

https://dspace.org/

Black female managers perceptions' of integration into informal social networks at work

Motlhamme, Kelebogile Faith

2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27216

Motlhamme, Kelebogile Faith (2018) Black female managers perceptions' of integration into informal social networks at work, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/27216>

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

In the past 20 years, organisations have implemented numerous policies and interventions in order to promote workplace equality and inclusivity. While South Africa is considered to have one of the highest percentage of women in managerial positions in Africa (Moodley, Holt, Leke, & Desvaux, 2016; Pather, 2016), research suggests that women are still experiencing workplace inequality due to a number of barriers, including a lack of access to proper informal networking channels in the workplace, gender stereotypes and a lack of education and skills (EE Research Focus, 2009). The aim of networking in the workplace is to gain social capital which can be used for career success and social support (Alan & Sözen, 2017; Ibarra, 1993). Given the duality of being the minority race and gender in management positions, Black women remain the least represented group in managerial positions in the country (Commission for Employment Equity, 2016). Informal social networks are also believed to maintain inequality in the workplace, due to gender differences in networking patterns and perceptions (Bierema, 2005; Mengel, 2015).

A basic definition of a social network is that it is the web of relationships characterised by an exchange of information and services (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). An assumption regarding social networks is that the more relationships an individual has within a particular network, as well as other relationships formed with others outside the network, then the more social capital will be gained (Bierema, 2005; Ibarra, 1995; Timberlake, 2005). Social capital refers to the "information, trust and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks" (Woolcock, 1998, p. 153). Social capital remains particularly important in social networking because investing in these social relations results in perceived expected returns and reciprocity (Lin, 2001; Putnam, 1995). This means that the more networks an individual has, the more access to resources will be achieved. Inclusion in informal social networks is one way of creating social capital. Research, however, has shown that since women have less access " in respect of the quality and quantity of useful workplace relationships" (EE Research Focus, 2009, p.8), women are more disadvantaged when it comes to acquiring the social capital necessary for career success.

There is one other construct that is related to social capital that will be explored in this study, and that is career success. There is no single definition of career success since it may mean the achievement of different job aspects which can be subjective to some employees, while other definitions may only include objective outcomes (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Visagie, 2012) . For the purpose of this study, career success is defined as the subjective achievement of good pay, building successful workplace relationships, and the prospect of career advancement opportunities. This definition which I formulated is based on the literature which indicates that career success is often measured based on the achievement of physical (e.g. pay) or social aspects such as recognition (Heslin, 2003; Riordan & Louw-Potgieter, 2011; Visagie, 2012). Figure 1 provides an illustration of the constructs which are explored in the study.

Figure 1. Constructs used in the Study



In organisations, there are two types of networking channels which may occur, namely formal networks and informal networks. Formal social networking refers to the professional relationships formed between employees (Alan & Sözen, 2017), such as scheduled meetings held every week at work. These relationships tend to be official, with specific boundaries of interaction for the achievement of organisational goals (Mcquire, 2000). Informal social networking is defined as " the set of job-related contacts that a manager relies on for access to task-related, career, and social support" (Ibarra, 1995, p.674). Inclusion in informal networks is usually voluntary. Access to informal social networks has been linked to career advancement (Bierema, 2005; Brass, 1985), knowledge and information gain (Mcquire, 2000), intra-organisational promotion (Podolny & Baron, 1997), reduced workplace stress (Hannaneh Mohammedi, Mahnaz, & Aliyeh, 2012), as well as access to social support and

feelings of inclusion (Cross & Armstrong, 2008). While both types of networks play important roles in the flow of information in the workplace, informal social networks are also argued to be more important than formal networks when it comes to career advancement, due to the closeness and trust formed between members (Combs, 2003). This report focuses specifically on informal social networks due to the importance attached to them and the strides made by organisations in an attempt to try and improve the networking patterns of female employees in the workplace (Perriton, 2006).

According to Cross and Armstrong (2008, p.600), "to reach senior executive positions, women need to either bypass or establish a way into these networks". The case in South Africa, however, is different compared to other countries given the socio-political history of the country. Therefore South Africa's societal underpinning makes our case especially unique (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007; Lewis, 2016). For that reason, it is imperative to understand how sociocultural backgrounds in South Africa account for the exclusion of women, and Black women more specifically, from informal social networks. Therefore, the aim of this research is to identify Black female managers' perceptions of integration into informal social networks at work and the strategies that they implement in order to integrate into these networks for career success and advancement. The theory of social networking is used to understand how the positions Black women hold in the organisation are perceived to affect their work success, since their status and position within a network can affect how they acquire power, social capital and the resources needed to meet workplace goals (Ibarra, 1993; Mcquire, 2000).

1.2. Rationale

Despite the implementation of progressive employment legislation in South Africa, such as the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and related interventions such as Affirmative Action, which are aimed at including previously disadvantaged groups into the workforce, the most recent report by the Commission for Employment Equity (2017) revealed that there is still an unequal status of men and women in top managerial positions, where women only represent 22 % of top management positions in the country whilst men occupy 78%. More notably, Black women only account for 3.3 % of top management positions in the private sector, whereas White women account for more than three times the amount at 13%. Similarly, a report published by the Business Women's Association of South Africa (2015) on the workplace composition of women in the country revealed that while 51.2% of the South African population comprises of women of which 45.8% make up the economically active population, women only accounted for 29.3% of executive positions and 11.65% were in CEO and chairpersons position as depicted in figure 2. These statistics indicate that although there is a large number of women in South African organisations, women appear to occupy lower positions in the hierarchy.

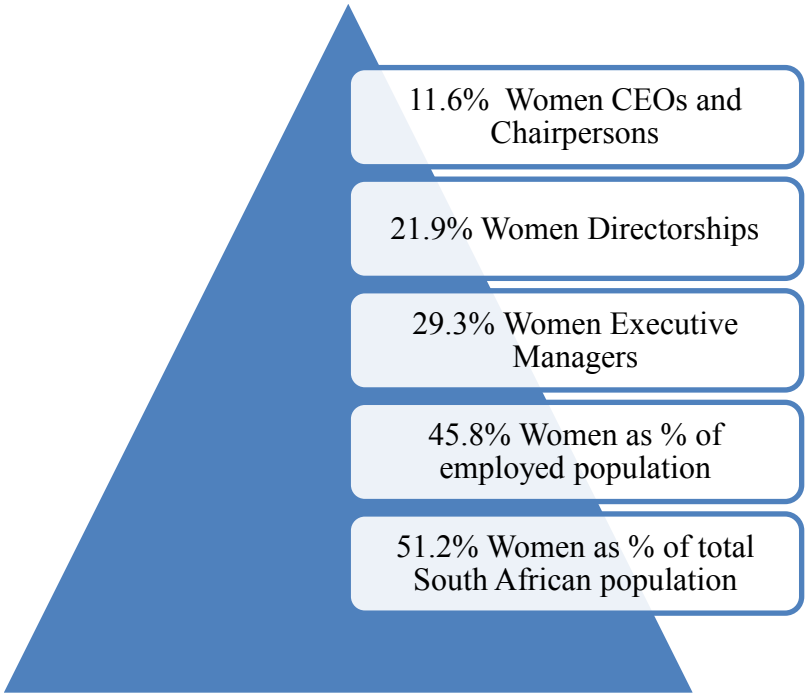


Figure 2. Management Census Pyramid by BWASA (2015)

Employment legislation efforts have increased the intake of women into the workforce, however, as quoted in Friedman, Kane and Cornfield (1998, pp.1156-1157), "affirmative

action dramatically increased the hiring of women and minority, but it has done less to ensure their promotion and retention" in America, and it is no different in South Africa (Booysen, 1999). This indicates that despite the progress in integrating more women into organisations, Black women still experience the greatest level of underrepresentation in management. Given past inequalities due to apartheid policies which limited career opportunities for women, and more importantly, due to the duality of being the minority race and gender in the workforce, the majority of the research on the integration of Black women into the workforce tends to focus on issues that are perceived as being more pressing, such as Black women's access to equal pay and entry into male dominated occupations (Wright, 2016). Little attention has been placed on Black women's integration into informal social networks in the workplace, despite findings that access to informal networks is imperative for career success and workplace inclusion (April et al., 2007). Based on the construct of intersectionality that focuses on how certain constructs are viewed as interdependent systems, Black women face the greatest level of underrepresentation due the interconnected nature of race and gender when it comes to social inequality (Shields, 2008 as cited in Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). The theory of intersectionality states that certain individuals are not oppressed primarily due to their gender, but rather due to the "inextricable web" with other constructs such as race, sexual orientation and social status (Padilla, 1997, p .848), so Black women are discriminated against three times over due to their race, gender and economic status.

This study therefore focuses on Black women's perceptions of their integration into informal social networks at work, as acceptance into these networks could influence their career development and progression. The study focuses specifically on Black women due to their underrepresentation in top managerial roles in corporate organisations, more especially since it has been noted by the International Women's Forum South Africa (2011) that "much progress has been achieved in integrating women in key decision making roles in government but to a limited extent in the corporate sector" (p.3).This is particularly due to initiatives by the government such as the 30% quota policy that encourages the promotion and hiring of Black women (Booysen, 1999; Lewis, 2016).

The inclusion of more women into managerial and leadership positions has been proven to be vital for organisations in the 21st century, given the shift from male oriented approaches to management to more feminine leadership strategies which are more transformational and relationship-oriented (Booysen, 1999). Companies with more women than men on their

executive committees are reported to make greater annual financial profits (Moodley et al., 2016), therefore attention needs to be placed on improving the channels available for the career success of women. This study is not only aimed at identifying perceptions of the integration of Black female managers into informal social networks, but also to establish the strategies that they use to successfully integrate into informal social networks in the workplace. Limited research could be found on how Black women actually integrate themselves, if necessary, into informal groups for feelings of support and inclusion in decision making positions in organisations in South Africa.

Since informal social networks refer to the relationships formed between people (Ibarra, 1993), the social network theory appears to be a useful theoretical framework which can be applied to the study in an attempt to identify the perceptions Black female managers have towards informal social networks. The theory maps out and explores the positionality of individuals within a network and the impact their position has on their career advancement. This theory has been used to explore how informal networks contribute to workplace inequality due to race, gender and ethnicity (Mcquire, 2000) and to examine the effects of the interaction between race and gender on the informal social networks of Black female managers in the United States (Combs, 2003). However, this theory has not been used to investigate the strategies Black female managers use to improve their access and use of informal social networks at work. Using the social networking theory in this research may therefore reveal the importance of informal social networks and how they may be beneficial towards the career success of Black female managers in South Africa. The theory will assist in investigating the different strategies that Black female managers use to manage their integration into these informal social networks.

This research report begins by providing a review of the existing literature on informal social networking in the workplace, thereafter the methods chapter that outlines the procedure and research design that was followed is presented. This research was conducted using a qualitative research design consisting of interviews, and the data was analysed using thematic analysis. Lastly, the results from the interviews conducted are provided, followed by a discussion chapter that explains the results relative to the existing literature. A brief conclusion chapter is then presented that summarises the key findings and implications of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a critical review of the history and current status of how South African women gained access to the South African workforce and into management. Secondly, the barriers that prevent Black women from integrating into informal social networks at work will be presented. Lastly, this chapter will discuss the Social Network Theory (Lui, Sidhu, Beacom, & Valente, 2017; Tichy, Tushman, Fombrun, & Tushman, 1979) and present the aims and research questions.

2.2. Historical Background

Before the democratic elections which took place in 1994, Black women were given limited opportunities to occupy positions of power in government and corporate organisations due to the implementation of the oppressive apartheid regime by the South African National Party in the 1950's (Lewis, 2016). Various laws were passed that caused the direct subjugation of Black people which perpetuated the dominant White patriarchal society which still exists today. For one, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 prevented Black people from receiving proper education, resulting in Black people forming part of the unskilled labour market (Lewis, 2016). Although it was not explicitly stated, The Mines and Works Act of 1956 was legislation which was enacted in an attempt to prevent Black people from competing for jobs in certain occupations that were monopolised by Whites. Therefore positions of power were reserved mainly for White men (Lewis, 2016).

The apartheid regime was not only discriminatory against people based on race, but also on gender. The South African society was therefore seen as both racist and sexist (Bernstein, 1985; Ramashamole, 2010). Women in South Africa worked mostly in the agricultural, services and manufacturing sectors, and some managed to work as teachers or nurses (Bernstein, 1985). Although women were generally oppressed, White women received better privileges compared to women of colour in South Africa. White women were allowed to vote and attend higher education. There was also a substantial difference between the jobs occupied by White women and Black women. White women were seen as more professionally competent than Black women, and this led to the deliberate job allocation of higher level jobs to White women than Black women (Maseko, 2013).White women occupied positions such as secretarial work whereas Black women could mostly become

domestic workers for White families (Booysen, 2007). While White women also lived in a sexist, patriarchal society, Black women in particular experienced three times the oppression due to their race, gender and social class (Ramashamole, 2010).

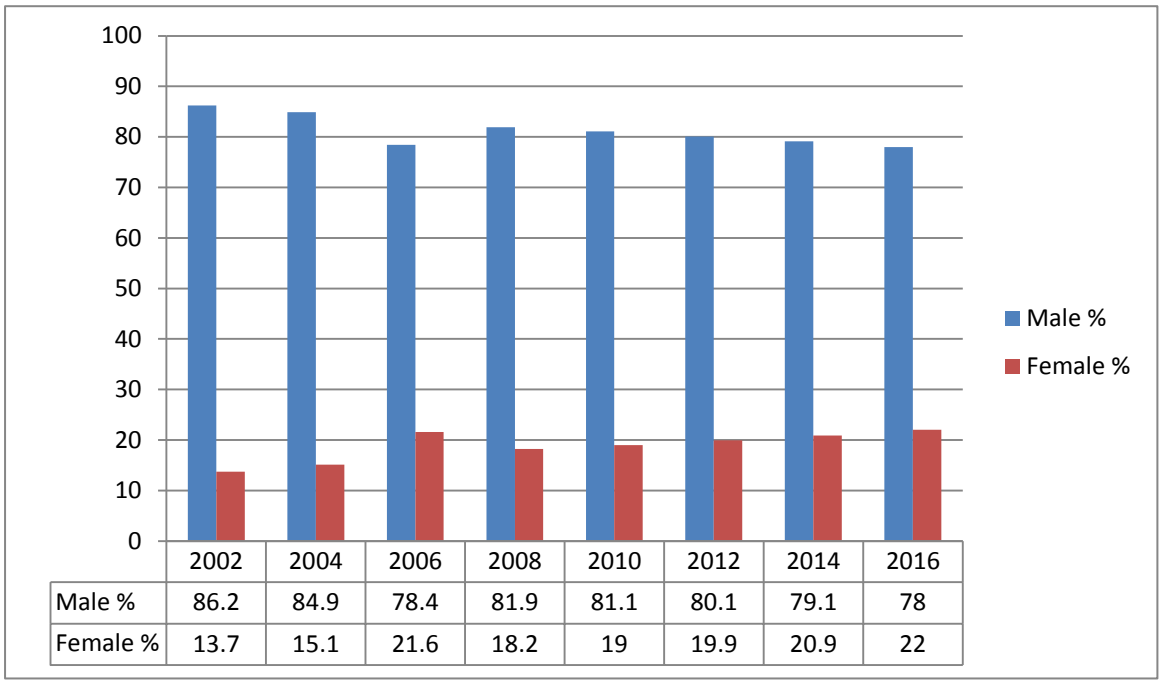
During the apartheid era, Black people's mobility was restricted because they were only allowed to live in certain residential areas, and legal documentation was required for them to work in certain White suburban areas (Lewis, 2016). Since Black men worked in the major cities as migrant workers, most Black women had to stay behind and survive by farming, and they were financially dependent on their husbands. Some Black women followed their husbands to the urban areas but due to the work restrictions, they could mostly work for White women as domestic workers (Lewis, 2016; Ramashamole, 2010). Some managed to find informal work such as selling vegetables and beer-brewing (Bernstein, 1985). As time progressed, women were allowed to work in the factories although the working conditions were extremely poor. Black women were mainly given the low skilled and least paying positions, while White women were given clerical posts (Bernstein, 1985). This shows how the apartheid system deliberately maintained the racial inequality characterised by white supremacy.

With the fall of apartheid in 1994, South Africa underwent great transformation which saw the passing of employment legislation that fostered the employment of, and the abolishment of the systematic discrimination against women and people from disadvantaged groups. These affirmative action policies were implemented in order to create a more inclusive and fair working environment by providing opportunities to those who were previously denied access to equal opportunities (Lewis, 2016). First came the Labour Relations Act of 1995 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 (Booysen, 2007). The Employment Equity Act of 1998 was then implemented which was aimed at including previously disadvantaged groups such as women and disabled people in the workplace. These legal policies were aimed at correcting the injustice in employment caused by the apartheid regime (Lewis, 2016). Over time, attention shifted from trying to appoint more previously disadvantaged groups into the workplace, and focus was placed on the development of minority groups in the workplace (Booysen, 2007).

Although the employment legislation greatly improved the hiring of women by organisations, statistics show that little progress has actually been made in assisting Black women in

reaching top level positions (Commission for Employment Equity, 2015; Commission for Employment Equity, 2017). Despite women making up majority of the economically active population, it appears that White men continue to dominate the top management positions in the country. The graph below provides the distribution of men and women in top management positions in the country over the past ten years.

Figure 3. Distribution of top management positions by gender



	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016
Male %	86.2	84.9	78.4	81.9	81.1	80.1	79.1	78
Female %	13.7	15.1	21.6	18.2	19	19.9	20.9	22

Figure 3 illustrates that over the past ten years, men have occupied more than 3 times the number of positions in top management than women. Women in top positions have increased between 1% and 6% over the years, but they continue to remain under-represented compared to men.

More noteworthy, Black women remain the least represented in top management. According to the Commission for Employment Equity (2017), in 2016, Black women represented only 3.3% of top management positions, whereas White women occupied 13%. Black women continue to dominate the low skilled jobs in the country (Commission for Employment Equity, 2017), highlighting how the social hierarchy in the workplace, where Black women experience the greatest form of oppression, still exists more than 20 years since apartheid was abolished.

2.3. Theory of Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality explores the multiple dimensions which shape how women experience and define their social identities in society. It is defined by McCall (2005, p. 1771) as "the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations" which affect women's experiences of exclusion and discrimination. The feminist sociological theory was developed and popularised by civil rights activist and advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw, who believed that when trying to understand the unfair treatment of women in the societal and work context, it should not be assumed that all women experience systems of oppression in a similar manner due to their gender, (i.e. women as a homogenous group) but that other factors which overlap with gender such as race, social background, ethnicity, religion and nationality should be taken into consideration (Carrim, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991). In academic research, it was noted that women of colour were not only excluded from feminist research, but that their experiences of discrimination were misconstrued or generalised (Browne & Misra, 2003, as cited in Carrim, 2012). The development of intersectionality as an approach to feminist research brought more attention to the concept of subjectivity as it applied to research. The gist of the theory is that women experience oppression and discrimination in varying degrees of intensity, and it is necessary to remain cognisant of how, when studying gender, race should also be incorporated since both aspects create specific experiences amongst women.

