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The underlying reasons for the slow gender transformation of black African female senior managers in the private sector

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Research Report (Master of Arts by CW and RR)

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Research title: The underlying reasons for the slow gender transformation of black African female senior managers in the private sector.

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June 2019

Plagiarism Declaration

I Yolanda Gonono student number: 567791 hereby confirm that this research report is my own work. I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university

Signed: Y. Gonono

……..

Date: 27/06/2019

Acknowledgements

All the glory to thee most high God of all, I could not do it without God and I would not want to. A big thank you to everyone in my life, for contributing to the person I am and who I would like to be. My late grandmother, my constant motivation and strength, it is her sowing that makes my life journey a fruitful one.

I am truly grateful to my supervisor professor David Dickinson, for seeing through my misty ideas and guiding me to the light. His patience, commitment and invaluable guidance are what made this study possible.

The support and kindness from the research participants went a long way, a big thank you to each and every one of them. Last but not least, thank you to my husband for being my rock.

Dedication

To the black African female I gave birth to, Ruvheneko Shoniwa. Qhawekazi.

Abstract

This study looks into the internal issues within the private sector that are possibly the reason for the slow rate of gender transformation. The annual Employment Equity Report (2017) by the Department of Labour shows that gender transformation is moving at a slow pace, particularly for black African females in senior management positions. The research sample is made up of black African female senior managers and HR staff in the telecoms, looking at their personal experiences. The research findings show that gender transformation is multifaceted and employment equity on its own will not produce the desired results. There are initiatives to empower women and progressive legislature but there is an apparent resistance for gender transformation in the workforce. These internal issues' root cause is the lack of change in systems and culture of the workforce, which was previously created for men and women are still having to change themselves to fit into it.

List of abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BEECom	Black Economic Empowerment Commission
BMF	Black Management Forum
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EAP	Economically Active Population
EXCO	Executive Committee
HR	Human Resources

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1. Introduction

This chapter gives a background on the study and explains why it specifically focuses on black African females. It also states the nature of the problem and purpose of the study.

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) was introduced to increase transformation by increasing the recruitment of black people into corporate employment as managers and board members (Southall, 2007). According to the B-BBEE Act (2003; 3) "black people is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians who are citizens of the Republic of South Africa by birth, descent or naturalisation". This paper focuses on black African females' transformation, as their racial advantages and disadvantages differ from that of Coloureds and Indians. A study by Gappoo (2006) states that historically Coloureds and Indians occupied middleman minority positions, meaning that they were more privileged than black Africans but also less than the ruling class. The Department of Labour's *Employment Equity Report* (2017; 41) states that "Coloureds constitute 10.8%, which is one percent above their Economically Active Population (EAP). Indians constitute 10.7%, which is three and half times above their EAP" in senior management positions. This means that Coloureds and Indians are well represented.

Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policies form part of the government's initiative for socio-economic development. The first empowerment deals that took place between 1993 and 1998 were aimed at selling equity stakes of companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange to black investors. This was done in an attempt to bring black people into the economy (Raphela, 2003; Hundah, 2007). BEE deals focused on the transfer of ownership and shares of corporate companies to a small number of politically connected black leaders, who were predominantly black African males (Tangri and Southall, 2008). Gender was side-lined in BEE's quest for transformation until later when the B-BBE act was passed in 2003.

The reason why this study focuses on BEE policies is because BEE policies were introduced to increase transformation by increasing the recruitment of black people into corporate employment as managers and board members. This study has focused specifically on black African females as senior managers. Other policies such as Employment Equity Act and Skills Development Act work together with BEE policies in increasing recruitment of black people into formal employment. The literature review will show that the issue is not with black people being recruited into formal employment but rather with slow rate of transformation in senior management roles. It is therefore important to show the history of South Africa's

economic transformation and how from the onset the first BEE deals which took place side-lined gender.

1.1 Problem statement

Employment Equity Report (2017; 66) mentions that "the workforce profile at the upper echelons in organisations is mainly white and male. This suggests that South African workplaces remain racial and gendered. The shift towards equality in this regard continues to grind at a slow pace, which suggests that this will not be reached anytime soon".

1.2 Purpose of the Research

This study aims to look at the underlying reasons for the slow rate of gender transformation for black African women in senior management positions in the private sector. In doing so, this study has looked into factors such as the organisational culture, salary discrepancies, social capital and the intersectionality of race and gender as factors influence gender transformation.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to look into the private sector, to, first, assess if there are any internal issues in the systems and operations that might be reasons for the slow rate of gender transformation for black African female senior managers. Second, to look at why there are few black African female senior managers compared to whites, coloureds and Indians. Third, to look at black African women as leaders (senior managers). In summary, the objective of this study is to look at the internal factors within the private sector that are the reasons for the slow rate of gender transformation for black African female senior managers.

1.4 Research question

What are the underlying issues in the private sector that might be the reason for the slow pace of gender transformation of black African female senior managers, post 1994?

1.5 Research Methodology

This study has used a qualitative method of enquiry, as its objective was to look into internal issues experienced by black African female senior managers in the private sector. Therefore, the research design needed to be one that has semi-structured questions to allow the participants to respond in detail and to also give room for the researcher to probe deeper. This was important for the study to ensure that there is no misinterpretation of the data and

that I as a researcher do not use my own experience as a senior manager to influence the research findings.

1.6 Outline of the chapters

This introduction is a brief explanation of what the research is about, its objective and the methodology used to achieve it. The following chapters go into the details of the study. The literature review locates the history of gender transformation within the South African context and discusses statistics from the Employment Equity Report (2017). Following is the methodology chapter which gives details on how data was collected, processed and analysed. The methodology chapter also touches on research ethics and recommendations. The chapter on research findings discusses the lived experiences of the black African female senior managers and cross examines it with that of the Human Resources officials. The last chapter concludes the study and has recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

Gender transformation issues in the private sector are both internally and externally influenced. By giving a historical background of the policies directly affecting gender transformation is one way of looking at the external issues. Though the study is looking into internal issues within the private sector, it is important to know the external influences as they may influence the internal issues. The study looks at the lived experiences of the underrepresented group in senior management in the private sector, which is black African females. This has been done by analysing the experiences of black African women who are well educated, empowered and senior within their professions. The analysis demonstrate that gender transformation issues have little to do with women's capabilities and more about the systems that continue to limit women in the workplace, through social exclusion, remuneration, promotions and decision making.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

It is important to know the history and policies responsible for gender transformation in South Africa as they directly influence the way in which the corporate sector functions (Maier, 1997). Studies (Nkenkana, 2015; Maier, 1997; Rudd, 2000) state that when dealing with issues of gender transformation, it is important to know the systems and structures that produce the knowledge that govern social practices. Gender transformation entails the abolishment of the systems and structures of patriarchy. A study by Nkenkana (2015) states that gender transformation is not just about numerical representation of women but about the transformation of a systematic and structural patriarchy. Crisol (2001)'s study mentions that gender and social transformation are one and the same thing, as gender is socially constructed. Therefore to achieve gender transformation there needs to be social transformation. Nkenkana (2015) argues that it is not just about the numerical representation of women in boardrooms but rather about dismantling oppressive systems and the structures that continue to uphold patriarchy. Social behaviour, stereotypes and beliefs need to be changed.

Crisol (2001; 108) states that "changes are taking place from the 'outside' which hopefully can penetrate and transform the 'core' but a parallel change must also take place from the 'core' outwards in order to give meaning and legitimacy to the new conditions being advocated for women".

Gender transformation for the purpose of this study assumes that women of all races are treated fairly in the workplace, meaning women should be treated with the same amount of respect as men. This is in terms of getting compensated the same for the same job and having equal opportunities for training and promotion. Transformation also includes women's family roles being given due regard and accounted for in the workplace. Studies (Fourie, Franks and Schurink: 2006) shows that women are prone to role overload and Maier (1997) explains that it is because women are expected to keep their family life separate from their work life. A study (Rudd, 2000; 531) in Germany revealed that policies regarding family and work have been combined to accommodate women's family roles. This means that being a mother does not disadvantage women.

Also, new mothers do not have to go back to work after giving birth because of financial strains, as mothers get up to a year and a half paid leave (Rudd, 2000). In South Africa the law allows for four months of maternity leave and the company is not obliged to pay women during these four months. Women have to claim from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act, 2013).

The following sections of the literature review look into the history of BEE and the influence the BEE Commission (BEECom) report has had on gender transformation legislation. The latest statistics on senior managers in the workforce is analysed in order to strengthen the argument that gender transformation is moving at a slow pace in terms of the representation of women in management positions as well as women receiving training and being promoted. The last two sections, intersectionality and the organisational culture, looks into the internal issues of the corporate sector

2.2 The history of Black Economic Empowerment

BEE was informally started in the early 1990s, the BEECom report (2001) states that the private sector had conceptualised, controlled and driven the BEE vision. In 1993, the private sector acted on its own initiative to embark on BEE ownership deals which meant selling stakes in companies to black elites (Tangri and Southall, 2008; Groener, 2003). These BEE deals did not translate into a meaningful transfer of ownership to the black majority as it only benefitted a few individuals (BEECom report, 2001).

