the experience within the roles are important factors to consider in relation to women's wellbeing. One advantage of women having multiple roles is that the dissatisfaction in one role is not as important, as one more role can create a balance (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005). Mclean (2001) suggests that multiple roles can complement or compensate each other ultimately enhancing the overall personal well-being, however, the combined overload of the roles can lead to increased levels of stress, strain and illness. This is similar to the Warr's Vitamin Model where he described an inverted u-shaped curvilinear relationship between job characteristics and affective well-being (De Jonge & Schaufeli, 1998).

Role conflict and role overload create barriers for women when the involvement of women in other roles leads to diminished performance or less commitment to their work roles. For example, Crampton and Mishra (1999) found organisations that had installed flexible working hours, along with pregnancy and sabbatical leave, and child-care facilities to favour women employees, but still practiced a demanding and long working hours culture, which the majority of women with family responsibilities found difficult. Furthermore, women who used these measures were viewed as

having a lack of commitment which reduced their promotional chances. In addition, Liff and Wards (2001) study on UK high street Bank on the under representation of women in top management positions revealed that banks are constantly giving messages to women that to be in top management, one has to prove loyalty and commitment through working long hours and participating in senior and top management functions. Women in middle management with a lot of obligation or roles to fulfill, would find this difficult and therefore the prospect of their career progress would be hampered. Therefore some women get to those executive positions by sacrificing other possible some roles, for example, motherhood or married life. Mathur-Helm's (2006) study confirmed this as, of all the married women in her study, 55% did not have children by choice, due to work pressures.

### **2.4.3. Social Support**

According to Bailey, Wolfe and Wolfe (1996, p.289), social support is usually defined based on one or more of three categories "social embeddness, as the interconnections among individuals, perceived support, as an individual's cognitive assessment of the interconnections, and enacted social support as the actual behaviours used to express support". Social is broken down into two types as either instrumental or affective in nature. Instrumental support refers to tangible forms of support such as financial and material assistance. Affective support consists of intangible forms of support such as social recognition and emotional support (Bailey et al., 1996). The many sources of support are classified as deriving from either formal supports, as provided by most social service agencies, or informal supports, as found in unstructured assistance from one's interpersonal relationships like friends (Bailey et al., 1996).



O'Reilly (1988) also notes that social network is an analytic concept used to describe the structure of linkages between individual or groups of individuals. Such networks have a variety of functions of which the provision of social support is but one. Ibarra (1993) further breaks down the concept of networks. First, there are formal and informal networks. A “formal network is composed of a set of formally specified relationships between superiors and subordinates and among representatives of functional differentiated groups who must interact to accomplish an organisational defined task”, examples are committees and teams (Ibarra, 1993, p.58). Informal networks on the other hand, involve more unrestricted patterns of interaction, where the subject matter of relationships may be work related, social or a combination of both. It is broader than formal networks. Informal networks may be observed at two levels, the organisation network and the personal network (Ibarra, 1993). The former involves all relationships of a given type and communication ties linking the population of individuals to a particular boundary like a company. A personal or ego network refers to the set of relationships defined by an individual and his or her direct contact with others (Ibarra, 1993).

One of the most frequently reported problems faced by women and black people in organisational settings is limited access to, or exclusion from, informal interaction networks (Combs, 2003; Ibarra, 1993). For example, the most common career barriers cited by African-Americans according to Catalyst (2004) are not having influential sponsor or mentor (43% of the sample felt this way), lack of informal networks (36%), lack of company role models of the same racial group (31%) and lack of high visibility projects or important projects (29%).

These networks allocate a variety of instrumental resources that are important for job effectiveness and career advancement as well as expressive benefits such as friendships and social support. Limited network access therefore, produces multiple disadvantages, including restricted knowledge of what is going on in their organisations and difficulty in forming alliances, which in turn is associated with limited mobility and glass ceiling effects (Ibarra, 1993). The literature seems to suggest that women do not really participate fully in networking. Mtizira-Nondo (2001), suggests that women do not perceive networking as adding value to their career development and as a result do very little to develop their networks. Onsongo (2007) also found similar results in her study. According to Ibarra (1993), women concentrate on social networks while men practice multiplexing (mixing both social and work networks).

Combs (2003) highlights that the effect of the dual minority status of being black and female is important in understanding the effects of this status on the access and instrumentality dimensions of informal social networks when discussing career advancement opportunities of black women. Informal networks in companies tend to revolve round white and male practices including sports (such as golf) and visiting pubs. Informal networks operate on all levels in the company, but the higher one goes in the hierarchy, the more rigid the norms of the network become (Luhabe, 2002). The school and university one attended, and interest in sports are just examples of the many factors that are sometimes considered in informal networks. This is related to what is referred as homophily, which is the degree of similarity among members in a network (Knouse & Webb, 2001). Women and minorities tend to have a smaller percentage of same sex and same ethnicity

ties in their networks than do white males. (Knouse & Web, 2001). This is due to the smaller number of women and minorities in many work organisations. Black women therefore experience a double outsider status from these “old boy networks” (Knouse & Web, 2001, p.226). Their activities sometimes take place in unsuitable hour like evening or weekend further excluding those women with family responsibilities (Simpson, 1998). Since, the majority of management is white male, and according to homophily, black women have major factors which make them dissimilar from the majority of management, further excluding them from possible promotions and career advancement opportunities.

In their study of the contextual impact of social support across gender and race, Bailey et al. (1996), reported that job support (support from co-workers and supervisors) reduced depression and strain in white men and white women, but had no such effect on black women. They further reported that home support (support from spouses, family and friends), was associated with lower levels of job-related tension and higher levels of job satisfaction for white men and white women. However, for black women, home support did not seem to help in the professional domain. Thus for black women, social support was only beneficial if it occurred in the same psychosocial context, suggesting that job support only helps within the professional domain, whilst home support only helps with the personal domain (Bailey et al., 1996). Akande (1997) reported that for black women in South Africa, career women reported more encouragement in relation to their career goals from family members than traditional women (those not interested in career goals) and their goals. This indicates that social support is an important resource for career women because it can lead to enhanced well-being (lower levels of job tension and increased job satisfaction) as well as increased work motivation.

Mentoring and sponsorship are also forms of informal networking systems (Luhabe, 2002). The lack of mentors (particularly black mentors) has been identified as a significant factor contributing to the slow rate of career progression of blacks (Luhabe, 2002). Sponsorship in organisations occurs when one or more persons have an active interest and take combined effort to ensure the allocation of rewards to a particular individual. The mentor or sponsor is usually someone in a position of power and authority because this allows them to be in a better position to offer valuable advice on career management, warn against potential obstacles, and recommend what practical skills and experiences should be gained to prepare for promotion and career advancement (Luhabe, 2002). Booysen's (2007) case study on a South African bank revealed that there was a white dominated male culture that lacked sensitivity to diversity and continued to exclude black and female managers. Black managers felt excluded from informal networks and this resulted in limited access to mentors and role models for black employees (Booyesen, 2007).

#### **2.4.4. Education**

The past apartheid government policies restricted access to education for black people as well as restricting them from working in various sectors of the labour market (Rowena, 1997). This has resulted in many African women not being given the opportunity to receive quality education. Betz (2004), states that the nature and level of the education obtained by anyone is crucially related to their subsequent career achievement, their adult socio-economic status, lifestyle, income level, as most employees earn more with increasing levels of education.

It seems that the difficulties that women face in the educational system begin from as early as primary school (Rowena, 1997). By the time that women enroll into higher education like university, they can expect to encounter an environment that involves sexual harassment, females being discouraged from classroom participation and a lack of support which is even more exacerbated in male dominated fields such as engineering and physical sciences (Betz, 2004).

Another finding about women and education according to Mathur-Helm (2005), is that there are few women who have managed to get into senior executive positions without having a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree. Therefore an MBA seems to be helpful in advancing the careers of women into management. Though an MBA is helpful for promotions, the criteria for senior management are not reliant only on MBA qualifications.

Singh, Lange and Naidoo (2004) suggest that the expectation that an MBA would lead to new employment and advancement opportunities is immense in South Africa. South Africa is on a mission to transform itself, therefore one of the important expectations of the MBA is the accelerated development of black and women professionals to take part in the management of the public and private sectors of South Africa (Singh et al., 2004). Mathur-Helm (2005) reported however, that South African women constitute only 10% of the MBA students. According to Booysen (1999), the percentage of women students on MBA programmes, averaged at approximately 20%, with white females representing 16%, black African women, 2% and Coloured and Asian women constituting the remaining 2%.

The difficulties that women face in business schools include the fact that faculty and administration staff are mostly white and male (Booyesen, 1999). This means that there is an under-representation of women in business education and management training. Therefore there is lack of female role models and mentors in business schools. There are also other reasons to the lack of enrollment of African females in business schools. Rowena (1997) suggests that social-cultural norms, stereotypes, ideologies and economic factors all contribute against South African women chances of successful educational pursuits. According to Rowena (1997), in many African societies, parents see their sons as investments because they will be carrying the family name, therefore they are more likely to be supported in their education than females. Also, the societal pressures urging the importance and necessity of marriage also affects females' educational goals due to concerns around balancing educational demands with those of taking care of a family. African families also battle with sending their daughters to educational institutions far from their homes because the daughters also take care of the homes (Rowena, 1997). Booyesen (1999) and Rowena's (1997) findings might still be relevant and occurring in the current South Africa.

## **2.5. Assessment of Career Barriers**

The issues identified above are some of the career barriers that women in general face and it has also been shown how some of these career barriers affect black women especially. Effective assessment of perceived barriers to career advancement is crucial. According to McWhirter (1997), the investigation of perceived barriers has occurred in one of three ways. First, researchers have used the Barriers Scale of My Vocational Situation which has four yes/no items. The problem with this scale is that it has low reliability coefficients (McWhirter, 1997) and this

suggests that it is a poor measure. Other researchers have used interviews or open-ended question formats and then organised the responses into categories whilst lastly, other researchers have used the Career Barriers Inventory which has 112 items. The Career Barrier Inventory was developed for use with college students and it might be too lengthy for investigators who have limited administration time (McWhirter, 1997). In this study, Schlossberg's Transition Theory will be used to provide a framework that will be used to guide the interview to determine if there are any career barriers that black women in middle management face in their career advancement.

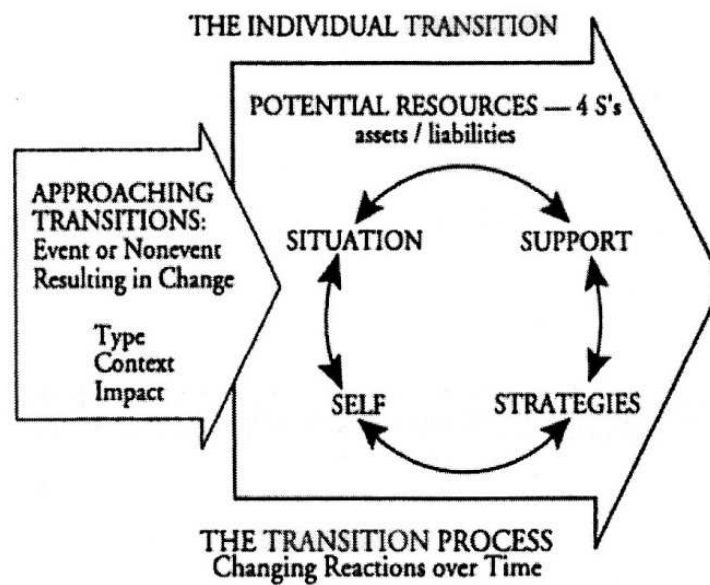
## **2.6. Schlossberg's Transition Theory**

Schlossberg's transition theory is complex and evolving. It was first presented in an article called "A model for analysing human adaptation" in 1981. It has since been revised and expanded several times. The theory is influenced by four major theoretical perspectives, namely the contextual perspective of adulthood, developmental perspective of human development, life-span perspective of human development, and the transition perspective (Schlossberg et al., 1995).

This theory has been applied to a variety of different contexts. For example, Goodman and Pappas (2000) investigated the application of this theory to retired university faculty and Wheeler, Malone, VanVlack, Nelson and Steadward (1996) based their study on retired athletes on this theory. McCarthy and Berger (2008) used this theory as their conceptual framework for their study on female technology educators who transitioned into a male dominated field. In Bundy's (2004) study, this theory was used as a basis for investigating the job loss experience of women from rural areas. Williams (1999) also suggests that an understanding of transition theory may

help employers to understand what employees who are undergoing transitions have to deal with and may thus develop transition management skills. However, there is no study that has applied this theory to career advancement.

Schlossberg et al., (1995, p.27) define a transition as “any event or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles”. Schlossberg et al. (1995) state that while individuals are different and hence their transitions differ, the structure to understanding the transitions is stable. The entire transition theory is made up of three major parts: approaching transitions (transition identification and transition process), taking stock of coping resources (the 4 S’s system) and taking charge (strengthening resources).



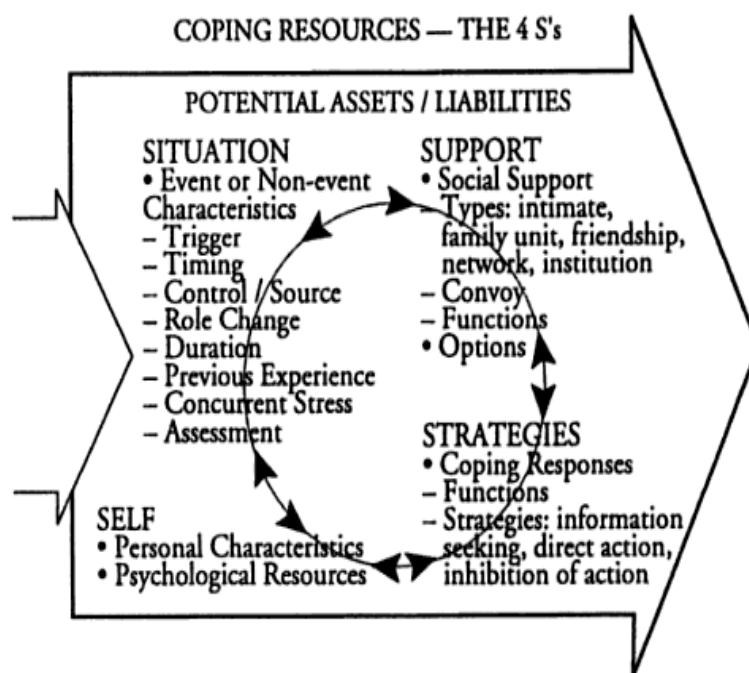
**Figure 5.** The Transition Framework (From *Counseling Adults in Transition* by Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 27.)



Approaching transitions refers to the identification of the nature of the transition and helps by providing a perspective of how to best deal with the transition. Schlossberg et al. (1995) differentiate between three types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated and non-event transitions. Anticipated transitions are those that are normal or predictable in that they occur as life unfolds. Unanticipated transitions are not predictable and just occur. Non-event transitions are the ones that are expected but which do not occur, thereby changing a person's life. A black women in middle management that is expecting to be promoted but the promotion never materialises is undergoing a non-event transition of someone who is hoping to advance their career. Particularly, they are going through a delayed non-event transition because there is hope that it might still happen. The transition process identifies where the adult is in the transition. Are they "moving in, through, or out of the transition" (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p.26).

The second part of the theory refers to the "4 S's" system: situation, self, support and strategies (Figure 6), which provides a way to identify the potential resources an individual has to cope with during the transition process that may be viewed as both potential assets or liabilities (Schlossberg et al., 1995). People deal with their transitions differently depending on the 4 S's. The 'situation' factor refers to what is happening or what has happened at the time of the transition. According to Schlossberg et al (1995), the 'situation' of every transition is characterised by the trigger for the transition, the timing (whether it's on time or off time), one's sense of control of the transition, role changes, the duration of the transition, experiences with similar transitions and one's assessment or appraisal of the transition. The 'self' variable refers to whom the transition is happening to because every person handles their transition differently depending on their

personality, demographic variables or psychological resources such as optimism. The ‘support’ factor refers to different types of support such as social support from family, friends, colleagues or the organisation and the roles they play in helping or hindering individuals in their transition. The ‘strategy’ factor refers to how a person copes with the transition and may include such as modifying the meaning of the situation, seeking information or not taking action (Schlossberg et al., 1995).



**Figure 6.** The 4 S's Framework. (From *Counseling Adults in Transition* by Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 48).