There are two main concepts that are related to the intricacy of race and gender and these are social location and standpoint (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). Social location refers to the societal position held by an individual with respect to race, gender, sexual orientation and other demographic categories. Some positions are either privileged or oppressed based on the amount of access to power that an individual has in society due to their race or the intersection of other categories. Stand point is defined as "a critical perspective that marginalized or oppressed groups may have about how power relations operate within society" (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010, p.288-289). People's standpoints are based on their group's location within the hierarchal social structure rather than their individual locations (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). This means that the amount of privilege or oppression an individual will be exposed to is based on their race and other demographics, and individuals who are oppressed in society often have their own view of how powerful their societal location is based their group's location.

According to Black feminists, although gender can create a certain standpoint for all women, Black women are viewed as occupying a distinctive position due to the intersection of their race and gender (Hill-Collins, 1990, as cited in Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). In the South African context, Black women have had to fight against racism, and their oppression has been further exacerbated by the fact that they live in a patriarchal country. White women, however, have only had to deal with the challenges of patriarchy as their race made it easier for them to receive more privileges, such as access to education and better job positions (Warnat, 2012). Therefore the different multiple facets independently can either increase or improve the level of oppression experienced by an individual (Warnat, 2012).

In a study conducted by Bell and Nkomo (2001) on the career experiences of White and Black female managers in South Africa, it was revealed that both race and gender affected their perceptions of career advancement quite differently. The Black managers believed that they experienced racism and sexism which had negative effects on their career advancement, whereas the White managers only experienced career barriers due to gender issues. White managers also experienced greater career advancement than the Black managers. This shows that "professional white women are privileged because of their race yet subordinated because of their gender, while Black women faced both racism and sexism in their daily organizational experiences" (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010, p.289). Therefore it is important to be cognisant of the existence of the concept of intersectionality when conducting research on women because the impact of race, gender and class cannot and should not be understood in isolation (Carrim, 2012).

2.4. Black Women and Informal Social Networks

In the past twenty years, research has shown that one of the key and most cited explanations for the lack of equal representation of men and women in top management positions locally and internationally, is the exclusion of women from informal social networks in the workplace (Cross & Armstrong, 2008). According to Catalyst (2004), Black employees and women from 6 different countries, including South Africa, reported that the greatest challenges that they faced in organisations is exclusion from informal social networks, and a lack of mentorship and role models which they could identify with. Similarly, Combs (2003) reported that African American women who do advance to executive positions are often isolated into out-group status when it comes to informal social networks amongst managers.

Internationally, there is a plethora of research on informal social networks in the workplace, yet little research has been conducted in South Africa on Black women and informal social networking, and the impact that exclusion from informal social networks may have on Black women's career success and inclusion. Studies which have focused on Black women and informal social networks, however, have shown that Black women are actively excluded from networking channels in the workplace by men and other women (April et al., 2007), yet at the time of writing this report no studies had been found that focused on the strategies that Black women use in order to cope with or manage their exclusion from informal social networks. This study therefore aims to extend the available literature by using the social network theory (Lui et al., 2009; Tichy et al., 1979) to firstly identify the perceptions that Black female managers have towards their integration into informal social networks, and the different ways in which they cope with their inclusion or exclusion from these networks.

Interestingly, Onsongo (2007) and Ntizira-Nondo (2001) reported in their studies that Black women in South African companies do not see the benefits of being members of informal social networks (as cited in Ramashamole, 2010). This indicates that although access to informal social networks has been identified as beneficial for career success in the workplace, not every Black professional woman sees it as beneficial and therefore they do not necessarily integrate themselves into these social networks. These studies contrast with the findings of April et al. (2007) who found that successful South African female managers from different races attributed some of their success to their ability to network with those in higher status and power. Therefore, some Black women either choose not to integrate themselves (Onsongo, 2007, as cited in Ramashamole, 2010), or to build their own networks or find ways to integrate into male dominated informal networks (April et al., 2007). This indicates a variety of responses to the question of whether and with whom to integrate informally within the workplace. It is possible that Black women's responses to the question of integration are related to the perceived barriers to belonging to informal social networks.

2.5. Barriers to Informal Social networks

The following section discusses the various barriers that prevent Black female managers from integrating into informal social networks such as patriarchal organisational culture, gender differences in networking, gender stereotypes and bias.

2.5.1. Patriarchal Organisational Culture

One of the most prominent reasons behind the exclusion of women from informal social networks is the prominence of patriarchal organisational cultures in South African organisations (Doubell & Struwig, 2014). Organisational culture is defined as "the relatively stable beliefs, attitudes and values which are part of the taken-for-granted reality in organizations" (O'Connor, 1996, p.1), and these are often reflected in the organisation's procedures and structure. A patriarchal organisational culture would therefore occur in an organisation where male domination in the decision making and running of the business is perpetuated (Rutherford, 2001). It has been noted that the social context in which networks are formed have a direct impact on the career advancement of organisational members, and an issue often maintained in the literature is that organisations are white–male dominated entities (Bierema, 2005). This is due to the fact that most corporate organisations in the world were founded by white males, and the founders of an organisation are said to be those who establish the organisation's culture (Rutherford, 2001).

As previously mentioned, in South Africa, the racial and gender hierarchies preserved by the apartheid system created an unequal representation of Black and White as well as male and female employees in the workplace, where women were particularly excluded from well-paying executive positions. According to Booysen and Nkomo (2010) , these posts were mostly reserved for White male employees either formally or informally. White women also had better job opportunities than Black women (e.g., secretarial work), whereas Black women were offered mostly domestic work. Booysen and Nkomo's (2010) study on gender stereotypes of managerial traits reported that while 74% of the working population comprises Black workers years after the apartheid regime was eradicated, the inequalities observed during the apartheid era are still prevalent where managerial positions are still predominantly occupied by White male employees. This demonstrates how the context of South Africa is unique due to the maintenance of hierarchal workplace inequality.

Although it is often asserted that organisations in South Africa remain relatively White-male dominated entities, a study conducted by Booysen and Nkomo (2010) on the effects of race and gender on the perceptions of what makes a successful manager, reported that Black men were more strongly of the opinion that women should not be leaders than their White counterparts. It was reported that Black men subscribed more to the "think manager-think

male" ideology (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). Similarly, Menon and Kotze (2007) found that Black men find it more difficult to accept female leaders' due to their strong traditional beliefs in patriarchy. This is due to the fact that South Africa is still considered a patriarchal society, regardless of race. Both Black and White men believe that women should generally not be in leadership positions.

In a study on the barriers which prevent the successful implementation of employment equity laws and the retention of Black managers in a South African bank, the organisational culture was reported as being inhospitable towards Black employees due to its lack of sensitivity towards the issue of diversity (Booysen, 2007). The organisational culture was largely male dominated, and Black women more especially felt excluded from both informal and formal networks, and they felt that they had limited access to Black role models which they could identify with in the workplace.

Similarly, a study conducted on Black women in the gambling industry in South Africa, revealed that women feel excluded from informal networks due to the maintenance of "old boys' networks" in top managerial positions, where interacting with senior male managers was described as being either "stressful" or "non-existent" (Jonkheid & Mango, 2008, p.14). They also reported that they felt isolated during networking events after hours since most events are centred on male-oriented activities. Old boys' networks refer to the informal networks amongst men in organisations where their positions of influence and privilege are used to help advance others who share similar social backgrounds with them (Rand & Beriema, 2009). Rand and Beriema (2009) assert that acceptance into old boys' networks is automatic if you are "White, male and White collar'" (p. 2). This results in the deliberate exclusion of people of colour.

One such tactic used to deliberately exclude women from old boys' networks is through competency testing, which is subjecting an individual to having to constantly proving themselves over and over again (Oakley, 2000). Women are expected to work twice as hard to prove themselves as worthy of being part of exclusive upper level informal networks. Therefore since women often have fewer connections to powerful men in old boys' networks, they are often overlooked when it comes to promotions, and job opportunities are prioritised for those in the informal network (Bradley, 2013; Oakley, 2000). Although most of these

studies were conducted about ten years ago, it is likely that these aspects of organisational culture still remain in many organisations.

2.5.2. Gender Differences in Networking

An additional important aspect which has been highlighted as a barrier towards the inclusion and use of informal social networks by women, is the difference in how men and women network in the workplace (Mengel, 2015). Networking patterns refer to the strategic use of networking channels for job related advantages (Mengel, 2015). Gender differences in networking have been explained by two different perspectives, namely structural and dispositional. The dispositional perspective states that because men and women are inherently different, women choose to form closer ties with family members for support more than men (Stallings, 2008). However, men tend to form ties in order to gain instrumental resources (Bierema, 2005).

According to Bierema (2005, p.209), "men usually belong to larger, more economically focused networks, while women belong to smaller, more localized and community-minded networks". This means that women tend to network more for social purposes such as support, friendship, and belonging, whereas men often network for career advancement opportunities. Ibarra (1993) reported that women often use male-dominated networks to gain information on career issues and they use women's networks for social support. These differences in networking patterns often result in women forming informal social bonds with other women, and developing fewer connections with men who are in powerful networks (Bierema, 2005; Lalanne & Seabright, 2012). This could explain one of the reasons why men tend to gain more work-related opportunities, due to the types of conversations that they have with other men.

The structural perspective refers to the contextual factors and environmental boundaries which affect the types of relationships formed between individuals (Stallings, 2008). Social bonds between groups often form due to commonalities, where members with the same interests form closer bonds than with those they do not identify with (Ibarra, 1995). This phenomenon is commonly known as homophily. Homophily is seen as a natural process which occurs when networking informally because of factors such as sharing the same interests, experiences and because of proximity in physical space (Koput, 2010). Demographics such as age, gender and race also influence homophily in the workplace. Since

homophily occurs between people who are similar in identity, this results in better communication and stronger feelings of trust and reciprocity, however, it also restricts access to information from others (Ibarra, 1993). There are two main reasons which can result in homophily amongst women in the workplace. Firstly, since women often occupy positions in the lower levels of the organisational hierarchy, they have limited access to a diverse network of employees (Mcquire, 2000; Woodley & Woodley, 2012).Secondly, being the minority group in the workplace often means that Black women also have fewer social ties compared to men (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998).

Contrasting with this perspective is a study conducted by Ibarra (1997) on how male and female managers network which revealed that women who are seen as having high potential for leadership form less homophilous networks than men, but they used their close ties with others more often than men for career advancement opportunities. Mengel (2015) found a similar pattern in his study on gender differences in networking. This means that while men tend to have more connections with individuals similar in race, age or social class, women prefer to form fewer but closer bonds with those in their inner circle. Because men's networks consist of more men (such as old boys' networks), they are exposed to be more job-related opportunities than women. Ibarra (1992) also found that amongst members of a social network in an advertising firm, the men forged more homophilous ties but across multiple networks. This means that being part of a small network that is homophilous is not beneficial for the career advancement of women.

Woodley and Woodley (2012) also reported that although women prefer being part of homophilous groups, if given the opportunity, they actually tend to forge more mixed gender ties in order to gain more instrumental resources for job opportunities. The way women network has been described as "strategic" because they actively pursue male-dominated networks for instrumental purposes, such as receiving information on job opportunities and career guidance, and they choose to be part of female networks to gain social support and a sense of belonging (Stallings, 2008). Therefore, one of the strategies that women may use to integrate themselves into informal social networks is to negotiate and find ways of entering male-dominated networks and pursuing social networks which consist mostly of women for social support.

2.5.3. Gender Bias and Stereotypes

As quoted in Powell, Butterfield and Parent (2002, p.177), stereotypes are defined as "beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviours of members of certain groups". Gender and race stereotypes remain an issue in the career advancement of women due to their proven resistance to change. This means that even if women prove to be competent enough to perform a particular job, they will not necessarily advance to the same level and at the same pace as a man who performs at the exact same competence level (Heilman, 2001).

Stereotypes are seen as an issue because they are convenient, so they are often used to assign social roles based on persistent norms (Powell et al., 2002). Existing gender stereotypes about women include women being viewed as thoughtful, sensitive and kind, characteristics which are viewed as nurturing. Men on the other hand, are seen as being aggressive and assertive, qualities often associated with managerial and leadership roles (Pheko, 2013). According to Schein (1973, p. 95), these persistent role stereotypes have become imposed on certain occupations, such as management, through "occupational sex typing" where the predominance of a certain sex in an occupation becomes the normative expectation over time. The predominance of men in management has therefore led to the assertion that men are more suited to the role than women (Schein, 1973). Therefore it is often asserted that women need to possess male characteristics to be accepted in leadership roles, due to the "think manager- think male" perception (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010, p.287). These persistent stereotypes have resulted in bias against women when it comes to promotions.

In South Africa, women of colour face stereotypes that are founded in their past employment as maids for White employers (Maseko, 2013). They are often viewed as inferior or not as competent compared to White women in the work place. However, a study conducted by Erasmus (1998) on South African career driven women revealed that stereotyping and misunderstanding of the "female role" in society were viewed as reasons behind the lack of career advancement of South African women of all races (as cited in Maseko, 2013). So while White women also experience discrimination in the workplace, women of colour experience the glass ceiling on a larger scale. This is why the theory of intersectionality states that while all women may experience oppression and discrimination in the workplace, in the organisational hierarchy, White women receive better treatment than Black and coloured women.

A study conducted in the United States on perceptions of women's career advancement revealed that male Chief Executive Officers viewed a lack of managerial skills as the reason for the slow progress of women into senior management. However, female Chief Executive Officers reported that it was exclusion from male dominated informal social networking and access to mentoring that were the main reasons (Schuck & Liddle, 2004). Such differences in perceptions regarding barriers to the career advancement of Black women indicate that men do not believe women have the adequate skills to become senior managers. A similar result was found in a study by Booysen and Nkomo (2010) where South African men in management believed that women should not be in managerial roles because they do not possess the qualities required to become successful managers. More importantly, female participants in a study on perceptions of networking revealed that they were reluctant to network with male employees because of how men view women as always needing help to complete their tasks, and the women therefore avoided networking in an attempt to prevent their competency being questioned (Bierema, 2005).

Alan and Sözen (2017) also reported that women's informal social networks in the workplace are often less dense due to their need to juggle work and home demands. Women are believed to form fewer ties with employees in different departments in an organisation compared to men, due to less time being available for them to interact outside of working hours. This belief comes from the fact that women are seen as nurturers who should stay at home and take care of their families. However, with more women joining the workforce, women are expected to perform the dual role of being care givers at home and employees at work. Similarly, April et al. (2007) found that women were often excluded from informal networks because men believed that women do not have time for informal networking due to personal duties. This means that at times men actively exclude women due to the perception that women are required to have a balance between their work and personal expectations, and that women do not necessarily want to advance to top management due to a lack of time because of their home responsibilities. Cross and Linehan (2006) noted a similar issue, where women in the high technology sector found it more difficult to advance in their careers due to patriarchal organisational policies which tended to favour the formal and informal networking of men, but not women.

2.6. Social Network Theory

Social network theory refers to the study of how network affiliations and membership in an organisation or society are used in order to attain power and a better position within the organisation (Bierema, 2005).The theory originated from multiple research disciplines, mainly the sociometric analysis tradition from mathematics, which uses graph theory to map out the patterns of relationships, from the interpersonal approach which focuses on the relationships between individuals, and the anthropological discipline which explores relationships and structures on a communal and societal level (Krause, Croft, & James, 2007; Liu et al., 2017).

The theory has been used in various research disciplines to investigate complex group and individual level interactions, as well as their causes and consequences (Tichy, Tushman, Fombrun, & Tushman, 1979). For example, the theory has been used to investigate the education system in Uganda, by understanding how network affiliations can improve the distribution and acquisition of resources needed to improve the education system (Hite, Hite, Mugimu, & Nsubuga, 2010). Bierema (2005) explored how women's networks in the workplace are viewed as impediments or interventions for career advancement, and Woodley and Woodley (2012) used it to investigate how gender affects access to social capital goals in self-managed teams .It has also been used to investigate disease transmission and evolution patterns between species in biology (Krause et al., 2007).

According to the social network theory, a social network is "a social structure made up of nodes (individuals or organisations) which are linked (tied) by one or more specific types of relationship or interdependency, such as values, ideas, financial exchange, trade, friendship, kinship, social role as well as affective (respect, dislike etc.) or action (e.g. talks to, has lunch with) relationships" (Haas, 2009, p.5). The main principle of social network theory with regards to networking is that informal social networks are used for information exchange through personal relationships and an open communication channel which is not readily available through the formal structure of the organisation (Beriema, 2005). There are three main properties which need to be explored when evaluating networks, which are the nature of the links, the structural characteristics and the content shared between nodes (Tichy et al., 1979).

2.6.1. Nature of the Links

The nature of the links refers to the strength and quality of the relationship between the nodes. This focuses on a particular role an individual occupies within the group. According to Ibarra (1993), the strength of the relationship is also determined by the intimacy involved between the nodes. The factors which can affect the intimacy and strength include intensity, reciprocity, clarity of expectations and multiplexity. Intensity is the ability for a node to forego personal commitments in order to honour group obligations, and reciprocity refers to "the degree to which a relation is commonly perceived and agreed on by all parties to the relation (i.e. the degree of symmetry)" (Paul, 2010, p.60). Once an existing relationship status is founded and accepted, there needs to be clarity of expectations, which is the degree to which every member of the group has clearly defined roles and beliefs regarding their position in relation to each other. The last property is multiplexity, and this refers to the extent to which an individual takes on different roles within one network (Combs, 2003; Paul, 2010).

2.6.1.1. The Strength of Weak Ties

According to Ibarra (1993), the effective use of networks in the workplace occurs if weak ties are formed between individuals. A weak tie is described as infrequent contact between members outside the immediate social circle (Granovetter, 1983). If someone has a larger number of strong ties with people in their circle, then they are likely to receive the same information from these people (Andriani, 2013). Therefore having more strong ties becomes redundant overtime because of the similarities amongst members of the group. As stated by Lalanne and Seabright (2012, p.3) "the social connections that are the most valuable when looking for a job are not the closest ones but the more distant ones." Distant relationships, such as with co-workers and acquaintances that an individual does not have strong ties to, can yield more job opportunities and information because they are more likely to belong to multiple social groups who have access to different information (Lalanne & Seabright, 2012).

The strength of the ties between individuals depends on how often they meet, the information shared as well as the level of intimacy between individuals. Women are often known to have strong ties with other women in the organisation who are similar to them, and they have deeper levels of intimacy than the ties formed amongst men (Bierema, 2005). Lalanne and Seabright (2012) also reported that women tend to belong to smaller groups with strong bonds whereas men prefer having larger groups with weaker ties between the individuals.

Weak ties occur when there is no intimacy or perceived reciprocity between members in a group. The extent to which Black women in middle management can benefit from informal social networks therefore depends on the strength of the bonds between the people from different groups, the size of the network and the group composition. Referring to the "Strength of Weak ties", Granovetter (1983) suggests that to gain access to important information, you need to belong to networks that are large and consist of members who are connected to more than one other informal network.

2.6.2. Structural Properties

Structural properties describe the systematic patterns of relations which exist between the nodes, and there are four main levels which classify the structural properties (Tichy et al., 1979). Firstly, there is the external network which focuses on how nodes are linked to others in external domains, for instance, the relationships an employee may have with others from a different organisation. The second level is the internal network, which includes the total number of participants in a network and how they are linked to each other. The third level is the clusters formed within the network, and these are the parts of the networks where some nodes tend to form closer links with each other than the rest of the network (Tichy et al., 1979). An example would be an employee being closer to everyone from the human resources department than anyone from the finance department. Networks can also be formed formally such as work groups or departments within organisations, whereas others are caused by informal agreements (a degree of understanding) such as coalitions and cliques which are beyond the control of the formal organisational structure.