The BEECom (2001) report states that between 1994 and 2001 about 500 000 jobs had been lost in the formal sector and that as much as the private sector had committed to economic transformation, its contribution was nowhere near the scale required to put the country on a new growth path that would eradicate poverty. The idea to have a BEECom came from the Black Management Forum (BMF) Conference in November 1997 and it was formally established in 1998 (BEECom report, 2001). The BMF wanted black people to have control of the BEE vision and of South Africa's economic growth which then led to the broadening of the BEE scope. It was concluded at the African National Congress (ANC)'s national conference in 2002 that BEE will be "given a broader definition so that the benefits flow to society as a whole and not just to a rising black elite" (Tangri and Southall, 2008; 706). The

ANC's decision was influenced by both the BEECom and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

As mentioned by Tangri and Southall (2008), the ANC's strategy document to broaden BEE was in line with the criticism by COSATU that the empowerment process had been concerned with equity transfer and had enriched politically-connected black elites. Following the recommendation made by the BEECom 2001 report, the B-BBEE Act was passed in 2003 and then later amended in 2013.

In the B-BBEE Act (2003; 4) it states that its "intended beneficiaries include women, workers, youth, people with disabilities and people living in rural areas". A study by Patel and Graham (2012) shows that although the politically well-connected black male leaders are still benefitting from BEE deals, broad-based beneficiaries and particularly women are also benefitting through deals that involve women groups or women-led companies. This does not affect the rate at which black African female senior managers are employed in the private sector, as studies (Canham, 2014; Department of Labour, 2017) show that gender transformation is still slow.

2.3 The BEECom report on gender transformation

Some of the concerns raised in the BEECom report (2001; 6) are that "both the public and private sector have designed various strategies aimed at achieving BEE", however there has been little coordination of the policies and programmes. This has resulted in BEE strategies having limited impact on the inequalities faced in the private sector. Patel and Graham (2012)'s study suggests that there are inherent tensions in the B-BBEE policy (2003), as it is a policy that asks the private sector operating in a neoliberal economic context to contribute to the state's social transformation agenda. The BEECom report suggests that "the private sector must also take into account private and social returns and factor in long term and strategic considerations when making investment decisions" (2001; 7). In other words, the private sector needs to invest in its employees through empowerment as this will benefit them in the long run and it forms part of social development. It is in the private sector's interest to utilise their employees to their best abilities. Up-skilling women and opening up opportunities for them in management positions would be beneficial for the private sector as well.

Women are equally able human beings as men and as the BEECom (2001) report states, women make up 54% of the population which ultimately means that women comprise more than half of the population that the private sector can invest in as human capital.

However, it is important to ascertain if there are women who have the necessary skills and qualifications to be in management positions and the following section will analyse the statistics of the South African workforce.

2.4 Statistics on management positions in the private sector

In order to see the rate of gender transformation over the years since the inception of BEE policies I have used data taken from the BEECom report (2001). The below table indicates that from 1997 to 1999 the number of female managers grew from 13% to 17% and the number of male managers decreased from 87% to 83%.

Table 1: National management prolife 1999

National Management Profile						
	African	Asian	Coloured	White	Female	Male
1997	5%	3%	3%	89%	13%	87%
1998	6%	4%	3%	87%	16%	84%
1999	7%	4%	4%	84%	17%	83%

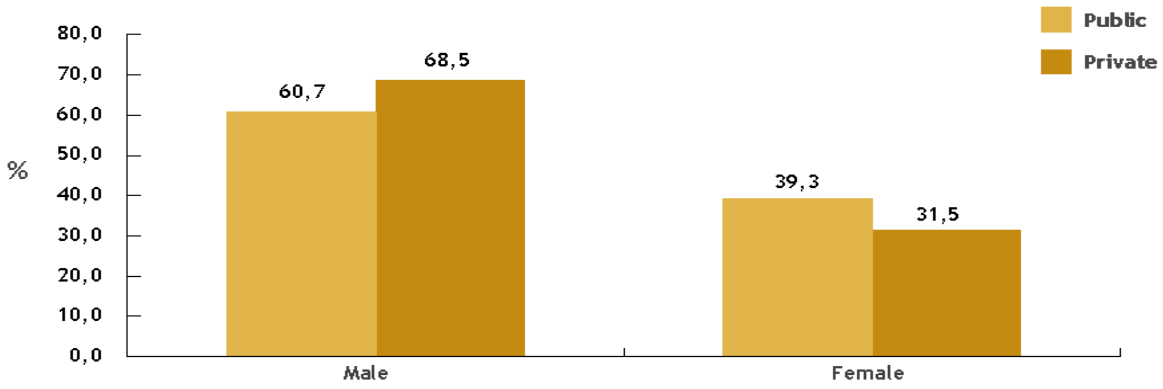
Source: BEECom report (2001)

Though the above table does not specify the percentage for black African female managers, the BEECom report (2001) does state that out of 103 companies at the time, only six senior executive managers, three senior managers and 5 middle managers were black African females. National management profile by race on the above table indicates that the black African managers grew by 2%, the Asian managers and coloured both grew by 1%. White managers decreased by 5%. The percentage of both race and gender transformation grew between 1997 and 1999 and even though it was at a low rate, it had increased.

The Commission for Employment Equity Report (2016 - 2017) provides the most recent statistics on senior management positions in both public and private sector. The report stipulates that the private sector accounts for 94.8% of the reports submitted, meaning that the data represented is more a reflection of the private sector than it is of the public sector.

When looking at senior managers in both the public and private sector, there are 33.3% females and 66.7% males.

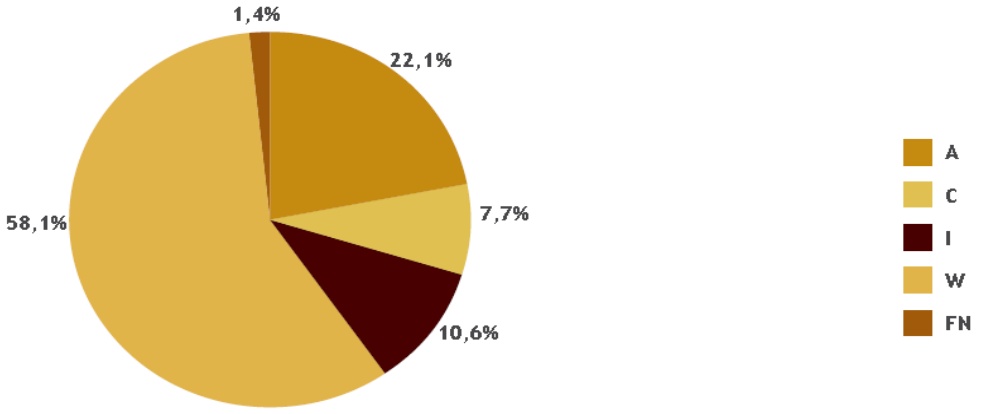
Graph 1: Senior managers in public and private sector



Source: Commission of Employment Equity report, 2017.

The above graph 1 shows that the South African workforce has more males in senior management positions, in the public sector (60.7%) as well as in the private secotr (68.5%). This is in stark contrast to the female senior managers who are not well represented in both sectors, (39.3%) in the public sector and (31.5%) in the private sector. These statistics show that in the workforce in general, gender transformation is slow and it is even slower when compared to racial transformation.

Graph 2: Senior managers across all sectors by race



Source: Commission of Employment Equity report, 2017

A-Black African, C- Coloured, I-Indian, W- White and FN- Foreign Nationals.

The above graph 2 shows the percentages of senior managers in the public and private sector by race. The white group is the largest out of all the races, there are 58.1% white senior managers in both the public and private sector combined. The lowest represented group in senior managers are black Africans at 22.1%.The report suggests that 22.1% is a three-fold under-representation in relation to their economically active population (see below table2).

Table 2: Economically active population by race and gender

POPULATION GROUP	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
African	42.8%	35.1%	78.0%
Coloured	5.3%	4.5%	9.8%
Indian	1.8%	1.0%	2.8%
White	5.3%	4.2%	9.5%
TOTAL	**55.2%**	**44.8%**	**100.0%**

Source: Commission of Employment Equity report, 2017

Table 3 shows that the private sector has the lowest representation of female senior managers in all races. The male senior managers across all races are almost twice the percentage of female senior managers. There are also more white senior managers as white males represent the highest percentage at 44%, followed by white females at 19.4%.

Table 3: Senior managers in the private sector by race and gender

Males				Females				Foreign nationals	
African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Male	Female
10.0%	4.6%	7.4%	44.0%	4.9%	2.9%	3.7%	19.4%	2.4%	0.7%

Source: Commission of Employment Equity report, 2017

The below table 4 shows that when it comes to the professionally qualified level, also known as middle management, the difference in race and gender is not as high as it is amongst senior managers . In terms of professionally qualified in the private sector there are 15.8% black African males and 10% black african females, 5.9% coloured males and 4.5% coloured females, 6.5% Indian males and 4.6% Indian females and 30.9% white males and 18.76% white females. Males and white people dominate the professionally qualified level as well but the inequality in representation is not much as it is in senior managers.

Table 4: Professionally qualified by gender and race

Business Type	Males				Female				Foreign Nationals	
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Male	Female
National Government	37.5%	4.4%	2.6%	11.8%	29.2%	3.3%	2.1%	8.6%	0.3%	0.2%
Provincial Government	23.6%	3.4%	1.3%	3.5%	51.9%	6.1%	2.0%	5.9%	1.5%	0.7%
Local Government	34.5%	9.8%	3.0%	13.7%	26.1%	5.0%	1.4%	6.1%	0.3%	0.1%
Private Sector	15.8%	5.9%	6.5%	30.9%	10.0%	4.5%	4.6%	18.7%	2.3%	0.7%

Source: Commission of Employment Equity report, 2017

Black African senior managers are under-represented in both the public and private sector, the public sector is doing better in terms of gender transformation than the private sector. The statistics show that there are 35.1% black African females who are economically active. There are 3.3% black African females who are top managers, 4.9% who are senior managers and 10% in professionally qualified/ middle management. If the black African females who are professionally qualified are given the necessary skills development training then there is a possibility of having more black African senior managers in the future. The below table looks at the skills development for the professionally qualified.