From literature reviewed on women and black women's career barriers, factors like, the legacy of the apartheid regime, sexism, racism, patriarchy in society and the workplace, and role conflict may represent the 'situation' or the context that women middle managers who are attempting to advance their career have to deal with. Black women's self efficacy or lack thereof, their gender

and their race, represents factors under 'self' that may present career barriers. 'Social support' from home (spouses, family, friends) and from the job (colleagues, supervisors), mentors and also the informal networks in the workplace are different forms of support which lack of can affect the advancement of black women managers. Middle managers attempting to advance their careers can also use education or seeking information as a coping 'strategy'.

Schlossberg et al. (1995) highlight a number of other factors that are important to understanding adult transition. One of them is the concept of relativity which refers to how different events have different meanings for different people. The individual's appraisal of the situation is what is important. The context of the transition is also important. Context refers to the relationship of the individual to the transition and the setting in which the transition occurs. The impact of the transition on the individual's "relationships, routines, assumptions, [and] roles" (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p.35) is also important. Therefore an individual's response to a transition is dependent on the type of transition (anticipated, unanticipated and non-event), the context in which it occurs and impact it may have on their lives. These points are very important because they demonstrate how this theory fits with the diversity in South Africa since the theory highlights the possible variability in situations and reflects a concern that individual concerns cannot be generalised.

In this study, women in middle management trying to advance their careers are considered as undergoing a non-event transition, particularly a delayed non-event transition because there is hope that it might still happen. Since Schlossberg's Transition theory is applicable to all kinds of transitions and it is beneficial; for understanding adult development, this study has attempted to

apply this theory to women in middle management who are attempting to or are advancing their careers to senior positions like top management. This theory has not been applied yet to individuals advancing their careers and specifically to black women in South Africa based on the literature reviewed. The application of this theory to black women advancing their careers might serve to contribute to knowledge about black South African women's career development. This is because there are concerns with some of the career development theories being applied to a South African context (Maree & Molepo, 2007). Such problems include research on these theories being conducted mainly on young, male and white participants and most of these theories are largely based on western European and American worldviews (Cook, Heppner & O'Brien, 2005). There is also another concern with traditional career theories regarding their applicability to the career development of women (Cronzier, 1999). According to Fitzgerald and Wietzman, (1992 as cited in Cronzier, 1999), this is because women's career development seems to be more complex than that of men and women as a group are more heterogeneous in their career paths. This complexity includes role conflict as women are combining work and family roles and dealing with other problems such as sexual harassment at work. Therefore this study might also add to the limited methodologies that have been used to investigate perceived barriers.

## **2.7. Coping**

Schlossberg's 4 S's are about how individuals cope with their transitions. By coping, Schlossberg et al. (1995) refer to the things people do to avoid being harmed by the events in their lives.

Schlossberg et al. (1995) also follow Lazarus and Folkman (1987) perspective on coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1987) suggested that individuals make two types of appraisals at the same time.

First is primary appraisal, whereby individuals perceive their transition as either positive, negative or benign, whether it is stressful or perceived as a challenge. Then individuals undergo secondary appraisal process during which they assess their resources for coping with the transition. The coping resources include the 4 S's-situation, self, support and strategies. Based on the secondary appraisal, individuals may select an overall coping strategy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1987) the crucial factor is the way the individual perceives the situation. They classified coping in two ways. There is instrumental or problem focused behaviour that intends on changing the situation and there is emotion focused behaviour that seeks to minimise emotional distress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Whether individuals want to change their situation or reduce the strain from their transition, they can choose from four coping methods: information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action and intrapsychic behaviour. Intrapsychic behaviours refer to the mindsets that people use like denial, wishful thinking and distortion which allow people to carry on minimally affected (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

Therefore by using these 4 S's in this study to investigate the nature and form of the strategies that black female managers use in their transitions, important barriers that they face in advancing their careers may be revealed. This also goes some way to meet Raskin's (2002) critique about the lack of researches on career development of women that investigate their coping strategies.

## **2.8. Research aims**

The main aim of the study is thus to apply Schlossberg's Transition Theory to an exploration of the career barriers of black women in middle management. This study also secondarily aims to explore through qualitative methods what black women in middle management perceive to be barriers in their career advancement and to further investigate how these women cope in their transitions.

## **2.9. Research Questions**

The central research questions can thus be stated as:

- What are the career barriers (should they be found to be present) that black women in middle management are facing in their career advancement?
- How do black women in middle management cope in their career advancement?

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents a description of the research design used to address the research questions that underpin the current study. It outlines the methodology used in determining the career barriers of the participants. Qualitative research was undertaken in this study. This chapter will also describe the sampling procedure used in this study and a description of the sample will be given. The procedure used to gather data will be looked at and a description of the method used to analyse the results will also be explained. Ethical considerations of the study will also be provided. Before discussing the methods employed, a brief summary of methodological considerations will be looked at.

### **3.2. Quantitative versus Qualitative Methodology**

A research design has been described as a plan of procedure to be used for the collection and analysis of data in order to evaluate a particular perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Deciding on design option leads to a consideration of the distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods. In quantitative research, there is an emphasis on the quantification of constructs. This means numbers are assigned to the perceived qualities of things. Quantitative methods use standardised measures so that the different perspectives of respondents can fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), in qualitative research, the purpose is to study human action from the perspective of the research participants themselves. The primary goal of studies utilising this

approach is to gain in-depth, thick descriptions and an understanding of human actions and events rather than explaining human behaviour. Babbie and Mouton (2001) also reveal that the concern with qualitative studies is to understand social action in terms of its specific context instead of attempting to generalise the study to some population.

Therefore qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that qualitative research is frequently more interactive, intensive and the researcher is likely to form more of a social relationship with the organisational members, and therefore gain more insight into their understanding of their experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

It is also important to consider the methodological approach or framework that this study utilised. This entails regarding the epistemology of the study which is “the philosophy of how we come to know the world” (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p.15). Broadly speaking, there are three approaches. There is a positivist framework which aims to provide truth by empirical methods, there is the interpretivist framework or hermeneutics which involves linking surface manifestations to underlying phenomena, and there is also the critical framework which involves “a process of deconstruction of the world” (Henning et al., 2004, p. 22). This study follows an interpretivist framework and hence the use of thematic content analysis.



### **3.3. Research Design**

This study aims to explore the career barriers that black women in middle management face in their career advancement. It will explore these barriers through a qualitative approach. Therefore, this is a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study. Because of the nature of the study and the absence of any manipulation of variables, this study took place in naturalistic settings, indicating that the participants were interviewed in their workplaces.

This study also employed a non-experimental and cross-sectional design. There was no random assignment of the sample, no control and experimental groups and no manipulation of variables. Therefore, a non-experimental design was used for the study. A Cross-sectional design compares participants on one or more variables simultaneously or takes a view of the study at one point in time and place (Whitely, 2002). Cross-sectional design precludes knowledge of the circumstances that occur before study. However, as there are limitations on the data collection this remains the most practical method of analysis. Murphy and Davidshofer (1998) suggest that this type of design allows for comparisons between participants and will be useful in assessing commonalities and differences in the response of the participants.

### **3.4. Instrumentation**

The exploratory nature of the current study proposes the need for a flexible data collection method that encourages unpredicted aspects of the phenomenon under study to surface (Kleovoulou,

2006). Therefore data was gathered by means of a semi-structured interview. In an interview, the researcher asks questions relevant to the subject of the research to the research participant, who then responds by answering the question (Whitley, 2002). In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer follows a framework of subjects to be explored which might include some specific questions, but there is no specified order in which the questions might be asked (Whitley, 2002). The interview is flexible and allows for an exploration of themes and ideas. There is also allowance for probing or pursuing additional information. The inherent strength of the interview is that it minimises the risk of misunderstanding.

A semi-structured interview was employed in this study. This semi-structured interview was based on Schlossberg's 4 S framework (See figure 6). Questions were based on the 'situation', 'self', 'support' and 'strategies' of the participants experiences with career advancement. The questions were not directly about career barriers because part of the aim of the study was to assess if Schlossberg Transition Theory can be utilised in assessing career barriers. This implies the emergence of career barriers in an interview on questions around 'situation', 'self', 'support' and 'strategies' related to career advancement. It took approximately one hour for the interviews to be carried out. The duration of the interviews differed due to corporate time-urgency and depth of individual responses. The interview began with an opening conversation about the future career plans of the respondents. This was aimed to create a relaxed and trusting atmosphere and to also establish whether the participants were interested in advancing their careers. The researcher was responsible for creating an atmosphere in which the participant was comfortable and responded honestly and comprehensively. The interview was recorded on an electronic voice recorder. The

recordings were then downloaded onto a computer and then saved onto a Compact Disc. The recordings were later transcribed verbatim by the researcher and one assistant. The assistant was briefed on the purpose of the study and provided with an example of a transcribed interview. Four of the interviews were transcribed by the assistant and they were checked by the researcher and modified if necessary in order to achieve accuracy of the recorded material. The present study limited transcriptions to verbatim report of utterances as far as possible including features such as strong emphasis, significant pauses (indicated by ellipses in brackets), and interruptions and overlaps in speech exchange.

Prior to utilisation of the interview schedule in the main research, a pilot study was conducted to address the suitability and clarity of the interview questions. The pilot took place with six female building managers. They indicated that they clearly understood the questions and that the terms were appropriate.

Biographical information was collected in order to effectively describe the sample. A short biographical blank (Appendix 4) was distributed just before the interview. Participants were asked to indicate their age, highest qualification, current occupational position, length of service in current occupational position, length of service to organisation, marital status and number of children.

### **3.5. Sample**

In this study, the intention was to study a relatively homogenous sample in order to find out the perceptions around career barriers of a very specific group, black women in middle management.

It was also important to the study that these women be interested in advancing their careers

because the aim of the study is to assess what are their perceived career barriers to top

management and how do they cope in their career advancement. Therefore, the sampling

methodology used in the research was non-probability sampling which means that focus was not

on fore-casting or guaranteeing that each element of the population will be represented in the

sample. Specifically, purposive sampling combined with snowballing sampling was used.

Purposive sampling is used when the researcher selects the sample on the basis of its elements and

the nature of the research aims or certain criteria (Whitley, 2002). The criteria for the sample of

this study were that they had to be black, female, middle managers, and interested in advancing

their careers or are already attempting to advance their careers. “Snowball refers to the process of

accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects” (Babbie & Mouton, 2005, p.167). In

this study, after the interview with some of the participants, they were asked to recommend other

people they know who fit the criteria for the study. But they were requested to get permission

from those people before forwarding their details to the researcher.

Given the time and resource limitations, a small sample of nine from whom rich information could be gleaned from, participated in the study. The participants came from four different organisations

in Johannesburg. The first organisation was a building organisation, specialising in

accommodation for students. The second organisation was a municipality. The third organisation

was an academic institution and finally the last organisation was a financial bank. The details describing the sample are provided below.

In summary, nine black women ranging in age from 26 to 53 years of age participated in the study. The lowest educational qualification amongst the participants was a diploma and the highest was a masters degree. All the women were in middle management as defined earlier in the study. They were managing different departments or portfolios, including marketing, finance, and records amongst others. The number of years in their current position ranged from 1 month to 9 years. The time that the participants had spent in their organisations also ranged from 1 month to 25 years. Four of the participants were married, two were single, two were divorced and one was a widow. Three of the participants did not have children and the rest had children ranging from one child to four children. Further details of the sample are provided in the participant summary information at the end of this chapter (Table 1).

### **3.6. Procedure**

The following procedure was utilised to find the interviewees. The sampling began once ethical clearance from the relevant authorities had been obtained. For the first organisation that was contacted, the researcher met face-to-face with a building manager. The researcher explained the purpose of the research and that the researcher is looking for black female middle managers to interview. The building manager then led the researcher to the one of the managers of the organisation to whom the researcher explained the purpose and criteria for inclusion of the study. This manager directed the researcher, through snowballing, to two further participants that

volunteered to participate. This generated three participants from this organisation including the student portfolio manager. All three were asked to participate by contacting them face-to-face. The three managers of the first organisation were interviewed in the conference room of the organisation.

The second organisation was contacted by going to a building as well and then asking the security guard if there were any black female middle managers who worked in the building. This led the researcher to the Human Resource department of the second organisation whereby the researcher was given the contact details of people who met the criteria of the study in that organisation. They were contacted telephonically by the researcher and then asked to participate in the study. This resulted in three participants who were interviewed in their offices.

The researcher approached various departments of the third organisation seeking black female middle managers. This resulted in two participants. One was interviewed in her office and the other was interviewed in the conference room. The fourth organisation is situated within the same premises as the third organisation. The manager of this organisation was approached face-to-face and asked to voluntarily take part in the study. She then agreed and was interviewed in her office.

After the initial contact with all the participants and once they had agreed to take part in the study, a convenient time and place for the interviews were arranged. On the day of the interview, before the interviews took place, all the participants were given the participant information sheet

(Appendix 1) to sign, together with the consent form whereby they agree to be interviewed (Appendix 2) and the consent form whereby they agree for the interview to be recorded and transcribed (Appendix 3). After the interview, the participants were asked if there were other people they knew of that met the criteria of the study and those that might be willing to participate in the study.

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

The interviews were taped and transcribed, the transcripts served as data for the study. The transcripts were analysed through thematic content analysis. This is a process for encoding qualitative information. “A theme is a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organises the possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.4). A theme may be identified at the level whereby it is directly observable in the information, this is the manifest level. It may also be identified at the latent level whereby issues underlying the phenomenon are categorised. According to Boyatzis (1998), analysing data at the manifest creates a possibility of leaving rich information unanalysed and latent level analysis can get complicated to the point whereby the researcher forgets the meaning of the theme. Braun and Clarke (2006), indicate that preferably the analytic process should progress from being descriptive whereby data is presented at the manifest level, to being interpretive whereby there is an attempt to examine underlying ideas and to theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications. In this study, the results presented were obtained at the manifest level. The discussion chapter of the study attempts to take these results further by then interpreting them and looking at their broader meaning and their implications.

The emphasis in this study was on coding for themes and not coding for frequencies, thus distinguishing thematic content analysis from classical content analysis (Bauer, 2000). The steps used in this study to analyse the data were guided by a number of qualitative researchers (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clark, 2006, Henning et al., 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) but there were some overlaps in the methods. Since Schlossberg's 4S framework was applied in the interview schedule, the themes that were developed were primarily theory driven or a top down approach was used (Braun & Clark, 2006), however there was room left for any themes that may emerge from the data and were not necessarily based on the 4S framework. That means that the codes were derived from the elements of the 4 S framework. The most prominent or recurring units are the ones that were taken as themes.

The following steps were followed through when carrying out the thematic analysis. Firstly the data was transcribed. During this process initial ideas about the data were noted. The Transcripts were then re-read. The data corpus was then coded for initial codes. This involved coding interesting features and prominent features of the data that related to the 4 S framework. The codes were then brought together into potential themes. The themes were then reviewed by continuous refining of the specifics of the theme like its name and its definition. Extracts that represented the themes were then selected. There was another review of the themes and the extracts to check that they are compatible. Following the full scale categorisation, the reliability of the coding was tested by inter-rater reliability. One fellow academic was asked to read through all the interviews independently and to assign themes according to Schlossberg's 4 S framework.



Following this exercise, discussion took place around the consistency of categorisation. Points of agreement and disagreement were noted. The researcher was satisfied that the coding decisions were supported in the vast majority of instances. A thematic map of the analysis (figure 7) was then generated.

### **3.8. Ethical Considerations**

Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants were told that they may choose to withdraw from the study at any time and they were also asked to sign consent forms to participate in the study and consent forms to record the interview. Confidentiality was ensured because no one other than the researcher had access to the research material. The transcripts and recordings will be destroyed after six months if the study is published, or destroyed after two years if the study is not published. The transcripts will be kept safely with the researcher's supervisor. There was no direct information that may identify participants like names, identification numbers or birth dates that was used in the research report and transcripts. The participants were given the researcher's contact details should any queries arise about the study. A summary of end results will be reported to the individual participants.