While there are numerous structural properties in networks which need to be analysed, for informal social networks, the components which are usually assessed are centrality, range, density, clique, cohesion and structural equivalence (Tichy et al., 1979). Centrality is the extent to which the nodes in the network are connected to each other, while range refers to how diverse the network is. Diversity can be based on demographics such as the racial composition and locations such members from different departments (Koput, 2010). Density describes the connectedness of the network by observing the quantity of existing links compared to the number of possible links. More related to the formation of informal social networks, cliques refer to more permanent informal affiliations between nodes for long term and broader purposes such as groups only consisting of young, Black women. Lastly, there is cohesion, which is "Grouping actors according to strong common relationships with each

other" (Paul, 2010, p.61). Cohesion has been used to investigate the development of subgroups and cliques within organisations (Liu et al., 2017). Structural equivalence refers to the grouping of nodes based on similarities such as individual traits and social status.

2.6.3. Content Shared

An integral aspect of social network theory which is important in understanding how Black female employees can benefit in the workplace from the formation of and access to informal social networks, is the concept of social capital. This is defined as the "resources embedded in social networks (or ties) accessed and used by its members" (Lin, 2001 as quoted in Andriani, 2013, p.5). More specifically, social capital consists of intangible assets gained from shared links, values and understanding within a group, which allows its members to achieve their desired goals (Keeley, 2007). Therefore the aim of inclusion in social networks is to acquire social capital, which is viewed as a tool necessary for career success and workplace inclusion. Since women and minority groups are known to form fewer ties, women are expected to form more relationships than men in order to gain access to social capital, such as political workplace information and career advancement opportunities (Gilbert & Ones, 1998). It would also beneficial for women to form more diverse networks to allow for more ties with individuals who have more status and power in the organisation (Gilbert & Ones, 1998; Ibarra, 1995).

2.6.3.1. Types of Content Shared

When people become part of a network, there are four different types of social capital which can be shared between members. The first one refers to affection or expression, and this refers to the expression of feelings, giving advice and social support. This type of content can be seen through friendships and liking (Tichy et al., 1979). Secondly, there is the transference of influence and power. This refers to political connections and being in a position of power with influential people. There is also the exchange of job related information such as work performance/input, career guidance, and exposure to promotions (Ibarra, 1993; Stallings, 2008). Lastly, there is the exchange of tangible goods and services such as financial resources (Podolny & Baron, 1997).The exchange of job related information and tangible resources is described as being instrumental because information and resources are professional and necessary for job performance (Stallings, 2008). Successful accumulation and use of the social capital in social networks is contingent on feelings of trust and reciprocity. People have

expectations such as receiving favours and access to influential people in the future and in present situations because of reciprocal obligations (Paul, 2010).

In the South African context, the patriarchal organisational culture and existing stereotypes about women may be seen as boundaries which presumably can affect how women integrate themselves into informal social networks at work. For instance, since men are perceived as better leaders who are equipped for managerial roles (Maseko, 2013), women would be excluded from the informal social networks that consist of men who are in influential positions in the workplace. This would possibly mean that women would not have direct access to the social capital embedded in these informal social networks such as job opportunities. This is why it is important to evaluate the different ways in which women can manage their integration into informal social networks that could be beneficial towards their career success.

The use of the social network theory to understand relationships in the workplace is favourable because it can be applied to actual real-life settings. A potential drawback is that it becomes difficult to separate personal preferences and the organisation's structural constraints (Stallings, 2008). The social network theory also seems to suggest that there are certain constraints and factors such as power, race and gender which determine how individuals become part of social circles. However it fails to acknowledge that people take active roles in structuring the networks, depending on what they actually want to achieve from being members of certain social circles (Bierema, 2005). Therefore, it is important to note that personal preferences can also determine how individuals choose to integrate themselves into informal social networks.

2.7. Research Aims

The main aim of this study is to identify Black female managers' perceptions of their integration into informal social networks at work. The secondary aim is to establish how Black female managers choose to manage their integration into informal social networks. Social Network Theory is the overarching theory that is used.

2.8. Research Questions

1. What perceptions do Black female managers have towards informal social networks at work?

2. What strategies do Black female managers use to manage their integration into informal social networks in the workplace?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the method that was followed to address the research questions in the study. It firstly outlines the methodology used in establishing the participants' perceptions of informal social networks at work. Thereafter the sampling procedure and sample description are provided, followed by the data gathering procedure. This chapter also discusses the method used to analyse the data. Lastly, this chapter concludes by outlining the ethical considerations which had to be adhered to throughout the research study.

3.2. Research Design

When conducting research, one of the first steps which need to be considered is deciding on a research design that will inform how the research is conducted. A research design is described by Babbie and Mouton as "a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research" (2002, p.74). There are two main methods which can be followed, namely qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative research refers to the empirical study of observable constructs through the use of objective and standardised measures of data collection. The purpose of quantitative research is to gain insight into predetermined categories by assigning responses to existing labels and emphasis is on the use of numbers to explain constructs. Qualitative research emphasises a holistic approach to human behaviour by describing phenomena based on the research participant's perspective within the context in which they experienced them (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). Therefore the aim of qualitative research is to understand human behaviour by engaging more with the participants by being more interactive with the participants within the organisations where they actually work.

A key difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that qualitative research allows for the management of data without destroying the complexity and the context, and more importantly, it allows for richness and in depth data to be gained, permitting a more realistic description of the participants' experiences (Atieno, 2009). Quantitative research, however, allows for replication and therefore generalisability to other settings. This research used the qualitative research methodology since the purpose was to explore the phenomena in specific contexts and not to generalise the findings to other settings.

The aim of the study was to identify Black female managers' perceptions of informal social networks, and identify whether/how they choose to integrate themselves into informal social networks at work, therefore the overall design was qualitative, exploratory and descriptive. Due to the absence of control and experimental groups or random assignment of the sample, the study was also non-experimental and cross-sectional. There was also no manipulation of the variables being studied, however this non-experimental cross-sectional approach is appropriate for this study because the aim is to explore and identify the participant's perceptions of informal social networks at work at a single place and point in time, without manipulating any variables (Babbie, 2013).

Conducting this study qualitatively appears appropriate because it emphasises the importance of the social context in which the phenomenon is occurring (Fossey, Harvey, Mcdermott & Davidson, 2002), since the formation and integration of informal social networks by employees also depends on the organisational structure, culture as well as climate. A qualitative study permits a great deal of information on the subject matter to be uncovered, allowing a thorough and rich description of the phenomena to be interpreted (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010).

When selecting a research design, the paradigm which will inform the nature of the research study also needs to be considered. A paradigm is defined by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p.6) as the "all-encompassing systems of interrelated practise and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their enquiry." There are three types of paradigms which exist, namely the positivist approach, which aims to explain overt reality through empirical and detached objective methods, the interpretivist approach which explains phenomena through the subjective experience of people using interactive methods, and the constructionist approach which involves adopting a political lens when deconstructing people's realities (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). This research study adopted the interpretivist approach, in order to appreciate the specific perspectives of the participants.

3.3. Sample

In order to find the sample for this study, a non-probability sampling strategy was used, because selecting this sample from the population was not random. This means that not everyone in the population had an equal chance of being selected since the purpose was to find a homogenous group participants with specific characteristics (Fossey et al., 2002). In

this study, the purposive sampling strategy using the snowballing technique was used. Purpose sampling is defined as selecting a sample with certain characteristics in order to address the specific research aims (Palnikas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). Snowballing refers to finding this specific unique sample by being referred to others with these characteristics by the participants (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This specific strategy was used because of the scarcity of Black female managers. Finding this specific sample would be more likely because the participants would be aware of where I could potentially find others who meet the criteria. This sampling strategy is best suited for studies where the aim is to uncover emerging ideas and thoughts from the participants (Fossey et al., 2002).

The sample comprises of 9 Black females who are employed in middle management and who have been in a corporate organisation for at least a year. This is because according to Stibitz (2015), it usually takes employees at least a year to be integrated into the formal structure of an organisation. The number of participants was based on reaching the point of saturation, which is an accepted practice in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). For inclusion, the participants had to have at least 2 years' experience in managerial positions or have worked in different levels of management. This was to ensure that they were able to comment on whether access to informal social networks aided or impeded their workplace inclusion and integration over time. Due to the struggle of finding participants, the number was reduced to 1 year in order to allow for more participants to be found. The participants were managers from different organisations such as financial institutions, student accommodation services and a logistics company. A detailed summary of the demographic information is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants

Participant	Age	Current position	Number of years in position	Number of years in organisation
1	24	General manager	1	1
2	37	HR manager (leadership and coaching)	2	4
3	46	Fund manager	2	2
4	42	Group manager (IT)	2	5
5	55	Learning and Development Manager	18	5
6	47	Senior HR Manager (Services and Operations)	5	5
7	43	Senior Team Manager	9	10
8	26	Residence Manager	2	2
9	28	HR Manager	2	2

In summary, the participants were aged between 24 and 55 years. All of the participants except one had been in management positions for more than 2 years, the longest being for 18 years. Participants managed different departments such as finance, information technology, student accommodation and human resources. The majority of the participants had been employed in their organisations for more than two years, with the longest being 10 years.

3.4. Procedure

3.4.1. General Procedure

Once ethical clearance was granted by the University of the Witwatersrand Research Ethics Committee (ethics no: MORG/17/010 IH) (Appendix G), the following procedure was followed to find the participants. The potential participants were approached by email or referral. If interested in participating, a meeting was scheduled for a specific time and place to conduct the face-to-face interview based on availability. The first participant was found through Wits Plus (a section of the University of the Witwatersrand that offers part-time courses), and she was given course credit for participating. The interview took place at the University of the Witwatersrand. The second and third participants were found through referrals from the researchers' colleagues. Participants 4, 5 and 9 were referred to me by participant 3 because they all work in the same company. Participants 6, 7 and 8 were all found through direct referrals from friends and family members. Except for the first interview, all interviews were conducted at the participants' place of work.

All of the interviews were recorded using a voice recorder on a phone and each recording was then saved on a password protected computer. Each recording was then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Using a recorder has its disadvantages, because it may be seen as "overly intrusive" by the participants, therefore it could potentially alter their responses (Fossey et al., 2002, p.728). It is, however, helpful in situations where the exact words of the participant are of great importance in the study where their meanings need to be interpreted accurately.

3.5. Instruments

Since the aim of the study was to identify Black female managers' perceptions of informal social networks at work based on their lived experiences, the data collection method needed to be flexible enough to allow the participant to take the lead when telling their stories (Fossey et al, 2009). Data was therefore gathered using a semi-structured interview consisting of ten to twelve questions (Appendix E). The questions were based on concepts taken from the Social Network Theory (Lui et al., 2017; Tichy et al., 1979) in order to uncover whether or not informal social networks were perceived as helpful in the workplace for the participants. These concepts included content shared between members, network composition and network structure. Other questions were based on a review of previous research in the

area of women in management and informal social networking (Bierema, 2005; Combs, 2003; Ibarra, 1993; Mcquire, 2000; Stallings, 2008)

The interview process involved asking the participant questions related to the research topic. When using a semi-structured interview, there is no particular order in how the questions are asked because probing questions are also used based on how the participants respond, so you would not stick to the order of the questions (Fossey et al., 2009). The first few questions were general questions about the participants' careers, and they were included to establish rapport and make the participant feel comfortable and at ease. The length of the interviews varied based on the participants' responses and their schedules, but it took approximately 35 minutes for the interviews to be conducted. The advantage of using interviews is that they allow for clarity to be gained in situations where there are misunderstandings or when further information is needed. Participants are also free to speak freely and not feel restricted by close ended questions.

A short biographical questionnaire (Appendix F) was also used to collect information regarding the sample for description purposes only. The participants were asked to provide their age, job title, number of years in the organisation and number of years in their current position. This contributed to describing the participants' contexts.

3.6. Data Analysis

Once the interviews had been conducted and recorded, the recordings were transcribed and the transcripts formed the data that was used for analysis. The data was then analysed using thematic analysis. This refers to the process of identifying and interpreting the patterns of themes which emerge from the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involved identifying themes and categories which arose during the interviews and then describing them in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are two types of themes which may emerge, namely latent and manifest themes. A latent theme is the underlying meaning behind certain phenomena, whereas manifest themes are the directly observable patterns. These themes were then classified based on similarities, in order to show the patterns that arose from the data. Themes were used in order to provide a subjective understanding of the phenomena (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010), by interpreting the specific perceptions held by participants based on how they construct the story of their experiences of integration . The themes were also discovered through an inductive method because the themes arose directly from the data

itself, rather than being forced to fit an already existing set of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The inductive method is appropriate because the intention was to uncover ideas which are specific to the data collected from the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using the inductive method requires describing the themes at the manifest level first, and then attempting to explain them at the latent level.

There are certain steps which were followed when conducting the thematic analysis. Firstly, I familiarised myself with the data by transcribing it and then constantly re-reading my transcriptions and listening to the recordings to highlight certain themes which are apparent and to gain some understanding of the data. Majority of the themes were related to the concepts of social network theory.

Once certain themes were identified, I then coded certain features which I discovered under the various themes that I found interesting. Some codes were either brought together or divided to create more refined themes with clearer names and definitions. Certain extracts were then selected to represent the themes, and the themes were then reviewed by ensuring that the extracts chosen matched the themes, and changes were then made if the themes needed refining.

This method of analysis has its benefits because it provides a rich, detailed description of themes within a study, especially in instances where latent themes or one particular theme is the main focus of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method does, however, have its limitations because if you wish to provide rich descriptions on the entire data set which you are using, then the analysis loses a lot of depth and complexity because you need to briefly reflect on the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Some personal bias, however, could potentially be introduced into the data analysis because as the researcher, I did the collection and interpretation of the data using my own idiosyncratic understanding. Therefore the participants' own personal opinions and beliefs could have been altered during the data collection and analysis process (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010; Fossey et al., 2002). As a Black female researcher, I have acknowledged that I may have influenced or be influenced by the research study throughout the duration of the research project. I have addressed this problem while interpreting their responses through the use of reflexivity, because reflexivity entails actively becoming aware of any preconceptions

that I may have during my data collection and analysis. In order to handle this issue, I kept a journal to write my thoughts about how I felt throughout the study.

Throughout the process of analysing and interpreting the data, I would constantly reread my notes to remain cognisant of how my lack of work experience could have an impact on how I interpret the data. My lack of work experience could have impacted how much importance I would attribute to the different benefits that the participants described. Similarly, although the participants were all in the same level of management, in exception to participants 6 who was more in a senior role, the participants could have also been in varying points in their careers, and my understanding of career success may have been different to theirs. As a Black female researcher, I often would agree with the participants and would often feel like I knew where they were coming from, so I had to constantly ensure that I did not let my beliefs cloud my interpretation.

3.7. Ethical considerations

The following ethical considerations were adhered to in order to protect the psychological well-being of the participants and to prevent harm (American Psychological Association, 2002). Firstly, permission was granted by the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee before data collection could take place (Appendix G). Before each interview commenced, the participants were provided with a participant information sheet (Appendix A for the Wits Plus student and Appendix B for the other participants), which provided an explanation of what the research study about, how it would be carried out (through interviews), what participation entails as well as the researcher and supervisors' contact details. They were also each asked to sign consent forms to participate (Appendix C), to audio record the interview and to use quotations (Appendix D) in any reports, presentations or publications based on this study. They were also informed of their right to refuse to answer specific questions or to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable at any point during the interview (American Psychological Association, 2002). However, no participants used this option. Participants were also asked to fill in a short biographical questionnaire (Appendix F) and they were informed that it was purely for descriptive purposes.

A summary of the results will be provided to the participants on completion of the study. Confidentiality was maintained because no one other than the researcher or her supervisor

had access to the recordings. The transcribed data and results did not have any information such as participants' names or the names of the companies they work for, which could potentially identify them, and pseudonyms were used in all reports. Although the participants were not regarded as vulnerable subjects, they were told that if they felt psychologically distressed by any of the questions, they can contact us and they would be referred to Lifeline to speak to a professional at no financial charge. These contact details could be used 24 hours a day in order to ensure that the psychological well-being of the participants was respected and were of first priority.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1. Introduction

The results from the thematic analysis that was conducted are provided in this chapter. Pseudonyms in the form of interview numbers were used to protect the participants' identities and to provide confidentiality. These results are based on the social networking theory which was used to reveal the perceptions that Black female managers have towards informal social networks at work. Some of the quotes and extracts overlap in different themes. This chapter begins by discussing participants' awareness and involvement in informal social networks, followed by the perceived benefits of informal social networks and integration strategies into these informal social networks at work. Lastly, the network compositions are discussed. A thematic map is provided at the end of the chapter as a summary. The most predominant theme which emerged was that the majority of participants indicated that they do not perceive themselves as being part of informal social networks at work. However, those who did see themselves as being part of informal social networks at work used these networks for instrumental purposes and emotional support. Despite the fact that the majority of participants did not see themselves as belonging to informal social networks at work, they acknowledged the benefits of informal relationships at work.

The following section provides the results from the interviews conducted with the nine Black female managers.

4.1 Participants' awareness of informal social networks at work

In order to understand how informal social networks are helpful for career success, it was firstly important to note whether or not the participants were aware of the informal social networks in their place of work. All the participants except interviewee 3 indicated that they were aware of the different types of informal social networks which exist in their organisations:

> *[Laughs]…. Uhm. It goes without saying that any organisation, whether work, church, sport team… whatever you can think of. All organisations have some sort of informal networks between their staff. Uhmm… (thinking)… I don't think that it is realistic to assume that an organisation will only just have formal networks which are… [pause]… which are determined by the organisation. Every organisation will have some sort of informal networks because people click with each other, you know.*

People are attracted to other people who are like them in some way and inevitably that will create informal groups. So yeah… I am not sure how to describe those groups that are here at work. But they are there. There's cliques, 'friends' to some extent, and people that come together to form some sort of a group for whatever reason, you know. I just can't describe them. (Interviewee 9)

Within the organisation? Let me be honest with you that the networks within the organisation that I would say are there and it actually helps. It's making sure that at my level you are very close with all the other executives. Like its human that you will have those that are very close to you, those that will actually be able you know, to also have confidence in you. (Interviewee 6)

Yes. There are those ones that uh, do, like you know uh, a certain race you know, especially in a call centre. There's this thing that, especially even if we go for training as leaders and you know, a certain race would love to group themselves when they say we must do group work and activities and stuff like that. It's the same thing here in the call centre you know especially lunch time you know. You go to the canteen and you see you know a certain race grouping themselves together. (Interviewee 7)

Eight of the nine participants indicated that they were aware of how certain individuals tend to group themselves within the workplace due to common characteristics, such as race or organisational level, or liking and attraction. They also mentioned how it seems inevitable and common for people to be interested in interacting with others beyond the formal organisational structure.

Secondly, participants were asked whether or not they believed they were part of any of the informal social networks that they mentioned. This was important because it would be informative regarding the different integration strategies that they use to manage being (or not being) part of informal social networks at work. Only four of the participants revealed that they are part of some form of informal social network at work.