Table 5: Skills development for professionally qualified by race and gender

	Male				Female				Foreign national	
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Male	Female
Workforce profile-all	120 731	30 352	28 569	130 695	125 126	27 156	27 701	91 477	12 024	4 563
employees	20.4%	5.1%	4.8%	22.1%	21.1%	4.6%	3.7%	15.4%	2.0%	0.8%
Skills Development	32.8%	3.7%	3.3%	28.1%	15.6%	4.2%	2.9%	9.4%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Commission of Employment Equity report, 2017

The above table 5 shows that males receive more skills development training compared to females. There are 20.4% African males in the professionally qualified category, however, when it comes to skills development they make up 32.8% of the employees given training. White males are also over-represented when it comes to employees who are given skills development training, they make up 21.1% of the workforce and 28.1% of the skills development employees. Females are under-represented, African females make up 21.1% of the workforce but only 15.6% are given skills development training. This means that more males compared to females will be qualified to be promoted to senior managers and gender transformation will continue moving at a slow pace.

Given the reluctance of gender transformation in the South African workforce, it is important to understand whether there are policy regulations that penalise non-compliance.

2.5 B-BBEE Regulations

In order to ensure that companies comply with the national socio-economic transformation plans, the BEECom report (2001) recommended that government introduce penalties for companies who do not meet the BEE targets. The government acknowledged the resistance from the private sector to follow economic transformation plans but due to the risks involved, the government would rather negotiate the terms of transformation with the private sector as opposed to imposing them (Tangri and Southall, 2008; Hamann, Khagram and Rohan, 2008). Patel and Graham (2012) mention that there is always a risk that companies will move their assets to less restrictive markets should the burden of satisfying government's socio-economic transformation agendas become too demanding.

A generic scorecard and Codes of Good Practise was published after the publishing of the B-BBEE Act, these were regulations put in place to measure the targets of B-BBEE (Hill, 2015; Tangri and Southall, 2008). Companies who do not comply with the BEE scorecard receive poor BEE ratings which affects their ability to do business in South Africa and more so with the government (Esser and Dekker, 2008).

The BEE policy is not the only policy with regulations for race and gender transformation, it works together with the Employment Equity Act and Affirmative Action measures. BEECom (2001; 27) report states that the "Employment Equity Act was implemented to address racial and gender discrimination that can prevent black people and women from accessing on-the-job training required to perform in high-skill occupations in the workplace". Non-compliance in terms of the Employment Equity Act may result in a fine (Employment Equity Amendment Act, 2014). "The Director-General may apply to the Labour Court for an order directing the employer to comply with a request or recommendation or to impose a fine in terms of Schedule 1 of this Act" (Employment Equity Regulations, 2014;25). The Labour Court has the powers to make orders and award compensation or impose fines (Employment Equity Regulations, 2014).

Hill (2015) states that discussion on representation of women in the managerial positions falls into three categories legislative, regulatory and voluntary. The government has enforced both legislature and regulations to increase black African women's representation in organisations. The issues impeding gender transformation within the private sector falls into the third category of voluntarily changing its environment and culture to accommodate gender transformation.

2.6 Intersectionality

Black African women continue to endure both race and gender discrimination in the private sector (Canham, 2014). The struggle for black African women to make it into senior management positions carries with it the intersectional burden of race and gender discrimination. Race discrimination is inherited from the pre-democracy era and the elimination of race discrimination is still in progress. White people are still dominant in management positions in the private sector (Department of Labour, 2017). Gender discrimination is something that is embedded in the corporate culture, being a previously male-dominated sector (Mintz and Krymkowski, 2014). In the private sector, roles were gendered, the managerial roles were for males and administrative roles were known to be for females (Fourie, Franks and Schurink: 2006). Study (Mintz and Krymkowski, 2014) shows that gender segregation is greater than race segregation in the workplace. The above statistics taken from the Commission for Employment Equity Report (2017) show that gender transformation is progressing at a slower rate compared to race transformation in the workforce.

A Study by Hills (2015; 153) states that "Women are the majority of all graduates almost everywhere in the developed world, but make up a smaller share of the workforce the further up the corporate ladder they go". Mintz and Krymkowski (2014)'s findings for the United States of America are similar to that of the Employment Equity Report (2017). There are two main similarities, the first one is that Mintz and Krymkowski (2014) state that white males have maintained their advantage in the occupational hierarchy. The Department of Labour (2017) states that males remain dominant in senior and top management positions. In the private sector white males dominate and in the public sector black African males dominate. This is a good example of how race transformation is moving at a faster pace compared to gender transformation, given that in the private sector it is white males who

are dominate in leadership roles and in the public sector it is black males who are dominate in leadership roles.

The second similarity is the negative impact transformation policies had on occupational desegregation of women, by addressing race transformation first and including gender transformation later. The same way in which BEE deals did not include women when transferring ownership and stakes of companies, the focus proved to have been racial but not gender based.

Black African women not only rank lower than black African males in leadership positions but also when looking at the same gender category. There are more white, coloured and Indian women in senior management positions compared to black African women, taking into account the demographics of the population (Employment Equity Report, 2017).

A study (Norris, Murphy-Erby and Zajicek, 2007; 333) mentions that intersectionality was introduced into mainstream sociology in the 1990s to specifically focus on the "interaction of class, race, gender and age inequalities in shaping people's experience". Masenya (2004) found that black African women experience multiple forms of oppression such as racism, classism and sexism and it is no different in the workplace.

The below sections discuss how this intersectionality between gender and race is embedded in organisational culture and therefore seen in the daily practises of the organisations.

2.7 Organisational Culture

The private sector is dominated by men due to historical marginalisation of women from the workplace and being stereotyped into gendered roles. There is persistence in the gender segregation of jobs (Kabeer, 2016; Choi, 2018, Rudd, 2000; Maier, 1997). Occupational segregation in the workforce is still visible as women are dominant in junior positions and few are in managerial positions (Department of Labour, 2017; Groener, 2013). When applying for stereotypically male jobs such as leadership roles, not only are women evaluated less positively than equally qualified men but the hiring criteria are adjusted specifically to disadvantage females seeking leadership positions (Hill, 2015; Maier, 1997). When women get into leadership roles, they are not treated the same as men. Study (Hill, 2015) states that South African women earn up to 33% less than their male colleagues for the same work. To further prove gender discrimination, the workforce does not

accommodate women who are starting a family or have small children to take care of, not many companies have childcare facilities or allow flexible working arrangements. Studies (Hill, 2015; Fourie, Franks and Schurink, 2006; Rudd, 2000) have shown that having flexible working arrangements help women to balance their career and domestic responsibilities.

Crisol (2001, 105) states that her “understanding of social change is that it is an alteration of the underlying structures of society, which entails a transformation of social behaviour (thoughts, beliefs, practices, etc.)”. Gender transformation in the private sector will require a social change, as Maier (1997; 73) states “the current bias of masculinist values in organizations, the "equity" focus alone fosters and perpetuates an assimilationist perspective of organizations, in which both men and women conform to an existing set of (masculine) norms”.

These existing norms directly affect female managers’ progress as mentioned by Maier (1997). Managers are expected to be single minded and devoted to their work only. External factors such as family roles or commitments “are considered irrelevant to what happens in the organization and must be compartmentalized so as not to interfere with work performance” (Maier, 1997; 73). A study by Rudd (2000; 518) shows that in the workforce women that have children experience a social devaluation “due to their identification of demanding family roles. These cultural norms within organisations do not only discredit women for their motherhood roles but also expect women to act like men. Maier (1997; 946) states that "organizational systems are constructed in ways which implicitly embody codes of conduct associated with men and therefore inevitably operate to validate masculine approaches and de-legitimize, or exclude feminine approaches”. The issue of managerial jobs being previously reserved for males only in the corporate sector has created an environment where corporate masculinity is set as a standard for good management (Maier, 1997).

The workplace is designed for men and women need to fit into it, progressive legislature is slowly changing this and having more women in leadership will make a difference. Having women in managerial positions or on the board means women will be represented in the decisions made for the organisations and it gives women an opportunity to be involved in

gender based solutions for the workforce. It is of interest to find out whether women who have this opportunity use it.

Conclusion

The literature review has shown that South Africa's legislature for gender transformation is progressive and there are regulations to ensure that companies comply. This study has investigated the advantages and disadvantages of the legislature for women, how it has influenced their careers or everyday lives in the workforce. This study has also looked into whether organisational culture works for or against women in the workplace.

Based on the literature review, this study has investigated whether black African female senior managers receive equal treatment in the workforce, if they receive the necessary training required for promotions or salary increases.

Lastly, this study has also looked at the challenges that senior managers have faced in their careers and how they have overcome them.

3. Research methodology

This study has followed a qualitative research process as a method of inquiry for two reasons; firstly it provides an in-depth understanding of the social world (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). This was achieved through in depth interviews which were used to collect data and these interviews were semi structured, as this format encourages respondents to describe their experiences with the least interference and influence from others (Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole, 2013).

Secondly because qualitative analysis can be used for verification purposes, allowing the researcher to validate assumptions, claims and theories within a real world context (Peshkin, 1993).