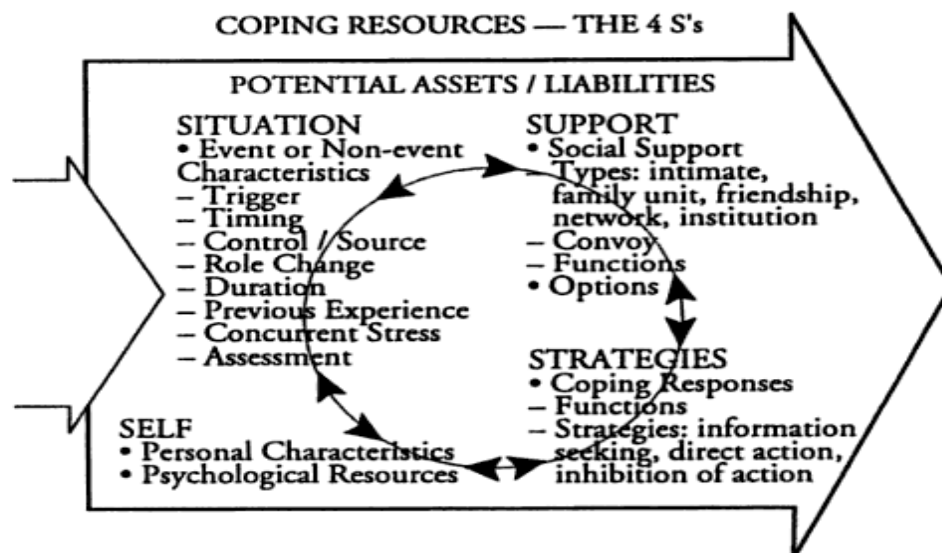
**Table 1.** Biographical information of the participants

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Highest Qualification</b>	<b>Current Position</b>	<b>Time in Position</b>	<b>Time in organisation</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>
1	27	Diploma	Facilities Manager	2 years	9 months	Married	1
2	29	Honours	Marketing and brand manager	1 month	1 month	Married	0
3	27	Diploma	Students portfolio manager	1 year + 6months	2 years + 4 months	Single	0
4	45	Diploma	Administration manager	9 years	1 year +3 months	Divorced	3
5	42	Degree	Stakeholder Manager	1 year	1 year + 1 month	Divorced	4
6	33	Masters	Development Manager	1 year	2 years	Married	2
7	34	Degree	Records Manager	2 years + 10months	2 years + 10months	Married	2
8	53	Degree	Finance and administration manager	5 years	25 years	Widow	2
9	26	Diploma	Branch manager	2 years	5 years	Single	0

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### 4.1. Introduction

The key findings of the thematic content analysis are presented in this chapter. A number of themes featured prominently across the transcripts. However, it is also interesting to note and consider the thematic differences within the data. In accordance with the reporting tradition of thematic content analysis, each theme will be introduced and illustrated with quotes from the data. These extracts vary in length from one line to extended paragraphs. In cases where an interviewee's response on a particular theme appeared to have been specifically prompted by the interviewer, both dimension of the dialogue were included. It is important to note that the names of the participants have been removed and replaced with numbering like IV1. IV denotes Interviewee and the numerals assigned were selected for confidentiality purposes. Since Schlossberg' 4S Transition Framework (figure 6) guided this study and the interview questions, it is only appropriate that the themes be organised according to this framework.



**Figure 6.** The 4 S's Framework. (From *Counseling Adults in Transition* by Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 48)

It is also important to note that as this study is also about transition/career advancement/career aspirations for top management, all the participants were only included in this study if they had an interest in advancing to top management. Therefore all the participants were asked if they were interested in being top management. Whilst all the participants indicated that yes, they are interested in being in top management, most of them had other career aspirations that they referred to during the interviews as is indicated in the following extract.

***Interviewer:** alright so my study is about career advancement. I just need to establish first whether you are interested in advancing your career, is that the case?*

***Interviewee:** uh yes at the moment I'm studying. Certificate in certified property managers*

***Interviewer:** so for instance where do you see yourself five years from now?*

***Interviewee:** retired*

***Interviewer:** really? So how come you are studying and yet you want to be retired?*

***Interviewee:** actually I'm thinking about being on my own but obviously you need to be well versed in the market when you do business.*

***Interviewer:** so you see yourself one day owning your own business or being an executive manager somewhere along those lines*

***Interviewee:** Obviously when I own my own business I will be the executive in that company but if I were to continue working of course I would see myself advancing to the position of being a portfolio manager and running my own portfolio in the organisation (IV4)*

Another point to note is that these women had different career aspirations in terms of the sectors. There were those who wanted to own their own businesses and there was also another (IV7) who wanted to advance her career in public sector. Most of the participants were from the private

sector and had career aspirations for the private sector. It is also important to note that three of the participants (IV4, IV5, IV6) are situated in the public sector.

## 4.2. SITUATION

The participants were asked generally what kind of situation they were facing with regards to trying to advance their careers. Different types of responses were given and some were explored later in subsequent sections (self, support and strategies) of the interview. The theme that was prominent was that of gender discrimination. Some participants especially those in the property industry felt that it was male dominated and they had to constantly have to prove themselves as capable and they were not treated the same as men. Similar themes came up later in ‘self’ and will be further detailed.

*The problem of course, I think in the industry is that especially in the property industry it has been dominated by men as well as whites. As a woman trying to get into the property industry you are still being looked at as collecting papers and putting up boards on site of properties that are on sale, you know that kind of things. You are not viewed as somebody who can make an impact in the industry. (IV4)*

*First I will say the lines of advancing in career its very positive for us as black women. The only problem is that you have to prove yourself twice than men. As, you know as women we are looked at as we suppose to be at home. So when you are in a managerial position you compete with men (IV5).*

The following sections are an exploration of the ‘situation’ according to Schlossberg’s characteristics of every ‘situation’ in a transition. These characteristics include the trigger of the transition, timing, control, role change, previous experience with a similar transition, concurrent

stress and assessment of the transition (Figure 6). Due to the difficulty of operationalising the characteristic ‘duration’, it was not included in this study.

#### **4.2.1. Trigger**

In response to being asked about what started making the participants think or attempt to advance their careers, a number of themes emerged.

##### **4.2.1.1. Intrinsic factors**

There were those who indicated that their career advancement attempts were triggered by factors that are inherent in them. This includes participant’s perception that this was something in everyone and this also includes those factors about the participants that they cannot change.

*Ambition, I think we are all ambitious (IV1)*

*I think that it is [career aspiration] something that uh all of us or at least most people have. (IV6)*

Age was referred to as an inherent factor by some of the participants, particularly retirement age.

One of the participants who is 29 years old also indicated that she wanted to be able to retire at 45 years if she felt the need to and this also pushes her to want to advance further now in her career.

On the other hand, the 53 year old participant was also motivated by retirement age to advance her career.

*It’s what after 65? What after 65 and I don’t see myself as a retiree or pensioner quite frankly (IV8)*

#### 4.2.1.2. South Africa

There were also those participants who referred to their country, South Africa, as an influence in their career advancement. Some interviewees (IV2 & IV5) indicated that the South African history of Apartheid was a factor that stimulated their career advancements attempts

*...and I live in a country where the history is [interruption door opens and then interviewee closes it] the history really is is so swayed to the whites kind of population that I honestly do feel that I'm not a very political person but I feel very strongly about making a mark (IV2)*

*...it's triggered by the situation that we have been oppressed previously and we want to see ourselves as leaders as women. (IV5)*

Others participants (IV1, IV2 & IV5) included contributing to making South Africa better as one of the triggers for their career advancement.

*...as long as I'm making something very effective towards the economy of the county (IV2)*

*...as a woman you want to see myself making a change and I believe that if you are up there then you will be able to take the decisions that will make to make that change to better the life of the people in the country. (IV5)*

#### 4.2.1.3. Work context

Some participants' career advancements attempts and thoughts were prompted by their work environment or the context of their work. IV6 revealed that her competitive work environment makes her want to go further in her career.

*You know it's really the work environment that pushes you because you know that if you don't keep up you will not achieve all that much. (IV6)*

IV7's work environment encouraged her to want to further her career even more because she is in a work environment where there is no proper regard for her field.

There were also those (IV4 & IV9) who felt like they had reached their limit in their careers.

This limit emerged due to the perception that all that could be gained from their current work, had been obtained.

*You know it's not a nice thing to stay in the same position, forever and ever. Why not not learn something else? (...) There is a point where you should (taps fingers on desk) work somewhere, have a position and on that position obviously the position doesn't stand on same level. There's growth, there's steps to go up in, know more about a company. That takes you, you start to work, you want to learn more about your job, and there's a point you feel I know much about my job, how about next level. You want to know more about next level and then you want to know more about the company on its own. You want to know more about the economy, what is happening on a daily basis. That takes you where (...) you really want to, where you should actually be (...) because no one deserves to really stay down there. (IV9)*

#### 4.2.1.4. Miscellaneous

There were various other responses that were not shared amongst the participants to the trigger question. Amongst these are included spending too much time at school, being motivated by money, setting standards, forums and associations making one realise that they haven't done much and being curious.



#### 4.2.2. Timing

What became apparent from this characteristic of ‘situation’s was that whether the timing for the career advancement was at a good time or was at a bad time for the participants was dependent on what the person was involved in, in terms of their roles.

##### 4.2.2.1. Roles

Those people who were involved in a lot of roles seemed to be struggling in terms of the timing of career advancement. For instance IV7 who is a mother, wife and is also studying said:

*...but the only time I ever uhm rejected an interview (...) was (...) when was it? In June. I was supposed to go for an interview on the 17<sup>th</sup> and then when I was sitting at home I was like okay in July I’d be going for the first block. I’m just starting my masters at [name of institution] and they are paying even though I have to pay a certain amount as well but is this the right, you know the question that I asked myself was, is this the right time to make that move? And then coming to think of it, I was like no, I think it’s better if I start my masters, see how it progresses, see how I am coping with the studying and juggling all my other responsibilities and afterwards it’s then that I’ll decide if I still want to move, I’ll decide if I want to move. (IV7)*

Contrary to the above, IV8 who is 58 years old, widowed and studying indicated that her career advancement efforts are happening at the best possible time. IV9 who is single, with no children but is also studying also indicated that the timing depends on the person and their ability to ‘drive their life’.

**Interviewer:** *Okay. Just you in your life, would you say this attempt to advance your career is happening at the best possible time or at the worst time in your life?*

**Interviewee:** *That all depends on you.*

**Interviewer:** *Yeah. Like how?*

***Interviewee:** Because you're the only one who can drive your life. Wherever you wanna be, wherever you wanna see yourself, you can drive yourself. And if you want that to happen soon enough, you would drive in this car and you can drive as fast as you can to get there quickly and if you don't get there quickly, don't blame anyone, blame yourself cause this car that you're driving you're really relaxed on it. You're in the comfort zone to get yourself there. It's entirely you, definitely. No one can drive your future, your career. To to study hard and go out of the university goal, to the corporate world, it's entirely dependent on you. To get married, start a family, it's entirely dependent on you. No one can come and drive that, that's you. (IV9)*

### **4.2.3. Control**

Themes that became apparent in this characteristic are the ones that clearly revealed what in the participant's perspective what can't be controlled when advancing one's career. When it came to what can be controlled, it become more complex because some participants indicated that they were in situations that were beyond them and yet they stayed in control of them by the way they reacted to them.

#### **4.2.3.1. Finances**

Finances were indicated as a factor that could not be controlled by some of the participants. Two of the participants (IV2 & IV8) talked about finances in relation to being able to pay for an MBA which is viewed as means through which career advancement could be obtained.

*...other could also be financial because I could consider to do do an MBA but I don't know if I'll be able to finance it and I wouldn't want to do it part time and work because then it will definitely kill my family life. (IV2)*

IV9 also referred to finances, specifically in relation to the current economic crisis, as a concurrent stressor as well as a factor that was beyond her control.

*Yeah, there are, which are beyond my control and which are under my control. I'd say that at this stage now, that the economic crises that we are facing, financial issues is the most thing that makes us really to be [checking-unclear] because when you look at this days, everything is expensive. (IV9)*

#### 4.2.3.2. Tough situation, but I can stay in control

Most of the participants noted that there were challenges that they dealt with but overall they indicated that the situation is in their control because of how they choose respond to those challenges. Hard work was noted as important to controlling the situation as well as making sure that one's efforts are noticed. For instance IV1 and IV5 indicated that they work in male dominated environment and they find it challenging to have to prove themselves as capable (as was indicated under gender discrimination) but they stay in control by working harder.

*I feel I actually have to prove to the men that I work with that I can actually do the job (IV1)*

*I am where I am because of my hard work at the end of the day so I manage to actually control everything. So it is tough and it does get really tough and we are women we do get those days where you get home and you get really emotional about the whole thing but you know what those things actually make you stronger. You get back and you know what you actually tell yourself that I'm going to do better, today. (IV1)*

*Yes there are some aspects that you can't control, there are some aspects but you don't have to see them as an obstacle. I'm one person that I don't want to see them as an obstacle. Yes I will have to prove myself you see because like I said you have to prove yourself twice times than other people as a black woman. Those are just the obstacles but I can take control of them because I can work harder and prove that I can do it. I believe that actions speak more than words. (IV5)*

Interestingly, IV4 who also works in a male and white dominated industry felt this was a challenge that was beyond her control. As well as the fact that people who are in top position in her work are near retirement age and they do not want to leave to give others a chance and they also do not want to impart their knowledge.

*The saturation of male in the top position and obviously whites and people who I mean right now in the property industry people who I'd say have the most experience or knowledge of the industry are people who are in their retirement age and they cannot leave the industry because people who are entering the industry would know very little about it and they are not willing to impart with it so you find that they are blocking, there is a blockage up there of people that are suppose to have moved out of the industry and give way for others who are entering so that is the main problem. To remove those and to be accepted as a woman that you can manage, you can control the industry you have it in you. If people can just, start believing and have faith in women that they can advance and push any industry to its limits then we wouldn't be facing a problem of career advancement. (IV4).*

IV7 indicated that one of the challenges she faced when trying to take her career further in the provinces was director positions are highly politicised and one needs the right connections to get such positions, she finds this beyond her control but she just tells herself that it wasn't her time.

*I've been to an interview at Limpopo and Nelspruit, it was for director positions (...) in provinces, those positions are highly politicised meaning you have you need the right connections in order for you to progress. So if you are not aligned to the party or you are not known in that party in that particular province, then you won't get that position. So that is one of the things when I say things that are out of my control*

**Interviewer:** [overlapping] control

**Interviewee:** *I mean sometimes you go for an interview and you know that I've done my best and there is no question that they asked me that I didn't respond to and then you end up not getting the position. Instead of blaming myself, I'm like oh okay, no it means it wasn't my time so yeah (IV7).*

IV6 on the other hand indicated that working hard is not the only solution to situations that are challenging or beyond one's control. A person needs to be able to know 'how to play the game' which refers to being able to make the right connections and being able to communicate well.

*A lot of what happens is not really within your control. There is a lot that a person can put in, you know, in terms of getting recognition is terms of getting promotions, in terms of uhm ,you know, advancing yourself. But it doesn't happen automatically. Some people work hard all their lives but they don't really get, they don't really get far. I think it has something to do with, you know, how you play the game because it is about, you know, playing the game. [Which is] you know, how to talk to the right people, you know how to talk the correct language, at the right time, to the right audience uhm and you actually have action you know to back it up. People tend to have confidence in you and they start to recognise you. (IV6)*

#### **4.2.4. Role Change**

There were various similar and dissimilar responses to the question 'Did you experience any role changes in attempting to advance your career or do you expect to change any roles when advancing your career?' The themes that came up are as follows:

##### **4.2.4.1. No role change**

There were some participants who felt that advancing their career would not necessarily result in any role changes. For instance, IV1 and IV4 indicated that none of their roles, both career and family roles, necessarily have to change for one to advance. One just needs a way of finding time to meet all the requirements for the roles.

*I think I am very traditional in a way if I can say that. I still feel I need to get home and do the cooking, I need to get home and play with the kids. Weekends I need to play with my daughter but still my career at the end of the day I have to put food on the table. It's not*

*something that can only be done by my husband only, it's something that we need to both do because I don't think I'm a born career person but I have learnt to actually put in, make time for family as well as career and also friends. It's difficult but you know what, you have to fill in everyone. Everyone has to fit in somewhere. You can't live a career life forever, then you will feel a void somewhere in your life and you will regret it in the future as you get older. (IV1)*

*I mean number one as a woman you know that we can multitask. You will be a wife, a mother a church leader, manager a career woman and be involved in all the other associations and you have to manage the situation and your involvement in all that has to be done at its highest degree. If you are a mother you must be a mother, at a time that your kids need you, you must be a mother and pay attention to motherhood. If you are a manager at that time you have to pay attention to what you are managing. So being a woman and multitasking comes naturally, it's not a problem. You don't have to change your life, what you need to do is manage your time. (IV4)*

IV1 and IV9 who are both single with no children also indicated that they did not need to change any roles especially relating to family to further their careers.