Yeah, we called ourselves the melanin girls, the Black girls of course because we were the only ones it was [lists all their names] ... We even had our own Skype and WhatsApp group uhm, and I just didn't like it I think. (Interviewee 1)

Yes, I would say I do, because I forgot to mention that there is a gym in the building so you can also go out at the gym either as part of that social network, you have a group of people that you go to in a certain aerobics class with and you find other people like guys for an example they don't normally do aerobics, but you will find them in the weights area or treadmill. (Interviewee 2)

These participants suggested that they were part of informal social networks because of how they identified with each other based on factors such as being the minority race in the

organisation or how their organisations foster their integration. Although Interviewee 2 stated that she sees herself as part of informal social networks in the workplace, she mostly described the networking channels promoted by the organisation, such as the workplace gym. These differences will be discussed further in the next sections.

Contrary to the other participants, participants 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 mentioned that they do not necessarily feel that they belong to any informal social network per se:

> *There are, but, I'm not too much involved in that. As a manager, you need to have boundaries. Okay, love your people, support them, be there for them, but at the same time I'm not too much into politics, okay. I don't like to get myself involved with you know, social groups, you know and stuff like that because that also has to do with my character, as a manager you need to draw boundaries as I'm saying. (Interviewee 7)*
>
> *Currently I don't, eh I usually don't like it because sometimes you find that people abuse these informal networks so for me it depends. (Interviewee 5)*
>
> *Not really, no. Not really. (Interviewee 6)*
>
> *Yes… well I don't know. After work, it's my life outside work because I live here. So I wouldn't want to be part of any network or more than what I am at the moment. I need a life apart from work because I do live, that's more than enough for me to socialise as well at work, so ah no. (Interviewee 8)*

It appears that there are various reasons why the abovementioned participants chose not to belong to any informal social networks in the workplace. Firstly, it appears that the participants perceived informal social networks as political tools that people often misuse for various reasons, and they did not want to be part of social groups because of their professional role as a manager. Secondly, the participants do not want to engage in informal social networks at work because they do not want their informal social networking at work to cross over into their personal lives after work. These reasons are due to personal preferences or professional boundaries.

It is also important to note that the majority of the participants did not see themselves as belonging to any informal social networks, and this might have an impact of the strategies used to manage their integration into the organisation. It is not known however, whether the participants would have felt differently about being part of informal social networks if they had not been part of a minority race at their level in their organisations. The next section

discusses the different benefits that the participants believe are gained from being part of informal social networks at work.

4.2. Benefits of Informal Social Networks

The participants where asked about the potential gains of being involved in informal social networks, and various themes emerged. The most prominent theme that was identified by most of the participants was social belonging, support, information sharing, exposure to job opportunities and job security. These are discussed below.

4.2.1. Sense of belonging

Two participants believed that people become part of informal social networks to obtain a sense of belonging and social affiliation through interpersonal social interaction:

> *It's for belonging, its sense of belonging. It's also you know you spend so much time at work and if you, if you don't have any networks you tend to be a loner. (Interviewee 4)*

> *I would say definitely social fulfilment. Like a sense of belonging, you know. When there are people that you identify with, it sort of makes your experiences of that place that much better and enjoyable, you know. We are all social beings, the way I see it. Nobody can be absolutely happy on their own. It's impossible. From time to time we need that social interaction. (Interviewee 9)*

These two participants quoted above both indicated that they belong to informal social networks at work.

4.2.2. Recovery from mental workload

Participants 2, 8 and 9 indicated that being part of informal social networks is helpful when it comes to taking a break and de-stressing from work because it allows them to vent about work related issues. Informal social networks allow them to escape the stress of work.

> *Yeah it is we really need it because you need fresh air, you need to reflect and you need to tell them what you are going through, not in a formal office way. You just need to chill and talk about it in a relaxed environment, and at least know what other people are going through that you are not working closely with, so other residence managers and office staff.* (*Interviewee 8)*

> *I feel that after you have concentrated a lot and not getting distracted you are prone to make errors in some of the things you do (…) As you know even health wise they say you must get up and stretch your legs. I think the mind will also need that form of*

exercise where you just going to pause. (…) It's pointless sitting at your desk for straight five to six hours and expect that you are going to be productive. (Interviewee 2)

Yeah. But also, you get a chance to debrief and take a well-deserved break. So yeah, when you don't have such cliques… it can be lonely and boring and miserable. I mean no one to talk to… (laughs)… or vent. None of that. So at least when you have people that you share the same values with and those sorts of things. You can use them as an escape to vent and debrief during a long workday or something like that (Interviewee 9)

Once again, the benefit of informal interactions with colleagues was recognised by both participants who stated that they belonged to informal social networks at work (Interviewee 2 and 9) and those who did not (Interviewee 8). It appears that the majority of the participants indicated that they do receive some form of support from their informal social networks.

4.2.3. Information sharing

Participants who reported that they belong to informal social networks felt that being part of the informal social networks gave them more access to information in the workplace. This information seemed to be related to work, but was often sensitive information that not everyone in the organisation would have access to:

Uhm it's really good because you tend to find out things that your own direct formal structure wouldn't give you. So you find out like for instance that there's bonuses, and your boss wouldn't maybe be talking about when bonuses are coming but people outside the network will be able to share with you these things, I mean outside your department in your networks. (Interviewee 4)

There was this Indian lady that they got, the one that left but she left because she saw that it was a circus. When she started, when we were getting paid she didn't get paid. So she went to the CFO and (…) she was like can I speak to you outside"?" she [The CFO] was like "No its fine ask, you can ask your question". She was like no I just wanted to check payments because I haven't received anything. She [The CFO] didn't reply, her sister replied (…) and said "no no no don't worry. Us bank A people only got paid" so she [Indian Lady] was like "Hold up, how do you even know I'm bank A you not supposed to know all this stuff. So I think (…) because they were all friends somehow they knew each other and already they had relationships with each other that were not solely professional, lines were crossed and I bet you they knew how much I was getting paid and all of that. (Interviewee 1)

In these instances, the informal social networks increase their power base by assisting with access to scarce, but relevant, important and sometimes sensitive information. This is

information that is often integrally related to organisational politics where knowing certain people gives them access that not everyone in the company would have access to.

Participants 3 and 7 stated, however, that not being part of informal social networks did not prevent them from receiving important information in the workplace:

> *Not really because we do get bulk emails that inform us as to what is happening in the organisation but what I've done is that I do my own research, okay. Like I'm saying yes, I do have a small group that I network with but we don't see each other every day and in most cases, we communicate with each other via email because they need information from my department and I also need information from them. So ja, it's not easy. Like I'm saying people withhold information, they sift it and they want to tell you what they think you want to hear or what is best for you and along the process there's communication break down and barriers and all of that. (Interviewee 7)*

It could be argued, however, that participants who are not part of informal social networks would not necessarily be aware of information they could have access to through networks. Also, there are some contradictions in the quote above. Interviewee 7 acknowledges that people filter information, yet she seems to rely on formal communication (i.e., emails) to obtain the information required for her job. This is a contradiction because she is aware that she may not be receiving important information that she potentially could gain access to through informal social networks, so she actively does her own research to get the information she needs. Whether this allows her to obtain adequate information, particularly regarding sensitive information, is unknown. She also seems to express a degree of mistrust towards information that is obtained informally as she perceives it as being biased, but does not acknowledge that information obtained through formal channels may also be incomplete or biased. Two other participants also perceived no disadvantages from not being part of an informal social network at work:

> *No, it doesn't hinder me in any way because part of being in these social networks is that our company has an app where staff members can state their opinions and views and they can talk about anything and everything such as the lift is off don't use lift C because someone was stuck in the lift. So, it is a nice internal app that has been created for us so to makes it easier to engage so it wouldn't hinder your work or productivity. (Interviewee 2)*

> *No, it's not influential here you actually in these networks, you join and its gossip, gossip. Uh they don't want to see people actually sitting and discussing so sitting and discussing is like you gossiping. (Interviewee 5)*

Participant 5 acknowledges that she does not see informal social networks as being constructive in the workplace, but as focusing on content that is not work-related. However, she may not be aware of how she may be missing out on access to important information whose availability is influenced by organisational politics. This may be due to the fact that participant 5 is in a more senior position than the other participants, and may already have access to the information she needs through the formal organisational channels.

One other aspect related to information sharing refers to the open communication between the participants and their subordinates:

> *Yes, and if something is not going right they [subordinates] do report to me that okay this and this happened. They are free to talk to me rather than to be shy or that they will lose their job or whatever so for them it becomes easier and then I wouldn't even know about it. I did this because of 1, 2 3 before I can even find out from someone else. (Interviewee 7)*

> *Late 2015, December and I started working here. And my junior staff, I treat them as family rather than staff members. So that if they have a problem they feel free to come to me and tell me and if they feel like I'm not being fair on other things it will be easy for them to talk to me and we can fix the problem rather than having a bitter staff that will do things not knowing why. So, I prefer to have them as family more than staff. But if they are wrong they know I will reprimand them but from a good part and from somebody who cares rather than somebody who's is angry and all that. (Interviewee 8)*

These two participants initially indicated that they do not feel part of any informal social networks; however, it appears that they see the relatively informal nature of their relationships with their subordinates as substituting for the need to belong to an informal social network. This is contrary to how participant 7 described her lack of informal social networks at work as due to her need to maintain boundaries in her role as a manager. This suggests that some participants might have confused the notion of informal social networking and informal management styles. This raises a theoretical question as to where the boundary between informal relationships, informal management styles, and informal social networks occur in the workplace.

4.2.4. Social support

The participants indicated that being part of informal social networks allows them to obtain social support from their peers and that their peers understand them a lot better. The

participants received emotional as well as work related support from their networks. The support sometimes seems to go beyond the workplace:

> B*eing part of my HR network (…) there is common understanding about where each one of us is coming from and thus the amount of support that we offer to each other is unbelievably high. And this is support in all forms. Like I mentioned, we are so close that we attend each other's family support which means that there is emotional support that is provided outside the organisation...it's like we have been friends for a long time. Also within the workplace, there is emotional support that you can get if you need it. (Interviewee 9)*

> *You are able to share that me taking my issues at work home are starting to affect my marriage and if someone is able to say "no don't do that this is how I have actually overcome that". (Interviewee 5)*

> *Your processes and the things you try to achieve in the organisation take longer so I would say they help with lobbying. (Interviewee 4)*

Interviewee 4 further highlights how the support she receives from her peers assists in getting her plans achieved more quickly than through the formal structure. Due to the emotional support received from their peers, they are able to influence the decision-making processes. This shows how informal social networks can assist with instrumental benefits due to the social support received.

Furthermore, an important aspect of emotional support provided by the network was the sense of understanding because they shared something in common:

> *You know with these networks because you tend to, people tend to understand you, who you are and some of the things as you propose they know where you are coming from because they know the kind of person you are so they are more, they might be, like sort of support in whatever it is that you propose because they know your intention and the type of person you are, and they know you do due diligence you know. But when you don't have any relationship, people tend to dig more and they doubt you basically. So, they do help. (Interviewee 4)*

> *You felt home at least, and you felt like its people who understand you, people that want to understand you. (Interviewee 5)*

> *Like it's human that you will have those that are very close to you, those that will actually be able you know also have confidence in you. (Interviewee 6)*

> *Uhm, relationships are key in terms of leadership, so if you want to climb up the ladder you have to build your, like good relationships with your stakeholders so it's one big thing that a leader needs to look at so you'll find. For instance, my job is more governance and more compliance so it's more like a policy, so people will push*

you back because you are like straightforward, everything is by the book and all that and if I use the networks it makes it easy for people to see outside your policy that you know so ya they are very good, relationships are a must they are one of the stepping stones. (Interviewee 4)

The support that they receive seems to feed into their reputations and credibility at work. Being part of informal social networks is perceived by the participants as important for increasing their power base so their competency is not always questioned. Since they understand each other, it is much easier for them to prove themselves. Participant 6, however, also highlighted that you can use your network as a platform to share your ideas in a non-formal way which is a strategic use of networking. She also highlights how her network allows her to get away from organisational politics because you do not need to always safe guard what you are saying.

Informal networks can be very good. You not safeguarding what you going to be saying and you not going to be judged than when in formalised. And I think on the other hand it opens up because it doesn't confine you to say this is the structure this is what can be discussed. If its informal it allows for anything you see which is quite helpful because you can ask and you can talk about anything, it doesn't say no this forum or this network platform is about this. (Interviewee 6)

Secondly, the participants also felt that they were able to receive work related support from colleagues that were part of their networks because it was easier to ask for help from them, and because they were more likely to share the challenges that they have faced and how they overcame them.

But we also support each other with work related… uhm with work stuff. Like if someone is struggling to perform their job, or need a pair of extra hands, we are always there for each other. We will not baby sit each other though… like everyone knows that at the end of the day they are responsible for delivering on their role that they are hired for. But if someone is struggling and needs some help, it is easier to approach people from the network for help than anyone else in the department. (Interviewee 9)

If you are with someone who is in the same level with you or higher but as long as they are in management you are able to talk the same language and you can say this is what I'm experiencing in my space and the person might have gone through the same thing and could be able to give you some kind of advice and say you know what, that thing that you talking about I've once experienced it or so and so who's within my network has experienced it and this is how they have handled it. (Interviewee 6)

It is important to note that with the exception of interviewees 4 and 9, all the quotes in this section are from participants who stated that they were not part of informal social networks at work. Despite this, they commented about the emotional support they personally have experienced based on relationships with colleagues. This suggests that many participants do experience social and emotional support at work although they do not necessarily attribute this to an informal social network, but to relationships at work. This could be interpreted as a lack of understanding of informal social networks, or as indicating overlap between informal relationships at work and informal social networks. It is also possible that the boundaries between formal and informal relationships at work are not as clear as definitions suggest.

4.2.5. Career opportunities

Participants 8 and 9 indicated that if you became part of an informal social network, it would expose you to job opportunities and it was easier to get help with work related content if people were aware of you.

> *Interviewee 8: I think you can express what you are capable of most of the time rather than having to be in your own corner all the time, people not knowing about you and what you are capable of doing, if there are opportunities for you, you understand, nobody would know if you are sitting at your own corner doing whatever you were doing rather than trying to be friendlier and helping out where you can so that people and see what you are capable of*
>
> ***Interviewer: So opportunities as in job opportunities?***
>
> *Interviewee 8: Yes*

Participants 3 and 5 mentioned how being known in the organisation is pivotal if you are part of a network with a strong power base because when changes are being made, you will be recommended. This highlights how organisational politics is used by participants because you get more exposure to opportunities. Participant 8, the youngest manager in the group however does not think informal social networks are necessary for exposure to developmental and career growth opportunities. She believed that they were somewhat important if you knew when to draw the line between being professional and friendly. This may be because she has not yet reached the stage in her career where politics and power play a significant role in her career success.

The quotes below were responses to the question regarding the potential benefits to being part of informal networks and whether integration into informal social networks was seen as pivotal in the workplace:

> *I don't know if that should be the case but it is the case. Sometimes if you don't put yourself out there and people know you then you will be left behind uhm unless people know you then when there are changes being made they think of you because they know of you. (Interviewee 3)*

> *Networking is very important in your career life, very important; you cannot stay in a place where you cannot network. But it depends on who the leader is in that organisation, specifically for us who are in the human resources space uh, if we are not given that exposure you won't know what it is that is happening out there. (Interviewee 5)*

> *I don't think so. I think the hard work that you put it's not about knowing who. If you are willing to learn you will eventually grow. Here in the company if you working if you hard worker if you want to progress if you show that you can do something you get the opportunity. (Interviewee 8)*

> *I think it's good, as long as you know when to draw the line [between being friendly and professional]. (Interviewee 8)*

The quotes in this section highlight how the participants are aware of the importance of networking, although the majority of participants indicated that they do not necessarily belong to informal social networks at work. Nevertheless, they were aware of the value of relationships at work and the advantages of these relationships such as exposure to career opportunities.

4.2.6. Job security

Participant 1 revealed that some of her colleagues who were in a different network that she was not part of had greater job security because they were part of a network with a stronger power base, so they believed that they would never lose their jobs. She felt that if she did something wrong she could potentially lose her job even though it was never explicitly stated to her. When asked about what are the potential benefits from integrating into informal social networks, she replied:

> *Job security. I'm not going to lie. I feel like they [other employees who are not part of her network] knew that whatever happened they knew that it was solid... (...) ... With us [referring to her melanin girls network], if you did something wrong, you were definitely going to lose your job even though they wouldn't say that. (Interviewee 1)*

It is interesting to note how participant 1 was able to identify the possible benefits of being part of an informal social network that she was not part of. This indicates how the participant was aware of how a lack of integration in certain informal social networks may exclude her from gaining certain benefits such as job security.

The previous section discussed the various benefits that the participants believed they gained from informal social networks at work. The previous section also highlighted both advantages and disadvantages of integrating into these networks, as well as how exclusion from certain networks may prevent them from gaining certain benefits such as job security. The next section discusses the different strategies that they used to either integrate into informal social networks at work or manage their lack of integration into these informal social networks.

4.3. Integration strategies

Since the majority of the participants indicated that they are not necessarily part of informal social networks in the organisation, the following themes emerged which indicated the various ways in which the participants managed their choice to either integrate or not into informal social networks at work. The first one is strategic integration, followed by professional boundaries and groupings based on minority status.

4.3.1. Strategic integration

One of the ways in which the participants became part of informal social networks is through the meticulous selection of who to network with for the purpose of gaining something:

> *It depends on the subject matter and why we interacting because you have people who are just platonic, people who you discuss certain things with. You've got for instance [people] you engage with for support and you've got people that you engage with because there is a certain objective or something that you are trying to achieve as a group, so it depends and warrants on who you are communicating with... (…). It depends on who I'm interacting with and what my motives of interaction. (Interviewee 5)*

> *Informal networks.... I don't know of any, but I can tell you this… I have made it my job to strategically align myself uh, so it's not necessarily network but recognising who's the right person to align yourself with and then doing that, so I'm not necessarily in informal networks but I, whenever I see an opportunity to align myself I*

use it because, sometimes it does matter who you know. I don't know if that should be the case but it is the case sometimes if you don't put yourself out there and people know you then you will be left behind uhm unless people know you then when there are changes being made they think of you because they know of you. (Interviewee 3)

I am skilled in sussing people, well I'd like to believe that so if I see that okay this the right person to align with uhm so it's not senior people but also because there is a lot of politics in a state-owned entity, I won't speak for other organisations, although I think all organisations but in more so in company T uhm there is organisational politics so I look at who's who in terms of seniority but also politically. Not, I don't know how to explain but I just know who to align myself with and I do not let other people know who I have aligned myself with. So if I have made an alliance with someone that's for me to know it's not for anyone else to know it won't be public because a lot of the times when there is changes the ones I was referring to the whole empire changes so now then there's new people so if people knew you were aligned with the last empire then doors might be closed in the new empire. I don't know if I'm making sense. (Interviewee 3)

I don't necessarily belong to a particular network per se but I've been very selective in terms of who I hang around with. My friends, I, you will pardon what I say if it comes out wrong, I don't hang out with losers because you are who you spend your time with. People influence you whether you are aware of it or not but people you spend your time with the most they influence you without you even realising, so I've make it a point to carefully select who I hang around with I don't necessarily belong to a particular network. (Interviewee 3)

These quotes indicate that there is a strong instrumental and political aspect when it came to how participant 3 selected her networks and the members of her networks. Participant 5 was selective regarding who she spoke to, based on whether she required emotional support or had an instrumental purpose. Participant 3 however only chooses to include people that she is aware will increase her power base, so her networking strategy was more instrumental and politically based. She seems to be aware of how having certain people in your network can influence the opportunities that you will be exposed to. Despite the fact that during the interview she initially stated that she did not belong to an informal social network, the above quotes indicate that she carefully and intentionally created and /or joined network(s) in order to increase her power and agency.