Face to face interviews meant that if there were uncertainties about the questions these could be discussed and if the participants looked uncomfortable or unsure about certain questions the researcher could rephrase or ask the question differently. Another valuable feature of semi-structured interviews is that it allowed for the participants to take the lead and as the researcher I could go back to verify or confirm with the participants on points they made previously.

3.1 Description of the participants

The research population consists of black African senior managers who identify as females, who work in the private sector and specifically in the telecoms industry. This research focused on black African females as they are under-represented at top and senior management levels in the workforce (Department of Labour, 2017). The telecoms industry was selected specifically because of the limited sample size, interviewing participants across industries requires a bigger sample size. Employment Equity reports from the Department of Labour were used to identify private companies in the telecoms industry, that have black African female senior managers. There was also a snowball effect, when participants would recommend someone they know. As Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013, 164) state that a "sample is partly selected in an ongoing way during the process of data collection and analysis".

Human Resource (HR) staff of the chosen companies were interviewed to check the reliability of the data collected from the senior managers. The participants from the HR

department did not have to be a specific race or gender and they were the Employment Equity officers who submitted the Employment Equity report for each of the five companies.

3.2 Research Population

According to the Employment Equity Report (2017), the total number of black African females in South Africa's private sector are 255 978 (4.9%) out of 5 224 047 private sector employees. In the Gauteng region there are 2 489 150 (35.2%) black African females out of 7 071 449 economically active population.

3.3 Sample size

The research target was to interview fifteen participants, inclusive of the senior managers and HR staff. In total I ended up interviewing twelve participants. The participants were from five different companies, both local and international and with their long industry experience I was able to collect sufficient data. The youngest participant was thirty one years old and she had been in the industry for eight years. The aim for the research was to interview two or three senior managers, one HR manager and one legal officer per company. I managed to interview five black African female senior managers. Fortunately, the two HR directors and HR business partner participants that are black African females and they wore two hats of being a black African female senior managers and HR staff. Which then brought the total number of black African female participants to eight.

3.4 Ethical issues

The research proposal has undergone ethical clearance and granted permission by the School of Social Science's ethical committee. To encourage honest feedback from the participants they were verbally guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. In terms of anonymity, it is preserved in the notes taken by researcher during interviews and on the transcripts and recordings. The participants remain anonymous in this report. In order to make sure the interviewees were comfortable to speak freely the interviews were conducted at their chosen time and location. A consent form was signed before the interviews took place. Permission to record was granted by the interviewees and the information that the participants asked not to be used for the research has not been used.

3.5 Interview Schedule

Two interview schedules were used, see the appendix A and B. One schedule is for the black African female senior manager participants and the second for the HR staff participants. The

reason two interview schedules were created was because the questions being asked to the black African female senior managers is about their personal experiences working in the private sector and the questions being asked to the HR staff is more about what their companies have done to promote gender transformation at their workplace. With the participants who wore two hats, as both a black African female senior manager and HR staff, both interview schedules were used. As a result their interviews were longer than the rest of the participants. Another reason the black African female senior managers/HR staff interviews took longer was because there always needed to be clarity of who they are speaking as. For example, there is a question which asks if the participants are happy with the rate of gender transformation at their company. The HR staff in them is quick to answer yes and mention all the initiatives the company has done to promote gender transformation but when they speak of their own personal experience as black African female senior managers they typically mention the exact opposite. This came up when questions about organisational culture where asked and when they spoke about what gender transformations means to them.

3.6 Processing and analysis of data

The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and themes were identified during that process, as the process allowed for immediate data analysis. For example when participants start describing their work environment even before the organisational culture questions were asked. To make an example a participant was asked if they have work friends and they answered that “it’s a cold culture, you come here and work. I have understood it to be corporate, it’s a cold culture, you do your job and go” (Sales Manager, International Company). Such a statement was grouped under the organisational culture theme and the pattern of a cold culture can then be identified.

The data was first analysed per interview and then collectively all the interviews were coded into themes. Some themes were overlapping and therefore collapsed into one and new themes were identified during the analysis. An example of a new theme that was developed during the data analysis is the Self-Reflection/Introspection theme, the participants mentioned key words and phrases such as “women are their own worst enemy”, “policing”, “couching”, “women doing it themselves for themselves” or “self-doubt” which spoke to this emergent theme.

The themes were identified in relation to the sets of interview questions and theoretically developed from the literature review and through thematic data analysis. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013, 339) state that qualitative researchers aim "to describe the range and diversity of experience within the sample". Therefore the aim of the research was not to look for similarities but rather for key factors in the experiences of the participants.

3.7 Internal and external validity

In order to verify internal validity the interviews are recorded and transcribed for analyses. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013: 238) mention that "the rigour of the way in which qualitative data is analysed is also important". Qualitative study offers the flexibility to employ different methods of data collection and analysis, in this case different methods of data analysis were used to test validity. Such as observation, in-depth interviews and an unplanned group discussion. Triangulation is a method most frequently used to verify the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole, 2013). In other words getting two sides of the story and in this instance it is from the senior managers and HR managers, this has assisted in making analyses and conclusion of the findings.

External validity cannot be guaranteed as there are different sectors within the private sector. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) state that external validity examines the extent to which the results of the study can be generalised. There are different sectors within the private sector. Therefore the research's findings might only be applicable to companies that fall within the same sector. This is also dependant if the respondents have worked in other sectors within the private sector, meaning that their experience as senior managers might be based on more than one sector.

When interpreting data in a qualitative study the researcher's biases and values influence how the data is analysed (Leedy and Ormrod; 2001). Self-reflexivity is a method that I have used to ensure that as the researcher I do not reproduce self-evident truths from my own experience as a black African female senior manager. This tool has assisted me as a researcher to check if I am not interpreting the findings based on my own experience. Self-reflecting as a researcher makes you aware of your own positioning in view of the topic (Van Stapele; 2014). My own industry experience meant that I was well informed about the work the participants do and the industry they are working in, therefore I was able to probe more

and engage the participants. Reflexivity assisted me in making sure that I always position myself as a researcher and not to ask leading questions therefore I would constantly verify what the participant meant to make sure I do not inset my own interpretations based on my experiences. I have also used lengthy quotations in the findings chapter to prevent imposing and misinterpretation of the data.

3.8 Limitation

It would have been beneficial for the study to have focus groups amongst the all the interviewees to see what themes and connections come up. Some of the participants wanted to know what other participants had to say and we ended up having a discussion after their interview. Group discussions amongst the females in an organisation is highly recommended as there seems to be a gap between what HR claims to offer women in terms of support and women forums and what the women say they are getting.

3.9 Limitations to the study

Accessing the interviewees was a limitation, senior managers are busy and I had to keep rescheduling interviews. I ended up doing some interviews over the weekend and at public places which were noisy. The noise on the recordings made it difficult to transcribe and I had to keep replaying the recording to ensure accuracy. Time was a limitation as most of the interviews went past the set one hour, the interviewees had a lot to say on certain issues and we ended up having to rush through other issues. Fortunately some of the participants were able to extend their time, one of the participants was even kind enough to move her next meeting. Due to the difficulty for the participants to find time for the interview I did not request a second interview. I waited for months to see some of the participants and there were instances I had to email the company's managing directors in order to be able to interview the staff.

The number of black African female senior managers at the organisations was limitation itself. For example the first organisation I went to had two black African female senior managers, one from the HR department and the other from the sales department. Both participants had different views due to the different positions in the company and there was no third or fourth candidate that could be interviewed from the same organisation to check the reliability of the answers

A limitation worth noting, the participants who were from the HR department were very cautious about what they were saying during the interviews. As a result it sounded as though they were speaking on behalf of the company, instead of their own experiences. For example when one of the black African female HR directors I interviewed started speaking of her experiences she asked me not to use the information as it would get her in trouble if her company were to find out.

Another HR director, passionately told me that she would like to participate on my research because she does not believe there is gender transformation in the private sector. However, when I interviewed her she suddenly had a change of heart and she thought that there is gender transformation at her organisation.

I had one interview that turned into a group discussion with the HR staff. After months of no response from the Employment relations consultant who is also the Employment Equity officer, I emailed the Managing Director and that is how I managed to schedule an interview with him. To my surprise when I walked into the boardroom there were two other people from the HR department joining the interview and we ended up having a group discussion. Both the female participants seemed to constantly ask the Employment Relations Consultant for confirmation or approval, for example they would say “I think David would agree with me here, right David?” This observation indicates that HR has something to hide and that a different method of collecting data could have been used. A group discussion with the female staff and HR representatives could have worked better, as it would require more openness from the HR staff regarding processes and their efforts towards gender transformation.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

This chapter discusses the research findings, which speaks to the experiences of black African female senior managers. The contribution of Employment Equity Officers, HR Managers and Directors have been used to get a different perspective to the black African female senior managers on the internal issues that might be the reason for the slow gender transformation in the telecoms industry. The telecoms industry being a male dominated industry (Molina, Lin and Wood, 2015).

The themes that will be discussed below are based on the above mentioned experiences, they are not based on similarities between participants but on the key factors. The first theme discusses the demographics of the research participants and their relevance to the study. The second theme is organisational culture which is the organisations' beliefs and values and this becomes a factor when the beliefs and values are not aligned with gender transformation.

The third theme is salary discrepancies, this is a factor in gender transformation because studies (Gerhart and Rynes, 1991 Harris, Gilbreath and Sunday, 2002) have shown that females are paid less than males. The forth theme is self-reflection or introspection of black African female senior managers, this theme is a discussion of whether females are doing enough to ensure that there is gender transformation at the workplace and if black African female senior managers are transformative. The fifth theme is intersectionality, discussing how race and gender are both an advantage and a disadvantage for black African females. The sixth theme is social capital and it discusses how lack of social integration within the workforce for women can be an impediment in gender transformation.