*I'm not in a situation where I can say I need to change anything. I think at some point in my life, I have structured my life in the sense that I know that it can work for me or it is working for me or I can work around the situation. So I don't think that there is anything I can change really cause I think I made the right track, unless in three years down the line I realise that this is not working. (IV3)*

#### 4.2.4.2. Role Gain, student

Being a student surfaced as an additional role that some of the participants have taken on to try to advance their careers. Five of the participants (IV4, IV5, IV7, IV8 & IV9) indicated that they were studying while working. This additional role seemed to be very challenging for most of the participants who had taken it on, the roles were conflicting.

*So I mean being a student, can you see my bag [points to a blue school bag], so being a student, being a mother, a wife, an empl, I mean a manager So yeah, it's conflicting roles and you know, in order for you to progress you can't want to be director or something*

*higher if you are not developing yourself, your own career. So yeah it's just that issue of conflicting of roles. I think balance is the only issue. (IV7)*

*It's stressful, very stressful because I mean I have a daughter who is in grade one. When I get home she expects me to help her with her home-work and then when you are at work, when you finish as well you have to study. You are tired, you are coming from work you know being, just just being a partner also is just. I'm trying you know, I'm trying. I think I'll find a balance later on. (IV7)*

*You find yourself, you're willing to study full time but ah at home the circumstance doesn't allow to study full time. What will you do? You're gonna be in a situation whereby you're studying and you're working. Studying and working doesn't match. You go home tired. When you're tired you're brain is tired, can you really sit down and study? It's hard. You can do it. There are people who progressed doing that, studying and working. But it's really difficult. (IV9)*

#### 4.2.4.3. Role loss

Some participants indicated that their career advancements attempts are involving some role losses or less time spent on some roles. There were those (IV5, IV6, IV7 & IV8) who indicated less time was spent on family and social life and others (two) sacrificing work responsibilities.

*You have to sacrifice sometimes, you sacrifice some time with your family because you needed to be in the office during the days meetings, it's the telephone, it's that and that and you must do your correspondence as a manager. By four o'clock you haven't done your correspondence so you have to be left behind in the office to do that. You leave the office maybe round about eight to prepare for the following day. You find that over weekends you are carrying your laptop with you. You find yourself not taking your children out, you have to work maybe reports and presentations you have to submit and for you to meet those deadlines definitely you have to sacrifice socialising sacrifice time with your family and there's no other way, you have to do that. (IV5)*

*...that you need support from your family, support from your friends, you know they should know that you are no longer going to be available to go out for Friday nights or whatever whenever you used to go out. (IV7)*

**Interviewer:** *okay. How do you manage the whole work family balance with you working and studying? Is that challenging or how?*

**Interviewee:** *It is challenging though you, you compromise a bit. You, there are things that you do not do which other people do. (IV8)*

**Interviewer:** *Are you compromising more on the school and work or more on the family?*

**Interviewee:** *Not on the family, on the social life.*

**Interviewer:** *Social life. Okay.*

**Interviewee:** *Social life because I hear some of my peers say you've since disappeared, we don't know you this year and I keep saying to them it's so true maybe the next two three years I'll be seeing you. But then at the same time, you see what needs to happen is, you still need them though. It doesn't mean that you must shut them out completely, you still need them but then in the next two three years when they see you, they see with another group which is maybe going to help them also in growing and improving. (IV8)*

IV6 also indicated that the role that she is currently sacrificing is family, but at the same time, as much as she would like to go further in her career, she chooses not to take further responsibilities thereby sacrificing career advancement because her family life would be greatly affected.

*I would love to meet a woman that is pursuing a career and is actually juggling a mother and wife roles who has actually found a balance sort of. Somehow you find that there is a role that gets neglected a bit, that lags behind(...) in my case it's more of the family uhm not getting as much of me as I would prefer,(...) Because I mean yeah, in as much as I would like to be an MD, when I look at how hectic my MD is I know that I don't want to be an MD because I want to be a mother in as much as I want to grow in my career so yeah, it is a challenge. (IV6)*

Similarly IV1 also revealed that she has had to sacrifice work related projects that could have perhaps helped her to take her career further because of family commitments.

*I'm first and foremost a nurturer and I have a role to play at home. I'm the only daughter in law because my husband is the only son. I have a lot to take on. I have to look over my sister in law schooling and things like that you know, and uhm as a result I often stop from*



*getting that project that will put me in the public eye and I've had to swallow a lot of stuff that I don't approve of. And it's usually just kind of infringes on my time and I'm very specific about my time. (IV1)*

#### **4.2.5. Previous experience with a similar transition**

Three of the participants did not indicate whether they went through similar experiences previously in terms of trying to advance their careers, two other participants did refer to their previous jobs but not necessarily their experiences of transitioning career wise. For instance, IV1 spoke generically about how her hard work is what got her to where she is since her school days and in her previous job.

*I am a hard worker. I have been a hard worker from school till here and I don't think I'm about to stop. IV1*

For those who referred to their past experiences with transitioning in their careers the following themes emerged.

##### **4.2.5.1. Lack of support**

What emerged from two participants (IV3 & IV9) about their past experiences with taking their careers further was that there was a lack of support from colleagues especially from those on the same level and those in their previous positions.

*I started as some manager somewhere in another department, and when I was promoted to this position where I am now, I found it difficult for those people who were in those positions already for them to be able to show you or advice you about certain issues IV3*

IV 9 explained that she found it tough to ‘climb a step’ because there are people who try to stand in her way. She explained that her past experience of advancing her career was characterised by discouragement, undermining, a lack of support and jealousy from her colleagues who she was leaving behind in terms of positions.

*People will never be happy for you to see you progressing. So that really tends to (...) it will discourage you (IV9)*

#### 4.2.5.2. Politics

Politics was another theme that became apparent from two participants’ recollection of their past experiences of trying to climb the corporate ladder. For the purpose of this study, politics will be defined as the use of any power or influence for self-interest (Cropoanzano, Howes, Grandey & Toth, 1997). IV7 explained that she once went to an interview for a director position in the Limpopo. She further explained that she felt that she had responded well to the questions but in the end she did not get the job. She later found out from another lady who also went for the interview that the person who got the job is the wife of the Head of Department (HOD) of one of the departments. That position was in fact created for the wife to be able to move from Pretoria to Limpopo.

*... in provinces, those positions are highly politicised meaning you have, you need the right connections in order for you to progress. (IV7)*

IV8 who is in finance explained that there are a lot of finance positions in government and she recalled her experience of trying to get into one of the positions.

*Uhm, I once applied for a position in the government and yesss I was short listed and I was sure that I got the position. But I discovered, okay, I got a regret letter. But then whether it was the right thing to do is another thing, but when I followed up what happened and the person that's in that position, it's a matter of it depends on who is comrade and what have you and at the same time those people, a lot of those people which work for the government would jump to the corporate sector because in the private sectors they also want to be politically correct. So there's been that, uhm, doubt in really advancing one's self. ...[describes position] but then I discovered that I'm not the right person for that position because my background says governance is this way, whereas in the government governance is something else. It's something else, it's who you know and you know what, you've got to be careful, you've got to be politically correct, you've got to do things a b c d and c so [sigh] you sort of jump out of [clears throat] government sector.*

#### **4.2.6 Concurrent stress**

Two main themes emerged from asking the participants whether they were experiencing other stresses in other areas of their lives.

##### **4.2.6.1. Gender stereotypes**

Some women related that they are also experiencing stress from gender stereotypes in their work environment. This was also further explored under the category of 'self'.

*Those are the obstacles that maybe somebody who is upper than you feel like you are a threat, more especially to men. We must know that these companies for now they are male dominated and they feel threatened, power they don't want to let go of it. And when we are supposed to be promoted as a woman to take that upper level they still feel that we are not good enough or they usually say we don't have a back bone and we are not decisive. (IV5)*

*More especially in our black culture, the men they feel that women must be the neck they are the head and even when you come to work he forgets that now we are colleagues or now that maybe he is just your supervisor or manager then he must give you the chance but they still want to treat you like the woman at home. (IV5)*

*You have a man and a woman who are doing the same job, the man will firstly by just being a man I in a man's world does not need to work and getting at least you know recognition. Secondly. Both the man and the woman have families a wife and kids but because naturally the woman takes on more responsibility on the home front and in the kids life and especially in your partners life, you constantly trying to be best at both whilst the man is just that. All he needs to bring home is just money and everyone is happy because that is all that is expected.(IV6)*

#### 4.2.6.2. Finances

Financial challenge was again another theme that emerged from this characteristic. IV4 related how the current economic crises which had led to some companies downsizing as a stressor that affects everything including career, family and social life. IV7 also indicated that a challenge for her was that her salary was not increased from her move to her current organisation. IV9 referred to how everything was expensive due to the current economic crisis and she is finding this stressful.

*As a career woman you find that like today there are financial challenges, you find that companies downsize and you are affected by downsizing. That alone is going to affect everything starting right from your career going down to your family, down to your social life, your interaction with people because that is I'd say that would be the anchor in your life in order for all other things to keep the balance your career would be the anchor (IV4)*

#### 4.2.7. **Assessment**

The participants had similar views regarding whether they viewed their situation as positive, negative or benign.

#### 4.2.7.1. Mixed feelings

What was a recurring pattern among participants was that they viewed career advancement as something that is challenging, accompanied with stress but overall was positive. No one indicated it as a negative experience.

*It is a challenge; it is stressful to some degree. But it is definitely a positive thing. Uhm, because I mean if you have goals that you set for yourself, obviously there is fulfillment when you actually achieve those goals and you see yourself moving actually up the ladder. It is a challenge it does have stresses but it's definitely something that is positive (IV6).*

### 4.3. SELF

To find out which psychological resources are used by the participants in their career advancement efforts, they were asked about their strengths and weaknesses and the role of these factors in their career advancement. To find out how personal characteristics affect them, they were asked specifically about race and gender, factors that are of particular interest to the current study.

#### 4.3.1. Strengths

4.3.1.1. A good communication skill was the recurring feature amongst most of the participants. This included their abilities to listen, negotiation and being able to articulate themselves.

4.3.1.2. Determination was also prominent among the strengths of the participants.

Determination is associated with notions of ambition, willpower, and focus.

The following extract and others were coded for communication and determination.

*I'm a very good listener and I don't give up easily. (IV3)*

IV7 talked about how ambitious and focused she is, but also knows how to articulate herself and *knows how to assert herself without being aggressive*. IV8 also talked about her determination to do and learn things.

There were other strengths that were mentioned such as friendliness (IV7), strong character (IV8), not judging people (IV5), working well with teams (IV7), curiosity (IV9), believing in everybody (IV5), resilience (IV2), and not being intimidated easily (IV2).

#### **4.3.2. Weaknesses**

The theme that came out strongly under weaknesses was around the emotions of the participants.

##### **4.3.2.1. Emotions**

Two participants indicated that they were emotional and they regarded this as a weakness. One indicated that she had days when she cried and the other was emotional because she sometimes took other people's problems as her own. IV4 also indicated that she was an empathetic person and she tended to also carry other people's problems. The other emotions were different in the sense that one participant indicated that she easily gets irritated and the other said that she has a short temper.

*Very emotional, I'm very emotional but I become emotional at that moment but with time it just passes. I'm very emotional, that's the only thing that I really don't like about me. (IV1)*

*Short temper. You see that one, whoo, I can be mad but well I can control it but it's really that. (IV9)*

### **4.3.3. Race**

Participants were asked if their race affects their career advancement and if so how.

#### **4.3.3.1. Advantages of being black**

Most of the respondents referred to both their race and gender when responding to this question. Participants revealed that being a black person and being a black woman was an advantage in helping them to advance. One lady referred specifically to transformation and black economic empowerment. Only one participant indicated that her race does not have an effect on her career advancement. Participants indicated that getting to positions is not affected by being black. However there were matters pertaining to their race that emerged after getting the job. These will be discussed under separate themes. The following extracts demonstrate this theme.

**Interviewer:** *Alright, how about the fact that you are black person, does that make a difference in you reaching some of your goals or getting to the top?*

**Interviewee:** *I will, no I don't believe that it does, I truly do not believe that it does. Especially being a black person in South Africa today. I think being a woman, being black, being educated, being focused knowing what I want I think that those are things that are working up to my advantage being in South Africa at the moment because of our history. I mean you know that previously we had more white people getting advanced, getting recognition so yeah owing to our historical background you then find that you know transformation and black empowerment you know is the buzz word. (IV6)*

*For now it should be an advantage quite frankly that I am a black person, it should be an advantage. (IV8)*

*I think there is even more opportunities for us black women. Opportunities are there, they are just waiting for us to grab them. I don't think there is anything. Colour or race, let me put it that way, I don't think it is something that can be standing in my way to go out there. Definitely that one, no. (IV9)*

#### 4.3.3.2. Questioning of ability

Some participants indicated that the challenge that they found in relation to their race was that their ability in doing the job was usually challenged. This includes credentials being questioned.

Some also indicated that their suggestions about work matters were not taken seriously because of their race. This finding also occurred when questioning participants about what they can control or can't control and was similar to some of the gender stereotypes found in the interviews.

*Do you know that I've found that (...) and I think it's because of my race and I really hate playing the race card on this but I really feel it is because of my race. I've found that a lot of Caucasian people can walk in and sell themselves without showing credentials, you know. For me as a black person no matter how rosy I am, no matter how well prepared I am for that meeting, no matter how well presented I am, no matter how eloquent I am on that day, it doesn't quite end there. It's almost like we see the facade. Can you produce? You know. (IV2)*

*There is sort of like a bit of a stereotype for instance you come to an interview, you are a black person. In people's minds there will probably be the question that can this person really do the job or does this person have the qualifications uhm or is this person only as good as the interview (IV6)*

One participant indicated that being black leads to being controlled in management, black people are put into those positions so that the company can meet BEE requirement to please clients and investors. This is an indication of their decreased decision latitude.

*For me being on top is being able to make decisions and being able to implement those decisions. And for me it means nothing if maybe I'm regarded as an Excom like your*



*executive managers committee but still I can't make decisions regarding, with concerning my department. So for me that's not growth it's just a position that they are giving you and it's just a meaningless position, there is nothing much you can do. You are just there to be controlled and yet they say to whoever their clients are or their investors are to say that we have so many black people in senior management or whatever line of management. But it's not management as such, cause they make decisions for you that you are supposed to make yourself. So there is no growth basically. (IV3)*

Some participants indicated that they had a problem of their suggestion not being taken seriously in their workplaces. IV7 explained in great detail how her suggestions were not considered of significance until someone else of a different race and same gender suggested them. IV8 explained how race and gender interacted in her organisation, preventing women and black people from making an impact in their organisation through making suggestions.

*You know when I got there, there was room, not really room, a very big big room full of records because there was no records management before. I was the first records manager that they appointed and then when I saw that room you know I was given two staff members who didn't know anything about what records is and they couldn't be of any assistance to me. So, I suggested that we need to get a consultant, a company like [name of company], a company like [name of company] to come and clear the backlog and give the room to us to come and to say at least these are the contents of the room and they put some order because it was some sort of an archive put some order because it was old records put some order in this room and then my manager said no you can't do that, no money, he gave all sorts of reasons and then somebody else, I don't know who suggested to him and then he took the idea. He took the Idea to the CFO and then I got an instruction to hire their friend, a lady that had another.*

**Interviewer:** [overlapping] *what was the difference between you and that somebody else?*

**Interviewee:** *It was a white lady. I didn't want to say, you know I just said somebody else or you know. And ah because the lady who was going to get the position is also white, not really the position, the contract. It was a contract of more than R900 000. She got that contract. You know when I left [name of company] she was still busy with that particular contract so yeah, I think that is an example of you know being black, not being able to make decisions or or you know to make suggestions I I. (IV)*

**Interviewee:** *Race and gender. If I were to advance here, it's race and gender.*

**Interviewer:** Like how? What have you seen because I was still going to ask you on gender but you can also elaborate on that. What are you seeing or what are you experiencing?

**Interviewee:** Not that I'm experiencing but I'm seeing. In terms of uhm the line my career where I am you know we've had (...) CFOs. I would say, yeah we've had one female who was a CFO, an Indian, but she could not break it (...) in those offices up there because everywhere (...) she went(...) it would be a big no, right, it would be a big no until she jumped.