An important concept to note that arose from the interviews was the sense of agency which was exhibited by the participants. While the social networking theory suggested that various external factors such as organisational culture determine how an individual actually integrates into a network, it does not emphasise how individuals can actively play a role in determining

and choosing how they can fit into certain informal social networks. This is an idea that is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Strategic integration also speaks to how the participants actually networked, based on how certain people serve different roles when networking with them:

> *No, I mean, you, if you network you are able to meet people you otherwise would not have met so I am a big fan of networking but it has to be the right networks. Don't network for the sake of networking because it can waste your time as well. Uhm, whenever you are considering a particular network ask yourself what's in it for me and also what can you bring because you shouldn't be coming in just to sponge off people but you should also be bringing something. But uh, networking is very critical hey, networking uhm, look for a network that will yield something for you but also where you can contribute. (Interviewee 3)*

> *There are always certain people who drive a certain intention, so those people will sit in a particular network. (Interviewee 6)*

These participants believe that networking should take place if there is an instrumental purpose to it, and that networking should occur with the purpose of gaining resources. Participant 2, however, did not see networking as instrumental, because she indicated that she interacts with anyone in the workplace regardless of age, position or gender:

> *When you are in my position or even I'll say your character, it goes as per the individual. It may not be the standard of the organisation or the rule but you know the way you interact with people in the corridors and everything. I'll say I'm one person that has good relations with people because I don't look at the age, the position that the person is in, colour or creed you know, I just interact with anyone you know. (Interviewee 2)*

Interviewee 2's strategy is to make use of all opportunities to create relationships with people, regardless of their characteristics such as age, organisational level race or religion. In this way, she is likely to create a broad network of relationships. Consequently, while interviewees 3 and 5 appear to be very selective of who they chose to interact with for the purpose of gaining work related resources, participant 2 does not see the need to have a distinct social network.

4.3.2. Professional boundaries

Although some participants were part of informal social networks, they insisted on maintaining boundaries between friendship and work:

> *As a manager, you need to have boundaries. Okay, love your people, support them, be there for them, but at the same time I'm not too much into politics, okay, I don't like to get myself involved with you know, social groups, you know and stuff like that because that also has to do with my character, as a manager you need to draw boundaries as I'm saying. (Interviewee 7)*

This is also why participant 4 indicated that she prefers interacting with men than women because of her difficultly in maintaining boundaries:

> *No, I don't mind but I find that I can't network with my own [gender]. Yea because it's hard to actually draw a line between being professional and friendship, I mean professionalism and friendship so it tends to cloud issues. So I can network with men but other women I don't think I can. (Interviewee 4)*

They also seemed to believe that they did not mind being part of these informal social networks, as long as they were only confined to the boundaries of the workplace. When participants were asked if they have informal relationships with their colleagues outside the workplace, three of the participants indicated that they did not:

> *No, no no no. It's only at work. And then outside work, maybe one or two people but it's mainly work. (Interviewee 4)*

> *Ya, ya, I do, but obviously because of the kind of person I am I don't do it outside the work environment but I don't think if I were an outgoing person I'd still be doing it ya but I don't network ya. After work, I go home and that's it. For my work, it doesn't go beyond work. (Interviewee 4)*

> *Ya… well I don't know. After work, it's my life outside work because I live here. So I wouldn't want to be part of any network or more than what I am at the moment. I need a life apart from work because I do live, that's more than enough for me to socialise as well at work, so ah no. (Interviewee 8)*

> *No, it's strictly work. You know I've learned the hard way but it was not here it was in the diamond industry whereby you make friends even outside working hours. It's not good because now what happens is that that's were gossips and disrespect comes from and yes, sometimes people will rub you the wrong way and to your core and then you'll start to react only to find out that its external forces something that happened outside the workplace so that is why I keep it very professional. (Interviewee 7)*

These participants indicated that they are part of informal social networks at work however their interactions were intentionally limited to the workspace. It is important to note that in this instance, Interviewee 8 makes an implicit acknowledgement that she is part of an informal social network, but that she manages its boundaries, despite initially stating that she is not part of any informal social networks at work. This is contrary to participant 1, who

revealed that she sometimes meets up and gets drunk outside the workplace with her colleagues. Similarly, participant 6 indicated that she often receives support regarding personal issues. These different responses indicate a variety of responses regarding the boundaries of informal networks, with some participants crossing professional boundaries to discuss personal issues or meet outside the context of the workplace:

> *We know each other we are friends. As much as I work for you, we get drunk together uhm, so I'm never going to lose my job. (Interviewee 1)*

> *So my closest networks would be with the females in HR. The network is more friends like type of network. We have become to close that we invite each other for family functions and stuff. But I also get along with the males in the department and would not necessary say there's a network there… we just get along and would from time to time grab a snack together or something. (Interviewee 9)*

Unlike the participants who were selective about who they chose to interact with, the abovementioned participants seemed to be more open to being part of informal relationships at work, regardless of what they could benefit from their integration. They only wanted to maintain the network at work, and ensure that it does not affect their professional relationships.

4.3.3. Grouping based on minority status

Participant 1 indicated that she became part of an informal network with other Black women because they were the minority group so they felt that they had to form their own group.

> *Uhm and I just didn't like it I think, because I always used to tell my mom I don't know apartheid I've never experienced it myself so I'm never going to say ah this is racism, this is segregation, but it was just different things that you find that were just not comfortable. So that's why we just decided that we need to stick together because we are the only ones here and we are the only ones that kind of understand each other you know. So, I'm thankful for them I think. (Interviewee 1)*

> *Because we are Black. I think because we were young all of us (…) interestingly, L was the oldest she had been a receptionist for 7 years and also, she didn't grow. We kept asking her "why don't you grow?" They kept saying they want to expand, they getting more clients so she was the older one and then the other guys were also young, so I think it's because it was more comfortable and we could speak Zulu and talk about them. (Interviewee 1)*

> *It was kind of like you sat there and you looked around and went like "well you look like me, you look like me" so let's just all hang out together. So it was just more or*

less like that… (…) We gravitated towards each other, we the same age and we speak the same language. (Interviewee 1)

While it may appear as though participant 1 only selected her network based on race and familiarity, she also uses her network to affirm her identity in the workplace and enhance her sense of power because she is able to speak a language that few people understand. She seems to create her network through the use of in and outgroup strategies because she purposely integrated into a social network that consisted of only young, Black females. These three different integration strategies illustrate how the participants actively pursue certain informal social networks in the workplace in order to meet their various emotional and instrumental needs such as affirming their identity or increasing their power base. This section discussed the different integration strategies that the participant used, and the next section outlines the various factors that influenced their integration or lack thereof.

4.4. Factors which influence networking experiences as Black female managers

This section provides an overview of various factors which either hindered or assisted the participants when it comes to integrating into informal social networks at work. These factors are based on the social network theory, and it looks at their experiences networking as Black female managers.

4.4.1. Proximity

Working with certain employees on a daily basis appeared to be one of the reasons why the participants integrated themselves into certain informal social networks. The following extract shows how working in the same department often leads to the formation of friendships between employees:

Interviewee 8: I think it happens most of the time when you are working in the same department, and then you get used to knowing that person, what are their dislikes. So you know when you are working closely with someone eventually you guys become friends.

Interviewer: So you would say it comes from being so close to them every day?

Interviewee 8: Yes, that is what I've noticed. Most of the people who are friends it's either they from the same department or doing the same job or something similar like that.

Interviewer: Is that how it is for you as well?

Interviewee 7: Yes, I' m close with P because I work with her.

While interviewee 8 initially indicated that she does not belong to any informal social networks at work, she often identified her friendly relationships with her subordinates as individuals who are part of her network. Similarly, participant 4 indicated that she became close to her peers because of the formal meetings between them:

> *It's mainly by sitting with them in executive committees and I tend to know them from there, then we'll talk outside maybe during breaks and so on… and that's how you get to know people. But people I have not met in person … that I've not engaged with formally it's hard for me to create, to form networks with them. (Interviewee 4)*

4.4.2. Individual differences

One of the main reasons why most of the participants chose not to integrate themselves into informal social networks is due to their own personalities. They mentioned how being an introvert often means they do not wish to become part of informal networks:

> *Ya, ya, I do, but obviously because of the kind of person I am I don't do it outside the work environment but I don't think if I were an outgoing person I'd still be doing it. Ya but I don't network, after work I go home and that's it. For my work, it doesn't go beyond work. (Interviewee 4)*

> *I'm not too much into politics, okay, I don't like to get myself involved with you know, social groups, you know and stuff like that because that also has to do with my character. (Interviewee 7)*

> *For me I'm not a person that has got friends even personally outside I don't have friends but colleagues within the organisation that would be close to so that when you have some challenges. (Interviewee 6)*

Participant 8 and 9 were more outgoing and therefore had no issues integrating themselves:

> *[laughs] ...because of my personality, I get along with people easy. It is easier for me to relate and draw people in. For this reason, I would say that I am part of endless networks because it doesn't take a lot for me to be part of group of people. So, in HR… like the department has a majority of Black females. We only have about 5 males, 4 Black and 1 White. (Interviewee 9)*

> *Ya I've never had a problem with getting close to people, I've never had that problem, and the other thing I think people feel comfortable talking to me because maybe I'm friendlier, I don't know. (Interviewee 8)*

For a second time, it is important to note how participant 8 initially stated that she was not part of informal social networks at work. However, during the interview it became apparent that some of the participants did have positive and sound relationships with colleagues that could be construed as informal social networks. Once again, this points to the difficulty in drawing a clear boundary between formal and informal relationships at work, and informal social networks.

4.4.3. Race, gender and age differences

Although participant 7 does not see herself as part of any informal social networks, she does notice that people in her organisation tend to group themselves based on race:

> *Ya. There are those ones that uh, do, like you know uh, a certain race you know, especially in a call centre, there's this thing that, especially even if we go for training as leaders and you know, a certain race would love to group themselves when they say we must do group work and activities and stuff like that, it's the same thing here in the call centre you know especially lunch time you know. You go to the canteen and you see you know a certain race grouping themselves together but like I'm saying I'm not involved in anything you know. (Interviewee 7)*

Participants 1 and 5 had different views on how race and gender can determine how they become integrated into different networks:

> *I'm at a stage whereby for me eh when it comes to working environments, it's all about work and work for me doesn't see race, or gender. Work for me is about do we have the same issues and how are you actually experiencing it. Its only where its issues whereby it could be a problem whereby a male feels that you are a female you don't understand their situation or you are male a female feels like they don't understand their situation for me issues of gender are not that much, issues of gender are not really that much because I think it's about the position. (Interviewee 5)*

> *It was very interesting because each kept to their own circle it was like high school in a way it was really disturbing. You had that group of smokers, the Black guys it was two of them and then there were… there was four guys in total, one Indian one White uhm but then the Indian and the White were senior and older whereas the two Black were in their twenties so they couldn't exactly hang out with them a lot because they didn't have the same conversations, so they would hang out with us. [referring to her melanin girls] (Interviewee 1)*

Participant 5, who is much older, did not see race and gender as an issue when interacting with her colleagues. This may indicate that her experiences over the years have made her less

concerned about race and gender, because her main focus is on getting the job done. Participant 1 however who is in her 20s and in the early stages of her career, is more aware of the how colleagues often group themselves based on race and gender.

4.4.4. Shared interests

When asked why certain people belong to certain networks, some of the participants stated that it was due to the members all having something in common.

> *It's because they are interested in the same thing first of all and whatever they are trying to achieve is one thing you see. It's where people will share the same thing or they're driving a certain thing to achieve a certain goal. (Interviewee 6)*

> *That is obviously determined by the type of group that is, you know. If it's a friends' groups, then it will be people that share the same values, beliefs, ideologies, those sort of things, you know. Uhm but then you get like, I don't know. Social groups that hang out together after work on Fridays for drinks or whatever. Those people, or the people in the group obviously share the same interests. They look to drink after work. But you know what I mean. They have that thing in common. (…) Yeah… there are a lot of diverse informal networks I would say here. (Interviewee 9)*

Participant 7 indicted that her network consists mostly of older people because she could not relate as much with the younger generation:

> *Absolutely, yes. And besides like I said here it's a younger generation okay and we don't like the same things and we don't relate that well, as much as you know with my generation you know. (Interviewee 7)*

4.4.5. Organisational culture

The organisational culture also determined how hard or easy it is for the participants to integrate themselves into these informal social or informal relationships. Some organisations also seem to set up opportunities for people to interact with one another beyond the formal structure.

> *The culture that I have seen at company L is, in as much as we work in a professional basis but we still also find that when its lunch hour or when we walking to a meeting we have those quick chats and there will be those times. I'm sure you saw our reception area, even here at each floor has tables and chairs and fridges and coffee. That is where people can move from their work station just to go sit there when they feel tired that is where most people interact. (Interviewee 2)*

There's a new thing actually, there's a new network that they are trying to activate today. I don't know you may have seen downstairs people trying to uhm, I don't know what's happening, I just saw an email. I didn't go myself because I'm not feeling well but there's a new thing, a new network that they are encouraging people to join. It's called ------. Uhm, it's almost like uh, how can I put it, so that... in simple terms, it's almost like change agents, people who are going to assist in leading the change and making sure that others are seeing the positivity in whatever change that is being brought about, so almost like ambassadors type of thing uh so that one they are trying to push they trying to make sure that a lot of people register for that so that's one kind of a network, I am, I am part of it but I'm not very active because whenever they meet I'm busy. (Interviewee 3)

Yes, we do and I don't think so that we [would] be [as] innovative as we are if there were no informal relationships. Uh, I think when it comes to work wise we are very good in doing that, because we've got initiatives, we've got volunteers. They also want us to build networks and relationships outside in order for them... it forms part of our company research in a way because if you know what's happening out there, it's easy even if you are going to design product it's for a certain market you know what is required. (Interviewee 7)

The abovementioned participants seem to suggest that some organisations actively foster informal networks. However, in the quotes there appears to be some confusion regarding the boundaries between formal and informal social networks. This confusion appears to have been enhanced by technology where participant 3 discussed how her organisation has launched an online App where employees can "meet" and "talk".

Participants 4 and 5, who both work in the same predominantly Black organisation, however said that their organisation does not support informal networking at all:

I wouldn't say they do, I wouldn't say they do because what happens is when you are seen with another, say for instance another executive outside your own eh, say your department, your direct executive will feel, probably threatened or loses trust and wants to know what it is that you are discussing with people at his level that is not work related. You know it's not something that I would say its promoted. There isn't any culture of coaching or anything like that. (Interviewee 4)

No, the informal networking within the organisation I don't think they support externally as well. They don't support [it]. You have to force yourself to go for training, otherwise they think you gallivanting. Our HR executive doesn't encourage it. So sitting with a colleague, closed doors, having a cup of tea and discussing behind closed doors, he doesn't support that and it's for this organisation. But if I tell you about other organisations which I've worked for, it was supported and it worked very well. (Interviewee 5)

No, it's not influential here you actually in these networks, you join and its gossip, gossip. Uh they don't want to see people actually sitting and discussing, so sitting and discussing is like you gossiping. (Interviewee 6)

The following quotes indicate that some organisations do support the formation of informal social networks, and that some of the participants also work in organisations that do not foster the formation of informal social networks.

4.5. Experiences of networking as a Black female manager

The following section below focuses on the factors which the participants perceived had an impact on their interactions specifically as Black female managers. The participants were asked about their overall experiences as Black female managers networking in their organisations.

4.5.1. Organisational context

The organisational context seems to play a role in how Black female managers experience their integration because this is the environment where the interactions take place as highlighted by participant 6; participants were asked if their organisations support informal social networking:

Interviewee: It depends on the environment in which one is functioning in. If you work in a mining sector and work in a food sector or construction it's completely different. It depends to the sector that you function in you'll find that in some areas, the people that you work with, the amount of time and years in which they've worked within that space reflects or contributes to how they are going to refer to you. If for instance, you get to a company or an organisation that has got more old Whites or figures, you will feel it. But if you get to an organisation where diversity is driving seriously, you won't feel it.

***Interviewer:** Do you feel it here?*

Interviewee: Uhm, at times you don't. Yes there are certain elements but the problem is the people that have been in the company for too long it's not easy for them to realise that there is something different. if you coming from outside with a different mind-set and you realise that [for] people from here it's still the old way. (Interviewee 6)

It appears that the participants believe that they are working in White dominated organisations and can have either a positive or negative effect on their experiences as Black

female managers trying to progress their careers. While some had negative views on organisations being White dominated, the majority of the participants actually did not see their race and gender as an issue during their interactions:

> *Interviewee 2: You know in the culture and the space that I'm in, part of my function in the management position that I'm in, I interact with the board of trustees and you know. Like I'll say that predominantly they are White males who have been in the industry for quite a while and some are old. And I have found it to be very pleasant to work with, there is at no point where there is intimidation either from them. They don't use their seniority over you, as long as you provide and do your work and you provide them with what they are looking for. And that's it.*
> *Interruption (wants to take a tea break)*
>
> *Interviewee 2: So, as a Black woman, I'm very happy and comfortable. I feel that, that is where one is able to show that Black women are also capable of handling certain positions because mainly some positons will be labelled as "This has to be done by guys."*
>
> *Let me just say that I don't think that organisations… Well let me talk about our one, that they are at a level of understanding the issues of equality when it comes to Blacks and Whites and when it comes to males and females. I still it to actually be too, well not too much, there's still a struggle in getting us to the after 1994. In order for them to understand that females also need to get some space in the executive level and females need to get space in senior levels, also the issue to the fact that when it comes to a female, there's this issue of parity, where you would find that for a female it wouldn't be the same you know. So I'm not quite sure as to why is that, is it because our CEO is a man or maybe because our senior HR executive is a man, ehhm I'm not quite sure as to why it's like that. (Interviewee 6)*

Participant 2 works in a White dominated environment but she has had more positive experiences where she feels that she has been able to prove that she is capable of fulfilling the demands of a managerial role. Participant 6 was aware that there is a discrepancy between women and men in managerial positions in her organisation.

Participant 7 had a different experience, where she feels that she has to work twice as hard in a male dominated environment.

> *Interviewee 7: You know as a Black female it's very difficult sometimes to network or to penetrate the business. Why I'm saying that. As we speak, I've been here for ten years. I've been trying to apply for other positions okay, especially in other segments besides the call centre. Its male dominated ya, and they don't see you as fit, you know. Because in most cases what used to come up was, like sometimes when they interview you, as which is not acceptable, they ask "are you pregnant?" You know they ask all those questions and sometimes as a single mom they going to ask you questions like"*

If you are not around who is going to look after your kids?" and stuff like that, you know. And you can see in the interview that that is an obstacle for you. Already you know, and as a result I didn't get most of the positions because of that. You know, like are you a single mom, how many dependants? You know, things like that.