These findings highlight the key factors of the participants' experiences and that being said gender transformation is complex and based on the participants' experiences it is multidimensional and experienced differently, it cannot be explained in a linear story. Therefore it is important to note that the participants' experiences do not account for all black African females who are senior managers in the telecoms industry.

4.1 Demographics of Interviewees

I interviewed eight black African females, five of whom are senior managers, two are HR Directors and one is a HR Business Partner. I also interviewed one coloured male who is a

HR Manager and an Employment Equity Officer. Additionally, I had a group discussion with one white male who is an Employee Relations Consultant and two white females, one is a Learning Development Consultant and the other a Culture Change and Leadership Consultant. All the research participants are from the telecoms industry, they were twelve in total and from five different companies. Three of these companies are international companies, consisting of employees between fifty to one hundred and fifty employees per company. The other two companies are local companies with one hundred and fifty or more employees per company.

As mentioned in the literature review, black African females are the least represented in senior management positions in the private sector by race and gender. Even in the category of persons with disabilities in senior management roles, males are the most represented and more so white males (Employment Equity Report, 2017).

The aim of this research was to find out the challenges they face at work, the advantages and disadvantages that comes with being a black African female in the private sector and whether legislature such as Employment Equity policy has influenced gender transformation. It is important to know from the personal experiences of employees what is lacking or where the disconnection is, as despite the progressive legislature South Africa has, South Africa's private sector is still dominated by white males.

4.2 Organisational culture

Ramodibe's (2009) study on organisational culture explains why organisational culture is important, more so for employment equity candidates. Therefore it is applicable to this study as black African females are the primary employment equity candidates. I will mention a few of the points Ramodibe (2009) has made in her study as I discuss this theme. These points are important as the research participants kept emphasising that the organisational culture needs to create a conducive and supportive environment for gender transformation. It is also important to note that the organizational culture being referred to is that of the private sector. Firstly, Ramodibe (2009) states that there is no consensus in the definition for organisational culture but that it is socially constructed and something that is "visible and less visible norms, values and behaviour that are shared by a group of employees which shape the group's sense of what is acceptable and valid" (Ramodibe;

2009, 6-7). The group of employees referred to is top management, these are the people who make the important strategic decisions for the organisation and the decision to push for gender transformation would have to come from them. Therefore it is important to know if the participants think that their organisational culture is an issue in gender transformation and if so how is it an issue.

A black African female senior manager described her organisation's culture saying that "it is not the warmest culture, it's a cold culture you come here and work. Other people have said its warmish but for me what I have understood it to be is that it is corporate, it's a cold culture you do your job and go" (Sales Manager, International Company). To have a cold culture seems to be a norm for the interviewees and more so with those who either have worked or work at international companies. As the interviewee mentioned that it is corporate meaning it is a norm for corporate companies to be cold.

"It is too rigid here man, it's too [pauses to think] yeah it's too rigid" (Senior Account Manager, Local Company). As Ramodibe (2009) explains in her study, culture is not something that can be easily changed in organisations. Therefore it can be seen as something that is rigid and things such as values, norms and behaviour are generally slow things to change. A way of changing this culture as Ramodibe (2009) states is through formal and informal socialization processes. This particular organisation that is described as rigid does not have much form of socialization, both formal and informal. As another employee from the same company who is the Business Manager to the CEO office described the CEO's management style as authoritative, he gives orders and listens to only a selective few people in the organisation. "He is very militant in the way he rules, he is very difficult and you do not just speak up even the EXCO, you do not just speak up. It will just be him speaking and even if he says the wrong information they [being the EXCO members] would not even correct him" (Business manager to CEO, local company). In an organisation where there is little socialization organisational culture is not something that can be changed. I interviewed the HR manager for the same organisation and he is also in charge of the Employment Equity committee, he confirmed that there is little to no socialization in the organisation and as he explains there is no money to pay for social events as his team was paying out of their own pockets for their Christmas function.

The participants also made distinctions between local and global organisations, some said that local organisations have 'Ubuntu' meaning they have compassion and are like a community because the local organisations celebrate local events at work and the people in the organisations are warm and socialise more. When describing a global company, a partner sales manager at an international company said "the culture here isn't that family, it's corporate, it's a corporate organisation" and continued to say "girl, we didn't even celebrate heritage day here, I was the only one wearing beads". When giving reasons for the global organisations being "cold" or "corporate" the responses from the participants pointed to the fact that global organisation try to keep their offices uniform across the different countries by imposing a uniform organisational culture in order to avoid the diversity the local cultures might bring from the different countries.

This is also not new as Ramodibe points out that "writers claim that the mono-cultural Eurocentric organisational cultural values practiced in South African organisations fail to consider diversity in organisations" (Ramodibe; 2009, 3).

Not all organisations are the same but the consensus from the participants was that local organisations have a culture that supports gender transformation compared to global companies. One of the participants mentioned that she works for a French company and in her organisation things such as BEE means nothing to them and she describes BEE as a culture the French do not understand. "It is kind of hard to drive some of those things by the French because it is a culture they don't understand so what we call BEE in the sense that it helps people who are previously disadvantaged, you take that to the French and they consider that a quick money making scheme" (Senior account manager, International company). When I asked the participant if there is anything that the company has done in assisting gender transformation her answer was, a senior account manager who works at an international company said:

We have got programs in place for gender transformation which every quarter they report on to say this is what we doing for gender transformation and as a woman you actually never get to see or feel the change you know, imagine being a custodian of something but the impact that is being mentioned has not hit you.

The HR directors who were interviewed mentioned that there are female forums and initiatives to promote gender transformation but it seems as though the custodians do not see outcomes. The black African female interviewees said that they know and hear of these forums but never see results.

Every organisation is different and this is based on the culture of the organisation, as it is a combination of shared values and beliefs of the organisation. Ramodibe (2008) states that organisational culture is to organisations what personality is to individuals, a personality is what differentiates us from one another. The participants, both the black African female senior managers and the HR personnel shared the sentiment that the rate of gender transformation is directly affected by the values, beliefs and behaviour of the top management team.

A participant mentioned that in her experience even if it is one influential person meaning someone who is in top management in the organisation, whether a woman or man that believes in gender transformation, it becomes easier for their influence to have a ripple effect organisation. The same applies to race, another participant explained that when they had a non-South African CEO who did not see colour there were more black people promoted into top management. This participant is a business manager to the CEO office and she has worked with three different CEOs in that company. She explained that:

We had a CEO who was a very old Afrikaner man, it is important to tell you that. Someone who has been groomed in the racism of the country because he has grown up here. I think you understand the race relations of the country. Then you have a white male who did not understand how racism was allowed to flourish as it did and who made a lot of changes in a period of about twelve months.

The business manager explained that during the time when their organisation had an old Afrikaner CEO the EXCO members were mostly old white males and when they had a non-South African CEO he changed the EXCO team to 60% black people. One of the participants mentioned that “I feel it depends on who the MD is and how much do they to push the agenda for gender transformation. If they do then it is easy to cascade down, not easy but at least everyone would know that this is what they want and therefore it will cascade down” (Partner sales manager, International company). Due to the intersectionality of being

a black African female, gender transformation for black African females need leaders who promote both race and gender.

The two black African female HR directors who are in top management, both working for international companies and have pointed out that during their time at their current organisations the rate of gender transformation has improved. One mentioned that:

When I started we did not have black African females, I think there was one Indian and one white female. So now we have got senior, middle, one female in junior level but we have progressed over time and I'm actually proud of it. I can actually sit and have tea with 10 ladies compared to when I started there were just two female.

Some of the participants mentioned that there needs to be more female in top management in order for organisational culture to change or for the rate of gender transformation to change.

To quote one of the black African female senior managers when asked what gender transformation means to her, she answered that for her it is “when sitting around the table and there is an equal representation of female, and female are heard, that’s it”.

There are not enough females in top management as seen from the statistics on the Employment Equity Report (2017) and the issue for two of the participants (black African female, senior managers) is that the few female who make it into top management end up acting like the men.

One explained: “I have always wondered why is it that females can get to the top and not look down to bring up the others? I think my rationale is that and it goes back to what I have been saying to you, some females get to a point where they actually start acting like their male counterparts so that they can gain acceptance. They are shrewd, they are careless, they just do things just to get on, and anything else does not matter. They don't want to be the females that are associated with being emotional, they don't want to be the females that are associated with being too motherly, and they are business professionals. They have got their business going so you must remember as a female sometimes when you raise a problem, they can do some things that you can actually point out and depending on how the person you are speaking to is feeling on that day, they can literally mount it to you being emotional and not even look at the rationale behind the things you are saying. I think some females get to the top and act like [pauses] not that I have made it and I'm comfortable but

that ‘now I need to play at the pace that the ones that have always been here are playing, I need to move with them’ and at which point can you look back to pick up others when you are trying to win a race”.

This issue is mentioned in the literature review, that managerial style in the private sector models masculinity. The private sector will require a social change of beliefs and values which are currently biased on masculinity and as Maier (1997) states that both males and females in management have to conform to a set of masculine norms.

As mentioned in the literature review, the issue with gender transformation in the private sector starts at senior to top management. The participants mentioned that in junior management there are a lot of female, more so black African. The issue is promoting females into positions that will change the organisational culture, people at senior management have some influence on the organisation but it is mostly people in top management who set the tone for the organisational culture. That is where the circle is close knit because those are the people with real influence of changing the organisational culture. One of the senior managers I interviewed mentioned that she has been a senior manager for a long time and that her job has now become an executive role with the responsibilities she has but the company will not make her an executive. She states that one of the reasons is that they would have to pay her more as an executive, which the company has been refusing to do. In the next section I will be discussing how salaries are also an issue in gender transformation.