**Interviewer:** Jumped where?

**Interviewee:** Until she jumped ship. She left [name of organisation].

[Interviewee asks interviewer what was the interviewer's interpretation and the interviewer explains to the interviewee what she thought]

**Interviewee:** Okay. Before that one there was one Coloured CFO(...). Even him, he had problems and problems that led him. This is another thing, you know you will have problems that will lead you into doing other wrong things. Shame, this guy in particular he landed up doing wrong things. He was the CFO but because everything was just blocked for him, he ended up doing wrong things and he had to leave [name of organisation] and after him came this woman who also left [name of organisation] and there was that uh void where there was nobody until we had an audit and [name of organisation] had this company and [name of organisation] had hunted this person who is white and funny enough whatever that he is saying, it's like he is echoing that white lady no not white lady, that black lady who left, yeah, whatever he is saying he is echoing that black lady but because it's him, he's an man and he's white, when he says it, the doors open up (IV8)

#### 4.3.3.3. Miscellaneous

There were other different responses to the race question. One participant indicated that her industry was dominated by white people in their retirement age, and these people are reluctant to retire thus causing a blockage in terms of advancing. Another participant indicated that black people are contributing to their stereotypes because they tend to feel entitled since they have suffered in the past and because their president is black. This participant also indicated that the degree of race stereotypes affecting a move was dependent on whether a person was moving to a new work environment (which is tougher) or whether the person was moving upwards in their current organisation.

*When you go to a bank or you see a white uhm woman or a man, immediately you sort of like have higher expectation because we have sort of like grown confidence that white people do things better. Uh I know that to some degree we are contributing towards that thinking because uh I know sometimes we tend to feel entitled because we are black because we have suffered, because our president is black and because our country is uhm you know transforming. So we tend to feel entitled and we don't work as hard as we could you know in actually earning our stake or our recognition (IV6).*

*When you're moving into a new environment, uhm, at least in an environment that you have been in and you have actually worked at creating you know a name for yourself, being recognised perhaps getting a promotions is not as tricky because they know you. But in a new environment, the, obviously it becomes twice as hard to actually sell yourself because they actually have to believe you know to that you are hungry enough for it and you can do it. Uh and there are instances where you know people just don't give you a chance (IV6).*

It was further suggested by a participant that there was no unity between black and white people.

*No sense of unity you know it's like, there is still the blacks, there is still the whites and the whites are there and the blacks are there you know so. (IV7)*

IV7 also indicated there was a shortage of black people in management.

*You know, most of the black people that you see are just supervisors, clerks, you know, not a lot of people are in management positions (IV7)*

IV8 also implied that South African organisations seem fulfill their employment equity requirements by giving the opportunities to Indian because they are also considered black in terms of affirmative action. This participant revealed that black Africans cannot be compared to Indians because Indians had more opportunities than black African people in the past.

*With due respect not that I'm racist, but I'm finding (...) South Africa (...) especially this big organisations, when they say black, they mean Indians, they mean Indians and you know where we come from being historically disadvantaged, I cannot see myself being compared to an Indian because they had the opportunities a long time ago and they've been coming with everything, whether you talk pre 1994 or even now, they have all the opportunities and those are the South African blacks. (IV8)*

#### **4.3.4. Gender**

##### **4.3.4.1. Advantages of being a woman**

Just like with race above, most women indicated that being a woman in the current South Africa should not affect career progression.

**Interviewer:** *Alright. And what about you being a woman, how does that affect you reaching the top, being an executive manager one day, does that affect that kind of career?*

**Interviewee:** *I'm not sure if I'm too ambitious but I don't think so. I think the trend is changing as time goes on and I think five years down the line, it was difficult for a woman to be in senior management or to be a manager as such. But these days I think it's changing, slowly but surely it's changing. (...) And I can probably say it's 40/60 but I don't see that as a problem really. (IV3)*

*I think being a woman, especially now that we are talking about undoing and rectifying the past injustices, women especially black women okay and white women but being a woman is not really a hindrance to you progressing. If the right position avails itself, then I think you can (IV7).*

##### **4.3.4.2. Gender stereotypes**

However when probed further especially around any experiences of gender stereotypes, many participants revealed some challenges that they faced due to their gender. Some women indicated that there were some assumptions about the roles that they were supposed to do like administration, making tea and not dealing with men. This indicates a contradiction to the previous theme.

*My gender, no it's just that the work that I do they consider anyone who does my work, just like engineers as well they think it's a job for men not something that can be done by a woman. They think we should be sitting behind a desk and doing administration which is the one thing that I hate doing (IV1)*

*I always feel like roles that needed more hands on in dealing with other men that are not necessarily in the company were always given to to like male counterparts in the company and more often than not they were the ones that would create more exposure. And it's not because they were trying to create more exposure for themselves. They just thought me as being incapable of dealing with men or soccer players on that level, do you know what I mean. (IV2)*

*You are still expected to be home in your (...).primate. People can't get it that a woman has the same amount of strength or even more to take business forward you know as a woman you are still expected to make tea in the office and such things. We have advanced to a level that we can operate as executives and if we can just as women be given that opportunity to prove ourselves it wouldn't be a problem and trying to build a career. (IV4)*

Two participants indicated that the gender problem was exacerbated within blacks due to culture and black men still found it difficult to accept females as capable of management, indicating patriarchy.

*More especially in our black culture the men they feel that women must be the neck they are the head and even when you come to work he forgets that now we are colleagues or now that maybe he is just your supervisor or manager then he must give you the chance but they still want to treat you like the woman at home. (IV5)*

*I think if that senior person happens to be a black person it makes it even more that difficult cause you know that they buy into the same kind of mind set as you and then if it's a men, oh gosh! sorry, goodbye to you cause chances are very slim that he will think that you are capable as him. (IV1)*

#### 4.3.4.3. Miscellaneous

IV5 had some additional responses with regard to gender. She asserted that men fear their power being taken by females if they were let into top position, the men fear being disenfranchised.

*And when we are supposed to be promoted as a woman to take that upper level they still feel that we are not good enough or they usually say we don't have a back bone and we are not decisive. You see but because they fear, they feel threatened that we want to take them out, we want to take their position. (IV5)*

IV5 also included sexual harassment as another issue that females have to deal when trying to advance their careers.

***Interviewer:*** *Okay because I was about to ask how about you being a woman. How does that affect your career advancement?*

***Interviewee:*** *It does because other people they always want to take chances like for instance you find that I will say you are a black female manager, you've got a subordinate who is a male some of them they go into strength of sexual harassment even if they are above you, you understand, you have to give them something so that you will see yourself advancing. That's another challenge that we are faced with as black women. You understand that people they always want to take an advantage of you by wanting that for you to get this to succeed then they have to maybe sexually harass you or abuse you or what. Those are the things we are faced with as women (IV5)*

#### **4.3.5. Age**

Age is a theme that emerged from the data and was not part of the interview schedule.

Particularly, managing older people seemed to be a problem for four of the participants who were aged 27, 29, 33 and 34. The problem seems to be that the older subordinates do not appreciate being told what to do by a younger person. Included here is also experience which is related to age.

*... some of them don't understand why they have to report to a woman whereas I'm a man and I have been doing this job for ten years and I she has just come out of varsity and has three years how can she actually be telling me what to do and how to do things. (IV1)*

*I happen to have people that work under me, that are decades older than me and to buy into (...) not only decades older than me, that makes them white middle management male and female and to buy into what I'm saying is a bit of a challenge. (IV3).*

*... even the age of the people you are dealing with because sometimes you will find that people have been in that space for years and they look at you and think what can you tell me so you are sort of like prejudged before you actually say anything. It's not a case of being uhm you know starting on the same footing basically you sort of like have to work twice as hard you know to make yourself to be seen, to be heard to be actually recognised. Uhm so yeah it is a bit of a challenge. (IV6)*

*But imagine an office that has been doing things in a particular way for 20 or 30 or whatever number of years and you coming to change people who are used to filing in a certain way and having to retrain them and I mean we are talking about people who are older than 50 in some instances, training them as to how records are supposed to be properly managed. (IV7)*

The age factor also emerged in other instance but not around managing older people. IV 4 emphasized the saturation of white males in their retirement age, who did not want to retire in her industry. IV8 who is 53 explained that younger people cause her to realise that there is still much to be achieved and that she wants to still work beyond retirement age. She also indicated that she was in a 'comfort zone' because of the many years she had worked in her organisation. Age as a factor therefore overlaps on the other characteristics of the 4 S's.

#### **4.4. SUPPORT**

Participants reported on several sources of support which will be dealt with as different themes. To gather information about 'support' there was further probing around networking, mentorship and role models. The following themes emerged around 'support'.

#### 4.4.1. Support from Family

##### 4.4.1.1. Marriage

It was interesting to note that all four of the participants who were married indicated that their husbands were supportive about their careers and three of the married individuals expressed that their husbands were either in the same industry as them, or were also in management positions and were thus able to provide advice about work related issues.

*My husband supports me very much. He is very supportive. He is actually an engineer which is actually funny because he actually pushes me very hard to be in the industry. He tells you don't let them get to me because that's what they want. (IV1)*

*My fortunately my husband is also a manager and they do discipline. He knows what my manager call the red book. He doesn't think twice about that. He takes people for hearings and all sorts of things. So usually I talk to him when I get home and explain to him you know I have a problem with this this and that and he'd tell me arg man leave that or do this or be careful or whatever, note. So he is very supportive. (IV7)*

One of the married participants indicated that her husband helped with her career as well as family responsibilities.

*Uhm my family you know, my husband I think he is actually a good support structure because even with the kids he helps out. I mean he is the one who drops off our boy at school and when I can't you know pick him up at in the afternoon even though he is also at executive level but you know he plays that role and he will pick up the kids. I mean I stay in Pretoria by the way, I work in Johannesburg so it's actually a challenge because I have to travel. He works in Pretoria so it's easier for him to actually be there at school quicker than I can sometimes. Uhm so yeah you know he motivates me, he challenges me he pushes me. Uhm he is probably a person, he sets high standards for himself so obviously even the people around him he will set equally high standards for you uhm.*



It was also interesting to note a response from one of the divorced participants who indicated that generally husbands are not supportive of women's careers because the man tends to feel as if "*his power or manhood is going down*" as the wife takes her career further.

*You know when a man, you earn more than him he doesn't feel secured, he will feel like his power is slipping through his hands and the competition will always be there. And then for instance when you climb the ladder you will be expected to travel a lot and everything. Sometimes a person will be asking you many times but why do you have to go to that conference and not coming back. Why don't you go there and drive back and sleep at home. It's like there is lack of trust, it's because of the more you climb the ladder then the other person will feel like his power or manhood is going down. (IV5)*

#### 4.4.1.2. Other family members

There were other responses about other family members. Two participants indicated that their fathers were supportive by showing an interest in their careers.

*My dad as well, I always thought I would be only a career woman I never thought I would be a wife and mother so my dad saw that in me before so he has always supported my career moves and everything so he has always been there for the support. For him I think it is more of a pride thing just having your daughter there working very hard for themselves. I think it's very important for any parent for their daughters to actually make a mark in the world by themselves without the help of the husband and even in the communities that we come from (IV1)*

*But before then [marriage] my dad was very interested in my career (IV2)*

Three participants indicated that their parents were a source of affective support (intangible form of support) because they either believed or provided them with motivation which in turn led to their increased confidence.

*My family you know like my parents, very supportive uhm and I think that yeah they have played a role, possibly even in me being the person that I am. The ambition, the drive uh you know believing in me actually I guess I've found that when people believe that you can do something you actually start to believe that you can do it. And when you start to believe that you can do it and when you believe that you can do something you actually can do it. Because a lot of yeah that is where you win, you know your battle in the mind when you believe that you can do it. If you don't believe you can do it, chances are you will not. So I've found myself actually reaching higher because you know of the structure around me, the pressure, the you know. Actually when people believe in you they put you under pressure because you want to show them that you actually can.(IV6)*

*You need morale support from home first for you to be confident enough when you start a new job when you get promoted into a new position cause know you'll get people in the company who are going to try their level best to bring you down but then if you have enough support from home, there's nothing you can't do. (IV3)*

*Support I get it, from my family. Okay whenever I go to them and tell them that I have a problem, this one two three, or my studies, don't give up, look forward and when you fall stand up again. That really gives you that (...) yeah. I know no matter what, my family will stand with me. Those are the only people that you can expect something from.(IV9)*

One participant however disclosed that her family was not supportive, even though she came from a big family of educated and well-off people.

*Everybody is minding his or her own business and funny enough, I'm from a, my maternal family is, I'm from a very big family and shoo! well educated and what have you but we mind our business. Mmm. We mind our business. There is nothing like ooo wee! So you are doing this, come come and work with me and shame they are holding high positions, others in the government but we are just minding our own business. (IV9).*

#### 4.4.2. Intra-organisational support

This refers to support directly from the organisation.

#### 4.4.2.1. Boss

Most participants (five) indicated that their bosses were supportive of them. The types of support ranged from bosses who encouraged participants to do more, those that offer guidance, those that offer mentorship and coaching, those that taught participants, those that ‘broke barriers’ and those that offered financial support. One participant was particular that the support came mostly from female senior managers.

*I’ve got the greatest boss here, [name of boss] he is actually very very wonderful he is willing to back me up to do actually more than what I am doing right now (IV1)*

*We do get support mostly from other female leaders, female err senior managers. That’s where mostly we get support because you find that whenever you need to bounce back your ideas you will have your confidant that you will say this one I look up to and is my role model and then you will be able to interact with that person and get guidance. (IV5)*

*Our MD she tells you that she wants to see women, mostly black women up there and she makes sure that she is mentoring and coaching us to achieve that. (IV5)*

*Uhm I have uhm yes an amazing boss [laughter] yeah, an amazing boss. Uhm you know he, you know the type of person you know who teaches you stuff and will allow you to run with things and will give you enough rope you know to actually run with things and you actually find yourself growing you know a bit more because you’ve got you know a good support structure. (IV6)*

*Obviously even like my managers, they do support me as well, they do give support and understand when you come to them with a problem that I’m experiencing this, financial problems, I don’t have fees for this year. (IV9)*

However three participants indicated that they had unsupportive bosses. The problems regarding the bosses varied. IV2 indicated that her boss did not follow through on agreed dates for meetings and needed leadership skills, IV3 indicated that her decisions were overridden by her bosses without her knowledge and IV7 explained in great detail how her boss had used against her an issue she had with one of her (participant) subordinates to make it seem as if she (participant) had bad managing skills.

*I don't want to be too critical of this place but I feel like the boss should be more involved you know. I shouldn't have to chase after him all the time. If I set status is on Tuesday, every Tuesday he should be able to attend and to say things or maybe it comes with the managerial position but generally I think that a good leader is not necessarily a good manager and what we need more of is leaders and at the workplace your boss should be the one providing you (IV2)*

**Interviewer:** *In terms of, what are you facing when you are trying to advance your career?*

**Interviewee:** *Okay. Mainly I think I can say (...) you don't get enough support from high senior management.*

**Interviewer:** [overlapping] *Okay*

**Interviewee:** *cause sometimes you'll make a decision as a manager of a certain department a-a-n-n-d before you know it, they override your decision and you know nothing about it and they don't even bother to inform you. So I think those are the main challenges cause now you never know whether you actually made the right decision or the decision was wrong because it was never implemented. So I think that's the the main challenge. (IV3)*

#### 4.4.2.2. The rest of the organisation

The rest of the organisation was also referred to when exploring 'support'. Three participants indicated that their organisation offered financial support specifically for their education that allows them to take their careers further. One participant indicated that her organisation which is a bank was similarly supportive by offering a loan for her studies.

*Yes, the company has a bursary scheme that everybody is allowed to take advantage of so that way I think the company is not discriminating to say that this is meant for whoever. So if you have a plan to advance, you will advance. (IV4)*

One participant indicated that her biggest source of support in her organisation were her subordinates.

*It's more about your junior staff members, people that you're looking after cause they've been in that department. They know most of the time how things work. They might not know the processes to be followed, which I can find out by myself as to what is it that's to be done in that department. (IV3)*

*Support is very important more especially from people you are supervising cause cause those are people who will make you realise if you are doing something right or something wrong and most of the time we tend to ignore the people that we are working with. We tend to concentrate more on our executive management and if you can't do anything right from where you are with the people you are working with I don't think you'll be able to to You can't climb any more stairs cause before you get a promotion whoever is promoting you must see that you are doing a very good job with the people that you are working with. (IV3)*

However one participant did indicate that she did not get much support from her organisation, particularly her department, because she did not trust them to keep her secrets.

*The thing is here, I don't know who to trust you know. Sometimes you tell people your deepest secrets and you hear people talking about it (IV7).*

#### 4.4.3. Extra organisational support

This refers to those support sources that are not directly part of the organisation.

#### 4.4.3.1. Mentorships

Four participants indicated that they had mentors. All the mentors were female. Two participants indicated that their mentors were black women, including an Indian mentor. IV9 explained further that she cannot have a white person as a mentor as they live different lifestyles.