***Interviewe**r: And do you think men and women network in different ways?*

Interviewee 7: 'Ya they do because as we know in our Black culture men perceive themselves as superior than us. You know as it is I'm reporting to a Black man and he wants me to be submissive all the time. And what he says, must go. And even sometimes when I tend to defy him it's like I'm being disrespectful or I'm trying to push back or… or"

***Interviewe**r: Undermine him?*

Interviewee 7: Exactly.

Participant 4 belonged to a predominantly Black owned company, and had more positive experiences than the participants when it came to networking:

Mmmm, if I were in another company, I think it would be harder, but because this is a predominantly Black company so yeah, no I don't find it hard. (Interviewee 4)

The various responses from the above quotes highlight how the organisational context that the participants work in have an impact on their interactions with their colleagues. Participant 7 had to constantly prove herself as a competent manager in a predominantly male organisation, whereas participant 4, who works in a Black owned company, had more positives experiences.

4.5.2. Stereotypes

The participants also mentioned that they are often perceived themselves as being subjected to certain stereotypes because of their gender.

I've noticed that most of the people judge a person before they can even know who you really are. They will think that "Okay, this person is a woman, you can do as you please" because "she's a woman and I'm a man", or you understand? She's younger, I'm older… which is not true. It's not that a person who's above or the person you are reporting to, because you are a woman they can take advantage or they can say whatever they want to say, they say you have to go with it or whatever. People tend to do that which is not cool (Interviewee 8)

Not hard to network, I find that a lot of the times people are interested in wanting to know how you've come this far. Cause you know there is a perception that you get opportunities because of our colour and not because we've earned it. So, I've found

that a lot of the times there is pressure to prove myself, that I have earned this. Uh, I remember when I moved to Cape Town and I was made regional manager there. I used to sit in the executive committee meetings, and uh I was the only Black female. And in fact, you could count the number of Black people and Cape Town is very racist, so I had so much pressure to prove that I know what I'm talking about, I know what I'm doing, I can deliver. And, excuse me, when I left actually they didn't want me to leave because I had made such a difference. So ya, all I can say is that there is pressure for a Black female to prove yourself that you are not a BEE candidate, but rather you're there because, you know you have what it takes, you have the skills, you have the knowledge. (Interviewee 3)

This seems to suggest that often the participants have to prove themselves as being good at their jobs, and they may often be subjected to judgements simply because they are Black women.

4.5.3. Interactions with men and women

The participants were asked about their views on how differently men and women network, and also who they predominantly chose to form relationships with. The following extracts highlights the different views on how men and women network. Participant 8 seems to perceive that there are specific things that you can only discuss with men if you are a woman, and vice versa.

Interviewee 8: Ya I think so. I think if you are a woman there's a certain level of boundaries that people can't come to you and say certain things to you because you are a woman. They think maybe you wouldn't understand especially male people

***Interviewer**: So, they wouldn't go to the woman to ask her certain things?*

Interviewee 8: Yes, there are certain things that they feel it's uncomfortable. Same applies to a man there's certain things women won't feel comfortable opening up to. I think it's the same. Either way there's certain thing people can't come up to you and tell you as they are opposite gender same applies to a woman

Participant 6 however, seems to suggest that you need to network like men in order to be influential. She also perceived that men have more open conversations because they always talk about topics that they know most men can relate to:

Yes, we network differently because there's a saying that if you want to run with the big dogs, you must bark like them. And one person that I had listened to said to me if you want to brand yourself, don't wait to be invited to the table. People must want to invite you table. How men network, if you look at golfing, there's few golfers that are women than men. When they talk it will start with a sport. Well me and you are going to talk about babies or if you know about babies, so we tend to network in a different manner. First of all I need to know whether you have kids or not, but men it's open. They know that you like sports. It might not be a certain sport but you know sports. So

the things that we talk about, the conversations that we have are completely different (Interviewee 6)

***Interviewer**: Do you think they have the same objectives though?*

Interviewee: No

***Interviewe**r: Why?*

Interviewee: Eh, my networking would be for networking without gaining anything but at an emotional level, but with men their emotions are always hidden so they might be networking for a different reason. There's something they want to achieve, so then I'm forced to network with you. (Interviewee 5)

Participant 4 appeared to be the only one who preferred interacting with men than women:

Interviewee 4: Ya, men for instance in the work environment, how women network is they'll only gravitate to those who agree with them, whilst men you can disagree with them in the meeting and outside the meeting you'll network and be fine. But women, they hold grudges, they not like men if you agree with them in the meeting they get personal

***Interviewer**: So, you don't mind networking with either men or women?*

Interviewee: No I don't mind but I find that I can't network with my own because it's hard to actually draw a line between being professional and friendship, I mean professionalism and friendship, so it tends to cloud issues so I can network with men but other women I don't think I can. (Interviewee 4)

Participant 7 felt like she could interact with women however she highlighted how there seems to always be competition between women:

Interviewee 7: Here, around? Well, ya… there's a good network but there's this "pull me down syndrome" in the sense that, when a woman holds a higher position, you are, you as you know maybe the other manager you are being seen as inferior and you know they don't want to share they don't want to transfer skill you know, they withhold information and sometimes when they at the top level they tend to be picky about who they want in their department and there are those elements [discussing her interaction with women]

***Interviewer**: And have you experienced that?*

Interviewee 7: Ya I have and with men also sometimes it goes as far as you know sexual tendencies you know and that touchy touchy sexual harassment. Do this then you will get that.

Participant 7 here seems to suggest that informal networking with male colleagues could be misinterpreted by other men, where they may view it as an invitation for sexual contact. This

could influence her belief that networking with either men or women has its draw backs. Participant 3, however, has a more positive experience in her group which consists mainly of women.

> *Ya, not all of them. So the friends, I have a circle of friends, but in that circle, I'm only very close to two from the rest of the group however all the women are powerful in their own right and differently so. So we are all different, there's no competition with one another uh instead, there's uh, energy about how do we uplift each other and support each other, so the rest of the women we just have relationships with not that close. I have two very close friends that I can say eh, form part of my support, so when I have challenges or whatever it is, personal or whatever, I do speak to them. sometimes they can't help me, in fact often times they can't help but sometimes it just helps that you can have someone to talk to. (Interviewee 3)*

The above quotes highlighted the various reasons that the participants viewed as that had an impact on their interactions.

4.6. Nature of the Informal Social Networks (closeness, diversity)

In this section, the participants' preferences and differences in networking patterns, or the people they choose to interact with, are discussed to illustrate their network composition.

4.6.1. Closeness

This refers to how close the participants perceive themselves to be to others within their networks/informal relationships. All of the participants were asked this question, even if they did not see themselves as members of informal social networks. Considering the boundaries that most of the participants maintained when becoming part of informal networks, most of the participants do not seem to be particularly close to the people in their network.

> *Yeah …I've forged some kind of relationships, so I can say I am close, I know where to draw a line so I know where, I don't get too close, I just get close enough. (Interviewee 3)*
>
> ***Interviewer: And how close do you think people are in your networks?***
>
> *Interviewee 7: I think, professionally, they are very close.*
>
> ***Interviewer: Personally?***
>
> *Interviewee: I think everybody just minds their own business. Like I wouldn't lie, everybody just minds their own business as long as its work', it'll always be just work. (Interviewee 7)*

These participants appear to be very guarded in terms of how close they wish to be to their colleagues on a personal level. They often created a distinction between being professionally close and personally close. Interviewee 3 was, however, very close to the people she interacts with because she mentioned that she is not part of any informal social networks:

> *Ya, not all of them. So the friends, I have a circle of friends, but in that circle I'm only very close to two from the rest of the group, however, all the women are powerful in their own right and differently so. So we are all different, there's no competition with one another uh instead, there's uh, energy about how do we uplift each other and support each other, so the rest of the women we just have relationships with not that close. I have two very close friends that I can say eh, form part of my support, so when I have challenges or whatever it is, personal or whatever, I do speak to them. Sometimes they can't help me, in fact often times they can't help, but sometimes it just helps that you can have someone to talk to (Interviewee 3)*

4.6.2. Diversity

The participants highlighted how the people that they interact with were very diverse based on job seniority, race and gender.

> *Very [diverse], because you can actually see when you were coming through our offices, one it's not because you are a manager you are going to be in an enclosed environment so we all seem to be sitting in a similar set up and then when you are passing by someone's desk we are able to interact and see when they are not feeling ok for the day (Interviewee 2)*

> *Every month, last Friday of the month, the whole department will meet in one of the meeting areas and birthdays will be announced for people who had birthdays for that month and people who will be welcomed in the organisation, the people who have just started so there you see with the CEO, the heads of the departments, organisation managers down to the person who actually makes tea for us. You can't tell the difference, we play games as well. So we interact. The CEO will be in the same group we split ourselves into teams, it doesn't go by seniors this side. (Interviewee 2)*
> *Very diverse, because here we don't… there's no CEO or whoever, no. We are all family. Whenever there are functions or whatever you wouldn't even tell who's who (Interviewee 2)*

> *A is more like a Black owned company, so my networks, is mainly guys and they are also in the executive level, and maybe, one or two maybe who are also women at my level and in terms of the lower staff, ya maybe one or two are women as well (Interviewee 4)*

Interviewee 2 seem to suggest that due to her organisations being in support of informal networking, she does not see the need to belong to informal networks because there is little

emphasis on status and hierarchical level in the organisation because she constantly refers to the organisations events when describing her informal network at work. This demonstrates how the perception of informal networks may be blurred by a variety of factors such as organisational culture. Similarly, the organisational culture and role of participant 4 fostered the level of diversity of her network, because she is in a field predominantly occupied by males.

4.6.3. Size

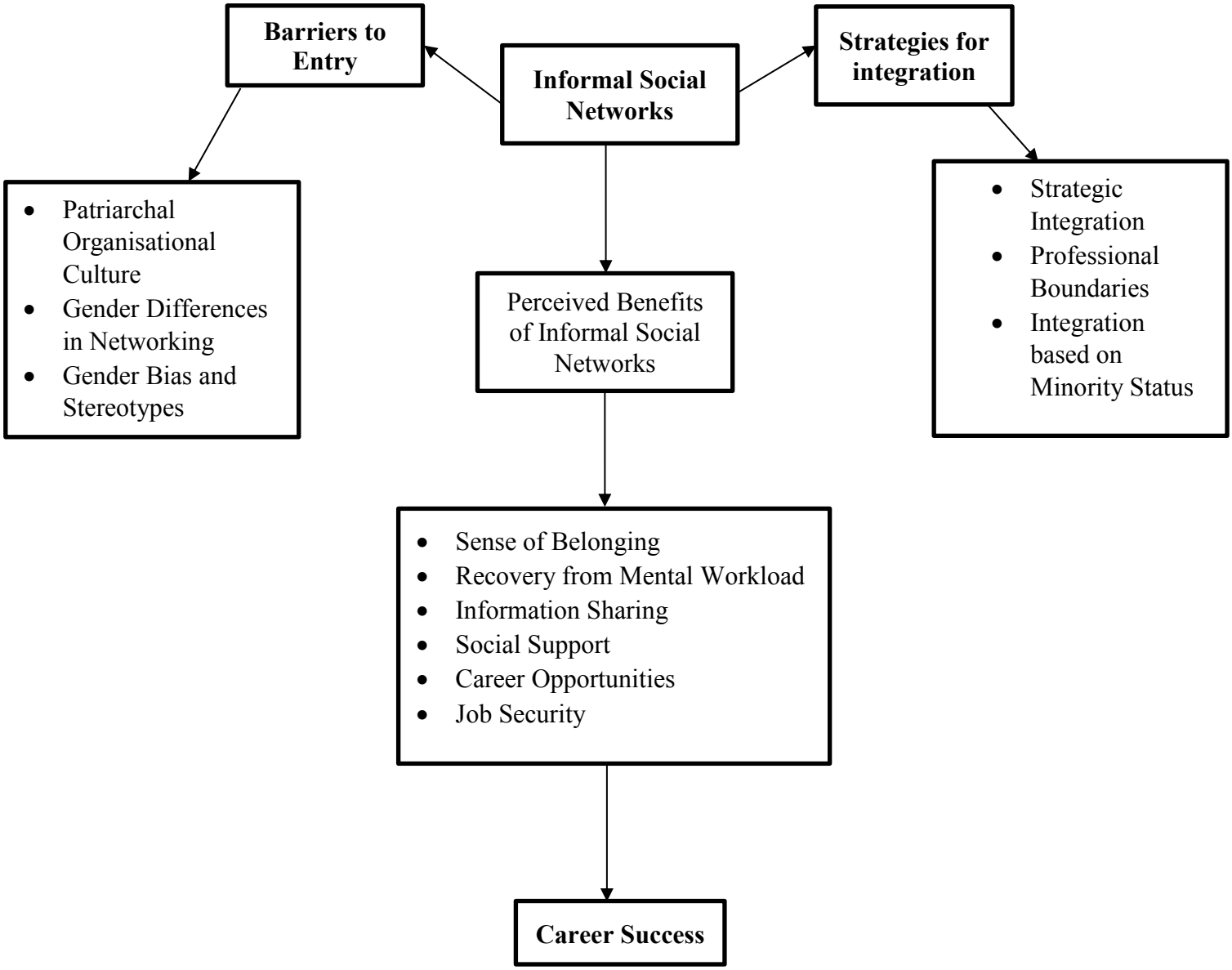
Participants 3 and 7 indicated that they prefer being part of smaller networks comprised mostly of women. Only participant 9 was more open to being part of large and multiple networks.

> *And another thing is the smaller the network, the better, for me, because I've been here for a very long time. I can see if you are all over the place. That also can also taint your reputation and stuff like that. (Interviewee 7)*

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results from the interviews conducted. The results were based on the social networking theory to illustrate the perceptions Black female managers have towards integrating into informal social networks at work. The results revealed that informal social networks are predominantly used for instrumental and emotional purposes. Black female managers also showed agency when integrating into informal social networks at work. Agency speaks to the active influence that the participants had in integrating into, or choosing not to integrate into certain informal social networks (Moore, 2016). The majority of the sample, however, did not actively see themselves as part of informal social networks. Nevertheless, most had informal relationships and interactions with people at work although they did not necessarily see these relationships as forming networks. The next page presents a summary of the themes that emerged from the data. The next chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the results in relation to the available literature.

Figure 4. Thematic Summary of Results



Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

In this section, an in-depth discussion of the results from the previous chapter is presented. The aim is to provide a more interpretive discussion of the results by relating it to existing literature. The results will be discussed in relation to the research questions and quotes from the data are also used to illustrate the issues discussed. The research questions are stated again in order to structure the discussion more clearly.

The first research question was "what perceptions do Black female managers have towards integrating into informal social networks at work?

5.2. Importance of integration

While the participants believed it was important to be part of informal social networks in order to gain various benefits for career success, it was important to note how the majority indicated that they do not necessarily see themselves as part of any informal social networks at work. As the interviews progressed, the participants indicated that may actually view certain informal relationships in the workplace as informal social networks; however, this may be because they did not fully understand the concept of informal social networks at work and the implications of this will be presented in this chapter. The participants also seemed to have more positive views on the benefits of informal social networking, and mainly participant 5 could identity some of the negative aspects of being part of informal networks such as how informal networks are sometimes used for political purposes. These will be discussed in detail.

5.3. Instrumental purposes

One of the most prominent finding across the participants was their use of informal social networks for instrumental purposes and this refers to using something purposefully as a means to reaching a goal (Stallings, 2008). According to the social networking theory, the exchange of job related resources between members of a social network is described as instrumental because they are necessary for job performance (Stallings, 2008). All of the participants indicated that they somehow use their informal social networks or informal

relationships in order to reach either long term or short-term goals such as access to job opportunities and advice, regardless of whether they belonged to informal social networks or not.

One of the instrumental uses of informal social networks by the participants was to gain access to information not readily available to them through formal social networks. The participants who mentioned that they belong to informal social networks described how they believed they could gain access to information that they actually should not be aware of such as when bonuses are going to be paid. They seem to be aware that informal social networks are beneficial for opening more channels to receive important information through the informal structure, as previously observed in the literature (Waldstrøm, 2011). Similarly, the participants discussed how informal social networks allowed for open communication between the participants with their subordinates.

It appears that the participants also became part of informal social networks in order to increase their power and influence in the organisation. This refers to the organisational politics where informal social networks are often used to increase members' credibility because power and influence are some of the resources that are transferred between members of a social network (Tichy et al., 1979). Being part of influential social networks is perceived by the participants as being necessary for improving their access to benefits that are not readily available from the formal structure. The participants implied that they needed to increase their power base because of how their credibility as effective managers is often brought into question because of existing stereotypes regarding Black women. One of the existing stereotypes which they had to overcome is the perception that Black women who are in management are not best suited for managerial roles (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010).

Similarly, the participants suggested that they always had to prove themselves when interacting with men. Being in an organisation that has a patriarchal organisational culture, one of the participants mentioned how she often felt that the male colleagues that she interacts with would always question her ability to be an effective manager. This is because they would ask her if she would be able handle her home/work life balance whenever she went to interviews in her company, and she saw this as an obstacle when interacting with men. This is an issue that has been reported in the literature that states that men often exclude women from influential informal social networks because of how organisations continue to

adopt patriarchal organisational norms where men are perceived as better suited for managerial roles (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Schein, 1973), and women are perceived as inherently more focused on domestic duties (April et al., 2007). Therefore, one of the instrumental uses of informal social networks by the participants is to overcome the existing stereotypes that often bring their competency as effective managers into question.

The participants also described how they often used their informal social networks as a way of ensuring job security and using the platform to express their work-related ideas. Being close to influential individuals in an organisation ensured that they would never be fired (Waldstrøm. 2011). One way of ensuring this was through crossing professional boundaries such as drinking and meeting with colleagues outside of the work environment. Interestingly, participant 7 also mentioned how the presence of informal networking allowed the employees to become more innovative. According to Waldstrøm (2011), sharing instrumental knowledge, seeking advice and innovative ideas are some of the productive contents which can be transferred during informal networking. This highlights how the presence and integration of employees into informal networks can assist with work related performance. This is due to how informal social networks allow for free flow information, where the participants feel that they will not receive the same level of scrutiny and boundaries compared with the formal structure. This is due to the level of trust formed between members of a network, where there is a high level of reciprocity and trust in each other (Ibarra, 1993).

Existing literature, however, suggests that males tend to use informal social networks for instrumental purposes more than females, which may explain their slow career advancement compared to men (Beriema, 2005). However, females have been reported as using informal networks for instrumental purposes when provided with the opportunity to do so (Stallings, 2008). Due to the different barriers, such as a patriarchal organisational culture, women are often excluded from gaining entry into influential informal social networks such as old boys' networks. Consequently, they try to find other ways of integrating into informal social networks for career success. It is important to note that some of the participants did not see themselves as part of any informal social networks, even though they were able to highlight the potential benefits of integration. A similar finding was reported in a study conducted by Onsongo (2007) and Ntizira-Nondo (2001) where not every Black professional woman saw membership of informal social networks as beneficial and therefore they do not necessarily integrate themselves into these social networks. In this study, this may be partly from a lack

of understanding regarding what informal social networking in the work pertains to, and the similarity between informal relationships that are not considered to be part of a network, and informal social networks at work. I had to explain to some of the participants what an informal social network is when the interviews started. A pilot study would have beneficial to identify the understanding that Black female managers have towards the concept of informal social networks.