4.3 Salary Discrepancies

There is a lot of research that has been done on the topic of gender-based salary discrepancies in different disciplines such as Economics, Industrial/Organisational Psychology, Human Resource Management and Sociology (Harris, Gilbreath and Sunday, 2002). It is important to point out that the majority of the participants, the black African female senior managers and the two black African females who are in top management felt as though they are being paid well. Out of the eight black African females interviewed, only two felt that they were not being paid enough.

One black African female who is a senior manager said that she had recently moved to an international organisation where the culture was different. She explained that at her

previous organisation she had to fight for salary increases and that it is for the first time in her career that she feels she is being paid what she is worth as her salary was doubled when she moved to the current organisation (Partner Sales Manager, International Company). Harris, Gilbreath and Sunday (2002) mention that females receive higher income increases compared to men but argue that females start on a lower base. One of the two senior managers who feel underpaid mentioned that at her first job, fresh out of university she got a contract that was paying her less than her colleague. The colleague was a white female and also fresh out of university and both of them had no previous work experience but the white female colleague was paid more than she (black African female) was getting paid (Program Manager Officer, Local Company). This brings another important point the interviewee made, which is that black African females do not only get paid less than men but they also get paid less than white, coloured and Indian females.

The program manager officer states that it is because of the low base salary that she started on that she is not able to catch up with colleagues that are at her level. A study by Gerhart and Rynes (1991, 256) states that "starting salaries can have a lasting impact on career earnings". Contrary to Harris, Gilbreath and Sunday's (2002) study that females receive higher salary increases than men, the same program manager officer states that she has not received any salary increase in three years but has been promoted twice and is currently doing two people's jobs. The second participant that felt as though she is underpaid was a Senior Account manager at an international company, she too has not received a salary increase. She mentioned that when she motivated for a salary increase she was acknowledged with a promotion which she declined because it came with no salary increase. She mentioned that:

> I deserve an increase because of one, two and three and they were like 'I want to offer you a promotion' and I was like okay that is welcomed. Let's talk about it and he gives me the scope and then I'm like let's talk about the money. Then I get a 'No you see, already you can see that the organisation has faith in you. Has faith in your abilities, so that on its own should be a lot of recognition for you. The money will come but firstly you need to prove yourself in that role.

She declined the promotion and stayed in her current role with no salary increase because for her it made no sense to take on more responsibilities for the same salary. Though it is important to note that the Senior Account Manager mentioned that she moved to the

international company because they offered her more money than her previous company. The salary issue at the current company seems to have arose when, as she states, “[she] had the unfortunate pleasure” of seeing what her white male colleague gets paid, which was more than her. She also mentioned that her black male colleague also gets less than the white male colleague but the black male colleague still gets paid more than her. It has been suggested, even by the participants that females are not as aggressive when it comes to salary negotiations like men are. A study by Gerhart and Rynes (1991) mentions that there is little empirical evidence to support that, although the study found that females received less monetary returns from negotiations compared to men.

Harris, Gilbreath and Sunday (2002, 499) state that females may be paid less but they receive higher payment increases and that these increases are “structural features of the pay increase system, rather than the reduction of stereo types”.

When I asked the program officer manager about the company’s payment structure, she answered that as long as you are within the bracket the company is not in the wrong. She gave an example that “So if you are within the bracket right, the bracket starts at hundred and ends at five hundred. So if you are within the bracket you can earn hundred and fifty, and you have to wait for your increases to get more. Anyway that is just how I see it, that’s my take on it” (Program Office Manager, Local Company).The payment increases that she receives are not to equalize her salaries with the men but are rather structural system adjustments

In concluding this theme, salaries are gender and race biased and the most successful means of getting better increases is to job hop. Which is not something that the two participants are inclined to. Both the senior managers who are not happy with their salaries have been at their companies for more than two years and both are willing to stay for two more years before they move. They are both staying for different reasons, one is staying because she believes she can get more money from the new CEO and possibly be promoted to Top Management soon. The other states that she has not done what she had planned to do yet at the company, as she states that she is a “fixer”. The point is not their reasons for staying and it brings me to the next theme, self-introspection. The point is that for these

black African females gender transformation goes beyond monetary value placed by companies on them but about how transformative they are as individuals.

4.4 Self-Reflection/ Introspection

It has been noted that there are internal issues within the corporate sector, such as organisational culture and salary discrepancies that interviewees believed slows down gender transformation. The participants, specifically the black African females made comments on internal issues within themselves that might also be a factor in gender transformation. This theme speaks to how females themselves can be a hindrance in gender transformation. Gender is a social construct that is imposed from birth (Crisol, 2001), which means that females have been taught how to behave and think in a manner that might be against gender transformation.

Crisol (2001; 106) states that "the presence of particular biological attributes automatically assigns the label of 'male' or 'female' to an individual. Children are then raised according to the constructed and accepted parameters of what it means to be 'male' or 'female'- the type of behaviour one is expected to display and the ways of thinking associated with either label."

Crisol (2001) explains that people are defined by gender and that gender roles are clearly defined and the practices attached to gender stereotypes are inevitable. The research participants are individuals who have made it into positions that only a few black African females break into and they all mentioned that they have had to fight and work hard to be where they are. "That is what the industry does to females, you have to jump through hoops and fires just to show that you are even worthy to have a conversation at the table about technological Solutions" (Senior Account Manager, International Organisation). The hardships that these females face in the industry seem to have also toughened them up, as a participant mentioned that female tend to police each other. In a sense that the female who makes it into senior and top management wants to make sure that those that come after them also jump through 'hoops and fires'. A participant mentioned that there is one black African female in their top management and she is an HR Director, which means she has influence to employ or promote more black females into senior and top management but that is not happening (Business Manager to the CEO office, Local Organisation). She

went on further to state that “at this point people are saying it is a matter of ‘she has made it and does not want her fellow people to make it too’ and I am starting to suspect that of her”. The consensus from the participants is that females need to do more in terms of opening doors and pulling each other up and that there is not much of a unity between black African females. A participant mentioned that females do not like each other much and when I asked her why she thinks females do not like each other, her response was that “I don't know what causes that and I don't know where it started. The corporate sector is shrewd, it is dog eat dog here. I always say watch your back and all those things, it can also change you as a person and you can become the meanest female” (Senior Account Manager, International Organisation). It seems as though the telecoms industry forces females to see each other as competitors and that is possibly the reason why females do not support one another.

Another issue that came up is that females lack the confidence to step up and grab opportunities and this was raised by six black African females out of the eight I interviewed.

A participant with more than twenty years in the industry had this to say “I need to point out that some females tend not to push themselves hard enough but I see this on very basic junior levels. On other levels, honestly female have the ambitions, they are assertive and they are getting there. The only block I may see because I am also a coach by profession, females lack confidence not the skills. The skills are there but they lack confidence to push themselves and say ‘I am here and I can do it’. There is always doubt, would I be able to do it or not?” (HR Director, International Organisation).

This was the general consensus, a participant even pointed out that “men always put their hand up, you can be in a big forum and they can ask who is qualified to be a CEO. 80% if not 90% of the men in that room will have their hands up, many of them without prior experience or even knowledge of it. However they have got the thing that you know what, fake it till you make it, I will learn when I'm there. For us females you are like okay maybe I've got one, two, three or four of the skills they asking for. Whereas for men he won't have a single skill but they put up their hand. For us it is almost like we wait to be cherry-picked, we do not lean in and say actually I can and I will learn on the job” (Senior Account Manager, International Organisation).

The six black African females agree that it might be another reason for slow gender transformation, the fact that females need to be asked if they want the position when opportunities come up instead of taking or creating the opportunities themselves. One of the two white female participants also mentioned, “I sometimes do believe that females are their own worst enemies when it comes to gender transformation because they behave in a certain manner and it is almost stereotypical, it is them thinking I cannot do this” (Culture and Leadership consultant, International organisation). Black African females seem to doubt themselves and unless approached, they would not rise up for opportunities.

This is an issue and in agreement with the Culture and Leadership Consultant (International Organisation) I interviewed, “you can create a conducive environment as much as you like, you can put as much policies as you like, but unless you get females to change their mind-set and head space to stand up and own their rightful place, I am not sure that you are going to have the outcome that you want. Sorry that is not a very popular stance that I tend to take but I do believe that this organisation does a lot for females but there is still the need to say okay come along now be part of”.

This was not an easy thing to admit for any of the participants but it was necessary in order for it to be opened up for future discussions about gender transformation. The quote that follows represents the female participants’ sentiment “we as females have to do it for ourselves, we cannot expect men to always do it for us” (Senior Account Manager, International Organisation). They are also aware that “the onus is also on us that we also need to start raising our hands whether they want to hear us or not, eventually they will hear us. I think what happens is that sometimes we just keep quiet and that is not going to get us anywhere” (Partner Sales Manager, International Organisation). Females are scared to talk because of the toxic organisational culture they experience and being condemned for talking. As one of the participants mentioned that she does not expect to get promoted anytime soon because she cannot bottle things, she stands up for herself (Senior Account Manager, International Organisation). In agreement with Crisol (2001, 105) that social change is “an alteration of the underlying structures of society, which entails a transformation of social behaviour (thoughts, beliefs, practices, etc.)” and that “concepts like gender are made operational in individual and social life”. Therefore, “responses to the issues of gender must be aimed at the more fundamental constructions governing social

reality" (Crisol, 2001; 105). Meaning that females should not be made to fit into spaces as if they are the issue, spaces should be changed for females to fit into them. The issue is the construction of the workplace, as a man's world and females having to fit into it. The next theme discusses the intersectionality in being a black African female in a white male dominated sector.

4.5 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an analytical tool used to look into similarities or differences in identities and this section looks at how gender and race are barriers in gender transformation for black African females. Intersectionality analyses experiences in order to reveal patterns and intersections of identities in social issues.

It is also important to note that intersectionality rejects 'single-axis' categories that universalize the experiences of a few individuals as a representation of all its group members (May, 2015). Therefore the below experiences do not account for all black African females.

The black African female participants are aware that if it was not for their race and gender, their mobility within the private sector would have been slower and that Employment Equity has assisted them in terms of being promoted. When I asked the participants if they are beneficiaries of Employment Equity, this is what one of the participants had to say:

(Partner Sales Manager, International Organisation) "Yes, oh I am not delusional. I do not think they would hire me for the sake of hiring me if it wasn't for Employment Equity. I think for me even my growth, yes I have always been a determined person. I think for my age I have moved up quicker, even when I was still at the previous organisation the way I literally moved up. Yes it was because of my efforts but I am also not disillusioned in that if it was not because of the colour of my skin and gender it would not have happened. They needed points but I had to fight for my position. I think if it was not for the pressure in the market, they would have put one of their white boys."

As noted in the previous theme, skills and credentials on their own will not get black African females far enough and that you need to fight for the right to be there because there is still resistance for gender transformation in the private sector. Which is what the black African female participants kept emphasising, that there is little gender transformation. In the same

breath they know that they have a bargaining power offered by policies such as Employment Equity to boost their employability. This is a good example of race and gender working in favour of black African females. The one coloured male participant also stated that he knows that his race as he identifies as black has worked in his favour in terms of being promoted. “I wouldn't have achieved what I have achieved if it wasn't for Employment Equity. I don't think I would have been given the opportunities I have in the absence of Employment Equity act” (Senior Manager for Talent and Organisational Development).

Based on the experiences of the participants there is a resistance from the private sector to promote employees because of their race and gender, as they have stated that they would not have been in senior or top management had it not been for Employment Equity. The participants feel that in the absence of Employment Equity the opportunities would have been given to someone that is white and maybe male too. Black African female participants also mentioned that they have to work three times harder than their male (regardless of race) colleagues to prove that they belong in the management team.

“It is a general consensus for many females in our industry especially black but white women experience it as well because our industry is male dominated. Let me actually call it what it is, a white male dominated industry. Firstly, you too face challenges of not being taken seriously from your first engagement before you even speak and show the person that you are meeting that you are capable. Already you are judged by the fact that you are a black woman, what do you know and ‘why is she in this industry, does she even know what It is that I want?’ So there are times that you have people that actually don't want to listen to you, just for the fact that you are a black woman. Like I said earlier, you have to work three times harder than the male counterparts and I see it here as well. I have got male counterparts, one is white and the other is black” (Senior Account Manager, International Organisation).

The participants who work in the HR department agree that the telecoms Industry is hard for females and more so for black African females. One of the black African female HR directors gave the below reason “the issue is the people you deal with outside of the organisation, they become a dictator on what the representation should be. Most of the

clients are still white males and they are not open to black African females doing business with them". The telecoms industry being a technical industry, it is said that most females are in supporting roles, HR and Sales. It has turned out not to be the case, even the sales teams do not have many black African females and as mentioned above it is because the clients dictate who should represent the organisations and who they want to do business with.

A participant mentioned that the race and gender intersectionality is not only industry based but it is (private) sector based. "I think anywhere in corporate, it is not necessarily to say it is this organisation.

I think anywhere in corporate, if you are white, people hear you more and if you are black you need to actually repeat yourself at least three times before people hear you. I think that is just corporate." (Partner Sales Manager, International Organisation).

Gender and race issues intersect in a sector that has a history of racism and sexism. The workforce as discussed in the literature review was created for men and females joined later, therefore it was setup for men and females had to fit in. It still practices and carries beliefs that masculinity is the way it should be managed. Hence race and gender are still an issue and gender transformation is moving at a slow rate in the private sector. The next theme will discuss how the social circles in the private sector remain racial and gender biased.

4.6 Social Capital

There are many definitions for social capital, therefore it is important to first explain what social capital means for this study. It is often said that to get management jobs in both public and private sector it is mostly about who you know that will get you the job and the participants agree as well. The senior managers who participated in the study mentioned that they would get a new job through someone they know whether in their personal social network, an ex-colleague from a previous organisation or through a client. In terms of getting a promotion, it would be a case of having someone that is in top management or in the decision making team that will back them up. That sums up what social capital is, as Portes (1998, 6) states that social capital is "the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures". A participant mentioned that if she wants to get promoted at her local offices she would have to join the organisation's

tennis or cycling team because top management is in those teams (Partner Sales Manager, International Organisation). That would get her into the social circle that has influential people at her organisation, meaning that she will be known and seen by them.

Loury (1992, 100) states that social capital is “naturally occurring social relationships among persons which promote or assist the acquisition of skills and traits valued in the marketplace”. The benefits vary from a new job, a promotion and being exposed to learning new skills and career growth. A factor that the black African female participants made is that the social circles that will most likely get them noticed are not natural to them.

To use the above example of the participant who mentioned that she would have to join the tennis and cycling team. Joining the cycling or tennis team is something that is unnatural for her as she mentioned that top management consists of mostly white males and the kind of social activities they do as a team are typically male sports.

In her words she would stand out like a “sore thumb in those white boy clubs”, referring to the social circles of the top management team (Partner Sales Manager, International Organisation). She would stand out firstly because she is a woman and secondly because she is a black woman. The white male participant mentioned that when you work with females you have to be careful of what you say, whereas when it is just men only they are free to say anything without offending one another. He mentioned that it is different when females are around because they have to be respected, he made an example that you cannot swear in front of a woman (Employee Relations Consultant, International Organisation). Therefore it does not seem like an environment that would be natural to both the black African female and the “white boys club”, if these women were to join them.

The value in social networking goes beyond financial or skills gain, it is also about having support in an organisation or team, participation and social trust (Dekker and Uslaner, 2001). There seems to be little to no social trust and organisational support for the black African female participants at their organisations. “I was in hospital in July for two weeks and nobody from the office came to see me. No message, nothing from this company, not even flowers” (Senior Account Manager, Local Organisation). Another participant (black African female, HR Director) mentioned that if she were to die she does not even think that any white person from the organisation would attend her funeral. When I asked if it has

ever happened before she mentioned that “one of our colleague’s husband died, one thing I can tell you, Jess was the only white person there from the company and that was a French person.” There is a general consensus that the black African female participants had was that they “do their work and go home”, they do not socialise at work or talk about things outside of work. Another point worth noting was the fact that there seems to be no social trust in organisations or in teams. A few of the black African female participants mentioned they have been “burned” before for befriending colleagues and that it has gotten them into trouble in the past.

A participant said when referring to her colleagues, “like I said they not the most trustworthy people” (Black African Female, HR Director). The support that is there is concerning work only and in terms of training and learning but nothing more.

Black African females’ social capital seems limited which could be an issue for them to get ahead at their organisations and making it into top management. Which is also impacted by the organisational culture that is in favour of white males. Organisational social circles remain racial, in terms of not being diverse. People socialise more with people of the same race and gender, as the black African female participants mentioned that they also have social circles with people in the industry.

Conclusion

The above themes discuss evident internal issues faced at the workplace by black African women, which are possible causes of slow gender transformation as these issues hinder gender transformation. As well as women’s own internal issues amongst themselves and within themselves, which are symptoms of slow gender transformation. The difference between the two as seen above is that, the causes of slow gender transformation are due to the resistance to change from organisations. The symptoms are then results of unchanged organisations, which makes women doubt themselves and compete amongst each other.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by summarising and discussing the research findings. This chapter also explains the study's policy implications, recommendations for further studies and the study's own limitations.

5.2 The research findings

This research report sets to find out what the internal issues within the private sector might be that are reason for the slow rate of gender transformation of black African females who are senior managers. It is pointed out in the literature review that in the South African workforce, senior and top management positions are still dominated by white males. This study focused specifically on the telecoms industry. The private sector makes up 94.8% of the number of reports that were used by the Department of Labour to compile the Employment Equity Report (2017) and therefore an industry within the private sector was chosen for the study as opposed to the public sector.

Moeller (2014) mentions that females and specifically black females have been made the subjects and centre of social development by big corporations. This is what some of the participants called "window dressing" when organisations use women in the name of development and empowerment for their own gain and very little gain for the women. Nkenkana (2015) argues that the issue is not so much with the women and their underdevelopment but rather the systems and spaces women live in. Which are patriarchal systems and environments that value masculine approaches and exclude feminine approaches. These systems do not give room for women to live up to their fullest potential. The findings chapter outlines how women participants lacked social capital because of how tight knit the social circles are in the telecoms industry, which some called the "white boys club".

I agree with Nkenkana that the fundamental problem is the "focus on women as the subject of change in gender transformation and focusing on fitting women into the status quo rather than transforming the status quo" (2015, 49). As much as it is good to self-reflect, the research shows that women can sometimes be their own worst enemy. It is because of the toxic environments and patriarchy that women have self-doubt and always look within

themselves for how they can change to make the situation better as if they are the problem. The findings section shows that the lack of self-confidence from the women is an impediment to gender transformation. The focus of developing women makes it seem as though women are lacking and need to be developed, instead of teaching women that they are born as equally able human beings like men. Making women the centre of gender transformation shifts the attention from the kind of background, upbringing and opportunities available to women that have played a role in shaping them into the people they become. The shift unknowingly problematizes the women as the subject. Empowering a woman means giving a woman power. Women already have power, it is silenced, restricted, controlled and navigated by these very same systems claiming to free them.

This study specifically looked into the internal issues within the workforce as that is where the fundamental work for gender transformation needs to be. Regardless of how progressive the legislature is, as long as there is still patriarchy and racism in the workforce, gender transformation is going to continue to move at a slow pace. The women participants made remarks that maybe they are not transformative enough or not doing enough to pull each other up and it is those exact sentiments that show that development problematizes women. It is the workforce that needs to be transformative, the objective should not be to gender transform women but rather to gender transform the workforce.

The aim of this study was to find out what the internal issues are within the private sector that are the reason for slow rate of gender transformation of black African female senior managers. The research findings have shown that internal issues such as salary discrepancies within organisations impede on gender transformation. Issues such as salary discrepancies show that gender transformation issues need more solutions other than empowerment, as gender issues are multifaceted. Women show their capabilities, know their worth and put in the work but are still paid differently to men for the doing the same job and for black women they are paid even less than white women. Therefore, the study should be good empirical evidence for future research in gender transformation.

5.3 Policy implications

This study has shown the effects of policies on gender transformation and how they have benefitted the previously disadvantaged. The black participants, which includes a coloured

male mentioned that they would not be senior managers if it was not for employment equity. It has also shown that gender transformation has challenges that are beyond the reach of policies, such as changing organisational culture. A participant used words such as "too rigid" to describe her organisation's culture and participants' sentiments were that the organisations needs to have an organisational culture that is supportive and conducive of gender transformation. This study started by pointing out the background and issues with BEE and has shown that regardless of how progressive the BEE act is there is still resistance from organisations to comply. As senior and top management positions are still dominated by white males. The findings chapter adds evidence to the literature from black African females' experiences.

Some of the women participants highly recommend coaching for women in the workforce as they feel that women themselves need to debunk certain stereotypes. Another point noted by the participants with regards to gender transformation in the workplace was the emphases on the top management being the biggest influencers of the rate of gender transformation. One of the participants mentioned that;

"If the overall group which is the CEO, actually advocated for Gender transformation and seriously focusing on gender transformation it would happen because the trick is to force the people that report to him to implement it. Remember a CEO's vision is what gets implemented" (HR Director, International Company).

Therefore for gender transformation to move at a faster pace, the mandate needs to come from top management.

5.4 Further areas of study

It would be useful for focus groups to be used in further research for triangulation and to promote truthfulness. These focus groups would be for the participants who are from the same company and amongst all interviewees is recommended, as noted in the methodology section. This is because there appears to be a disconnection or gap between what HR claims to offer women in terms of support and transformation and what the women say they receive.

5.5 Limitations of the study

Due to the limited number of black African female senior managers in the telecoms industry, it was difficult to get the desired number of participants. The aim was to interview fifteen participants and I ended up with twelve. This limitation also led to another limitation of getting more than one perspective as there were organisations that had one black African senior manager.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire for senior managers

Section 1: Demographic and profile Information

1. What is the respondent's gender?

Male	Female	Other

2. Which race do you classify yourself as?

Black African	1	White	2	Indian/Asian	3	Coloured	4	Other	5

3. What is your ethnic group?

Language	Nr.
Zulu	1
Sotho	2
Swati	3
Pedi	4
Venda	5
Tsonga	6
Tswana	7
Xhosa	8
Ndebele	9
Afrikaner	10
English	11
Other (specify)	12

4. What is your job title?

5. Which department do you work in?
6. How long have you been at your current organisation?
7. How long have you been in your current position?

8. What is your age?

9. In which of the following areas did you predominantly grow up in?

Category	Nr.
Suburb of a town or city	1
Township of a town	2
Township of a city	3
Rural village	4
City centre or town centre	5

Farm or agricultural holding	6
Other area (specify)	7

10. What is your relationship status?

Single	**5**	**It's complicated**	**4**	**Dating**	**3**	**Engaged**	**2**	**Married**	**1**

11. Do you have children?

12. How many children do you have? (if yes to question 15)

13. What are their ages?

14. Are you South African?

Section 2: Job Satisfaction

15. Is the work you do meaningful to you and how so?

16. Are you confident in your ability to do your work?

17. Have you mastered the skills necessary to do your job?
18. What level of impact do you have on what happens in your department?
19. Can you describe the level of influence that you have over what happens in your department?
20. Have you considered leaving your job in the past year?
21. If so, why?
22. If so, what has prevented you from leaving?
23. If you measure your mobility within the organisation against your white peers that you in the same level with, would you say that they have progressing faster, slower or at the same pace as yourself?
24. What would you attribute similarities or differences to?
25. Do you think that your salary and benefits are any more or less than your white peers?
26. If there are any marked differences, what would you say accounts for these?

Section 3: Social networks

27. Would you say you have work friends?
28. If not why not?
29. If yes, would you say your work friends are diverse?
30. Do you socialise with your peers and manager (white and black) after hours and / or on weekends?
31. If you do not, what would you attribute this to?
32. If you do, is it with other black colleagues or white colleagues?
33. Are you aware of anyone that does socialise with peers after hours and / or on weekends?
34. Do you know what their reasons might be?
35. Do you attend your organisation's social events?
36. If not why not?
37. If yes, how would you describe them?
38. If yes, do you feel as if you gain anything from them?

Section 4: Organisation's environment

39. How would you describe the training and development support that you have received?
40. What for you was the defining moment of working in this organisation (one high and one low)?
41. How far do you think the organisation has come with regard to employment equity since you joined it?
42. Are you happy with this pace?
43. What can be done differently?
44. Do you feel as a beneficiary of EE?
45. Is your race an advantage or disadvantage at this organisation?
46. Is your gender an advantage or disadvantage at this organisation?

47. What does gender transformation mean for you?
48. Do you feel this organisation has gender transformation?
49. If not, what can be changed?
50. Are there any questions you would like to ask me or feel I should have asked?

Appendix B

Questionnaire for HR staff

Section 1: Demographic and profile Information

1. What is the respondent's gender?

Male	Female	Other

2. Which race do you classify yourself as?

Black African	1	White	2	Indian/Asian	3	Coloured	4	Other	5

3. What is your ethnic group?

Language	Nr.
Zulu	1
Sotho	2
Swati	3
Pedi	4
Venda	5
Tsonga	6
Tswana	7
Xhosa	8
Ndebele	9
Afrikaner	10
English	11
Other (specify)	12

4. What is your job title?
5. Which department do you work in?
6. How long have you been at your current organisation?
7. How long have you been in your current position?
8. What is your age?

9. In which of the following areas did you predominantly grow up in?

Category	Nr.
Suburb of a town or city	1
Township of a town	2
Township of a city	3
Rural village	4
City centre or town centre	5
Farm or agricultural holding	6
Other area (specify)	7

10. Would you say that you are a religious person?

11. How important are religious beliefs to you?

Very important	**5**	**Fairly important**	**4**	**Neutral**	**3**	**Not very important**	**2**	**Not at all important**	**1**

12. What is your relationship status?

Single	**5**	**It's complicated**	**4**	**Dating**	**3**	**Engaged**	**2**	**Married**	**1**

13. Do you have children?

14. How many children do you have? (if yes to question 15)

15. What are their ages?

16. Are you South African?

17. What is your highest qualification?

Section 2: Job Influence

18. Is the work that you do meaningful to you and how so?
19. What level of impact do you have on the hiring by the organisation?
20. Can you describe the level of influence that you have over what happens in your department?
21. Have you considered leaving your job in the past year?
22. If so, why?
23. If so, what has prevented you from leaving?

Section 3: Employment Equity

24. What do you understand the role of employment equity to be?
25. How do you perceive Affirmative Action?
26. Why?
27. Do you support or disagree with the way it is practised in your organisation?
28. What would you do differently?
29. How have you personally experienced (the effects of) employment equity?
30. Do you see a moral case for or against employment equity?
31. What do you think are the greatest enablers for employment equity in your organisation?
32. What do you think are the greatest impediments to employment equity in your organisation?

33. Are salaries relatively equal between all race groups at the same level or are there discrepancies in favour of one group?

34. What is the organisation's hiring criteria?

35. Has the organisation specific ally targeted/hired black female to fill BEE quotas?

36. Does the company have an equal representation of both sexes?

37. If not is there a reason for it?

Section 3: Social networks

37. Would you say you have work friends?

38. If not why not?

39. If yes, would you say your work friends are diverse?

40. Do you socialise with your peers and manager (white and black) after hours and / or on weekends?

41. If you do not, what would you attribute this to?

42. If you do, is it with other black colleagues or white colleagues?

43. Are you aware of anyone that does socialise with peers after hours and / or on weekends?

44. Do you know what their reasons might be?

45. Do you attend your organisation's social events?

46. If not why not?

47. If yes, how would you describe them?

48. If yes, do you feel as if you gain anything from them?

Appendix C

Consent form

The underlying issues for the slow gender transformation rate for black African female senior managers in the private sector.

Researcher: Yolanda Gonono

I …… Agree to participate in this research project.
The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

Please circle your answers below

I agree to my participation in study YES NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded YES NO

…… (Signature)

…… (Date)