*Our MD she tells you that she wants to see women, mostly black women up there and she makes sure that she is mentoring and coaching us to achieve that. (IV5)*

*You should have, I believe in that you should have a mentor, someone you can look up to. It's good that way. That when you wake up and find advices and ...*

**Interviewer:** *Do you have a mentor?*

**Interviewee:** *... Yeah I'd say I do have. Couple, there's couple of them.*

**Interviewer:** *What kind of people are they? Are they female, are they white, are they black are they...*

**Interviewee:** *females, black. I can never have a white mentor.*

**Interviewer:** *Why?*

**Interviewee:** *(...) Our lifestyles are different. We're living different lifestyles. So whoever is going to be my mentor should be on the same level. Whites, they always have this, we're never going to be on the same level, no matter how hard we can try. Their lifestyle, level regarding their lifestyle, concerning our lifestyle, the way we live, is totally gonna be different, all the time. So I want someone which can fit in every way, each department of my life. So I choose my, not to say I'm discriminating or something but I prefer someone from my nation, an African person. (IV9)*

However one of the participants who had mentors did reveal that there is not enough black females to look up in her organisation.

*No there is not enough black females to look up to here. (IV8)*

#### 4.4.3.2. Networking

Seven participants (IV1, IV4, IV5, IV6, IV7, IV8, IV9) referred to networking during the interview. Networking came out as a factor that helped the women to progress.

*If you work hard in anything and socialise with the right people, make uhm what is this word that I am looking for. You make networks and once you start networking people hear about you and they're actually interested to actually work with you. When you network it's very important what comes out of your mouth more than anything. They might not know what you actually capable of in the office whether you deliver but people actually give you a chance because of what because of how you actually present yourself and how you actually sell yourself. (IV1)*

*...you know the right networks in establishing yourself because obviously when you talking business it's all about networking for you to be able to establish yourself and grow as quickly as possible (IV6)*

There also seemed to be different types of networks. This included forums, conferences, women organisations, industry associations and gala events.

*Yes there is support such that from time to time you get invitations to attend certain forums of women or of uh people who are already there in the industry in the ranks. So getting such an invitation is an honour that okay I'm recognised as somebody who can attend this and appreciate what is being said and you know come back and apply that that you have learnt from there in your job space. [explains support from organisation] and we have an association called [name of association] and we are members [name of association] we attend [name of association]we network we interact with other people in the property industry. I think that is support enough if you make the right connections. (IV4)*

However there were some issues that were explained by some of the women regarding networking. Race and gender seemed to be aspects that factored into networking. Participants indicated that it was easier to network with people from the same race and gender. IV9 indicated that she did not have an opportunity or access to networking with white people.

*Uhm you might find that the people that you need to network with for you to get somewhere are predominantly white uhm male so obviously if you come as a white person networking with another white person becomes that much easier if you are a male and you are networking with other males it becomes so much easier. But now coming as a female and black now you have to beat the racial barrier and probably even the gender barrier it probably becomes twice uhm as harder as it would be (IV6)*

*I mean there are all these organisations that are being established now. You know like women organisations, black women organisations and all of that. In that setup it's much easier to network because obviously that is set up for you (IV6)*

**Interviewer:** *How are you finding the whole networking thing? Is it easy to make networks or?*

**Interviewee:** *A black on black is easy, is easy because we understand ourselves the way we do things. You know uhhh black networking is different from white networking. You know with Whites it's we meet here and now, beyond this you can't be phoning this person at about nine at night as say ooh! I've got a problem with this assignment. No, you wait until tomorrow morning and see if he or she can help you. I think the other thing is the pride we have as black now is we can't be asking too much from them, you know.*

**Interviewer:** *Okay, and what about women, is it easier to have black women as part of your network or?*

**Interviewee:** *Well it depends. You know in terms of (...) exactly what you are doing, say you are studying, it's easier to do it with male, black males. Whereas it's easy to do, what is easy to do with women is to say Hey, you know what, I'll make that person your study mate though you are not studying the same things, but this person will be constantly reminding you, are you going? Are you doing this? That's far how it goes. (IV8)*

Interestingly to note was IV7 who indicated that she networked in associations around her industry and was a founding member for one of them. She also indicated that these networks were not particularly helpful for career advancement because the members were people on the same level.

*I don't know how well they can assist but in the [name of association], most of us are records managers so it's not like you'd want another records manager to hire you. It's not their bosses. (IV7)*



IV7 however indicated that a particular social networking website was more helpful because it had members from different industries and were on different work levels. She also indicated that race and gender do not affect here infiltration into this particular network.

*I don't think it makes it harder. I have friends who are in those like [name of social networking website] in particular. (IV7)*

Another issue that came out in relation to networking and was highlighted by two participants, was that it was a challenge to find time to participate in these networks because of family commitments. For instance IV6 explained that during the week she does not spend enough time playing the role of mother and it's challenging to commit herself to weekend activities like golf and that going to pubs at night was also not an option. She also indicated that even the conference and dinner galas are a problem because they take time away from her.

*It becomes a challenge for me as a black woman, wife and mother because I mean obviously I spend a lot of time at work. Over the weekend all I want to do is to be at home to actually relax and once I'm relaxed I want to be at home to spend a bit of time with my kid,s spend time with my husband. Uhm you know to sort of like play that role which from Monday to Friday I hardly find time to. Uhm going to the pubs at night is even something that is unthinkable, you know. Even when you go to conferences sometimes it takes that you go to conferences so that you can get information and also the intention behind it is to establish those networks. And there will be, you know, like your networking functions, or a dinner gala or whatever the case is. You actually find that it's probably an opportunity for you to actually have time to yourself to relax so you don't even get to go to that networking function or that gala dinner because you know you work hard when you are in the office and when you get home take care of the family so when you go to a conference or wherever you want time to actually be by yourself and actually relax. So it is challenging to actually to attend even those functions (IV6)*

IV5 also referred to how conferences amongst other work activities also takes away time she could spend with her children. She also indicated that husbands do not appreciate it when women have to go travel to go to conferences.

*Like for instance let's say you are in the office until eight when are you going to look at the homeworks for your children, you go to conferences maybe for a week, you travel abroad. That time when you are at home you have got deadlines that you have to meet you can't take your children. We tend to forget, you can give them money but they need you as a mother so you don't have time for that (IV5)*

*... and then for instance when you climb the ladder you will be expected to travel a lot and everything. Sometimes a person will be asking you many times but why do you have to go to that conference and not coming back. (IV5)*

It was also interesting to note the other factor that seemed to affect networking which were specifically highlighted by IV6. She explained that once a person gets to higher level or has a good background, it become easier to network regardless of that person's gender or race.

*There are people who will sort of be in the forefront in terms of their background whether gender or race and obviously it becomes that much easier for them to actually penetrate. Uhm and when you talking networks you also find that there are people who get, once you get to a certain uhm level it becomes even that much more easier then to network whether you are a woman or black because say you are the MD or you have been the president and after that it is sort of like downhill from there because people know that you have been at this level. So it's not just about the colour or gender it's also about what you have achieved and who you are basically socially. So yeah it does tend to be a bit challenging to establish the right networks (IV6)*

The opportunities for networking also seemed to be affected by socio-economic status. This was revealed as IV6 explained how she came from a rural area where there is no golf course and yet golf is a sport for the upper class and a lot business deals are clenched on the golf course.

*Exactly uh a lot of deals are clenched on the golf course and you actually tend to find more people actually playing golf. We have not be introduced to golf I mean from, in our upbringing and I grew up eEastern Cape, eMtata there is no golf course and actually golfing you consider it as a sport of you know the upper class people and it is not really something that you would take an interest in. But then you find that for you to be able to penetrate the right networks again you need to play the game that includes you to even taking lessons to play golf and actually being on the course so that you are able to interact*

*with the right people you know on a social level and then from a social level you can take it up to sort of like a professional level. (IV6)*

#### 4.4.4. Miscellaneous

##### 4.4.4.1. Religious support

Support from religious sources, is another aspect of support that came up. Three participants (IV2, IV6 & IV7) revealed that they found support from a religious point of view.

***Interviewee:*** *I believe that for me to make it I need to have a strong spiritual base so when I'm looking at my support structures I will first start with that spiritual relationship.*

***Interviewer:*** *does that mean church?*

***Interviewee:*** *Yeah church you know prayer time, and to sort of like to draw strength from having a relationship with God. Uhm I find actually with me that it actually helps you know because it gives me you know sort of like a sense of uhm well being and when you have a sense of wellbeing you are able to perform a bit better. You know I find myself being able to spread myself a bit more than I would without you know that foundation. (IV6)*

IV7 also pointed to gaining support from a colleague in another department after realising that she was also a Christian.

Under 'strategies' factor, IV1 indicated that for her to function optimally some of the things she has to do are as follows

*I've got to do my church, I've got to do my cell group, I've got to do my bible reading, (IV1)*

#### 4.4.4.2. Domestic Help

Only two participants (IV2 & IV7) revealed that they had domestic help, which they refer to as ‘helpers’. However only one of them referred to her helper as a source of support during the interview.

*My helper also helps. Like what’s gonna happen now, when I get home, she has started with my daughter, they’ll be doing the the home-work. When I get home, I just check the home-work. If there is anything that they haven’t done properly, I’ll just correct instead of starting because imagine in grade 1, you have to sit when somebody goes five up to hundred, five ten up to hundred. (IV7)*

#### 4.4.4.3. Support is an important resource

All the participants indicated that support was an important resource to have but they mentioned the importance of support in different respects. Three participants indicated that support was important for those ‘tough days.’

*I think it’s always good to have support but you must remember that when you are a woman other women will always try to snide you but they forget that they make you stronger and make you want the job more than anything you know in the world. You always find that there are those people that try to pull you down and there are those that try to pull you up so should you fall down it is your responsibility to actually get up dust yourself and try to climb the ladder again. It’s the only way. (IV1)*

*It is important. It is because if you don’t have support you cannot live in silos. You have to have support. Whether be it from the community, or from your friends or your family, your husband whoever, you really need support as a person. Because there are times that it’s tough in the office you need to when you go home there must be somebody who will listen. Who won’t be feeling like you deserve it but will listen to you and give you advice and you need to have support from friends because it’s not easy. (IV5)*

*It’s something deep. It’s not something for you take light because for you to go there [parents] and offload and get a response that things will be okay, for the fact that you come out there feeling relieved, it’s really something strong that you can depend on (IV9)*

IV3 indicated that support especially from subordinates was crucial to her because the subordinate are the ones that will make her realise if she is doing anything wrong or right. She also revealed that her managers must see that she is able to deal with subordinates well before she may be promoted. IV4 said that support was especially important to act as a reminder of her goals, IV7 referred to the importance of her helper with easing her family responsibilities and IV8 also mentioned that support in handling financial matters would be really helpful.

*It is extremely important because I want to believe that uhm (...) if I had all the support, in every respect, emotionally, physically, and otherwise, if I had all the support I'd be far. I'd be far. You know [clears throat] I want to believe that if you study, you shouldn't be worrying about shoo! (...) who's going to be paying for this, who is going to. That's the support that you need. I could be working, working and studying but if there is somebody who is going to take from my salary and say a b c and d, it's fine. So those are the in terms of support that you need. (IV8)*

## **4.5. STRATEGIES**

To explore the ways participants cope with taking their career further, participants were asked about the plans or direct actions or behaviour that they will change in order to go forward. Some of the responses have been covered in previous sections due to an overlap in the data.

### **4.5.1. Education**

Education was the most prominent theme in this regard with five participants (IV3, IV5, IV7, IV8 & IV9) indicating that formal education was one way that they planned of advancing their careers.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Just one more question. Do you have any specific plans in order to help you climb the corporate ladder or reach those high positions?

**Interviewee:** Study, study, study

**Interviewer:** Study, study, study. So it's not exactly like it's a range of plans to choose from?

**Interviewee:** No not really. Or else it depends on where you want to go. But from my side, it's more of me studying. Cause now if you are working you are getting that experience, you getting that skill but now you need educational backup for you to be able to make sound decisions. (IV4)

*I've already started. For now I'm studying through [name of university] as well doing the Property Management Programme, Diploma err because I have studied in the public service category the one for B Admin in that and I've worked for government and then I felt here it's a property company I didn't have those qualifications and for me to know that, I have to do the Property Management and then I still have to do Project Management. So I feel if I can to get those two diplomas, nothing is going to stop me because I know that I am a hard worker. (IV5)*

#### 4.5.2. Networking

There was also evidence to suggest that the participants regarded networking as a strategy that they could use to advance their careers. See networking under 'support' for quotes.

#### 4.5.3. Time management

Networking was then followed by time management with two participants (IV7 & IV9). One of them indicated that she needs to rearrange her times and the other indicated that she needs to keep to her schedule.

*I think it all has to do with rearranging my times but 24 hours is just not enough. I don't know where I'm going to find the other hours but I need more than 24 hours. (IV7)*

#### 4.5.4. Miscellaneous

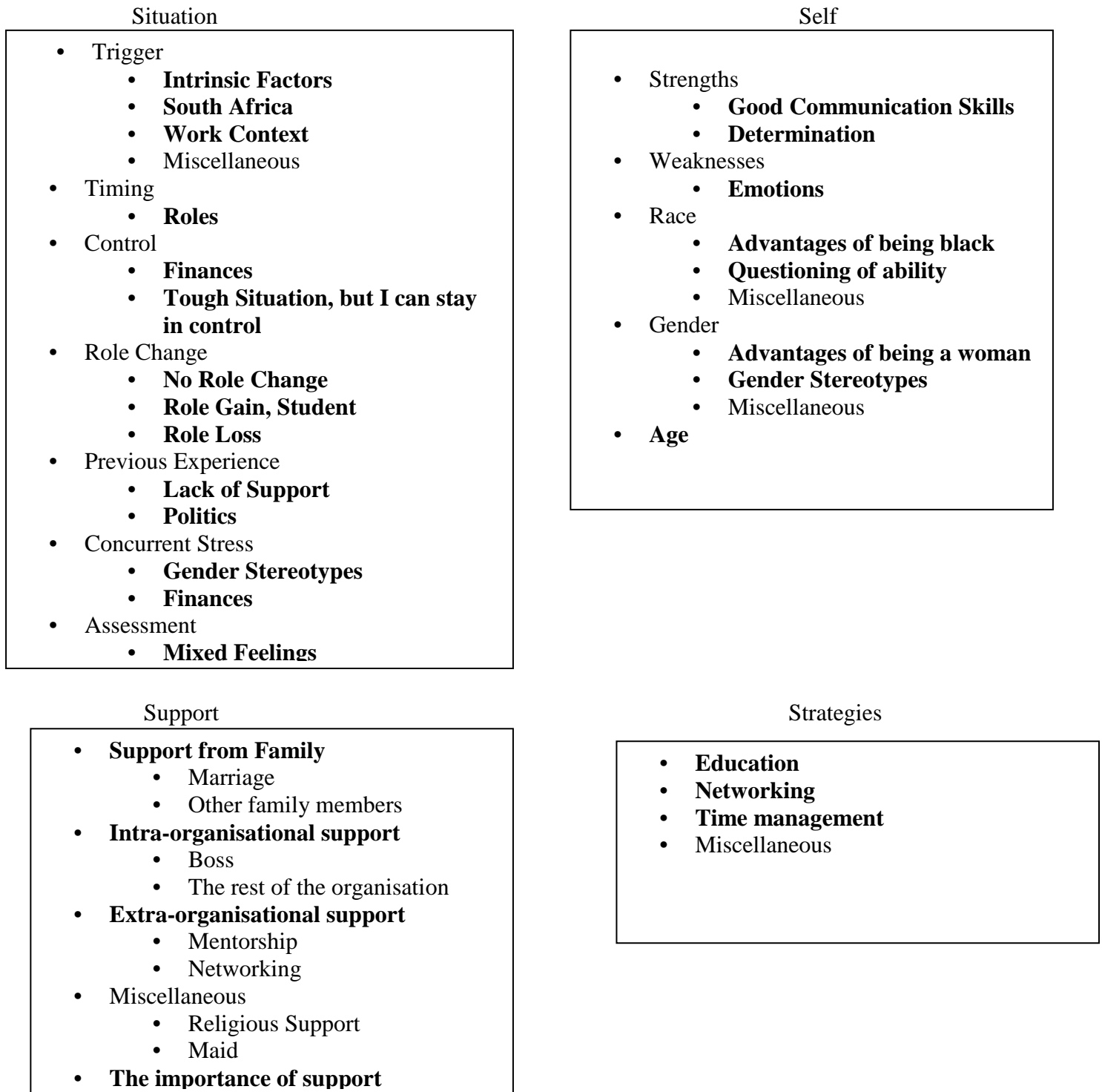
There were other various responses in relation to utilised strategies that included working hard, religion, shopping, making a difference in family, learning the industry, assisting in work challenges enjoying the work one is doing, informal learning like shadowing, taking interest in executives, writing down in a diary, cutting down on movies, alerting family and friends that one is not going to available, being proactive like knocking on doors or talking a lot about what one wants and moving quickly.

*My strategy generally is it's not selfish per say but it start with realising that I'm the most important person. I perform at my absolute best when I'm healthy, when I'm eating when I eat well when I rest well. That is very tiny but it gets so much out of the way. And I, there are things that I'm very particular about that I have to get a lot of or some of for me to function. Uhm, I've got to do my church, I've got to do my cell group, I've got to do my bible reading, I've got to do my uhm like shopping, be happy with my wardrobe and I've got to do my cooking and feel like I make a difference in my family life. That is on a personal level. On a on a career kind of level, I've also got strategies. I've drawn goals. I know what this company for instance needs. They don't even know whether they are achievable. I've drawn goals that should meet their needs within three years like I said and I plan on following that. If in three years, I've achieved only 90% then that's a success. Anything less than 80% of that in a failure and I'm am actually ready to resign as a result. (IV2)*

#### 4.6. Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the study. The framework used to present the results is that of Schlossberg et al. (1995) 4 S's. A summary of the results is shown in Figure 7. This figure indicates under the 4S, there are factors which charactersise the 4S'. Further, themes have emerged under these factors. For example, under 'Situation', trigger is a characteristic of every situation. Therefore the themes from this study that emerged under trigger are intrinsic factors, South Africa and work context. Miscellaneous themes are those that do not fit neatly into the

framework and those that were not expected and they are part of the bottom-up process of thematic content analysis. The next chapter will interpret the findings in this chapter.



**Figure 7.** Summary of results. Please note that the themes are in bold.



## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1. Introduction**

In this section, the focus is on presenting the discussion of the findings in the previous chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to move from the descriptive, manifest level of presenting data in the results section, to a more interpretative level whereby the significance of the results and their broader meanings will be related to theory. The results will be discussed in relation to the research questions and will be interpreted with reference to the available literature. Quotes from the data are also used to illustrate the issues discussed. The research questions are stated again to frame the discussion.

The first research question was ‘what are the career barriers (should they be found to be present) that black women in middle management are facing in their career advancement?’ The following sections are a discussion around the career barriers that were found in the study.

### **5.2. Dual Challenge: Race and Gender**

One of the key findings across the group was that of gender and race discrimination and this result confirms previous findings in literature (Booyesen, 1999; Cook et al. 2005; Giscombe & Mattis, 2002; Hite, 2006; Mathur-Helm, 2005). These findings came up in ‘situation’ and ‘self’. In general, discrimination refers to a distinction, exclusion or preference but “to discriminate against is to make an adverse distinction” (Krieger, 1999, p. 297) based on gender, age, race, national or ethnic origin. Discrimination “has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition,

enjoyment, or exercise ... of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (Cook, 1994, p. 20). Most of the women felt that they ‘have to prove themselves twice’ (IV5) to advance in their careers. This means having to ‘beat the racial barrier and ...the gender barrier’ (IV6). Other researchers have indicated that black women are doubly discriminated because of their race and their gender (Booyesen, 1999; Giscombe & Mattis, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2005). Hite (2006) and Cook et al. (2005) emphasize that it is the concurrent interaction of gender and race discrimination that operates on women that should be examined, instead of looking at gender or race separately. It was apparent from the women interviewed that both gender and race discrimination were operating concurrently to create challenges in their career advancement.

*Race and gender. If I were to advance here, it's race and gender. (IV8)*

*So due to the challenges that you face you have to prove yourself twice than men can do. Even when you are in boardroom meetings immediately when you open your mouth as a woman they are looking at a fault they are looking for something that will go wrong you understand because there is still that stigma that women cannot, black women at mostly cannot do it. (IV5)*

From the gender side it came across that there were some gender stereotypes that women have to deal with in their careers. Some women indicated that there were some assumptions about the roles that they were had to fulfill in the workplace like administration, making tea and not dealing with men. Participants believed that men held the perception that the women are supposed to be at home, even when they are at work they are treated like women at home. It seems societal gender stereotypes play a major role in influencing the attitudes of people in the workplace towards women middle managers. It was also indicated by some participants that this gender

discrimination was worse within the black culture and black men found it difficult to accept women as capable of management.

*More especially in our black culture the men they feel that women must be the neck they are the head and even when you come to work he forgets that now we are colleagues or now that maybe he is just your supervisor or manager then he must give you the chance but they still want to treat you like the woman at home. (IV5)*

This is related to April and Dreyer's (2007) and Booysen's (1999) assertion that patriarchy seems to be stronger in the black culture than in white culture because black African culture is traditionally patriarchal. Another reason for this could be the history of South African women at work. Historically towards the end of Apartheid, as indicated by Bernstein (1985), women and African women were occupying mostly clerical positions. Perhaps men are still tied to this vision and the breaking of these gender stereotypes challenges their worldview; women in management and especially black women, provide for such challenges. Those in the property industry also indicated that their male environment exacerbated the problem because they are not viewed as capable. They had to constantly prove themselves as capable. This was also not surprising as Burlew and Johnson (1992) found that African-American women in non-traditional careers indicated racial and gender discrimination, colleagues questioning their competency and limited access to political influence or power as barriers to their career success and according to Oakley (2000) women in male-dominated and male led organisations struggle with making contributions to their organisations. Men in South African organisations also seem to be resistant in accepting women "as professional equals" (Mathur-Helm, 2005, p.56). This makes gender discrimination a factor that contributes negatively to the advancement of women in middle management in their career progression.

Another interesting finding was with regards to what is considered as a good manager or managerial stereotypes. It was interesting that most of the women indicated that their emotions were their weakest points. Women are stereotypically known for being emotional (Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987) and the fact that the women in this study indicated this as a weakness suggests a lack of approval of emotions by the corporate world. It seems these women have circumscribed to this disapproval. As Heilman (1997) indicated, while men are described as decisive, independent, rational, objective and self-confident, women are described as indecisive, dependent, emotional, non-objective and insecure. The ideal of what is considered a good leader or manager revolve around masculine stereotypes that do not consist of being emotional (Powell, 1993)

*... and when we are suppose to be promoted as a woman to take that upper level they still feel that we are not good enough or they usually say we don't have a back bone and we are not decisive (IV5).*

The participants also indicated some of those stereotypical female characteristics like being able to listen, being open, treating others with respect and being friendly as their strengths. There was also an indication of what Oakley (2000) referred to a double bind, where a person is in an unfavourable position no matter what she does. For instance IV7 indicated that being friendly was her strength but this friendliness also acted as a weakness because 'sometimes people don't know where to draw the line'. IV6 also indicated that one needs to be assertive but without being aggressive. This also demonstrates the conflicting expectations of women in the workplace that Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) referred to. It seems that these women still take up feminine traits, but they are conflicted by not being taken seriously when portraying these traits. Yet when they take up the masculine traits, they need to be careful to not over do it because they might be perceived less favourably.

As was indicated in the results, what became apparent with regards to race was that participants indicated that their competency and credentials were usually challenged due to their race and this acted as a career barrier. This included their work related suggestions not being taken into consideration for business and in other cases their ideas taken and used by others without any credit being attributed to them. According to Luhabe (2002), such acts are a form of aversive racism. In South Africa, it seems that blatant racism may have been replaced by this subtle form of racism. This is despite the country's efforts to eradicate all forms of discrimination by implementing affirmative legislation.

Interestingly and in contrast to the above barriers, most of the participants also indicated that their race and gender, being a black woman, in present day South Africa was working towards their advantage. This was in reference to employment equity and affirmative action legislation. This was explored under 'self'.

*I think being a woman, especially now that we are talking about undoing and rectifying the past injustices, women especially black women okay and white women but being a woman is not really a hindrance to you progressing. If the right position avails its self, then I think you can (IV7).*

*I will, no I don't believe that it does, I truly do not believe that it does. Especially being a black person in South Africa today. I think being a woman, being black, being educated, being focused knowing what I want I think that those are things that are working up to my advantage being in South Africa at the moment because of our history. I mean you know that previously we had more white people getting advanced, getting recognition so yeah owing to our historical background you then find that you know, transformation and black empowerment, you know, is the buzz word. (IV6)*

It seems that these women regard affirmative action positively despite some of the issues like negative stereotypes discussed above. This finding concurs with those of Motileng et al. (2006) where they also found that the black middle managers in their study regarded affirmative action positively, even though it came with some challenges like resistance of the affirmative action candidates and negative stereotypes. Other women under trigger revealed that the South African history of Apartheid motivated them to want to make something of themselves and others indicated that making South Africa a better place is what also encourages their career advancement. Therefore government policies and legislation, as well as South Africa's apartheid history seems to act as factors that facilitates the career advancement of black women managers. Affirmative action acts as an advantage during selection and promotion, but does not seem to eradicate the problems of aversive racism, negative race and gender stereotypes which are prevalent in the working environment of these women. In fact, one participant did indicate that that affirmative action leads to tokenism which is one of the challenges identified in the literature that is associated with affirmative action (April & Dreyer, 2007; Motileng et al., 2006)

*For me being on top is being able to make decisions and being able to implement those decisions. And for me it means nothing if maybe I'm regarded as an Excom like your executive managers committee but still I can't make decisions regarding with concerning my department. So for me that's not growth it's just a position that they are giving you and it's just a meaningless position, there is nothing much you can do. You are just there to be controlled and yet they say to whoever their clients are or their investors are to say that we have so many black people in senior management or whatever line of management. But it's not management as such, cause they make decisions for you that you are supposed to make yourself. So there is no growth basically. (IV3)*

This suggests that there is a lack of decision latitude for these women. According to Warr's Vitamin model, decreased decision latitude leads to reduced well-being which in turn results in a deteriorated quality of life (De Jonge & Schaufeli, 1998). Overall, there is an indication that there

are some conflicting matters that black working women have to deal with. On one hand their race and gender exposes them to the experiences of racism and sexism but on the other hand, they are advantaged during selection processes because of affirmative action, they are now the advantaged.

### **5.3. Role Conflict: manager, student, family**

Another factor that presented itself as a career barrier for the participants was that of Role Conflict. The majority of the women interviewed evidenced distress about the having to fulfill roles that are sometimes in conflict in their lives. The roles that they referred to during the interviews were those such as having to juggle the combination of either being a manager and a student, juggling family responsibilities (marriage, children extended family) with work responsibilities, and sometimes having to juggle being a manager, student and having family obligations concurrently.

All the interviewees indicated the importance of education as a mechanism that would allow them to advance their careers; as a result a majority of them were currently studying. While the women in the study might have gotten to middle management with their current qualification, and other factors like affirmative action, there is an implicit acknowledgement that to get further, one needs to improve her knowledge through being educated. The reason why some of these women have their current educational qualifications could be due to the country's past, where education was marginalised to favour white people (Rowena, 1997) and now with the new opportunities offered by the new South Africa, some of these women are only getting the educational opportunities now that they need to advance their careers. Some were studying diplomas, others bachelor degrees

and others masters degrees. Other studies have indicated that having an inadequate educational background has acted as a barrier for women trying to get to senior positions (Singh et al., 2004). What also became apparent was that the cost of obtaining the educational qualifications was a challenge for some of these women. This could be partly attributed to the economic crises in the country at the time of this study. Financial challenge is a theme that emerged under some of the topics in the interview.

What was evident amongst those women who were studying was the distress caused by having to fulfill their work responsibilities concurrently with family and educational commitments.

*It's stressful, very stressful because I mean I have a daughter who is in grade one. When I get home she expects me to help her with her home-work and then when you are at work, when you finish as well you have to study. You are tired, you are coming from work you know being, just just being a partner also is just. I'm trying you know, I'm trying. I think I'll find a balance later on. (IV7)*

*You find yourself, you're willing to study full time but ah at home the circumstance doesn't allow to study full time. What will you do? You're gonna be in a situation whereby you're studying and your working. Studying and working doesn't match. You go home tired. When you're tired you're brain is tired, can you really sit down and study? It's hard. You can do it. There are people who progressed doing that, studying and working. But it's really difficult. (IV9)*

A study by Home (1998) on adult women university students with families and jobs reported that the biggest predictor of role conflict, overload and contagion was intense student demands. This was followed by family and job demands. This might have been the case in this study as it was indicated that the women who are studying and have family and job demands to meet seemed to be the most distressed.



Those women who indicated that they were challenged by having to meet both family and work commitments concurrently, alluded this difficulty to the consequence of one role suffering while they were fulfilling the other one. These women have to perform well at work especially if they want to progress their careers. When they get home they also have to fulfill other roles such as being mothers, wives or doing household chores. It seems that the choice is between sacrificing work or family. The majority of the women in this study indicated that their family was suffering because of work commitments. This suffering included less time spent with family. This finding concurs with Ngoako's (1999) findings that women had a problem of spending quality time with their families. One participant expressed her fear of children generally getting into drugs because of working mothers not spending enough time with children. However, there were fewer participants who indicated that sacrificing work was also an option for them as they were not willing to compromise on their family time.

It was also apparent that the work-family conflict was not only with regards to time spent at the office. Some participants revealed that their family lives conflicted with their networking. This is because most of the networking occurs out of the office during those times that these women are usually at home. The reason that is often cited to this regard in the literature is that the corporate social networks are masculine in nature involving activities such as golf or pubs (Luhabe, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2006). Whilst some women indicated that this type of networking was a problem for them, most of the women who engaged in networking seemed to be involved in networks that incorporated feminine values like dinner galas or women's conferences. Even though there are these feminine networking opportunities, some women still indicated that networking conflicted

with their family roles as these dinners or conferences occur at the time that they are supposed to be spending time with their families.

There were two participants who felt that neither of their roles, career or family, necessarily have to change for one to advance. One of these two indicated that because she subscribes to a culturally traditional identity, she has to find a way of fulfilling all the roles in her life, without sacrificing time for family or work. The other participant believed that multitasking comes naturally to women and therefore women are able to meet their requirements from their different roles naturally. This finding illustrates to some extent the gender expectations that Naidoo and Jano (2002) referred to. Women are expected to be able to take on all these roles and it seems that these two women have embraced their duties as they indicate that it is all about finding time to meet all the roles. Also, it seems that women might still want to live up to the traditional criteria of what constitutes a good woman (Ngcongco, 1993) despite the fact that they are also now working.

*I mean number one as a woman you know that we can multitask. You will be a wife, a mother a church leader, manager a career woman and be involved in all the other associations and you have to manage the situation and your involvement in all that has to be done at its highest degree. If you are a mother you must be a mother, at a time that your kids need you, you must be a mother and pay attention to motherhood. If you are a manager at that time you have to pay attention to what you are managing. So being a woman and multitasking comes naturally, it's not a problem. You don't have to change your life, what you need to do is manage your time. (IV4)*

It must be noted that those women who were single and had no children did not indicate any work-family conflict, as well as the one participant who was approaching retirement age.

#### 5.4. Other barriers

There were also some other concerns that presented themselves as barriers to career advancement that the participants referred. These are issues that were not expected and also not presented in the literature review. One of this is issues that of age. The majority of the younger participants indicated that managing older people was challenging because they perceived that the older people either felt that they (older people) have more experience and can therefore not be instructed by younger people or the older people could not fully recognise the younger managers as managers because of the age difference.

*Being a black women, who is younger uhm okay more educated than them obviously even though they work for a university [giggles] and them being like seeing you know when they look at me, they see their daughters at home and then I having to come and tell her what to do and what not to do, I think that that is where our problem comes from that you know somebody who doesn't understand what my role is and what their role is. (IV7).*

This finding is similar to Ngoako's (1999) finding that the female managers in her study were having trouble with the way that they are supposed to relate to older workers because of the clash between their culture and organisational culture. The participants were from cultures where elder people are supposed to be treated with respect. This is not the way that most workplaces are run whereby everybody is equal.

Politics also emerged as an important factor for consideration. This matter was reported by two participants who had tried to advance their careers in government. The problem seems to be that if one is not politically connected, it becomes a problem to get into top positions.

*Those positions are highly politicised meaning you have you need the right connections in order for you to progress. (IV7)*

This finding was interesting because researchers have reported that South African women are flourishing in government and parliament (April & Dreyer, 2007; Mathur-Helm, 2005). According to April & Dreyer (2007), this might be because black women particularly were active in the liberation struggle and also affirmative action policies are succeeding in reaching their goals. This suggests that the political connection that women need to get into government positions is to have been involved in the freedom fight. It seems that those women, even black women, who do not have ties to the liberation struggle are thus dealing with a barrier to get into top government positions.

The second research question was 'How do black women in middle management cope in their career advancement?' The sections that follow have attempted to answer this question.

## **5.5. Coping**

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1987) the crucial factor in coping is the way the individual perceives the situation. This is the primary appraisal, whereby individuals assess their situation and may perceive it as positive or negative or stressful. Most of the participants noted the challenges that they face in their work places, which the relevant ones to this study have been noted above. However, most the participants took their career advancement problems as challenges and they viewed advancing their careers as a positive experience.

*It is a challenge; it is stressful to some degree. But it is definitely a positive thing. Uhm because I mean if you have goals that you set for yourself, obviously there is fulfillment when you actually achieve those goals and you see yourself moving actually up the ladder. It is a challenge it does have stresses but it definitely something that is positive (IV6).*

This implies that these participants are choosing to not be victims of their situation, but to rather take up the challenges and try to solve them. This can further be explained by referring to the glass ceiling. It seems that the women in this study do not view the glass ceiling as ‘concrete’ as the African American women in Catalyst (2004) study, but rather that this glass ceiling can be shuttered.

Secondary appraisal involves selecting coping resources, which according to Schlossberg et al. (1995) are found in any of the 4S’s’ and then an individual may choose a coping strategy. For those challenges such as gender stereotyping and racism, under ‘control’, some participants indicated that working hard was how they coped with these problems. This is to prove that they are just as capable.

*Yes there are some aspects that you can’t control, there are some aspects but you don’t have to see them as an obstacle. I’m one person that I don’t want to see them as an obstacle. Yes I will have to prove myself you see because like I said you have to prove yourself twice times than other people as a black woman. Those are just the obstacles but I can take control of them because I can work harder and prove that I can do it. I believe that actions speak more than words (IV5)*

This is consistent with findings from other studies on women in managerial positions. For example Ngoako (1999) also found that the women in her study had to work very hard to disprove the sex stereotypes. According to Prekel (as cited in Ngoako, 1999), women feel pressurised to prove their expertise to both themselves and the men around them.

To deal with the role conflict, some of the participants indicated the strategies that they already employ or those that they think can help. There was an indication of the importance of time management which involved scheduling carefully.

*I feel very strongly about eating together for instance. So that means that I should be home by six so we've eaten by seven and I have prepared that meal. I feel very strongly about preparing all three meals so I do that and as a result I sometimes come in late at the office or sleep very late and start working after this whole family thing.(IV2)*

This is similar to what Epston (1970, as cited in Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987) referred to as 'compartmentalisation by scheduling' which is a strategy the working women use to schedule their times in a way that reduces the spillover of work into family. With regards to the 4 S's, this strategy may be viewed as an attempt to control the 'situation' which is a result of their gender ('self') as these women aim to advance their careers. A few participants indicated that they had domestic helpers to help with the multiple roles. There was also an indication of 'reactive role behaviour' or 'superwomen' that Hall (1972 as cited in Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987). These are the women who attempt to meet all the roles in their lives. As was indicated under role conflict, this was the traditional woman and the woman who believed multitasking comes naturally to women. This strategy relates to some of those factors under 'situation' and 'self' such as gender stereotypes where women deal with those factors that are a result of their personal characteristics. There was also an indication of the reduction of social relationships such as friendships by some of the participants to cope with role conflict.

There were other various coping strategies used. Other participants use the intrapsychic behaviour that Lazarus and Folkman (1987) referred to. For instance, both the participants who indicated that

they had a problem with getting into government positions due to their lack of political ties said they responded to this by telling themselves that the positions were not meant for them.

*Instead of blaming myself, I'm like oh okay, no it means it wasn't my time so yeah (IV7)*

*... this is the background I come from and I think this would help but then I discovered that I'm not the right person for that position because my background says governance is this way, whereas in the government governance is something else. (IV9).*

To deal with the challenge of advancing careers generally, participants also highlighted a number of strategies. Education was prominent as the importance of education to these women was discussed above under role conflict. Social support also seemed to play a major role as a coping mechanism for these women. Social support is one of the factors in Lazarus and Folkman's Ways of Coping Questionnaire (Lazarus, 1993). The women referred to various sources of support including husbands, parents, coworkers, bosses, religion. All these sources of support offered affective support by being encouraging, motivating and providing guidance. Three participants indicated that their companies supported them financially by providing bursaries for their studies. Bailey et al. (1996) report that women received informal and affective support as compared to men who more often received instrumental (tangible) support. The occurrence of affective support more than instrumental support in women was evident in this study.

One of the strategies used to advance a career that was highlighted by the participants was that of networking. This is related to Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) coping mechanism of seeking information. Studies have indicated that women and black people have limited access to networks in the workplace (Combs, 2003; Ibarra, 1993). The participants did not really specify lack of

access to networks but they did indicate that the same race and same gender networking were easier to access.

*I mean there are all these organisations that are being established now. You know like women organisations, black women organisations and all of that. In that setup it's much easier to network because obviously that is set up for you (IV6).*

This means that in those workplaces whereby the majority of employees and managers are white and male, it becomes tougher for black women to form networks. It seemed that gender also played a role in mentorship. Four of the participants revealed that they drew social support from their mentors who were female. The lack of black mentors has been recognised as a factor contributing to the slow rate of career progression of blacks (Luhabe, 2002).

## **5.6. Conclusion**

The various themes that have been identified, discussed and interpreted clearly demonstrate that there are some barriers that black women in middle management face in advancing their careers. The first of these is the simultaneous operation of gender and race discrimination in their work places which in turn work against these women progressing. These women experience negative gender stereotypes and also seemed to be conflicted about how they are expected to act as managers. The ability of these women is questioned due to their race and as a result of both this gender and race discrimination this women work hard to prove themselves twice over. However, the women also viewed their race and gender as an advantage to career advancement due to affirmative action policies. This indicates that whilst the doors might be open to these women and gender and race discrimination are prohibited in formal writing, the reality of the daily



experiences at work suggests that race and gender discrimination are still prevalent in South Africa.

It was also found in this study that these middle managers were involved in multiple roles, particularly being managers, students and having family responsibilities which included being a wife and/or mother. Middle managers need education to get into top positions and part of the reason that these women are still educating themselves at this level could be due to the history of the country which also segregated education and resulted in poor education for black people. Age also acted as a barrier, with younger middle managers having problems of being seen as managers. Lack of political connection acted as barrier to those attempting to get in government positions. The women in this study were proactive and took up their challenges. A variety of coping mechanisms were used to deal with these barriers and to advance their careers. These included managing time, educating themselves, networking, social support and intrapsychic behaviours. It seems that 4 S's are interconnected as career barriers identified mostly under situation and self are mitigated by factors under support and strategies.

The researcher concludes that Schlossberg's et al. (1995) model provides a logical and viable conceptualisation for exploring the career barriers faced by black women in middle management in their career transition. The variables 'situation' and 'self' revealed some barriers that these women face and 'support' and 'strategies' revealed coping mechanisms. Therefore these variables are useful for exploring this multifaceted career transition of black women in middle management.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the final chapter of this research report is comprised of four sections: limitations of the study, implications for future research, a reflexive comment and a general conclusion.

### **6.1. Limitations of the study**

The qualitative nature of the study introduced some limitations which need to be reflected upon to determine the validity of the study. The descriptive and interpretation of the data from the interviews conducted with a small number of participants allowed access to rich and diverse information. However, the small sample size of women from a specific geographical location compromises the generalisability of the results. Thus the results obtained cannot be said to represent all black women in middle management in South Africa. The vast responses also suggest that saturation of data was not reached and that more possible responses regarding the subject matter might have been elicited with extended research. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to generate a large sample size. Furthermore, the sampling strategy used which is snowball sampling could have contributed having a sample of similar women, as most of the respondents were in the property industry. This also leads to problems with the generalisability of the study.

It was also decided to not include the characteristic ‘duration’ that appears under ‘self’ in the study. This was because the pilot study indicated that the interviewees did not understand the question and hence it became difficult to analyse the results of this characteristic. The difficulty

ultimately lied in operationalising this concept as it was difficult to say what the timeline was for the interviewees attempt to progress their careers and it was also difficult to establish the effects of the duration on the transition. This means that whether attempting to advance one's career is a permanent or temporary situation does not reveal whether this acts a hinder to the transition.

Interviews also pose some problems. One of them is they are self-report methods and anonymity is not possible in a face-to-face interview. This might lead to participants giving socially desirable responses. Since a semi-structured interview was used, the researcher probed into any issues for clarification purposes and to also minimise dishonest responses.

## **6.2. Reflexive Comment**

Perhaps the greatest potential limitation of the study came from the researcher herself. The interaction of the researcher with the sample, the researcher's involvement in the interpretation, representation of the results, as well as the overall process influences and subjectifies the research process and findings. Therefore, the organisation of the results and the analysis could have been presented or interpreted from a multitude of perspectives. The way the results are presented also emphasized certain material over others.

Thematic content analysis is prone to subjectivity and bias of the researcher. The researcher was aware of her own personal, ideological and cultural assumptions and knowledge could potentially influence her arrival at certain interpretations. Therefore to increase reliability of the results,

another rater was used in the study and their results were consistent with those of the researcher. Many direct quotes were also used to minimise subjectivity by illustrating consistent support for interpretation.

The demographics of the interviewer may have also influenced the responses of the participants. The researcher is black female in her early 20's. Participants may have assumed that the researcher is similar to them and therefore there was no need to elaborate on some of the issues. On the other hand, the similarities could have led to the participants being more comfortable with the researcher and therefore being more open. There were also times when the participants responded in a certain way because of the researcher's age. Some of them were giving advice to the researcher about what to expect in the workplace. This may be an advantage as the participants were then conscientious in explaining fully what they meant.

### **6.3. Implications for organisational practice**

The organisational implications of this research pertain the use of the 4S model by organisations. The results of this study indicate that the experiences of black women in middle management are multifaceted and are linked. Perhaps for transformation to occur, organisations need to look beyond the numbers or statistics and to also consider the situation that these women are in when trying to advance their careers. A broader process of considering these women in social networks and mentorships might also help. The results of the study could guide possible interventions on career advancement of black women. These interventions could take the dual challenge of being black and being female into consideration and also the challenges of working, studying and

attending to family responsibilities at the same time. Based on the results of the study, organisations need to consider giving black women in management more discretion and decision latitude, instead of these women being in management positions but not contributing to the decisions of the organisation.

Although this study was not aimed at contributing to the counselling field, the findings of this study could be applied to the career counselling of black women in middle management who are concerned with advancing their careers. Schlossberg's 4 S's could be used to inform counselors or therapist of coping resources utilised by individual in dealing with specific career barriers.

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#### **6.4. Implications for theory**

This study has confirmed the utilisation of Schlossberg's Transition Theory as a useful systematic framework for exploring career barriers. This theory allows one to explore career advancement of women broadly, by looking at the barriers or glass ceiling but also the coping mechanisms that these women use. What became apparent during the interview and analysis was that there was an overlap in the 4S's. For example, while race might be a factor that could be explored under 'self' as a personal characteristic, it could also come up in 'situation' as factor that respondents feel is beyond their control or as a concurrent stressor and support could also be a strategy to cope with difficulties. It seems as if the 4 S's are not discrete factors but are intertwined which implies that the study of career barriers should be a process that takes multiple factors into consideration, but should also indicate the links between the factors.

## **6.5. Implications for future research**

The results from this study identified certain areas which may warrant further research. Some of those areas are as follows:

- Further research into the elimination of aversive racism and negative gender stereotypes in the workplace.
- The contribution of organisational culture in perpetuating aversive racism and negative gender stereotypes in the workplace.
- The combined role overload of being a manager, a student and having family roles.
- The contribution of politics in affecting the career progress of women.
- Age discrimination as a career barrier for women

Other studies on career progress or advancement could employ Schlossberg's transition framework as a guide.

This study was exploratory in nature and aimed to generate a broad understanding of the research questions. In depth research into any of the research questions could generate more focused findings.

## **6.6. Concluding Remarks**

This research venture has been a highly engaging and an interesting process. 16 years after the first democratic elections, the effects of the past can still be seen. South African black women in

the workplace are still dealing with issues from the past that are affecting their career advancement, hence there are so few black women at the top. However there seems to still be hope as the women in this study were optimistic and were prepared to work hard. The fact that the researcher is a black female made this project personally pertinent.

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## Appendix 1: Participation information sheet

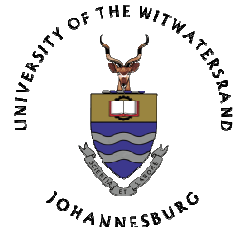


### School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 7174 500 Fax: (011) 717 4559



Hi

My name is Maliile Ramashamole, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. The main aim of the study is to explore the career barriers faced by black women in middle management in trying to advance their careers and how do these women cope with their career advancement. These aims will be explored through the application of Schlossberg's Transition theory. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participating in this research will entail being interviewed by myself, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last for approximately one hour. With your permission this interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Therefore you will be asked to complete consent forms to record the interview and to participate in the study. You will also be asked to complete a biographical information form that will be used for sampling purposes only. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not to participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that identifies you would be included in the research report and transcripts. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person, and will only be processed by myself. The tape records will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

If you choose to participate in this study, please contact me telephonically at 083 671 9262 or (011) 717 5406 or via email at [mramashamole@gmail.com](mailto:mramashamole@gmail.com).

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on the career development of black women.

Kind Regards

Maliile Ramashamole

Ian Siemers (Supervisor)

## Appendix2: Consent Form for Interview

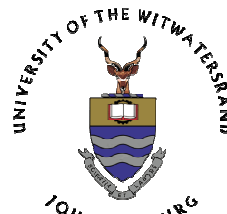


**School of Human & Community Development**

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**Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050**

**Tel: (011) 7174 500 Fax: (011) 717 4559**



I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to being interviewed by  
\_\_\_\_\_ for her study on  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I understand that:

- Participating in this interview is voluntary.
- That I may refuse to answer questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix3: Consent Form for Recording

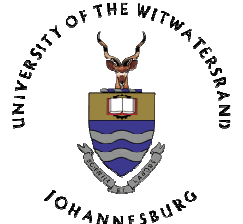


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**Tel: (011) 7174 500 Fax: (011) 717 4559**



I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to my interview with  
\_\_\_\_\_ for her study on  
\_\_\_\_\_

being tape-recorded.

I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person besides the researcher, and will only be processed by the researcher.
- All tape recording will be destroyed after they have been transcribed.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 4: Biographical Questionnaire

(For describing the sample only)

Please fill in the form and tick where appropriate.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Qualification: Matric ☐ Diploma ☐ University Degree ☐ Masters Degree ☐

Other(specify)\_\_\_\_\_

Position occupied presently: \_\_\_\_\_

Length in service in current occupational position: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of service to organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widow ☐

## **Appendix 5: Interview Schedule**

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. If you feel uncomfortable at any point during the interview, please let me know and please ask any questions that you may have.

May you please explain to me the hierarchy of your organisation and where do you fall?

Do you consider yourself to be in middle management?

Are you interested in being in top management? (CEO, Director)

Where do you see yourself five years from now, in terms of you career?

### **Situation**

- Please describe fully the situation that you are in with regards to trying to advance your career?

The next questions will be used as probes depending on how the participants answered the main question:

- What triggered your career advancement attempt? (Trigger)
- Is your career advancement attempt happening at the best possible time or worst possible time? (Timing)
- What aspects, if any, can you control in your attempt to advance your career and what aspects can you not control? (Control)
- Did you experience any role changes in attempting to advance your career? (Role change)
- Have you ever attempted to advance your career before and if so, was your experience helpful or harmful? (Previous experience with similar situation)
- Are you experiencing stress in other areas of your life? (concurrent stress)
- Do you view the situation that you are in as positive, negative or benign (neutral)? (Assessment)

## **Self**

- What do you see as your strengths?
- Strengths to help you climb the corporate ladder?
- What do you see as your weaknesses?
- Weaknesses to hinder your career advancement?
- How does your race affect your attempts to advance your career? Have you encountered race stereotypes?
- How does your gender affect your attempts to advancing your career? Have you encountered gender stereotypes?

## **Support**

- Who would support you in working towards your career goals and in what ways do they give you support?

### **The company and support from home**

- Do you have any mentors or role models and what kind of person is he or she?
- Do you network? And how easy or difficult is it for you to network as black woman?
- Do you feel that the support given to you in reaching your career goal is a low or high resource?

## **Strategies**

- What direct action will you take to deal with your situation?  
What plans will you carry out? What behaviour will you change by elimination or improvement?
- Do you feel that you can choose from a range of strategies to deal with the situation?

Thank you for participating in my research. I really appreciate your time and involvement.