5.4. Emotional purposes

An important aspect which arose from the data revealed that while the participants seemed to use the informal social networks for instrumental purposes, they also integrated themselves or used their informal relationships with others in order to gain emotional support. Emotional support refers to the expression of feelings, giving advice and receiving social support (Tichy et al., 1979). The participants who indicated that they belong to informal social networks and some of those who initially highlighted that they did not belong, stated that they feel that they gain a sense of belonging from being part of informal social networks at work. Similarly, the participants used the informal social networks in order to gain social support and understanding from their peers. Correspondingly to how informal social networks are used in order to increase credibility, the sense of being understood by people with whom they interacted with informally at work was perceived as assurance that the participants' capability as managers would not be brought into question.

One of the participants also indicated that she used her informal network to affirm her identity within the workplace, where the network consisted mostly of Black women like her. A similar finding was reported by Bell and Nkomo (2001) who described how Black women often use their cultural heritage to cope with discrimination and exclusion. According to Waldstrøm (2001), belonging to informal social networks can also be viewed as a defence mechanism when faced with uncertainty. The network provides a sense of cohesion and support between them, to strengthen their perceived lack of power due to their minority status (Tichy et al., 1979; Waldstrøm, 2001).

The participant further mentioned that she was part of that informal social network because they are able to speak in a language that individuals who were not part of their social network would not be able to understand. This can be viewed as a form of organisational politics

because they feel that they are in a position of power. Similarly, forming a relationship with someone similar to you is known as homophily (Koput, 2010), and it is often viewed as the main reason behind women forging relationships with other women who are in the same positon as them (Koput, 2010). Homophily often occurs due to factors such as having the same interests, experiences and proximity. In this sample however, homophily was not as prominent as previously observed in the literature, because majority of the participants seemed to belong to networks that were diverse in race, age and gender. Participant 8 indicated that one of her subordinates was part of her network because she works closely with her every day.

It is important to note that the majority of these benefits that are mentioned by the participants are from participants who stated that they were not part of informal social networks at work. Despite this, they commented about the emotional support they personally have experienced based on relationships with colleagues. This suggests that many participants do experience social and emotional support at work although they do not necessarily attribute this to an informal social network, but to relationships at work. This could be interpreted as a lack of understanding of informal social networks, or as indicating an overlap between informal relationships at work and informal networks. It is also possible that the boundaries between formal and informal relationships at work are not as clear as definitions within the literature suggest.

Furthermore, an interesting concept that arose from the data was the notion of agency. Agency is defined as an individual capability to act independently and out of their own free will (Moore, 2016). The ability to be selective of who they chose to interact with, for instrumental and emotional purposes demonstrates how the participants did not integrate into specific social networks due to relational properties such as proximity, but through their own evaluation of the potential benefits from integration. This means that the participants had control over their integration strategies. This is an area not emphasised by the Social Network Theory that was used in the study.

The second research question was: “What strategies do Black female managers use to integrate themselves into informal social networks”? The following sections provide a discussion of the different strategies that were reported by the participants.

5.5. Strategic integration

The most prominent strategy that the participants used to integrate into informal social networks was through the meticulous selection of who to integrate with in order to gain something. This is consistent with the literature which describes how employees' network strategically in order to gain work related advantages (Mengel, 2015). While the participants who described being strategically aligned to certain individuals in the workplace for instrumental purposes, they did not necessarily see themselves as being part of informal social networks. They described how they use their access to informal networks in order to increase their influence and credibility in the workplace. The fact that they do not see themselves as being part of informal social networks, but sometimes choose to align themselves with networks or individuals that they know will increase their influence, indicates that they are aware of the potential advantages of forming informal social networks in the workplace. This might also partially explain why the participants in this study did not necessarily see themselves as members of informal social networks, yet they were able to speak with a certain amount of knowledge about the networks. It further illustrates how the participants exercised their agency because of how they chose who they wanted to integrate with and when they wanted to do this. This is an aspect that is not highlighted by the social network theory because it mostly attributes the organisational structure as the factor that often determines how employees integrate themselves into informal social networks (Beriema, 2005) and does not take into account how individuals choose to move in and out of the networks. This is important because it suggests that informal social networks are organic and continually shifting in terms of their membership.

Through the use of strategic integration, participant 3 described how being selective of who she interacts with, has to be with individuals who would help with career progression such as gaining exposure to career opportunities. This is a conscious act where the participants are aware of their ability to exploit their positions in informal social networks, even when they do not want to be fully integrated into these networks (Waldstrøm, 2001). Similarly, participant 5 was also selective of who she wanted to interact with, based on whether she required emotional or instrumental assistance. This is a similar networking strategy that Stallings (2008) reported in her study that stated that although women are often believed to form more emotional networks than instrumental, they were still strategic when it came to deciding who they wanted to network with based on what they wanted to gain.

Contrary to the abovementioned participants, participant 2 who stated that she felt that she was part of informal social networks at work stated that she chooses to interact and create relationships with her colleagues regardless of their personal characteristics such as age, race or organisational level. This would be described as beneficial because it is often suggested that in order to be exposed to more opportunities, it would be vital to form bonds that do not consist only of people with similar characteristics. This is because an individual is likely to be exposed to the same information (Andriani, 2013). The broader the network is, the more access to social capital would be gained (Bierema, 2005; Ibarra, 1995; Timberlake, 2005). It is important however to note that participant 2 did not fully understand the concept of informal social networks, due to her constant reference to the networking promoted by her company such as gym areas and open floor plans, although these areas may have provided opportunities for networking. This may have implications for how she did not see the need to interact with certain individuals in order to gain social capital for career success.

5.6. Professional boundaries

One strategy that came up that was not discussed in the literature review is the maintenance of professional boundaries. Two of the participants who mentioned that they were not part of any informal social networks stated that their reasons for not integrating; was to ensure that they maintained professional boundaries between friendship and work-related interactions. One of the participants believed that her role as a manager meant that she should not be engaging in social groups in the work environment. The participants wanted to ensure that their relationships did not cross over into their personal lives, because one of the participants indicated that she also lives at her place of work.

Despite this, when the participants were asked about how close the members within their networks were, these participants described how they treat their subordinates as family. These participants seem to be confused regarding the distinction between informal social networks and informal management styles. Again, this could be an indication that the participants do not fully understand the concept of informal social networks, or were misled by how the questions during the interviews were phrased. Participant 5 also mentioned that she does not see herself as a member of any informal social network at work; however, she stated that she often goes to certain employees for social support on personal issues regarding her marriage.

This indicates that there are other boundaries that are sometimes crossed by the participants which are not necessarily physical, such as discussing personal issues with your colleagues.

According to the social networking theory, an informal social network is defined as "a set of relationships or linkages among individuals, each of which has a varying degree of significance to the wider network" (Arshad, 2011, p.6). This implies that an individual can play different roles in an informal social network, and it also suggests that there are specific relationships that form between people. However, it does not account for individuals who do not see themselves as part of these networks, even though they may use these networks to gain social capital. furthermore, Ibarra (1995, p.674) defines informal social networking as " the set of job-related contacts that a manager relies on for access to task-related, career, and social support" . This emphasises the resources gained from informal networks, and not the properties which determine how an individual is actually linked in these networks.

Therefore, the way informal social networks are described may have to be reevaluated, given the blurred distinction between informal social networks and informal social interactions amongst employees. The confusion may stem from numerous factors which have an impact on how employees perceive their interactions within the workplace such as management style and individual preferences. The definition should focus on how integration into these informal social networks may not be a requirement for membership, so you can gain social capital from the social interactions in the organisation.

More noteworthy, with the maintenance of professional boundaries, the participants may not be aware that they are excluding themselves from gaining potential benefits such as exposure to career opportunities. Participant 7 described how she only relied on her formal structure to receive important information regarding what is happening in her organisation. She however also mentioned how she was aware that this information is often sifted through, so she always has to do her own research to find out more information. This clearly shows how she is aware of how integrating into informal social networks would be helpful for receiving more information because it has been reported that information is transmitted more faster through informal networks in the workplace (Waldstrøm, 2001).

5.7. Integration based on minority status

One of the participants indicated that she integrated herself into a specific informal social network at work due to being the minority race at work. She became part of an informal social network that was comprised of Black women who are similar to her. She highlighted how her likeness to them was the first thing that attracted her to them and she believed she formed ties with them because they are Black. The participant also had a name for her network called "the Melanin girls" which illustrates how her race and gender were the main contributing factors to her integration into that specific informal network.

> *Yeah, we called ourselves the melanin girls, the Black girls of course because we were the only ones it was. (Interviewee 1)*

This finding concurs with the literature that states that social bonds between individuals can occur due to commonalities because they share similar interests (Koput, 2010). The participant stated that her informal social networks also consist of Black men, however she was closer to the Black females. Although the participants' integration strategy was based on being the minority race in the organisation, she may not be aware that she might actually be excluded from receiving important benefits due to how homogenous her informal network is. According to Granovetter (1983), in order to benefit from informal social networks, the members need to ensure that their network consists of weak ties between members from other networks. This means that it would be more beneficial to integrate with others that may provide access to a variety of benefits.

When the participants who stated that they do not believe that they were part of any informal social networks were asked if their lack integration meant that they did not have access to important information, one of the participants indicated that she did not think so. This is because she believed that she received all the information that she needed to perform her task from her formal structure. However, she was able to acknowledge that this information might be sifted and she only receives information that they want her to know. This could indicate that she may actually be missing out on receiving information such as when bonuses are going to be paid such as participants 1 and 3.

5.8. Networking as a Black female manager

One of the important aspects that was explored regarding the participants' perceptions of integration, was the impact their race and gender had on their integration into informal social networks. Previous research has indicated that Black women are often discriminated against three times over due to their race, gender and economic status (Padilla, 1997). The majority of the participants highlighted that they did not necessarily think that their gender or race were unfavourable towards their integration into informal social networks at work. More importantly, the older participants were more of the opinion that being female and Black was less of a concern in their career success as the literature suggests. This may be due to the fact that they have reached a point in their careers where being strategic about getting information to perform your job is less of a concern, and they are able to effectively perform their tasks through the formal structure. This could also imply that over the past 20 years, organisations have become more cognisant of how they need to accommodate for the changing organisational structure where more women of color are gaining entry into managerial positions.

Participant 2, who often confused informal social networks for networking that is promoted by her organisation, described how in her organisation she does not feel like her competency was being questioned. She described how her organisation was mostly White and dominated by older White males; however, she was never discriminated against because she believed that as long you get your work done, and then they do not see the need to question your competency.

This was contrary to the four participants who were from the same organisation that was not perceived as supporting informal social networking. The organisational culture can therefore have an impact on how employees integrate into informal social networks (Beriema, 2005). Previous literature has indicated that women are often excluded from influential informal social networks due to the maintenance of patriarchal norms (Doubell & Struwig, 2014). Participant 7 described how her interactions with other Black male employees in her organisation were also difficult for her because of how the men she interacts with expected her to be submissive when given instructions. Previous literature asserted that although it is believed that South African organisations are predominantly White and male dominated, it has suggested that some Black men also subscribe to the belief that women should not be in

managerial roles (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Menon & Kotze, 2007). Although race and gender appeared to be important factors, the organisational culture also played a role in how the participants integrated into informal social networks at work.

While the participants discussed the various stereotypes that they believed prevented them from progressing, they also seemed to subscribe to these stereotypes as well. When asked if they believed men and women have similar networking patterns, participant 6 stated that:

> *My networking would be for networking without gaining anything but at an emotional level, but with men their emotions are always hidden so they might be networking for a different reason. There's something they want to achieve, so then I'm forced to network with you. (Interviewee 6)*

This suggests that some of the participants may have the perception that that in order to be part of influential informal social networks, or for your employees to be aware of you, you need to adopt male networking patterns that is described as instrumental (Beriema, 2005). The participant further described how men are able to network informally network more easily with each other because of the content of their discussions which are often centered on sports. Whereas when women network, they have to first identify if they have something in common, such as do they have babies, before they can have a discussion. This is a similar issue that was observed by Black women in the gambling industry, who believed that they found it hard to integrate into male dominated informal networks at work because of how their conversations were centered on male interests such as sports (Jonkheid & Mango, 2008).

The above quote further illustrates how Black women are more focused on networking for emotional purposes. Due to the difficulty of integrating into influential informal social networks and being the minority group in the organisation, the participants emphasised how they were more likely to gain social support from their informal social networks such as a greater sense of understanding, belonging and affiliation. This is consistent with the literature where it has been observed that women are more likely to seek social support than instrumental support from their informal social networks (Stallings, 2008). This phenomenon is more apparent in this sample due to their minority status and exclusion from influential social networks.

An interesting point to note is how some of the participants who stated that they do not view themselves as part of informal social networks later mentioned that they preferred integrating into small, social groups that consisted mainly of women. This is a similar finding from Bierema (2005) who described how men usually belong to larger networks, while women prefer belonging to smaller, more localized networks. Participant 4 however, did not prefer interacting with women because she believed that she would be unable to maintain professional boundaries with them. She also networked more with men because she worked in a department that consisted mostly of men. This illustrates how factors such as personal preferences and the industry that the participants work in can affect who they prefer to work with.

Participant 7 highlighted how she also wanted to keep her network small, but interacting with other women was a challenge for her because of how the women who had advanced to higher positions in her organisation were often selective of who they chose to interact with. This is consistent with previous literature where it has been observed that Black women who have advanced in their careers may sometimes adopt the Queen Bee persona (Timberlake, 2005). This is characterised by the reluctance of women who are in senior positions organisations to help other women, for fear of risking their own careers and because they wish to remain unique in the organisation (April et al., 2007).

This research therefore concludes that informal social networks are beneficial for career success because the participants were able to identify potential benefits from integrating into informal social networks at work. An interesting point which arose from this research is the discrepancy between what the participants understood regarding informal social networks, informal social interactions and informal management styles. There are also various factors which can also affect how Black female managers may choose to integrate or not into informal social networks. However, the most important aspect was the fact that their sense of agency was an integral factor that determined whether or not they actually wanted to, regardless of their perceived notion that informal social networks are important for career success.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter presents the limitations of the study, implications for future research, reflexive comments and a summary of the research report.

6.1. Limitations of the study

The study was conducted using a qualitative research approach. The nature of this research design introduces a number of limitations which may affect the validity of the study. The sample size was very small, however it allowed for more information to be extracted from each participant, similar to previous studies on Black female managers (Ramashamole, 2010). The majority of the participants were based in one location, Johannesburg, and this has an effect on the generalisability of the results. This means that the results do not represent all Black women in middle management in South Africa, however the aim of qualitative research is not to generalise the findings to other setting. Due to time constraints and the sample comprising of women who are generally busy and unavailable, it was not possible to generate a large sample size. Furthermore, the sample could not be specific to one industry, due to the scarcity of Black female managers in one field. However, qualitative research normally requires for a smaller sample size than quantitative research (Fossey et al., 2009). The snowballing sampling that was used may have contributed to the small sample size, because it only allowed access to other potential participants based on who the participants knew. This also has an impact on the generalisability of the study.

6.2. Reflexive comments

As the researcher, interacting directly with the participants, and interpreting what I think the participants are saying could have influenced how the results were interpreted. This could have led to issues with subjectivity because my own personal perceptions and views may have filtered through the analysis. The researcher also focused on certain content over the other, which could have meant that important information may have been overlooked.
The researcher being a Black female herself could have influenced how the participants responded as well. As a young female, the participants could have withheld information with the fear of being vulnerable or they could have stated information which did not require clarity because they would assume I understood them. This means that the participants may

have also been more open to discussing sensitive issues with the researcher because of their similarity in background. However, the majority of the participants were much older than the researcher and were hesitant to discuss sensitive issues with a young researcher. Additionally, being cognisant of the busy schedules of managers, the researcher would often go through the interview quickly in order to capture some information before some of the interviews were cut short. This influenced how some of the questions were asked to ensure that the manager's time was not being wasted. This means that additional information may not have been obtained on some issues. Some of the participants were unable to express themselves using English, and I would encourage them to use a language that they were comfortable to use.

6.3. Implications for organisational practise

Organisations should be aware of the existence of how informal social networks in the workplace are inevitable, given the participants' views that it is a natural process that occurs amongst people. Organisations should use them to their advantage because there are potential benefits for the organisation, such as an increase in innovation. A better flow of information and more informal management styles may also arise between employees and managers that can effectively lead to better communication and understanding between managers and subordinates. Organisations who promote informal networking can therefore increase their employee performance.

6.4. Implications for theoretical practise

This research has brought to attention the confusion and overlap between informal social networks, informal relationships, and informal management styles in the workplace. This needs to be revaluated to ensure that there is an adequate distinction between these concepts. There is a great deal of complexity involved in distinguishing the relational properties of informal social networks. More importantly, the sense of agency that individuals have when it comes to integration strategies also needs to be taken into consideration.

6.5. Implications for future research

The following research has highlighted certain areas which require further research:

- The negative impact and implications of informal social networks on the career success of Black female managers who do not see the need to integrate into informal social networks at work
- A focus on the negative effects of integrating into informal social networks at work
- The impact agency has on the network composition of employees in the workplace
- Establishing the boundaries and relational properties involved in informal social networks more clearly.

6.6. Conclusion

This research study focused on the perceptions of Black female managers towards the process of integrating into informal social networks at work, and the strategies that they use to integrate into these informal social networks. The results indicate that majority of the participants do not see themselves as being involved in informal networks in the workplace although most participated in informal relationships with certain colleagues at work. However, an important finding from the study was the confusion regarding the properties of informal social networks and the sense of agency exhibited by the participants when integrating with their colleagues. The participants acknowledged that numerous benefits could arise from informal social networks such as increased innovation, which can help Black female managers attain career success in organisations that support informal social networking.

Reference list

Alan, H., & Sözen, H. C. (2017). The Role of Formal and Informal Social Networks in Social Capital Acquisition :An Investigation on Women Board Directors Turkish Patent and Trademark Office. *Journal of Business Research*.

American Psychological Association. (2002). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct., *57*(12), 1060–73.

Andriani, L. (2013). Social Capital: A Road Map of Theoretical Frameworks and Empirical Limitations. *Working Papers in Management*, 1–26.

April, K., Dreyer, S., & Blass, E. (2007). Gender Impediments to the South African Executive Boardroom. *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, *31*(2), 51–67.

Atieno, O. P. (2009). An Analysis of the Strengths and Limitation of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Paradigms. In *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*.

Arshad, I. (2011). It's not what you know it's who you know that counts, *Policy Horizons*. Canada

Babbie, E. R. (2013). *The practice of social research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning

Babbie, E., & Mouton, J. (2002). *The Practise of Social Research*. Oxford, O.U.P.

Bell, E. L. E., & Nkomo, S. M. (2001). *Our Separate Ways: Black and White Women and the Struggle for Professional Identity*. *Harvard Business School*. Boston, MA.

Bernstein, H. (1985). *For their triumphs and for their tears: Women in apartheid South Africa, 2nd ed*. London: International Defense and Aid Fund.

Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowballing Sampling: Problems and techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. In *Sociological Methods & Research*, *10*(2), 141-163

Bierema, L. L. (2005). Women's Networks : A Career Development Intervention or Impediment ? *Human Resource Development International*, *8*(2), 207–224. http://doi.org/10.1080/13678860500100517

Booysen, L. (1999). A review of challenges facing black and white women managers in South Africa. *South African Business Review*, *3*(2), 15–26.

Booysen, L.A.E (2007). Barriers to employment equity implementation and retention of blacks in management in South Africa. *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, *31*(1), 47–71.

Booysen, L. A. E., & Nkomo, S. M. (2010). Gender Roles Stereotypes and Requisite Management Characteristics. *Gender in Management*, *25*(4), 285–300.

Bradley, B. T. (2013). *Informal Networks and Mentoring : A Phenomenological study*

exploring career advancement strategies of women leaders in the defense industry. Capella University.

Brass, D. J. (1985). Men's and Women's Networks : A Study of Interaction Patterns and Influence in an Organization. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *28*(2), 327–343.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*, 77–101. http://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Business Women's Association SouthAfrica. (2015). *2015 BWA Women in Leadership Census*. Sandton.

Catalyst (2004). Advancing African-American women in the workplace: What managers need to know. New York.

Carrim, N. M. H. (2012). *"Who am I?"- South African Indian women manager's struggle for identity: escaping the uniquitous cage*. University of Pretoria.

Chambliss, D. F., & Schutt, R. K. (2010). Qualitative Data Analysis. In *Making Sense of the Social World. Methods of Investigation*. Los Angeles: Pine Forge Press.

Combs, G. M. (2003). The Duality of Race and Gender for Managerial African American Women : Implications of Informal Social Networks on Career Advancement. *Human Resource Development Review*, *2*(4), 385–405. http://doi.org/10.1177/1534484303257949

Commission for Employment Equity. (2015). *Annual Report*. Pretoria.

Commission for Employment Equity. (2017). *Annual Report*. Pretoria.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Standford Law Review*, *3*(1241–1299).

Cross, C., & Armstrong, C. (2008). Understanding the Role of Networks in Collective Learning Processes : The Experiences of Women, *10*(4), 600–613. http://doi.org/10.1177/1523422308320495

Cross, C., & Linehan, M. (2006). Barriers to advancing female careers in the high tech sector: empirical evidence from Ireland. *Women in Management Review*, *21*, 28–39.

Doubell, M., & Struwig, M. (2014). Perceptions of factors influencing the career success of professional and business women. *South African Journal of Economic Management Sciences*, *17*(5), 531–543.

EE Research Focus. (2009). *Women in Management in the Financial Services Sector in South Africa : A Review of the Literature*. Tshwane.

Fossey, E., Harvey, C., Mcdermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *36*, 717–196.

Friedman, R., Kane, M., & Cornfield, D. B. (1998). Social Support an d Career Optimism: Examining the Effectiveness of Network Groups Among Black Managers. *Human Relations*, *51*(9), 1155–1177.

Gilbert, J. A., & Ones, D. S. (1998). Role of informal integration in career advancement: Investigations in Plural and Multicultural organizations and Implications for Diversity Valuation. *Sex Roles*, *39*(9/10), 685–704.

Granovetter, M. (1983). The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited. *Sociological Theory*, *1*, 201–233.

Haas, M. (2009). *Social network theory and analysis: A preliminary exploration*. Sydney.

Hannaneh Mohammedi, K., Mahnaz, H., & Aliyeh, K. (2012). Women's position in intra organizational informal relationship networks: An application of network analysis approach. *Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *41*, 485–491. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.04.059

Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and Prescription: How Gender Stereotypes Prevent Women's Ascent Up the Organizational Ladder, *57*(4), 657–674.

Heslin, P. A. (2003). Self- and Other- Referent Criteria. *Journal of Career Assessment*, *11*(3), 262–286. http://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072703254500

Hite, J. M., Hite, S. J., Mugimu, C. B., & Nsubuga, Y. K. (2010). "Strategic Co-opetition" Headteacher Networking in Uganda's Secondary Schools. In J. D. Daly (Ed.), *Social Network Theory and Educational Change*.

Ibarra, H. (1992). Homophily and Differential Returns: Sex Differences in Network Structure and Access in an Advertising Firm**.** *Administrative Science Quarterly, 37*(3), 422-447

Ibarra, H. (1993). Personal Networks of Women and Minorities in Management : A Conceptual Framework Author. *The Academy of Management Review*, *18*(1), 56–87.

Ibarra, H. (1995). Race , Opportunity , and Diversity of Social Circles in Managerial Networks. *Academy of Management*, *38*(3), 673–703.

Inkpen, C, A., & Tsang, E, W, K. (2005). Social Capital, Networks, and Knowledge Transfer. *Academy of Management Review, 30*(1), 146-165.

International Women's Forum South Africa. (2011). *The Status of Women in South Africa: A preliminary report incorporating the findings of consultative roundtable discussions on Women Empowerment in South Africa*.

Jonkheid, E., & Mango, T. (2008). *Perceptions of female managers in the South African gambling industry with special reference to gender equality*.

Keeley, B. (2007). What is social capital? In *Human Capital: How what you know shapes*

your life. Danvers, USA: OECD Pubishing.

Koput, W. K. (2010). *Social Capital: An Introdction to Managing Networks*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Krause, J., Croft, D. P., & James, R. (2007). Social network theory in the behavioural sciences: Potential applications. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, *62*(1), 15–27. http://doi.org/10.1007/s00265-007-0445-8

Lalanne, M., & Seabright, P. (2012). The Old Boy Network : Gender Differences in the Impact of Social Networks on Remuneration in Top Executive Jobs.

Lewis, C. P. (2016). Gender , race and the social construction of leadership in organisations : A South African case study Gender , race and the social construction of leadership in organisations : A South African case study.

Liu, W., Sidhu, A., Beacom, A. M., & Valente, T. W. (2017). Social Network Theory. *The International Encyclopedia ofMedia Effect*, (January). http://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0092

Lin, N. (2001). Social Capital a theory of Social structure and Action Cambridge. *Cambridge University Press.*

Maseko, T. I. (2013). A Comparative study of challenges faced by women in leadership: A case of Foskor and the department of labour in Mhlathuze municipality.

McCall, L. (2005). The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *30*(3), 1771–1800. http://doi.org/0097-9740/2005/3003-0003$10.00

Mcquire, G. M. (2000). Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Networks. *Work and Occupations*, *27*(4).

Mengel, F. (2015). *Gender differences in networking*. University of Essex.

Menon, S.T., & Kotze, E. (2007), Human resource integration in the South African military: A view from the trenches. *Human Resource Management*, *46* (1), 71-94.

Moodley, L., Holt, T., Leke, A., & Desvaux, G. (2016). *Women Matter Africa 2016*.

Moore, J. W (2016) What Is the Sense of Agency and Why Does it Matter? *Frontiers in Psychology*. *7(*1272), doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01272

Ng, T., Eby, L., Sorensen, K., & Feldman, D. (2005). Predictors of objective and subjective career success: a meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, *58*(2), 267–408. http://doi.org/10.111/j/1744-6570.295.00515.x

O'Connor, P. (1996). Organizational Culture as a Barrier to Women's Promotion. *Economic and Social Review*, *3*, 187–216.

Oakley, J. G. (2000). Gender-based Barriers to Senior Management Positions: Understanding

the Scarcity of Female CEOs. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *27*(1994), 321–334. http://doi.org/10.2307/25074386

Padilla, L. M. (1997). Intersectionality and Positionality : Situating Women on Color in the Affirmative Action Dialogue. *Fordham Law Review*, *66*(3).

Palnikas, L.A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C.A., Wisdom, J.P., Duan, N & Hoagwod, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Adm Policy Mental Health*. 2015 September ; 42(5): 533–544. doi:10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y.

Pather, R. (2016). Africa is more pro-women leadership than most of the world according to study. Retrieved March 4, 2017, from https://mg.co.za/article/2016-08-10-africa-is-more-pro-women-leadership-than-most-of-the-world-according-to-study

Paul, D. R. (2010). The Importance of Social Network Relationships During The Socialisation Process of New Employees By.

Perriton, L. (2006). Does Woman + a Network = Career Progression ?, *2*(1), 101–113. http://doi.org/10.1177/1742715006060655

Pheko, M. M. (2013). Batswana female managers' career experiences and perspectives on corporate mobility and success. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1–11. http://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v12i1.445

Podolny, J. M., & Baron, J. N. (1997). Resources and Relationships: Social Networks and Mobility in the Workplace. *American Sociological Review*, *62*(5), 673–693.

Powell, G. N., Butterfield, D. A., & Parent, J. D. (2002). Gender and Managerial Stereotypes: Have the Times Changed ?, *28*(2), 177–193.

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Tuning In, Tuning Out : The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America.

Ramashamole, M. (2010). *An exploration of the career barriers faced by black women in middle management: An application of Schlossberg's theory*. University of the Witwatersrand.

Rand, S., & Beriema, L. (2009). E*xploring the nature of the" Old Boy's Network" in the United States: Using electronic networks of practice to understand gendered issues in HRD*

Riordan, S., & Louw-Potgieter, J. (2011). Career Success of Women Academics in South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *41*(2), 157–172.

Rutherford, S. (2001). Organizational cultures, women managers and exclusion. *Women in Management Review*, *16*(8), 1–21.

Schein, V. E. (1973). The relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite

management characteristics, *57*(2), 95–100.

Schuck, K., & Liddle, B. J. (2004). The Female Manager 's Experience: A Concept Map and Assessment Tool, *56*(2), 75–87. http://doi.org/10.1037/1061-4087.56.2.75

Sheppard, L. D. (2017). Sisters at Arms: A Theory of Female Same-Sex Conflict and Its Problematization in Organizations. *Journal of Management*, *43*(3), 691–715. http://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314539348

Stallings, M. M. (2008). Whom would you approach for advice? Gender differences in networking in preferences.

Stibitz. (2015). How to get a new employee up to speed. Retrieved April 30, 2017, from https://hbr.org/2015/05/how-to-get-a-new-employee-up-to-speed

Terre Blanche, M., & Durrheim, K. (1999). *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town, SA: University of Cape Town Press.

Tichy, N. M., Tushman, M. L., Fombrun, C., & Tushman, M. L. (1979). Social Network Analysis for Organizations. *The Academy of Management Review*, *4*(4), 507–519.

Timberlake, S. (2005). Social capital and gender in the workplace. *Journal of Management Development*, *24*(1), 34–44. http://doi.org/10.1108/02621710510572335

Visagie, S. (2012). The experience of career success: An exploratory study among South African executives, (November).

Waldstrøm, C. (2001). Informal Networks in Organizations – A literature review, (2).

Warnat, A. E. (2012). *Intersectionality and Employment Equity in South Africa*. University of Cape Town.

Woolcock, M. (1998). Social capital and economic development: Toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework. Theory and Society, 27(2): 151-208.

Woodley, V. A., & Woodley, V. A. (2012). Gender and networks in project teams: The case of a troubled insurance and asset management company.

Wright, S. C., & Taylor, D. M. (1998). Responding to Tokenism: Individual action in the face of collective injustice. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *28*, 647–667.

Wright, T. (2016). Women's Experience of Workplace Interactions in Male-Dominated Work: The Intersections of Gender, Sexuality and Occupational Group. *Gender, Work &*, *23*(3). http://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12074

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet Wits Plus

Psychology Department
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Good day,

My name is Kelebogile Motlhamme, and I am currently completing my Master of Arts in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a study on Black female managers' perceptions' of their integration into informal social networks at work. If you are a Black female in middle management with a formal qualification, I would like to invite you to participate in my study. This will involve being interviewed by me for approximately an hour, at a time and place that is convenient to you.

Participation in this study is voluntary and as a Wits Part Time student, you will receive 5% course credit for participating. The purpose of the interview is to find out about your experiences. However, you can choose not to respond to any of the questions if you feel uncomfortable, and you can withdraw from the interview if you wish to. Your identity will only be known to me and my supervisor, and confidentiality will be strictly maintained by removing any information which could potentially identify you. I will anonymise your responses by using a pseudonym in all reports, presentations or publications that could result from this study. I would like to audio record the interviews so that I have an accurate record of your experiences. The audio recordings will be kept secure on a password protected computer for the duration of the study, and on completion of the study the audio recordings will be destroyed.

If you wish to participate in the study, please sign the attached consent forms before the interview. If you have any queries, please free to contact me or my supervisor through our email addresses which are provided below. If you are interested in the results of the study, please let me know as I will be very happy to send you an executive summary.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research study. Please detach and keep this participant information sheet for future reference.

Yours sincerely,

Kelebogile Motlhamme
721866@students.wits.ac.za
Tel: 0787091830

Professor Fiona Donald (supervisor)
Fiona.donald@wits.ac.za
Tel: 011 717 450

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Psychology Department
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Good day,

My name is Kelebogile Motlhamme, and I am currently completing my Master of Arts in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a study on Black female managers' perceptions' of their integration into informal social networks at work. If you are a Black female in middle management with a formal qualification, I would like to invite you to participate in my study. This will involve being interviewed by me for approximately an hour, at a time and place that is convenient to you.

Participation in this study is voluntary and there will be no advantages or disadvantages to participating. The purpose of the interview is to find out about your experiences. However, you can choose not to respond to any of the questions if you feel uncomfortable, and you can withdraw from the interview if you wish to. Your identity will only be known to me and my supervisor, and confidentiality will be strictly maintained by removing any information which could potentially identify you. I will anonymise your responses by using a pseudonym in all reports, presentations or publications that could result from this study. I would like to audio record the interviews so that I have an accurate record of your experiences. The audio recordings will be kept secure on a password protected computer for the duration of the study, and on completion of the study the audio recordings will be destroyed.

If you wish to participate in the study, please sign the attached consent forms before the interview. If you have any queries, please free to contact me or my supervisor through our email addresses which are provided below. If you are interested in the results of the study, please let me know as I will be very happy to send you an executive summary.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research study. Please detach and keep this participant information sheet for future reference.

Yours sincerely,

Kelebogile Motlhamme
721866@students.wits.ac.za
Tel: 0787091830

Professor Fiona Donald (supervisor)
Fiona.donald@wits.ac.za
Tel: 011 717 450

Appendix C: Participation Consent Form

Psychology Department
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

I, _____
(Full name/s and surname of the potential participant)

Do hereby provide consent for Kelebogile Motlhamme to interview me as part of the research study on Black female managers' perceptions of their integration into informal social networks at work.

I understand that (please tick each condition in the box provided to indicate agreement)

☐ - My participation in this study is completely voluntary

☐ - I have the option to refuse to answer any of the questions asked

☐ - Participation in the study has no personal potential risks or benefits

☐ - Confidentiality will be strictly maintained through the removal of any information from the transcripts which could potentially identify me. My responses will be anonymised through the use of pseudonyms in any reports, publications or presentations that draw on this study

☐ - I grant permission to use direct quotes from the interview in any reports, publications or presentations that draw on this study

☐ - I grant permission to audio record the interview

I do hereby grant permission to be interviewed

Yes		No	

Signed: _____ (signature of participant)
Date: _____

Appendix D: Consent for Recording Form

Psychology Department
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

I, _____
(Full name/s and surname of the potential participant)

Do hereby consent for the interview which will be conducted by Kelebogile Motlhamme, for her study regarding Black female managers' perceptions of their integration into informal social networks at work to **be audio-recorded**

I understand that (please tick each condition in the box provided to indicate agreement):

☐ - The recording will be stored in a secure location with restricted access (password protected computer) - only I as the researcher will have access to the recordings

☐ - publications or presentations that draw on this research

☐ - any information which may identify me will be removed from the transcripts and research report and pseudonyms will be used

- I do hereby consent for the interview to be audio recorded

Yes		No	

Signed: _____ (signature of participant)
Date: _____

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. Please ask any questions if you have any concerns, and if you happen to feel uncomfortable at any point during the interview, please let me know.

1. Could you please tell me what your job title is, and what level of management you are in at the moment?

2. What factors do you feel contributed to your professional growth and career progress to where you are now?

3. How has your experience been like working in your current organisation?

4. Are you hoping for any promotions within the near future?

In most organisations, there are formal and informal relationships between people. I am interested in the informal networks or groups of people that form in organisations. These are networks of people who tend to interact with each other, perhaps give advice on work and even personal issues, and so on. I would appreciate hearing your views and experiences with these networks.

<u>Informal social networks in the organisation</u>

Please can you tell me about any informal networks that you are aware of in your organisation?

- Who belongs to these networks? (A rich description of the characteristics of people in the networks).
- How diverse are the people in these networks? In terms of organisation, gender, age, race, relatedness of jobs of network members, closeness of work or business units or departments
- How close do you think people in these networks are? (At work and outside work)
- What do people gain from being part of these networks? (Probe: What do these relationships benefit people's work, career progression, social lives, influence on decisions that are made at work, power).

- What have your experiences (as a black female) been like networking with other employees in your organisation?

- Do you find it easier to network with men or women? People your age or older people?
- Do you think there is a difference between how men and women network in the workplace?

Participants' involvement in informal social networks in the organisation

Do you see yourself as belonging to any of the informal social networks that you have told me about? (Yes/No/Not sure).

- If yes:
  - Which networks are you part of? (Probe the diversity of network? How similar are the other network members to you in terms of your race, gender, age, level in the organisation, relatedness of jobs of network members, closeness of work or business units or departments.
  - If no: why do you choose not be part of informal networks?
  - Do you want belong to any informal networks in your organisation? Why?
  - Do you maintain any personal relationships with the people you just told me about outside of work?

Why do you think you have become part of this network instead of one of the others that you told me about?

- What is it like being part of this network?

How did you become part of that network? (Strategies) so on your part specifically what have you done to ensure you become part of informal relationships at work

- **(**Probe: How easy was it becoming part of the network(s)
- Challenges in becoming part of the network(s) and how did you handle these, what was easy about becoming part of the network(s), what did you do to help you become part of the network(s).
- When you going through a difficult time at work or at home, who do you generally speak to first at work? (what is your relation here at work, describe the persons characteristics)

- Do you ever feel excluded from any informal relationships and groups at work? And how has that affected the way you perform your job at work.

What do you gain from being part of these relationships at work?
(Probe: How has it benefited your work, career progression, decisions at work, your influence at work, life outside work)
How has this affected your access to important information in your organisation?
How influential is the network(s) you belong to compared with the other networks you told me about?
(Influential in terms of aspects such as having members with a lot of formal power in the organisation, as well as being able to influence formal decisions from behind the scenes, possibly by talking to and influencing people before decisions are made formally, or other ways of influencing decisions).

To what extent does your organisation support the informal networking inside as well as outside your organisation?

Do you have any general comments regarding informal relationships at work?

Appendix F: <u>Biographical Questionnaire- (</u>*for sample description)*

Please note that the following information is merely to assist in describing the sample involved in this study.

1. Age: _____
2. Position currently occupied: _____
3. Number of years in current occupational position: _____
4. Number of years within current organisation: _____

Appendix G – Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MORG/17/010 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Black female managers' perceptions of integration into informal social networks at work
INVESTIGATORS	Motlhamme Kelebogile
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	27/06/17
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 27 June 2017

CHAIRPERSON
(Dr Colleen Bernstein)

cc Supervisor:

Prof. Fiona Donald
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2019

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES