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Gender Transformation in the Workplace and the Role of Trade Unions in South Africa: A Case Study of Rand Water

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree in the field of Labour, Policy and Globalisation

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ABSTRACT

The central point in this research is that some public-sector organisations are making accelerated progress in gender transformation in the post-apartheid South African workplace. The research showed that Rand Water was previously a male-dominated workplace with a strong patriarchal culture. It also showed that Rand Water took a cue from the various legislative provisions of the democratic era and made conscious efforts towards general workplace transformation, with a profound commitment to gender transformation from 2007 onward. This success story of Rand Water and gender transformation was linked to union, worker and management partnership and participation in the workplace. The major partners in the transformation process were the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) through the individual and collective contributions of its members.

The research adopted a qualitative research approach, and used structured, semi-structured and in-depth interviews with 26 respondents from Rand Water, SAMWU and the South African Department of Labour in Johannesburg. The study investigated the sociological experiences, employment profiles and gendered perceptions of the participants. The findings indicate that although the respondents' experiences and perceptions were diverse, both men and women appreciated the gender transformation process at Rand Water. However, there were different views that cut across gender, race and occupation levels. Significantly, the findings also illustrate a heterogeneity of views in terms of how gender transformation is understood. Nevertheless, there was an overwhelming belief that accelerated gender transformation processes are going on at Rand Water because of the promulgation of the Employment Equity Act of 1998. The study also reveals that SAMWU members are the major partners in the process through worker mobilisation.

In conclusion the study shows that the role of trade unions in the gender transformation process is crucial. Trade union contributions to the process would

be more effective if unions could be restructured with a focus on improving internal structural democracy. By so doing, both women and men would experience equitable representation so that a non-gendered solid front could be used to propel the transformation process.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project entitled “Gender Transformation in the Workplace and the Role of Trade Unions in South Africa – A Case Study of Rand Water” is my own unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signed_____

Libanus Quanson

This_____ day of _____ 2014.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the following: my wife Anita Adwoa Nana Konadu Quanson, my daughters Katherine Neinimaa Quanson and Teresina Nhyira Opeibea Quanson, mothers Agnes Jolade Adetomiwa and Paulina Boateng, and also my grandmother Eugenia Ama Eleaza Quanson. I hope that their individual efforts continue to transform this gendered society for the better.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACIs	Africans, Coloureds and Indians
BAG	Bargaining Agenda for Gender
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act.
CEC	Central Executive Committee
CEE	Commission for Employment Equity
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CESR	Centre for Employment Studies Research
CGE	Commission for Gender Equity
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
EAP	Economically Active Population
EEA	Employment Equity Act
GLU	Global Labour University
GTUC	Ghana Trade Union Congress
HR	Humans Resource(s)
JSFDA	Job Summit Final Declaration Act
LRA	Labour Relations Act
NEC	National Executive Council
NOB	National Office Bearer
PCP	Participation, Coordination and Partnership
PDG	Partnership Development Group
PIC	Portfolios Integrated Committee
PUWU	Public Utility Workers' Union
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers' Union
SDA	Skills Development Authority
UASA	United Association of South Africa
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US	United States

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... **i**

DECLARATION ..... **iii**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **iv**

DEDICATION ..... **vi**

ABBREVIATIONS ..... **vii**

CHAPTER 1: Introduction **1**

1.1 Objectives of the Study **1**

1.2 Rationale for the Study **1**

1.3 Background and Context: The Employment Equity Act of 1998 ..... **4**

1.4 Entry of Women Employees at Rand Water **9**

1.5 Research Questions **10**

1.6 Role of Stakeholders in Gender Transformation at Rand Water **10**

1.6.1 Categories of stakeholders 10

1.6.2 The PCP Forum 11

1.6.3 Role of the PCP Forum 12

1.7 Conclusion **13**

1.8 Structure of the Report **14**

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework **16**

2.1 Introduction **16**

2.2 Patriarchy **17**

2.3 Dominance/Subordination Tension and Gender **20**

2.4 Work and Gender **21**

2.5 Gender Relations in the Workplace **24**

2.6 Gender, Transformation and the Role of Labour Unions **25**

2.7 Organised Labour, Transformation and the Workplace **27**

2.8 Moving away from the Gender Stereotype **29**

2.9 Conclusion 30

CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology 32

3.1 Introduction 32

3.2 Research Design 32

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection 33

3.4 In-depth Interviews 35

3.5 Semi-structured Interviews 36

3.6 Key Informant Interviews 37

3.7 Data Analysis 38

3.8 Access 38

3.9 Limitations 39

3.10 Ethical Considerations 40

CHAPTER 4: Gender, Transformation: Process and Progress at Rand Water 41

4.1 Introduction 41

4.2 "Rand Water was a male-dominated organisation." 42

4.3 "Rand Water is a boys' club." 43

4.4 Alienation of Women 45

4.5 People and Employment 47

4.6 Implementation Process – The Journey towards Gender Transformation 50

4.7 Rand Water Gender Transformation Policies, Programmes and Initiatives 52

4.8 Gender Transformation and Perceptions 55

4.9 Gender Transformation Strategies 59

4.10 Employment Equity and Gender Transformation as a Legal Requirement 60

4.11 Women and the Collective Bargaining Process 62

4.12 Gender Transformation – "For Women in Upper Echelons" 63

4.13 Reverse Discrimination 65

4.14 Threat to Patriarchy 67

4.15 "One day, women will be more than men." 68

4.16 Gender Equity at Rand Water 70
4.17 Power Relations 73
4.18 Specific Programmes for Gender Transformation at Rand Water . 75
4.19 "Gender transformation is still a bit of a sour issue." 77
4.20 Power, Gender and Corporate Policy Influence 79
4.21 Conclusion 82

CHAPTER 5: Gender Transformation and Trade Unions 84
5.1 Role of Trade Unions in Gender Transformation at Rand Water ... 84
5.2 Women in SAMWU 86
5.3 Partner Strategies in Workplace Transformation 89
5.4 "Gender equality at the workplace has moved beyond masculine and feminine." 91
5.5 "Gender transformation is blurred in definition." 96
5.6 SAMWU's Understanding of Gender Transformation 100
5.7 Masculinity, Women and the Trade Union – "You need the balls of steel." 103
5.8 Conclusion 104

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion 107

REFERENCES 111

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet 117

Appendix B: Interview Schedule/Questionnaire (Rand Water) 120

Appendix C: Interview Schedule/Questionnaire (SAMWU) 126

Appendix D: Profile of Respondents 130

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study explores the state of gender transformation and the role of trade unions in the workplace in post-apartheid South Africa. It provides a brief historical overview on gendered workplace transformation, and shows that women have been faced with multifaceted discrimination, especially in the workplace. Firstly, the study sought to understand and explore the sociological dynamics that attest to gender transformation at Rand Water.[1] Secondly, it identified the role of the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) in the process. The study also acknowledges that gender transformation is subjective with varied interpretations and cannot occur in isolation, and therefore it could not be examined without recourse to its interdependence on race, class and disability. As such, the study took the effect of race, class and disability on gender into consideration by dwelling on such theories as hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005), theorising patriarchy (Walby 1990) and the theory of the second sex (De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]).

1.2 Rationale for the Study

The research showed that Rand Water was previously a male-dominated workplace with a strong patriarchal culture. It also showed that Rand Water took a cue from the various legislative provisions of the democratic era in South Africa and made conscious efforts towards general workplace transformation, with a profound commitment to gender transformation from 2007 forward. This success story of Rand Water and gender transformation was linked to stakeholders'

[1] Rand Water was established in 1903 as a public utility company, to supply water to the entire area of Johannesburg in South Africa.

partnership and the partnership concept at the workplace (Geary & Roche 2003). SAMWU is a major partner in the process as a trade union whose members are making tremendous contributions individually and collectively.

After proscribing apartheid, several organisations in South Africa realised that the South African workplace needed transformation in various areas. Therefore, initiatives were taken in conjunction with legislation and affirmative action towards the achievement of transformation in general and gender equity in particular in the workplace. Prior to late 1998, a number of major policy initiatives were taken in South Africa to mitigate discrimination of various forms. Particular emphasis was placed on education and training (Melanie 1999). These initiatives included the Employment Equity Act, the Job Summit Final Declaration Act and the Skills Development Act, all enacted in1998 (Melanie 1999). Based on these provisions, many organisations, especially those in the public sector, committed to the transformation process.

Rand Water is one of the top three public utility sectors, along with gas and electricity, that appreciated the need to take up the issue of workplace transformation in a committed manner (CEE 2013; Rand Water 2012). As such, the organisation made the following provisions as a benchmark towards workplace transformation.

Transformation in post-apartheid South Africa can be understood from two broad categorisations: first, the desire to achieve demographic representation in the public service; and second, the need to change public service functioning processes (Chipkin 2008). The Commission for Employment Equity emphasises the representation of designated people at top management levels as the major transformative factor in the workplace (CEE 2012). The Commission argues that companies with a higher representation of women in senior management positions financially outperform those with proportionally fewer women at the top, suggesting a business case diversity. Within the public service, gender relations have also been an issue of great contention, which has not been conclusively

addressed. As a result of affirmative action and other legislation (see above), areas such as the workplace in South Africa are beginning to see some transformation. In this study, gender transformation formed the focus of inquiry.

In a recently published report, the Commission for Employment Equity showed that there has been some increase in representation by designated people (based mainly on race and gender) at various levels of occupation between 2002 and 2012 (CEE 2013). These are upper occupational levels of decision-making, which include top management, senior management, professionally qualified and skilled levels. These increases in representation by designated people can be considered to be part of the transformation process. Again, according to the CEE (2013), designated groups in the electricity, gas and water sectors are well represented in the highest echelons. Rand Water is one of the top six major public sector workplaces that have seen increases in representation of designated people, and reported to have made significant strides in gender mainstreaming at the workplace (Rand Water 2012). In these sectors, African females comprise 9.5% of top management. African males constitute 21.5%. Coloured females are at their highest level of representation in top management of all the six major sectors in the country, albeit from a low base of 2% (CEE 2013).

In terms of trade union involvement in the workplace, Rand Water's workforce is highly unionised. As at 2012, 73.6% of Rand Water's total workforce are unionised; only 26.4% are non-unionised. Two unions are recognised at Rand Water – the United Association of South Africa (UASA) with a minority membership of 26.4%, and SAMWU with an overwhelming majority of 65.6% membership (Rand Water 2012).

Another recent publication by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) (2012) shows significant improvement in women's representation in leadership positions in SAMWU. As Table 1.1 shows, out of a total of 59 persons in the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of SAMWU, 23 are women, representing 39%. Out of a total of 27 members of the National Executive Council

(NEC) of SAMWU, 10 are women, representing 37%. And two of the six National Office Bearers (NOBs) of SAMWU are women, representing 33%.

Table 1.1 Women in leadership positions in SAMWU

Category	Number of Women	Women as % of Total
Central Executive Committee	23	39
National Executive Council	10	37
National Office Bearers	2	33

Source: COSATU (2012)

The challenge regarding statistical representations of gender transformation at Rand Water and SAMWU is that one is unable to read in-depth sociological realities of complex phenomena such as gender transformation, which might include the particular experiences of these women and their perceptions on gender and transformation. Although statistical information is significant in painting a picture of what exists, the qualitative research methodology was adopted to explore, understand and explain the social complexities, perceptions and lived experiences of gender transformation in Rand Water. Through this approach the study also sought to examine what the role of individual and collective SAMWU members was in the transformation process.

1.3 Background and Context: The Employment Equity Act of 1998

> Recognising that as a result of apartheid and other discriminatory laws and practices, there are disparities in employment, occupation and income with the national labour market; and that those disparities created such pronounced disadvantages by certain categories of people particularly women that they cannot be redressed simply by repealing discriminatory laws... (Employment Equity Act, 1998: 2).

The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) was promulgated in post-apartheid South Africa to achieve racial and gender transformation in the workplace. The Act seeks to achieve equity in the workplace, eliminate unfair discrimination, promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment, and achieve equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace through the implementation of affirmative measures by employers (Bentley & Habib 2008; CEE 2009, 2010; Melanie 1999; Naidoo 2008).

In order to understand discrimination on the basis of race and gender in South Africa, there is the need to first understand South African history (Mathur-Helm 2005). During the era of apartheid, black people and other minorities (Indians, coloureds, Asians, women and people with disabilities) – sometimes referred to as "designated people" – were discriminated against in terms of access to education, career development and job opportunities. These were readily available to white people, especially white men (Mathur-Helm 2005; Msimang 2000).

Most women experienced alienation from formal-sector employment, except a few white women who were employed in administrative occupations (Msimang 2000). On the other hand, black women were relegated to domestic and menial employment areas such as cleaners and tea ladies who worked in poor conditions and with little or no education, compared to their white counterparts. This situation is a reflection of what De Beauvoir (1949 [2009]: 85) refers to in a classic Marxian expression as "primitive division of labour, where two sexes constituted in a way, two classes and there was (supposed) equality between these two classes … and in consequence, woman plays a large part in economic life". The laws in South Africa did not provide protection for women because South Africa was a very patriarchal society and women were considered inferior to men in status; they were subjected to family care roles (Mathur-Helm 2005; Msimang 2000). This power disparity between men and women indicates that resources, including information and income, were not equitably distributed (Mathur-Helm 2005).

At the end of apartheid in 1994, the new democratic and non-racial government sought to redress past injustices and to eliminate all forms of unfair discrimination among previously disadvantaged people, both in terms of education and in the workplace (Esterhuizen 2008; Msimang 2000). As a result, labour policies were introduced as corrective measures in employment, giving preferential treatment to designated people in order to protect and improve their status in the workplace (Cross 2004; Esterhuizen & Martins 2008; Molebasti 2009; Msimang 2000).

The introduction of the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and other labour legislation such as the Labour Relations Act of 1995 (LRA of 1995) and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 (BCEA of 1997) have been crucial in the process of protecting all workers. They have set the minimum working conditions, and promoted the employment of designated people. Section 2 of the Employment Equity Act provides as part of its aim, to promote affirmative action policies and ensure equal representation of all groups of people at all levels of the workplace.

These corrective labour policies have sometimes been criticised for their seeming tokenism, which is perceived as creating reverse discrimination in terms of race and gender (Benatar 2008; Mabokela 2000). Organisations, therefore, need to remain truly committed to transformation in general and to gender transformation in particular. At the same time, organised labour unions should implement labour policies fairly, eliminate unfair discrimination in the workplace and focus on ensuring justice and fairness in the workplace (Esterhuizen & Martins 2008). These are the underlying principles for gender transformation in the workplace in South Africa.

These objective are in line with the vision of South Africa's liberation icon, Nelson Mandela, regarding equity for South African society, pronounced during his famous trial in 1964:

> I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal

> opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die (Mandela 1964).

Another aim of the Employment Equity Act is to ensure that black people, women and people with disabilities received equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace. There are certain mandatory requirements that are expected to be met by employers. For example, an employer with 50 or fewer employees, referred to as a small business, is required by the Act to implement affirmative measures (Bentley & Habib 2008).

Also, in consultation with the unions and employees, the Act requires employers to carry out the following:

- Conduct an analysis of employment policies, practices, procedures and the working environment, and identify the employment barriers faced by designated people.
- Develop a profile of its workforce in order to determine the degree of underrepresentation of designated people in all occupational categories and levels of their workplace; report on remuneration and benefits in each category and level, and take measures to progressively reduce any disproportionate differentials.
- Prepare and implement an employment equity plan which includes objectives, numerical goals, timetables, strategies, monitoring and evaluation procedures, internal dispute resolution mechanisms, and the allocation of responsibility for the implementation of the plan, and report the implementation plan (Bentley & Habib 2008).

The 2006–2007 Employment Equity Report gives us some indication of the level and pace of accelerated transformation in the South African workforce at the workplace in terms of race and gender. There is an increasing population of black people and women who are employed in higher positions in the workplace (Modisha 2006). Between 2000 and 2006, black people's occupation of top

management positions increased by 9.5% (from 5.1% to 6.2%). A 2009 review on the effectiveness of the EEA shows that black people have recently realised a slight but positive change of transformation in South Africa (CEE 2009, 2010). For example, African representation in top management increased from 10% in 2002 to 12% in 2012. The Commission for Gender Equality has also shown a slight increase, but lamented the fact that women's representation in top management moved only marginally from 13.7% in 2002 to 19.8% in 2012, and at senior management levels, from 21.6% in 2012 to 30.7% in general terms (CGE 2012: 29, 2013: 1).

At the local workplace level in Rand Water, transformation has also been slow in the past. Historically, Rand Water had an employee base dominated by white males, with low entry for females, especially in technical and technology related fields and senior management positions. In 2007, Rand Water was said to have recorded a slight increase in the percentage (82.6% to 83.3%) of black employees following from the prioritising of employment equity and transformation processes. These increases reflect the findings of Modisha (2008: 161), who shows an increase in level and space of transformation in South Africa's workplace during the same period.

In 2007, Rand Water came to the realisation that there was a need to map out policy and strategies to ensure rapid gender equality in the organisation. It therefore embedded the Portfolio Integrated Committee (PIC) into its transformation trajectory. As Liff and Ward (2001) put it, some organisations are formally committed to the pursuit of equal opportunities and profess concern about the minimal level of women's entry to senior positions, and therefore devise means of improving the situation. This saw the company changing its structural strategy towards transformation in general and gender transformation in particular. By putting formal policies in place, emphasis was placed on employing females in technical, technological and strategic positions. As a result, a continuous increase in the number of women employed at senior and decision-

making levels in Rand Water was realised as of 2012 (Rand Water 2007, 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

1.4 Entry of Women Employees at Rand Water

The number of black employees at senior levels (M-Q) decreased from 402 to 394 between June 2006 and June 2007, and the number of women decreased from 221 to 209 over the same period. Table 1.2 shows the disproportionate representation of women and black people at top and senior levels of management in Rand Water as at 2007 due to low entry into technical and technological fields.

Table 1.2 Percentage of blacks and women at management level (M-Q) at Rand Water, 2007

Band	Total staff	ACI	%	Female ACI	All Female	% ACI Female	% All Female
Q	15	10	66.7	3	4	20.0	26.6
P	36	23	63.9	8	8	22.2	22.2
O	121	71	58.7	24	33	19.8	27.3
N	123	79	59.4	32	47	24.1	35.3
M	301	211	70.1	86	117	28.6	38.9

ACI = Africans, coloured, Indians
Source: Rand Water Annual Report 2007.

However, by 2012 increases in representation of women in top, senior management and decision-making levels were being realised (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3 Percentage of black women at Rand Water, 2012

Level	Total Staff	ACI	Females
Executive management	15	10	4
Senior management	36	23	8
Middle management	121	71	33
Supervisory	434	290	168

ACI = African, coloured and Indians
Source: Rand Water Annual Report 2012.

1.5 Research Questions

In broad terms, this research aimed at understanding the experiences, perceptions and processes of gender transformation policy at Rand Water, and the role that SAMWU members in particular are playing in the process. This research also explored the similarities and differences of the gender transformation policies of Rand Water and SAMWU.

The specific question of the study is: What are the views of various stakeholders at Rand Water of the gender transformation processes, progress, successes and challenges at Rand Water?

1.6 The Role of Stakeholders in Gender Transformation at Rand Water

1.6.1 Categories of stakeholders

There are three main categories that constitute the stakeholders in Rand Water's transformation process – management, labour representatives and the general workforce. This is founded on three key pillars, namely:

- commercial equity: the need to improve the expenditure directed to previously disadvantaged business,
- employment equity: the need to bring Rand Water's demographic profile into line with the country's demographic profile, and
- changing organisational culture.

1.6.2 The PCP Forum

The Participation, Coordination and Partnership (PCP) Forum was established in 1995 at a time of uncertainty and transition in South Africa. It focused on mutual responsibility in problem-solving, consensus decision-making and creating a common understanding. The primary role of the PCP is to ensure that all stakeholders contribute to the decision-making process on policies. The structure has been commended by many labour relations commentators as a promising model for participative processes toward policy formulation.

The PCP Forum comprises three layers of consultation (Rand Water 2007):

- The Stakeholders' Forum is a corporate-wide forum which deals with issues that have an organisational impact. The restructuring of Rand Water and the establishment of the Portfolio Integrating Committee (PIC) are examples of this.
- Site Forums typically comprise a supervisor, site manager and labour representatives, and deal specifically with issues affecting a particular site.
- Workplace meetings are attended by all employees within a specific section.

These are the strategic provisions through which transformation processes are carried out at Rand Water. The processes involve consultation, education and information-sharing between and among management, labour representatives and the general workforce. The various fora that are organised by these bodies serve as platforms for policy direction information in terms of workplace transformation in general and gender transformation in particular. It became obvious from the respondents in this study that each of the identified stakeholders complements the

effort of the others in the gender transformation process. The researcher learned that mobilisation of workers by the union leaders, especially the shop stewards at the various workplaces, is a major role played by trade unions in the workplace transformation process at Rand Water.

1.6.3 Role of the PCP Forum

The PCP Forum was instituted in line with the Employment Equity Act of 1998 for the purposes of achieving workplace transformation. Rand Water's gender transformation agenda is also grounded in this legislative provision. It is envisaged that this vision will result in gender equity at the workplace whereby women presently in the organisation, as well as women who will be employed in future, will have the opportunity to work in positions of influence, power and decision-making. From these arrangements, Rand Water seeks to achieve the vision of attaining a 50–50 split in gender representation and participation at all levels of the organisation by 2016. This vision is in line with the 50–50 women representation campaign of South African bureaucracy (Hassim 2003).

One of the programme initiatives that Rand Water has embarked on as a long-term solution to the prolonged dominance by male employees is the Technogirl Programme. In this programme young girls are offered bursaries to study for the acquisition of critical skills, particularly in areas of science, mathematics and technology. Besides this long-term plan, the respondents in the study indicated that other on-going activities that complement each other in order to ensure gender transformation are yielding positive results. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 was promulgated to achieve racial and gender transformation in the South African workplace. The Act seeks to achieve equity in the workplace, eliminate unfair discrimination, promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment, and to achieve equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace through affirmative measures implemented by employers (Bentley & Habib 2008; Naidoo 2008; Melanie 1999; CEE 2009, 2010).

Prominent on the gender transformation agenda for Rand Water is the employment of women in occupations which were previously dominated by males. Historically, Rand Water was a male-dominated place of work. This trend begun to change only after 1994 when the apartheid regime was proscribed. The management of Rand Water is said to have made strides by increasing the number of women that they have employed. These increases resulted from certain specific interventions that the organisation has established.

1.7 Conclusion

In post-apartheid South Africa, certain challenges which border on discrimination were faced by women in the workplace. These challenges included gender stereotyping, gaining employment and working in male-dominated environments, inadequate support services, lack of career development and unavailability of women role models. Dealing with multiple roles was also problematic (Crompton & Misha 1999; Hoyt & Blascovich 2007; Liff, Ward & Wards 2001; Mckinsey & Company 2010; Marthur-Helm 2005; Molebasti 2009; Paulsen 2009).

Irrespective of the fact that some progress is being made in terms of transforming the South African gendered workplace, much study remains to be done on the sociological underpinnings of the progress and the role that trade unions play in the process.As a result, the researcher explored and tried to gain understanding of the sociological underpinnings and processes of gender transformation and the role of trade unions in the workplace in South Africa. Specifically, the study sought to understand SAMWU's gender policy (if any) for the workplace and how this played itself out in Rand Water gender transformation. It was realised that SAMWU has a role to play in the workplace transformation process. However, SAMWU has not yet developed a full gender transformation policy to achieve the purpose. This raises the question of how committed SAMWU is to the issue of workplace gender transformation.

Rather, SAMWU depends on the gender equity provision in the constitution of COSATU, of which SAMWU is an affiliate. In this process, the unions emphasise representation at leadership levels to measure transformation. Again, the researcher tried to understand women and their experiences of transformation at Rand Water; explored and tried to understand the perceptions and understanding of SAMWU members (both women and men) about the role of the trade union in gender transformation, and the sociological and labour activity profile of women in the workplace.

The study shows that respondents' experiences and perceptions were diverse. There were different views that cut across gender, race and occupation levels. There was no homogeneity in the views that were expressed by the respondents in terms of how gender transformation is understood in the organisation. However, there was overwhelming emphasis from the respondents that there is an accelerated gender transformation process going on at Rand Water because of the promulgation of the Employment Equity Act of 1998.

The study concludes that the role of trade unions in the gender transformation process is crucial. However, if the union's contribution to the process is to be effective, then the union should be restructured to project internal structural democracy. By so doing, both women and men would experience equitable representation so that a non-gendered solid front can be used to propel the process. Achievement of this objective can be accelerated by every individual woman's commitment to the process. For, according to De Beauvoir (1949 [2009]: 86), "each conscious individual through challenge, struggle, and single combat can endeavour to raise himself to sovereignty".

1.8 Structure of the Report

This research report has six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research topic and elaborates on the aim for the study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed review of literature on gender theories. It also examines publications that look at patriarchy,

femininity and masculinity, and De Beauvoir's theorisations on gender "in essentialism" (De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]). Chapter 3 discusses the research approach and methods used to collect and analyse the data. It also details the actual research experiences and the study's limitations. Chapter 4 discusses the findings on gender transformation at Rand Water. It also presents data on participants' perceptions and aligns them to policy, programmes, initiatives and experiences of gender transformation. Chapter 5 discusses gender transformation and the role of SAMWU at Rand Water. Chapter 6 offers the conclusions and recommendations for possible improvement of gender relations, for promotion of gender equity and for sustained gender transformation in the workplace.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, literature on the gendered nature of employment at various occupation levels, and women's employment in particular, is discussed, with much focus on South Africa. The discussion aims at revealing the understanding and experiences, as well as gender transformation policy. The discussion is based on theories and concepts that explain the processes of discrimination and the eventual transformation process in the workplace, with particular focus on Rand Water and SAMWU.

This section reviews scholarly work on recent and relevant literature on emerging themes such as transformation, power, masculinity, gender and women's empowerment, social reproduction, reverse discrimination, class reproduction, threats to patriarchy, tension and contestation, and challenging patriarchal dominance.

The understanding of discrimination in South Africa cannot be explained without recourse to race, class, disability and gender (Mathur-Helm 2005). During apartheid, blacks, people with disabilities and women suffered the brunt of discrimination in areas such as education and career advancement; they were also excluded from formal employment, although a few white women managed to gain employment in administrative jobs (Mathur-Helm 2005; Msimang 2000). Unlike black women, white men had access to formal education and career development opportunities, and therefore could gain employment readily in the formal sector (Mathur-Helm 2005; Msimang 2000).

South Africa's process of transformation cannot be explained in isolation from the gendered division where women were relegated to domestic spheres of employment including unpaid labour, and public jobs were preserved for men (De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]). The social structure of patriarchy can also be held responsible for these phenomena (Walby 1990).This social structure arguably resulted from the notion that the socialisation process differentiates the male from the female child at a tender age. In this process, males are made to view themselves as breadwinners and heads of households, whereas females are taught to be obedient and submissive mothers and wives (Chuchu 2011). The areas in which black women were mostly employed comprised maternal duties, including child care (Mathur-Helm 2005; Msimang 2000). These discriminations bred inequality of power and influence between men and women, and undermined equitable distribution of resources, access to information and equal income distribution (Mathur-Helm 2005). After the end of the apartheid era in 1994, the new democratic government resolved to redress the injustices and remove unfair discrimination among designated people through the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, towards the realisation of transformation in general and gender transformation in particular, at the workplace (Buhlungu 2006).

2.2 Patriarchy

Social institutionalisation of patriarchy has been problematic in domestic and public lives, especially with women. Social institutionalisation of patriarchy exposes women to different perceptions and experiences. According to Walby (1990: 19), the concept of patriarchy was developed by Max Weber, who used it with reference to a system of government in which men ruled societies through their position as heads of households. There are different theoretical perspectives on patriarchy, but they all converge at men oppressing women by coercing them into subordination. Some people perceived gendered relations between men and women at the workplace as oppression and subordination. However, experiences that are usually shared by employees indicate that such perceptions are relative in

meaning because gender transformation is becoming progressive at various workplaces.

Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices whereby men dominate, oppress and exploit women by holding positions of power to themselves and largely excluding women from those positions (Walby 1989). It is a reality that, in some cases, women are exposed to subordination and oppression. However, it is arguable that some women fail to get involved in progressive activities that have the potential to bring transformation. Rather, they look to men for such gratification.

Within the social structure framework of patriarchy, the notion of biological determinism and the perception that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman is in a subordinate position has been dismissed from this discourse (Walby 1989: 214). This suggests that not all men are oppressive and not all women are subjected to oppression. For instance, the trade unions remained dominated by male activists, reinforcing hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005). However, this does not mean that every male in the trade union was an inherent oppressor. It would be erroneous, therefore, to assume that every woman is oppressed and subordinate to every man.

Britwum, Douglas and Ledwith (2012) share similar views with Buhlungu (2006), that more women are participating as union members than men in recent times. This twist of events can be explained within the context of demolishing hegemonic masculinity. It is clear that more and more women are undertaking capitalist wage labour jobs in the labour market. Nevertheless, the underrepresentation of women in leadership and other powerful positions in the trade unions and other institutions has been widely attributed to the patriarchal social and organisational structure of the institutions. Buhlungu (2006) observes that the South African labour movement has not seen much participation and representation of women, particularly at leadership level, despite the long involvement of women in trade union organisation and labour struggles. This is

because the struggle against racial discrimination overshadowed the struggle for gender equality in the past (Buhlungu 2006). Recently, however, this situation has begun to change, and women are increasingly occupying public positions of influence, power and leadership.

In another argument, the Radical Feminism theorists are of the view that the patriarchal system of the domination of women by men benefits the latter. However, this relationship does not emanate from any other social inequality. The theory argues forcefully that patriarchy is not a by-product of capitalism. According to Walby (1990), patriarchy both predates and postdates capitalism, and sexuality is the major site of male dominance over women; the violence of masculinity and desire contests with autonomy and recognition for independent space (Walby 1990; Rubin 1997; Benjamin 1983; Jewkes & Morrell 2012). It can be concluded that patriarchy and sexuality are inherently embedded in the wage labour process of capitalism. This is because, the wage labour system has many disadvantages for women.

Hierarchical dominance by men over women is socially constructed, through the agency of hegemonic masculinity. It is a cultural idea of manhood and configuration of masculinity. Notably, this forms the basis for violations against women, especially in South Africa (Connell 2005; Jewkes & Morrell 2012).

Furthermore, it has been argued from the queer theory perspective and corroborated by dual-system theory that identity should not be focused only on what is historically constructed as this forms the contingent nature of a homosexual/heterosexual binary that continues to reinforce the dominance of heterosexuality. It also reproduces steep hierarchies and an increase in gendered characteristics of bureaucracies of hegemonic masculinity in the workplace through which patriarchal and capitalist institutionalisation shapes and stabilises social structure and culture to the disadvantage of women (Valocchi 2008; Walby 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

In effect, it is arguable that patriarchy is socially constructed and interposes dominance on the liberties of women in society. As was previously stated, women in general are perceived as subordinates to men due to their socialisation. Irrespective of these assertions, women should not resign themselves to this situation. Women have demonstrated ample capability to overcome the challenge, and have worked with men to achieve an equitable society.

2.3 Dominance/Subordination Tension and Gender

The social spaces in which both men and women strive to achieve their aspirations are always characterised by tension and contestation. According to Walby (1990), women's subordination manifests in various ways in contemporary society. This involves structural and institutional exclusion among others, based on the notion of patriarchy stemming from different perceptions and experiences. According to Walby (1989), patriarchy constitutes a system of social structures and practices whereby men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Men arrogate to themselves powerful positions and exclude women from them. For example, in the trade unions women are relegated to subordinate positions such as treasurer or organiser (Britwum *et al*. 2012). Note, however, that this argument does not seek to state that every man is inherently superior to any woman or vice versa. Dominance of men in almost all aspects of public life forms the core feature of social interactions between women and men (Robinson *et al.* 2000). Therefore, different ways in which women protest hegemonic masculinities (Connell 2005) tend to challenge the way in which spaces and their accompanying gendered power relations have been reconstructed (Bonnin 2000).

Notable within the social structural framework of patriarchy is the notion of biological determinism and the perception that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman is in a subordinate position. This, according to Walby (1989: 214), is not the case. Rather, it is patriarchal tendencies that reproduce masculinity, and shapes and stabilises social structures

and culture to the disadvantage of women (Valocchi 2008; Walby 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

The patriarchal dominance phenomenon is culturally installed in society and has evolved throughout the history of human existence. Arguing from this evolutionary perspective, Robinson *et al.* (2000) shows that gender roles tend to be naturally selective of men as superior and women as subordinates in terms of their social roles and gendered division of labour (Robinson *et al.* 2000). As such, in the world of work, women continue to face different kinds of violations of their employment rights. According to Britwum, Douglas and Ledwith (2012), women are discriminated against at the workplace in places like the Philippines in terms of pay equality, special leave for women, menstrual leave, day-care services and facilities, breastfeeding facilities and maternity leave. Also, women are excluded from the core of the Collective Bargaining Agenda. This becomes illustrative of the gendered positioning of man as the essential *one* and woman as the inessential *other* (De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]; Britwum *et al.* 2012). The notion of patriarchy, therefore, impacts heavily on women in the world of work.

2.4 Work and Gender

Work has served as an answer to many social questions for both men and women throughout history. According to De Beauvoir (1949 [2009]), it is only through work that woman's freedom is guaranteed, closing the gap separating her from the male. Furthermore, as soon as the system of dependence of woman on man collapses, she ceases to be a parasite and no longer needs masculine mediation between herself and the universe. Increasing numbers of women are gaining social and political awareness of this advantage and have depended on it in varied ways to break the glass ceiling, removing the invisible barrier to women's advancement based on attitudinal or organisational bias (Ragins, Townsend & Mattis 1998; Davies-Netzley 1998; De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]: 737).

The liberal feminist view indicates that women's disadvantaged position is based on specific prejudice such as denial of equal rights to education and employment opportunities as well as the sexist attitude of society (Melanie 1999; Walby 1990). Also, it has been argued by De Beauvoir (1949 [2009]) that woman embarks on a career in the context of a highly problematic situation. She is still subjugated by the burdens traditionally and historically implied by her femininity, such as her sex, sexuality and gender, leading to the various forms of exclusion that women encounter. In South Africa, for instance, emphasis has been placed on education and training, with the claim that access to it will serve to address gender inequalities (Melanie 1999).

Nevertheless, most women are faced with exclusion from the classroom and training workshops because they are women, instead of being considered on the basis of their individual merits and/or faults (Melanie 1999). These forms of discrimination can be considered as structural, based on gender (Melanie 1999). Such discrimination has the tendency to alienate women from securing satisfactory jobs even after skill acquisition and education.

Melanie (1999) observed that, in 1995, 4% of South African women workers were employed as operators, compared to 27% of men as operators. Furthermore, in terms of gender and the racial division of labour, access to education alone is not enough for a woman to gain equal access to suitable jobs, as might be the case for a man. It is the case that giving women access to education and training increases their prospects of securing jobs. However, the gains that ought to be associated with such development could be undermined by labour market discrimination (Melanie 1999).

From a Marxist feminine perspective, capitalism is held responsible for gender inequality on the basis that men's domination over women is a by-product of capital's domination over labour. In addition, the nature of gender relations is determined by central social structures such as class relations and economic exploitation (Walby 1990; Valocchi 2008; Bell, McLaughlin & Sequeira 2002).

Western colonial activities, cultural infiltrations and societal systems mainly in Africa, Asia and Latin America, accompanied by attempts to establish, universalise and reinforce Western gender concepts of patriarchal hegemony of capitalism, suggest that capitalism plays a role in male dominance and violates the employment rights of women (Lugones 2007; Mclintock in Gibson 1999; Oyewumi 2002; Price & Shildrick 1999).

Women in the United States (US) who have actually advanced to senior levels of leadership in some large companies shared their perspective of the breakthrough process. They revealed some of the obstacles that were encountered and the strategies they used to overcome the obstacles (Ragins 1998). These successful women executives adapted to the predominantly male culture and environment in order to deal with the so-called male managerial model. They did so by adopting masculine styles and characteristics, a situation which placed women into what Ragins (1998) refers to as a "double bind". By employing a feminine managerial style, women in the US run the risk of being perceived as ineffective managers. However, with a masculine managerial style, they are perceived as appropriate, even though this style could be criticised for rejecting feminine characteristics (Ragins 1998). Although this strategy showed success, it reproduced the institutionalisation of gender stereotypes and thus reinforced the capitalist production environment.

Invariably, women have never been resigned to remaining passive victims of oppressive structures of patriarchy. There is abundant evidence showing that they have struggled to change both their immediate circumstances and the social structure at large (Walby 1990). According to Ragins (1998), women in managerial positions are forced to develop managerial styles that are neither masculine nor feminine, yet are acceptable to male colleagues, supervisors and subordinates. Also, it is expected that women managers accept performance expectations, and perform in a way that does not pose a threat to males and make them feel uncomfortable. This seems to suggest that male dominance is posited as

the yardstick with which women's performance should be measured. There is also a relationship between women's work experiences with class and race which affects gender significantly, noting that gender relations are always spaces of tension with subjective interpretations. However, according to Davies-Netzley (1998), women with race and class privileges have progressed to top management positions of decision-making and power in the world of work in the United States and elsewhere, transforming gender order process and bringing the hope of breaking through the glass ceiling for women to attain full utility of their aspirations (Bell, McLaughlin & Sequeira 2002; Davies-Netzley 1998; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Walby 1990; Ragins, Townsend & Mattis 1998). Such developments justify the argument of De Beauvoir (1949 [2009]) that women can be liberated from socially constructed subordination through work.

2.5 Gender Relations in the Workplace

The issue of gender equity and the socialisation of females as far as the gender division of labour is concerned has endured debates, arguments and opinions. The general perception of women as subordinates to men in the world of work has led to bitter experiences of discrimination against women for a long time. De Beauvoir (1949 [2009]) has argued that women always existed and that, unlike the proletariat which emerged from the capitalist labour/production relationship, the essence of woman's existence did not emerge through historical events or realities. Also, in attempt to naturalise the patriarchal dominance logic of placing women as subservient in society, women have always been subjects of exclusion from the core of society (De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]; Nicholson 1997; Walby 1990). These patterns have affected women negatively in the world of work. Women in general have suffered discrimination in the form of refusal to hire, receiving inequitable pay and being steered to what society posits as "women's jobs" (Bell *et al.* 2002).

Furthermore, the biological and physiological uniqueness of women has obscured them as objects of subjectivity, limiting them in their own nature, whereas man's

anatomical uniqueness has not done so to him. Such biological and physiological uniqueness that brings discrimination upon women in the workplace were identified by Britwum, Douglas and Ledwith (2012) to include lack of a bargaining agenda for gender (BAG) in areas of menstrual leave, special leave for women, day-care services and facilities, pay equality, breastfeeding facilities and maternity leave beyond what was stipulated by law. This illustrates the gendered positioning of man as the essential and woman as the inessential, therefore making man *one* and woman *the other* (De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]). The biological and physiological uniqueness of women which tends to limit their involvement in work at certain periods need not be used as yardstick to measure their capabilities, because women have always proven capable of achieving their working goals.

Contrary to the view of De Beauvoir (1949 [2009]) on the non-eventfulness of gender, however, it is suggestive that the concept of gender contains historical eventfulness in the sense that Western colonial activities infiltrated cultures and societal systems mainly in Africa, Asia and Latin America to establish, universalise and reinforce the Western gender concept of patriarchal hegemony of capitalism (Lugones 2007; Mclintock in Gibson 1999; Oyewumi 2002; Price & Shildrick 1999; COSATU 2003).

2.6 Gender, Transformation and the Role of Labour Unions

Invariably, this research project focuses on gender equality and transformation, with an emphasis on women as a previously disadvantaged group and the progress that has been made at the workplace. It examines what is variously construed as gender transformation and identifies the role of unions in the process. Gender transformation is subjective in meaning, and therefore there are various ways in which gender transformation can be construed. One of those many ways is through the breaking of the glass ceiling by women and their rise to top managerial positions. According to Ragins (1998),the glass ceiling is “an invisible barrier to advancement based on attitudinal or organizational biases against

women". This circumstance has the potential of creating lost productivity and incurring turnover cost (Ragins 1998).

In a study that was conducted in the United States, Ragins (1998) showed that about half of the US labour force are women, with their occupations cutting across middle and senior levels of employment. The study also pointed out that between 1972 and 1995, the managerial positions that were held by women increased from 17% to 42.7%. Within this context of women occupying management positions as part of a gender transformation process, these increases can be considered as significant and remarkable progress in the US workplace. However, irrespective of the increases of women in these positions, the proportional representation at the top level of management was said to be low in the United States. This low movement to the top was attributed to the phenomenon of the glass ceiling. Nevertheless, an increasing number of individuals in many organisations are breaking through the glass ceiling in order to ensure that women maximise their full potential (Ragins 1998).

Transformation within the South African context encompasses the attainment of equality for persons who have previously suffered discrimination in the social, economic and political spheres. This group of persons included black people, disabled persons and women, with emphasis on the emancipation of women as well as the addressing of gender inequalities within the various sectors of society (Buhlungu 2006).

The focus on gender transformation is motivated mostly by the fact that all the previously discriminated-against groups that have been identified for transformation are gendered (Melanie 1999). Central in this discrimination are women, since gender was applied as a criterion for employment-related decisions in what Bell *et al.* (2002: 66) refer to as overt discrimination. There are both men and women disabled persons, and there are men and women in all races. Therefore, women could not be treated as a homogeneous group that could be studied in isolation as previously discriminated-against persons (Melanie 1999).

Gender is referred to as a person's biological sex, as constructed, understood, interpreted and institutionalised by society, and the social implications of being male or female (Moore & Brudder 2005). By extension,the concept of gender transformation, adopted at Beijing in 1995, was established as a global strategy for the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the platform for action. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), gender mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them participate in and benefit equally from development efforts.

> The problem of social stratification and its association with gender, has moved beyond masculine and feminine and therefore calls for collaborated effort to achieve mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming requires that effort be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making, power and influence. And in order to realize this agenda, it may require changes in goals, strategies, and actions so that both men and women can influence, participate in, and benefit from development processes and thus transform unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women (ILO 2012).

2.7 Organised Labour, Transformation and the Workplace

Labour's role in social transformation is divided into those who believe that labour's role is inherently limited and those who believe labour has the potential to play a central role in transformation of society. Hyman (1971) refers to the former as the pessimist tradition within Marxism, which holds that trade unions do not facilitate, and may in fact inhibit, the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society (Adler & Webster 2000). In terms of the latter attitude, a study conducted for the Centre for Employment Studies Research (CESR) on trade unions and gender equality in the workplace in the United Kingdom (UK) found

that trade unions play a vital role in improving the employment conditions of women during the process of advancing gender equity in employment (Tavora 2012). This forms part of the gender transformation process in the workplace (Tavora 2012).

Notably, gender relations are always spaces of tension in which the social hierarchy of gender inequality in the world has always belonged to males (Walby 1990). Also, the tendency to impose sovereignty by one over the other has always characterised the relationship between male and female (De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]). This culture has been profoundly dominant in almost all trade unions globally until recently, when a few of them have started moving gradually away from the practice. In South Africa, there is a significant difference in the participation levels of men and women in trade union activities (Wood & Dibben 2006). While men tend to be aggressive and chauvinistic, women are more subordinated and tend to toe the line of male leadership. Two factors are responsible for this development: first, a long-standing culture of male domination in trade unions, and second, the burden of domestic duties that tend to restrain women's participation in the unions (Wood & Dibben 2006).

As at 2004, there has been an increase in women's activism in the union. Unfortunately, however, this increased participation was not reflected in increased representation of women in the leadership (Buhlungu 2006; Britwum, Douglas & Ledwith 2012). Nevertheless, the increased proportion of women in employment and in the unions increased the recognition of women's importance in the workplace, as women engage on matters that concern women as part of union strategies, especially in collective bargaining processes in some unions in the UK (Tavora 2012).

Also, it is imperative to consider the call for women in the workplace to take the challenge of claiming their positions at top and middle-level management and also in trade unions. Therefore, women have achieved significantly recognisable emancipation in various spheres. In South Africa, the likes of Emma Mashinini,

Maggie Magubane and Lydia Kompe served as role models for the struggles for women's participation and representation in the frontline activities of trade unionism during its formative stages in the 1920s and 1930s (Tshoaedi 1999; Buhlungu 2006).

2.8 Moving away from the Gender Stereotype

Changes have occurred recently in gendered relationships between men and women. Indeed, it has been shown in a study conducted by Britwum, Douglas & Ledwith (2012: 49) that there are increasing proportions of women moving into work and into trade union membership in all the countries where the study was conducted. This trend is quite profound in Zambia and was attributed to the fact that there is increased awareness of women's rights. Some other countries are achieving growth in the numbers of working women who are assuming leadership roles and positions of influence in the workplace and the unions. For example, in Ghana and the Republic of Korea, significant successes have been achieved through the application of affirmative action (Britwum *et al*. 2012).

As a result it is notable that there are reserved seats for women in some unions. In Ghana, the seat of the vice-president is reserved for women. This dispensation was interpreted (or misinterpreted) by Britwum *et al*. (2012) as though this is the highest position that a woman can aspire to reach in the union. This interpretation is erroneous. Rather, this provision encourages women to build the necessary competence and confidence to vie for higher positions, following from which the current president of Ghana's TUC is a woman (Britwum *et al.* 2012). Irrespective of their subtlety, these achievements in women's emancipation indicate that the campaign for gender transformation is gaining ground. It is not clear, however, whether the increased representation of women in the general bureaucracy at institutional level has any effective impact on their decision-making influence because research in that area has not received much attention (Hassim 2003). In the democratic transition of South Africa, the government expressed commitment to achieving gender equality through the implementation of certain national

processes. These included the representation of women and the socio-economic empowerment of women (Hassim 2003). However, the institutional commitment to these provisions has not received the necessary support, hence the continued struggle for gender equality in the South African public space. Hassim (2003) argues that formalisation of democratic institutions and the elaboration of democratic rules and procedures in the public lives of South Africans has reduced the gap of transformative politics (Hassim 2003).

Although the issues of gender disparities transcend male and female problems, the issue of gender transformation places heavier responsibility on women to strategise for the desired transformation. As such, Hassim (2003) posits that a sustainable and autonomous feminist lobby is needed in civil society in order to effectively engage formal institutions for the address of gender inequality challenges.

2.9 Conclusion

So far, the literature reviewed has shown the presence of gender inequalities both in society and the workplace. These gender differences are explained in terms of racial and class discrimination, especially in the global division of labour. There are also theoretical underpinnings of understanding how men's and women's roles differ or are similar in the world of work. The review also showed that there are conscientious efforts by various groups and institutions to ensure gender equity and transformation of the gendered spheres of work. At the individual level, some women as well as some men do make efforts to eliminate gender stereotype tendencies from the workplace and from society in general.

According to Robinson *et al.* (2000), feminist philosophers and patriarchal fanatics have always been entangled in a dialectic tension between the numerous benefits that have accrued to patriarchal expositions on the one hand, in the face of the sufferings that has been perpetrated on women on another hand. This is the bone of contention that has always played a central role in mediating general

discrimination, whereby women bear the brunt in the march forward to gender transformation, especially in the workplace (Robinson *et al.* 2000).

It has been a long and tiring effort for women to establish their basic worth and value in modern society (Robinson *et al.* 2000). However, the literature does not reveal the sociological processes and influences that are associated with the challenges, strategies and experiences that impact the transforming gendered workplace. This void forms the basis for this study.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a description of how the research was conducted is discussed in detail. The chapter also illustrates the data collection and analysis methods employed in the study. The researcher also examines the potential limitations of the research and reflects on the processes therein throughout the study.

3.2 Research Design

The concept of gender transformation is a reality that is subject to varied perceptions and interpretations. In order to unravel the subjective and divergent views of research participants, the qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. Qualitative research was adopted because it is more appropriate for describing and understanding details of phenomena such as learning from the multiplicity of interior and exterior experiences, stories and voices, perceptions and interpretations of those perceptions (Babbie & Mouton 2001). Most of the respondents for this study were women. They were placed within a wider context such as political, cultural and socioeconomic realities (Weiss 1994; Neuman 2000; Chacko 2004; Martins 2005; Kitay and Callus 1998).

The qualitative approach was the most appropriate because, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), this type of methodology has the potential to situate the activity under observation and locates the observer in the world. Also, it provides materials that make the world visible, and it involves the study and interpretation of phenomena in their natural setting within the context of the meanings that people assign to the social life that they enact (Herbert 2000: 556).

Furthermore, the qualitative research approach provided grounds for better understanding of the subject matter. This was dome through the use of the feminist perspective of reading transformation within historical moments which are marked by a particular sexuality, gender, race and class ideology, including their tensions and contradictions. As Chacko (2004: 52) puts it, this includes aspects and other attributes that mark the relational positions in society, devoid of intrinsic qualities.

These merits accompanied with its potential to be flexible and its reactivity, reliability, replicability and representativeness make qualitative research methodology the most suitable choice for this research (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Burawoy 1998).The researcher aims at acquiring knowledge by narrowing the perception and experience gap that existed between the researcher and the participants prior to the study. In order to do so, the researcher collaborated, spent time with participants in the field and became an insider in the process of investigation.

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used in this study with triangulation tactics. According to Neuman (2000), qualitative researchers engage in non-probability sampling techniques of various forms, focusing on how sample, activities, units or cases bring out social life. The form of sampling techniques adopted for this research included purposive sampling of key informants which included:

- Top and senior management staff of Rand Water, including the following:
    - the Human Resources Manager (GMHR) who served as the main gatekeeper in terms of access to the workplace;
    - SAMWU officials – three national officials, including:
        - two females in the positions of National Gender and Equity Officer;

        - the immediate past National Chairperson of the Women's Forum of SAMWU, stationed at the Vereeniging Purification Station;
        - a male who doubles as a full-time shop steward;
        - the National Treasurer of SAMWU, stationed at Rand Water Head Office;
    - three officials from the Department of Labour; this formal and personal contact was facilitated by the Executive Human Resource Manager. The officials included:
        - one female in the position of Inspection Manager;
        - two males in the positions of Employment Equity Officer and Inspection Team Leader in Braamfontein, Gauteng.

The choice to interview these respondents as key informants was made based on their location and relevance to the study as per employment equity legislation in South Africa. They provided information on policies, programmes and activities that were undertaken in order to achieve transformation in general and gender transformation in particular, and showed that some progress was being achieved, although at a slow pace. The study also examined the tension and contestation in relation to the imperatives for gender transformation between the unions and employers and between the Labour Department and the unions.

The snowball technique was also used among professional, skilled and unskilled employees, as well as key informants at the Rand Water Head Office and the Vereeniging Purification Station. This process facilitated and interconnected respondents in a network, through which smaller groups of people such as shop stewards were contacted (Neuman 2000).

In the process, strategies such as structured and semi-structured interviews and participant observation (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994), which is typical of case studies (Kitay & Callus 1998), were adopted in order to collect primary data from respondents. This enabled the researcher to gain access to the participants'

understanding of work and work relationships, both in verbal and non-verbal expressions that are important but would have been taken for granted (Friedman & McDaniel 1998).

The researcher engaged mostly with women in order to gain insight into what Flyvbjerg (2001) refers to as context-dependent knowledge in the workplace, which happens to be at the centre of this research with particular focus on context-bound nature of gender inequality (Wendy 2005).

The researcher interviewed 26 respondents in all, through a non-probability but relevant sample selection process by considering respondents' possession of special knowledge that could help explain social life, and their ability to help the researcher to gain access to the phenomena under investigation (Kitay & Callus 1998; Neuman 2000).

Furthermore, relevant literature was used as sources for secondary data collection. Such sources consisted of archival information including documents, reports, statistics, manuscripts and other oral and visual materials (Babbie 1986). The secondary data involved content analysis of relevant documentation such as trade union documents, reports and policy documents from Rand Water, SAMWU and the South African Department of Labour as well as instruments such as the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) and material from the Commission for Employment Equity.

3.4 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted by using a set of structured and semi-structured questions. Sixteen respondents were interviewed, including Rand Water employees at the Head Office and the Vereeniging Purification Station, mainly black women, as well as shop stewards who were SAMWU members. This served the purpose of capturing social and employment profiles of employees, particularly people who had been discriminated against, such as black people,

people living with disabilities and women who experienced particular power dynamics at the workplace, which Bourdieu (2000 [2005]) refers to as the actors of the field.

It is important to note that although gender issues were earlier considered to speak to women's issues, in essence they go beyond this to include society-wide issues of gender relations. Therefore, the perception that men are worth considering when studying gender transformation is important. As a result, some male respondents were also interviewed in order to gain insight into men's experiences and perceptions of gender transformation. One of the respondents was a visually impaired man in the capacity of Employment Equity Officer. This is a senior management position in the organisation.

The data that was captured included biographical details, employment histories and transformation profiles. The respondents cut across a wide range of occupations. Much emphasis was placed on interviewing shop stewards. This served to gain insight into their experiences and perceptions of SAMWU's role in the gender transformation process at Rand Water.

3.5 Semi-structured Interviews

Three trade union national officials from SAMWU were interviewed in order to assess the level of coordination, cooperation and compliance of the various Employment Equity dispositions by employers. Furthermore, the researcher learned about the union's own institutional and organisational gender policy, strategies and tactics for the participation of women in the union's transformation agenda as well as the challenges that are faced by SAMWU.

In the Department of Labour, three senior officials were interviewed in order to gain an understanding of the level of the Department's involvement in transformation processes. In the process, the researcher used semi-structured questionnaires. This was done in order to gain insight into reports on gender

transformation processes, policy direction and information on compliance levels. The process elicited some of the challenges and successes that have been experienced by the Department in the process of workplace transformation in general and gender transformation in particular.

The researcher further engaged in participant observation at Rand Water, through attending the Women's Forum meeting at the Head Office, and mingling with workers at lunch times where possible. This assisted the researcher to gain direct and in-depth understanding of the behaviour and attitudes at the workplace that could not be observable through the interviewing process (Chacko 2004: 56). However, due to language difficulties, the researcher could not fully appreciate the conversations that went on during those moments, because the employees spoke in South African languages that the researcher did not understand.

3.6 Key Informant Interviews

Based on sound knowledge of the issue that was being studied and a broad overview of their respective organisations, the respondents shown in Table 3.1 served as the key informants for the study. (See also Appendix D.)

Table 3.1 Summary of interviews and respondents

Category of Respondent	Number Interviewed	Interview Type	Gender	
			M	F
Skilled, unskilled and professional staff	16	Structured, semi-structured and in-depth	4	12
Top and senior level management	3	Semi-structured, key informant	2	1
General Manager (HR)	1	Semi-structured, key informant	1	
SAMWU	3 3	Semi-structured, key informant	1	2
Department of Labour	3	Semi-structured, key informant	2	1

3.7 Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to examine the data. The researcher, mindful of the theory development, generation of new ideas and research questions, coded the data and organised them around the themes that were revealed during the process as well as explanatory schema. This brought out the specific purpose of all the themes in relation to the logic of the analysis, generated a report which provided a clear analysis of the evidence gathered, and matched the analysis with the research question and the literature (Kitay & Callus 1998; Friedman & McDaniel 1998: 125; Clarke & Braun 2006).

Most of the respondents at Rand Water, especially the shop stewards who provided in-depth information on gender transformation issues and processes, were SAMWU national officers. They formed part of the SAMWU executive membership or had held positions of leadership and influence in SAMWU in the past. Thus they were informants from SAMWU as well as from Rand Water.

3.8 Access

Gaining access to the research site is one of the most important but difficult aspects of field research, and is not peculiar to any particular research design (Kitay & Callus 1998). The researcher encountered some difficulties regarding access. These were linked to production concerns; the Strategic Human Capital Portfolio Manager of Rand Water expressed fear that the researcher might spend excessive time at the research site and consume part of the production hours of the organisation.

Another point to note is that the authorities entertained fears that the information that would be given to the researcher by the respondents could not be properly regulated. Indeed, in this study attempts were made by the authorities of Rand Water to select the respondents for the various interviews, but they could not do

so because the researcher insisted that that type of regulation had the potential to weaken the objectivity of the respondents and their ability to give information freely. Eventually, the researcher managed to convince the authorities and was allowed to choose respondents based on the rationale of the study.

According to Friedman and McDaniel (1998), permission from the controllers of the site in order to observe work processes and interview employees forms one of the hurdles that needed to be overcome by the researcher. The researcher was also mindful of multiple gatekeepers whose roles were both formal and informal, but who were influential is terms of gaining access to the site (Kitay & Callus 1998). Most of these people were shop stewards. The cooperation of these people was fully sought and utilised during the days at the research sites.

Official introductions and personal familiarisation efforts were made ahead of the data collection activity to gain, maintain and extend access to participants and the premises. This is because the longitudinal nature of the research required that the researcher spend time repeatedly at the research site (Kitay & Callus 1998). Throughout the visits to the various research sites the researcher developed relations of trust, built and maintained relationships with informants in order to maintain access to quality data which would be reflective of the realities within the social strata of the workplace, and established a social network (Bourdieu 2005). This approach facilitated access to a wider segment of workers at the various research sites and maintained political neutrality throughout the study (Friedman & McDaniel 1998; Chacko 2004).

3.9 Limitations

Being a male, the researcher was aware that the research space was sensitive because of gender dynamics. Mindful of this situation, the researcher maintained that sensitivity throughout the period of interaction, especially with women who did not feel very comfortable in sharing personal experiences.

The researcher faced some language constrains as a foreign student who had never lived in any part of South Africa, and therefore did not understand any other South African language apart from English. Thus the researcher was unable to understand the conversations that went on at some of the unofficial gatherings at lunch times by workers. It was also difficult to get people to help interpret the conversations. Some workers expressed willingness to grant interviews, provided it was going to be taken in any South African language other than English; the researcher lost these opportunities. However, that did not compromise the quality of the study processes in any way.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure respondents' voluntary participation, the researcher made the interview schedule and the participant information sheet available to respondents, and made early requests for participation to enable the respondents to make an informed decision before they participated in the research. The protection of participants' welfare was held paramount by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and voluntariness of respondents (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 523). All the participants who had their voices recorded consented to the process by signing the consent forms. There were some respondents who declined to have their interviews audio recorded, but agreed to the scribing of their contributions. Their requests were duly respected.

In terms of confidentiality, the researcher maintained sensitivity (Friedman & McDaniel 1998), and ensured that the public did not have access to the identity of respondents. This was done by removing all names and addresses from the questionnaires and replacing them with identification numbers, through the creation of a master identification file for reference and follow-up purposes. That file will be discarded as soon as it becomes unnecessary to keep it.

CHAPTER 4

Gender, Transformation:

Process and Progress at Rand Water

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides discussions on the findings on gender transformation at Rand Water. It shows that the South African workplace is gendered and that women are faced with multifaceted discrimination. In the process, the perceptions and experiences of both women and men are revealed. These processes were examined in line with policy, programmes, initiatives and experiences that reflect on gender transformation at Rand Water and the role of the trade union. The study further reveals that management, employees and labour unions form the core stakeholder partnership in the gender transformation process.

Generally speaking, the gender situation in South Africa prior to 1994 was not easy. However, the situation has improved recently, and there are many active women in various spheres of endeavour, where women are excelling and achieving a great deal for themselves and other women. In the world of work, women have been faced with double agony due to public and private division of labour in the capitalist production system, with strong features of masculine cultures (Liff & Ward 2001). In this sense, women are alienated from public domains and subordinated to men. Also, in the domestic sphere they are faced with tacit responsibility for carrying out all manner of domestic labour such as child care, maternal roles and home management.

These disadvantages were brought to bear on women, especially black women, because of the social construct of patriarchal society. According to COSATU (2003), black women faced a “triple” agony – as blacks, as workers and as

women. In South Africa, black people, people with disabilities and women – that is, designated people (Melanie 1999) – have been identified as the most vulnerable and discriminated against in society and at the workplace, especially during the era before 1994.

As a result, many interventions and laws have been established to mitigate the impact of the discrimination and victimisation of designated people. It is important, however, to note that women form a part of all three groups that were identified, and therefore they cannot be studied as a homogeneous group (Melanie 1999). The most prominent of the laws that was established to intervene in the gender equity process at the workplace in post-apartheid South Africa is the Employment Equity Act (Act No. 55 of 1998). It states:

> Recognising that as a result of apartheid and other discriminatory laws and practices, there are disparities in employment, occupation and income with national labour market; and that those disparities created such pronounced disadvantages by certain categories of people particularly women that they cannot be redressed simply by repealing discriminatory laws... (Employment Equity Act, 1998: 2).

As such, this research was centred on gender transformation with a bias towards women in the workplace.

4.2 "Rand Water was a male-dominated organisation."

The Rand Water Board was officially established on 8 May 1903 by Rand Water Incorporated Ordinance No. 32 to supply water to the entire area of Johannesburg in South Africa. It is a state public utility company. The company reports to the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs.

Rand Water was dominated by white males, and provided only low entry for females, especially in technical and technology-related fields (Rand Water 2007). As a result of this historical culture, the workplace was perceived as a place where

women had little space to function effectively when it came to occupations that needed physical effort. But it is worth noting that technological developments have cancelled out the muscular inequality separating man and woman (De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]).

The previous alienation of women in Rand Water is attributable to statistical representation because male dominance in this case is considered from the number of males in the organisation as compared to the number of women, and not the power and influence in terms of decision-making.

4.3 "Rand Water is a boys' club."

A black female respondent and SAMWU shop steward interviewed at the Head Office of Rand Water had this to say:

> *Rand Water is a boys' club. … Rand Water is one of those industries that by the nature of their operations and core business, it is a very male-dominated space and industry and rightfully so. You look at our size and there is that lifting of heavy pipes, there is those big trucks that need to be operated, so you know by the nature of our core business, you know, we, we it is a male-dominated industry (Interview, Rand Water employee.05-09-2013).*

It can be adduced from the view of this respondent that masculinity is perceived as dominance. The need for physical application of effort in the core business of the organisation dictated that more men were engaged than women. This is because women are generally perceived in society as weak and men as strong in terms of physique. In terms of gender stereotype, male dominance forms the major feature of social status between men and women (Robinson *et al*. 2000).

Society posits man as superior and woman as subordinate in the superstructure of socialisation to form patriarchy. However, according to Bourdieu (1997), the

patriarchal structure of the workplace reinforces male dominance. Furthermore, "the dominant is the one that occupies a position in the structure such that the structure acts on its behalf" (Bourdieu 1997: 76).This illustrates how women are relegated to submissive positions in the global division of labour under structural and institutional discrimination.

It follows then that from the onset, this culturally-installed patriarchy, with the notion that men could fit better in certain occupations than women, reinforced gender stereotypes in Rand Water to the employment advantage of men against women. This pattern historically worked in favour of men and against women, depriving women of employment opportunities In the past, Rand Water was racially segregated, discriminatory in gender and gave minimal attention to the plight of designated people in the workplace. This can be explained within the context of structural tendency or patriarchy, and has the inherent potential of reproducing itself in the workplace (Bourdieu 1997).

As stated by a black female receptionist and SAMWU shop steward at the Vereeniging Purification Station:

> *Prior to 1994 women in Rand Water were household–based; only a few were able to work proper, I mean they were cleaners, tea/coffee women, yah, and the like (Interview, Rand Water employee. 30-09-2013).*

This signifies that women were perceived as deserving to serve in domestic activities even at the workplace, while employment proper was a preserve for men in the capitalist division of labour. Society in general steeped men in the culturally installed patriarchy that worked in their favour and to the disadvantage of women, especially at the wage labour workplace.

The culture of patriarchy acts to preserve the social norm of male dominance wherever there is opportunity to exercise power and influence. Therefore, to

consider Rand Water as an historically male-dominated space could posit the organisation as a highly gendered and conducive place for perpetrating extreme discrimination against women in terms of power relationships and influence in decision-making processes.

Such patriarchal tendencies can have pervasive influential tendencies that blind the vision of men, depriving them of balanced views of issues in the workplace, and also informs their stance on decisions that affect the welfare of women. Following from this state of imbalance as far as provision of certain workplace facilities was concerned, women tended to be deprived of some basic social necessities. As mentioned by a black female maintenance operations worker at the Rand Water Head Office during an in-depth interview:

> *I started working for the past 14 years as general worker and to apprentice electrical….. Something like we didn't have enough toilets and health care facilities as women, you know, so if women are part to decide on such things, maybe we can mention it, but yah (Interview, Rand Water employee, 15-07-2013).*

It is obvious from this narration that men in general might not be very sensitive to the needs of women. This may not be because they do not want to, but rather that women tend to be more conscious of their needs than men. As such, it is important to involve women in every decision that may affect their lives in one way or the other at every level. By so doing, a level playing ground for both genders may be constructed, in order to bring to the fore their peculiar social needs in order to ensure gender equity, be it in the general society or at the workplace.

4.4 Alienation of Women

Legislated discrimination has been deep-rooted in South African society due to apartheid, which was endured over a prolonged period (Buhlungu 2006). This

discrimination against black people has been profound, especially against black women, and has impacted negatively on their working life and rights. Most women in South Africa, especially black women, have faced (and continue to face, albeit at a reduced pace) oppression and alienation. They have been denied such basic social involvement as living in cities, owning land, family planning, inheritance, borrowing money, participating in political and social struggles, employment alienation and workplace privileges (COSATU 2003).

The early days of Rand Water buttresses the point that women were discriminated against in South Africa when it came to employment in certain occupations that were perceived as the preserve of males. According to a SAMWU shop steward, a male respondent at Rand Water Head Office:

> *Rand Water was once a male-dominated organisation when we started and when I joined, and for that matter in 1994 there was one woman who was a secretary and then in 1994 just to give you a bit of background, in 1994 the first black woman that was working in Rand Water who was sort of – how can I put it? – the one who had a degree, the B.Sc. from the university, started working at, we have a laboratory in the Purification Station. That was in 1994 when they first hired a woman, black woman, educated black woman. So from then on they started employing women and all that (Interview, SAMWU official, 31-07-2013).*

Also, the Strategic Finance Portfolio Manager, a black female at Rand Water Head Office, in giving a brief history of social facilities at Rand Water, said:

> *Rand Water was established in 1903 and was dominated by white males. As such, toilet facilities for women and disabled persons (I mean physically disabled people) was something that was just not there. And you know the history of oppression in this country South Africa. I am talking about apartheid (Interview, 21-08-2013).*

As has been shown, the process of employing workers at Rand Water was characterised by gender discrimination. It follows that patriarchal tendencies were high. These tendencies influenced decisions at every level of occupation. In order to ensure gender equity at the workplace, therefore, it is clear that Rand Water needed a change in structure and policy, in order to be part of the gender mainstreaming agenda in the modern gendered workplace.

4.5 People and Employment

> Rand Water seeks to ensure that all its people operate in an environment characterised by the values of excellence, caring, equity, integrity and a spirit of partnership. ... Rand Water has fully embraced the spirit of employee/employer relationships and has bound itself to abide in full measure by both the spirit and letter of all labour laws, such as the Employment Equity Act, Labour Relations Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Skills Development and Levies legislation (Rand Water 2007).

In order to ensure success in workplace transformation and employment equity, the Rand Water 2007 Annual Report sets out to follow policies, strategies and guidelines:

> **Recruitment and Selection Policy, and Guidelines –**
> Have been developed which commit Rand Water to systems, procedures and practices for recruitment, selection, promotion and placements that are professional, effective, fair, and comply with all relevant labour legislation.
>
> **Employment Equity Plan –**
> Through a consultative and awareness raising process Rand Water has developed an Employment Equity Plan, which was endorsed in 2002. The Plan complies with the requirements of the Employment Equity Act. In keeping with the requirements of the Act, Rand Water undertakes to ensure good employment equity practices by recruiting, employing, training, empowering and retraining a diverse, representative, stable, motivated and competent workforce.

> **A Human Resource Development Policy and Strategy –**
> Has been developed which is formulated to ensure that development and training needs within Rand Water are identified and prioritised and that programmes implemented are effective and cost-effective in order to meet the organisation's priority needs.

It is under this benchmark that the process of gender transformation is being undertaken as a project.

The government is the major stakeholder in employment equity, and therefore promulgated the Employment Equity Act in 1998 purposely for the attainment of equitable representation of South Africa's workforce within specific strata of industrial society. This is expected to reflect the national demographics of the country's economically active population (EAP). The Act also contains provisions that promote employment equity, including provisions that prohibit unfair discrimination, regulate affirmative action and establish a Commission for Employment Equity (CEE). It is expected that with these provisions, unfair discrimination against race, gender and disabilities will be eliminated at all levels of occupation (CEE 2009-2010; EEA 55 of 1998).

According to the Strategic Human Capital Portfolio Manager (General Manager HR) of Rand Water:

> *Rand Water made a conscientious decision to transform the organisation from a white male dominance base into a working environment where both men and women are able to pursue their aspirations and making sure that non-gendered efficiency is achieved (Interview, Rand Water official, 17-06-2013).*

This is a good idea. The implementation process takes policies, which are ideas and plans, and transforms them into reality (Ayee 2000).

Rand Water identified the need to transform from a male-dominated working environment into a gender equitable space. Therefore, the organisation took a cue

from the various legislative provisions, upon which its transformation process is grounded. According to the Employment Relations Consultant, a male senior manager and also a black person at the Rand Water Head Office, who answered the question about the basis for workplace transformation, including gender transformation, at Rand Water:

> *I think the basis there will be the Employment Equity Act that is the basis. Apparently, South Africa is obliged to report to the Department of Labour on an annual basis in terms of what progress are they following up and what steps they are taking to ensure workplace transformation in general and gender transformation in particular. In terms of promoting and assisting what we call previously disadvantaged individuals – they being women, blacks and people with disabilities – that is the bottom line (Interview, Rand Water official, 01-08-2013).*

It was observed that the interviewee was visually challenged. The respondent stated that efficiency was the goal of the transformation agenda. The most common impression that was created by respondents from all the occupational categories were duly captured to at least "a desirable representation". It depends on where one stands in relating to a mountain that will determine whether the mountain is far or near. As has been shown already, observing from the point of view that employment in Rand Water has been a male business, one can say gender equity can be problematic at Rand Water. However, the respondents overwhelmingly acknowledged that the Rand Water transformation process was grounded in the Employment Equity Act of 1998.

This study is about gender equity at the workplace, and women have an equal stake in the rights that men have always appropriated. Therefore, in case of any weaknesses that society has placed on women, the same society should ensure that such patriarchally constructed ideas are debated, and that women ought to be at what was referred to as "50-50". The researcher sought to obtain from the

Strategic Finance Portfolio Manager (General Manager. Finance) what the vision of Rand Water meant in terms of gender transformation at the workplace. This individual responded that:

> *So, gender transformation is fundamentally about how to streamline both roles of men and women, irrespective of their race, colour, abilities and disabilities. This has all to do with discrimination against designated people. To this regard, Rand Water is committed to achieving a 50-50 female-male, black and white representation at all the decision-making positions by the year 2020. We have started to realise this vision, as at the moment we have seven top managers who report directly to the Chief Executive Officer, including me (Interview, Rand Water official, 21-08-2013).*

The respondent elaborated further that:

> *It is our vision that at every level of influence, women, especially black women, are on the balance, represented and their voices effectively play a role in the progress decisions of the company. The organisation can achieve this objective through policies, programmes, initiatives. In order to achieve 'vision 50-50',there are a series of policy programmes that Rand Water has established, to ensure gender transformation and females, blacks and people with disability, in other words, designated people to fulfil the vision (Interview, Rand Water official, 21-08-2013).*

4.6 Implementation Process – The Journey towards Gender Transformation

Policy programmes and initiatives in general deal with a range of variables. Also, policy implementation is closely related to the feasibility of the policies. Furthermore, some policies might have impressive theoretical objectives and

overwhelming communal support, but be totally unfeasible to implement. There are several social barriers erected by the society which work in opposition to gender global equity. It goes without saying that human services and social policies are difficult to implement because of social complexities of relationships. Ayee (2000) refers to such human services and social complexities as actors and processes in implementation. It is important to know the actors who are involved as stakeholders in the organisation and their roles. This is because the commitment by these actors through actions is also very important.

In order to demonstrate its commitment to the gender transformation process, Rand Water constituted a progressive body known as the Participation, Co-operation and Partnership (PCP) Forum for the purposes of achieving its transformation objectives. The Forum was established in 1995. At this period, the transition of South Africa was very uncertain. The focus of this forum was on mutual responsibility in problem-solving, consensus decision-making and the creation of common understanding. As its primary goal, the PCP Forum serves as a channel through which all stakeholders participate in the decision-making process on policies.

The actors in the PCP Forum are identified within three layers that form the consortium. These are organisational restructuring processes that aim to facilitate the needed innovations for achieving institutional progress. According to Verschoor (n.d.), organisational transformation creates specific additional needs. These require leadership enhancement, change in management competencies, interactive skills and performance management techniques. According to Rand Water, first, the Stakeholders Forum is a corporate-wide forum and deals with issues that have an organisational impact – the restructuring of Rand Water and the establishment of the Portfolio Integrating Committee (PIC) being examples. Second, Site Forums typically comprise a supervisor, site manager and labour representatives, and deal specifically with issues affecting a particular site. And third, Workplace Meetings are attended by all employees within a specific section.

There is also the Participation Development Group (PDG), which consists of executive management, functional specialists, site management and labour representatives. They meet on a quarterly basis to monitor the value-adding services to PCP (Rand Water 2012).

4.7 Rand Water Gender Transformation Policies, Programmes and Initiatives

Having shown the structural arrangements that have been established to ensure transformation in general, it is expedient to identify the policies and their social viability. There are formal policies that are expected to address transformation issues in the organisation. According to the Employment Equity Co-ordinator, a male, visually impaired black person at Rand Water Head Office:

> *At Rand Water, we want to ensure 50-50 transformation by 2020 in terms of gender split at the top management. That is in accordance with our gender equality plan, you know, in terms of equity at management level (Interview, Rand Water official, 18-07-2013).*

Following from this projection, the respondent indicated:

> *Look, in terms of gender transformation we have got for policy, we are basically now finalising the policy because it is still in the consultative stages. But what is happening in terms of our programmes is that we have got the women programme that is currently happening, that is taking place. It is being facilitated by our PCP department. P is participation, C is coordination and P is partnership. This is, you know, a platform where management and labour usually meet in terms of issues that relate to the organisation. So a women's forum in being facilitated by the Department but then, we, previously, we have our women's forum, you know. That is part*

of your employment equity forum, you know (Interview, Rand Water official, 18-07-2013).

The history of male dominance and discrimination against female recruitment into Rand Water reveals a profound female workforce deficit in the organisation. This poses a threat to gender-balanced human resources, which has eluded the organisation for a long while. Therefore, initiatives for the long term have been taken to minimise the deficit. Accordingly, the Employment Equity Coordinator says:

Basically what is happening now is that we have got what we call the women's forum, that we are reviving it in the sense that it was there but somehow, due to other things, we are reviving it. The other programmes, which it is a long-term programme, is called Technogirl. Technogirl is a programme that was initiated by the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, facilitated by consultant UNESCO. Basically the programmes is that we bring girl learners who get Grade 9, 10 and even 12, but this time we started with only learners, the 60 of them. The intention is to make sure that these girls acquire critical skills. Skills, scarce and critical skills like, you know, like maths, science, you know, all those subjects that has to do with science and technology, you know, like engineering field. And so that, through a shared programme, these girls would be shadowed and would be mentored by your female, especially so that we try and make sure that most of our mentors are females, and then employees in those areas so that they can understand what is happening in these areas so that they can develop interest to study in those fields. So those are some of the things that we are doing in terms of gender development in terms of transformation (Interview, Rand Water official, 18-07-2013).

This long-term policy trajectory in relation to Technogirl was corroborated by the Strategic Finance Portfolio Manager who told the researcher:

> *There are a series of policy programmes that Rand Water has established to ensure gender transformation and females, blacks and people with disabilities, in other words designated people, to fulfil the vision. One of them is the Technogirl programme whereby we offer bursaries to potential designated people, especially girls, to be trained in critical skill areas such that as part of our succession plan we can meet our target (Interview, Rand Water official, 21-08-2013).*

The centrality of the gender transformation process at Rand Water is based on long-term projection to eliminate the "gender asbestos". Gender asbestos is the term used in Australia to mean the continued exclusion of women from leadership and decision-making spaces. This can be considered as a step in the right direction. This point of departure from gender discrimination at the workplace can be likened to what is similarly going on in Australia under the concept of "fixing the system instead of fixing the women". The notion of this concept is that "fixing women" has to do with providing more assertiveness training, mentoring, networking and self-branding advice (Broderick 2010). However, these are temporary measures that are one-off solutions to a long-standing problem, the problem of male dominance and patriarchy. Therefore, a long-term solution would be the most suitable.

According to Broderick (2010), there is a need to "fix the system" so that it works for everyone. Also, there is a need to agree on what gender equality in the workplace looks like, and then to put all options and possibilities up for discussion by both men and women in order to define suitable methods and tools. Recognition of men's role is vital in this project because gender equity issues move beyond women, in that they are societal issues in a broad sense. In the case of Australia, aiming towards critical mass population was key to the march forward to gender transformation. This involves the massing of the female

population in senior roles in the presence of the existing barriers. This is because most of the critical decisions that are made in any organisation emanate from those levels. By so doing, it is believed that the change of acceptance, appreciation and difference being sought would be achieved (Broderick 2010).

Rand Water claims to be committed to a long-term solution. The organisation has come to realise that change is inevitable. In line with this commitment, the Strategic Finance Portfolio Manager indicated that:

> *Rand Water has gone through redefinition in various ways since its establishment. Important to our discussion now is about gender values and particularly equity and partnership. Also important is the achievement of transformation in general and gender transformation in particular as part of our strategic objectives. By 2007 women have increased their representation at powerful positions and they are affecting decision-making processes. For example at that period, the Chairperson of the Board was a woman. In 2007, however, we came to the realisation that we were still lagging in employment of women in senior levels. We therefore decided to embark on grassroots-level balancing of inequality, one, to address the imbalances and two, to serve as a succession plan as I have said earlier by the Technogirl programme. And through the resolutions from our women's forum, management has decided to offer bursaries, external bursaries, to people and communities of previous discrimination, particularly girls, as a march forward to achieving gender balance at the workplace (Interview, Rand Water official, 21-08-2013).*

4.8 Gender Transformation and Perceptions

During participant observation at the Rand Water Head Office, the researcher realised that women are very high-spirited as they move about their duties. They

also interact freely without signs of apprehension and fear of intimidation. However, on one occasion (4 September 2013) at the main reception of Rand Water Head Office, a man was carrying a pack of stationery which was meant to be delivered to a lady. While the lady waited for the man to approach and deliver the parcel, the man shouted at the top of his voice to demand that the woman walk closer for the delivery. This can be taken to mean that the man was attempting to be intimidating. However, the woman waited for the man to get very close to deliver the parcel; this could be taken as an act of bluff. In effect, feminist enthusiasm could be read into it.

Some female respondents gave their views about the implementation of the Employment Equity Act to facilitate gender transformation at Rand Water. At the Vereeniging Purification Station a receptionist (junior staff) responded in an interview as follows:

> *The Employment Equity Act has been implemented and every engagement of employment equity is good. I can say it is bedrock of the transformation and gender equity that we have or we are achieving in Rand Water…. If you look around Rand Water, nobody will tell you that women are doing well. Women have confidence to face the challenges at the workplace. Look for example at this place [Vereeniging Purification Station]. There are some women that have been employed and we are performing just like men so we, I have more confidence and courage of the employment equity (Interview, Rand Water employee, 30-09-2013).*

Other employees were not aware of policy programmes for achieving gender equity at Rand Water, but they felt that such a project was on-going and yielding positive results. A male respondent at Rand Water Head Office, and also a project scheduler, told the researcher:

Well, I wouldn't say I know any initiatives, but l believe there are but they just may be another way of, but I know that Rand Water has got some initiatives that they are pushing to provide women transformation or rather gender transformation so but, yah, as l said l do not know any of those. I am not aware of those but l know, looking at the way that the ratio of the women in the workforce, I can see or say there is a lot of women coming in the last two years that I have been in Rand Water. Comparatively speaking, l would say maybe 60% women are in here since l started with the company, and officers men 40% sort of (Interview, Rand Water employee, 04-09-2013).

Whether one is aware or not, the responses that came from the respondents during the research were indicative that a conscious effort is underway at Rand Water towards achieving gender equity in all the occupational levels of the organisation.

In contrast, however, some respondents were sceptical about the whole issue of gender transformation. To begin with, doubts were expressed as to whether Rand Water was committed to gender equity. There was also doubt as to whether employees, particularly women, understood what the gender transformation agenda sought to achieve. It was argued that irrespective of the enthusiasm that Rand Water women expressed, the gender equity process was just to satisfy the legislative provisions of the Employment Equity Act. This was believed to be because the company feared sanctions from the state authorities. But for that fear, the doubt remained that the hitherto male-dominated Rand Water would not have contemplated gender equity. A female junior employee, a secretary to an executive portfolio manager, intimated that:

With Rand Water, l really don't know obviously except stating the obvious as l said that pre 1994, black women that were cleaners, that is it, and tea ladies, and obviously now you can get your general managers, you can get your head of sections, your head of

> *departments, and those your young ladies as managers. I'm not sure even if that is transformation. That is just a typical legislated, l mean because it is for employment equity purposes, so l often ask myself that if organisations were not forced to employ women, would they be employing women? Or is it something that they do because they know they will be penalised if they don't? (Interview, Rand Water employee, 05-09-2013).*

South Africa has experienced prolonged and bitter gender relations due to colonisation, imperialism and apartheid. Also, the social construct of patriarchy, race and many other forms of discrimination have alienated women from public and social spheres of life such as employment. These situations impacted negatively on the social, political and economic wellbeing of women in different ways. One of the profound ways in which oppression and discrimination affected women is in the gender inequalities and imbalances that are endured in the world of work. Many organisations, especially in the public sector, alienated women from employment. One of these organisations is Rand Water, which was historically a male-dominated workplace.

As a result of socially constructed subordination of women, and their subsequent alienation from employment, among other forms of discrimination, particularly against designated people, laws were established by the post-apartheid democratic government. These laws were to mitigate the negative impact of all forms of discrimination, and gender discrimination in particular.

The most vulnerable victims of discrimination were identified as designated people. These comprised black people, disabled persons and women. It is worth noting, however, that all these three categories include women. Therefore, women are the most affected by the brunt of discrimination in South Africa. The laws, therefore, were aimed at ensuring transformation in general and gender transformation in particular. Thus this research looked at the process and progress

of gender transformation at the workplace in sociological terms, at Rand water and at the role of SAMWU as a major stakeholder in the process.

4.9 Gender Transformation Strategies

Some of the transformation strategies were indicated by a respondent. The Strategic Portfolio Finance Manager stated in an interview that:

> *We have mentorship programmes whereby women and other previously discriminated against people are mentored by some women at the top echelons like me, through the Women's Forum and committees so as to sensitise women and men on the transformation agenda…. Strategically, we use seminars, talks, indabas [durbars] as education platforms in collaboration with the unions who mobilise their members for our activities (Interview, Rand Water official, 21-08-2013).*

It has been observed that Rand Water was predominantly a male workplace, but that it is transforming into a female-friendly workplace, and working towards the achievement of gender equity. There are measures in place to achieve this aim. However, a policy document outlining the gender transformation process is not yet available. In an interview, the researcher was told by the Employment Equity Coordinator that the gender policy document for Rand Water is undergoing formalisation. This was corroborated by the Strategic Finance Portfolio Manager, who reiterated that:

> *I must say that Rand Water's transformation in general is grounded on the EEA of 1998 to eliminate all forms of discrimination against designated people at the workplace. Therefore, key to this is to ensure the need to bring Rand Water's demographic profile into line with the country's demographic profile among other things. I have indicated to you already that we have a series of programmes and*

activities and forums that we use or depend on to address gender issues based on the provisions of EEA. We are actually now compiling into a document our strategic gender policy for Rand Water (Interview, Rand Water official, 21-08-2013).

4.10 Employment Equity and Gender Transformation as a Legal Requirement

There are indications that Rand Water is undergoing workplace transformation in general and gender transformation in particular, to the admiration and satisfaction of employees, especially women. This processes emphasises statistical representation of women at all occupational levels of employment in post-apartheid democratic South Africa. The numerical strength of women on the Rand Water staff has an impact on the transformation process. There is a correlation between the number of women who are employed by the organisation and their effect on decision-making and influence in the organisation.

While employees with different employment profiles agree that gender transformation is going on at Rand Water, they hold divergent views about the process. Some contested the view that gender transformation at Rand Water is all about women at the upper echelons of the organisation's organogram, just to satisfy the legislative demand for employers to report to the Department of Labour. Others contended that the process results in reverse discrimination and threatens male opportunities. Irrespective of these divergent views, most women at all levels of occupation remarked with gratitude that Rand Water had gradually evolved into a gender-conscious working environment where women and men have peaceful working relationships and respect each other as equals. To this effect, a female black in the position of Protective Services Officer stationed at Rand Water Head Office told the researcher:

At Rand Water, you are here as an employee, not like man or woman. You don't use your gender to do our job. That is most

important at Rand Water (Interview, Rand Water employee, 18-09-2013).

The issue of discrimination against women in any form at Rand Water is becoming very faint. Women have begun to have their voices heard, and they are also realising their self-worth in terms of occupational development from which they derive gratification.

Rand Water agrees that it is a statutory requirement to report its transformation situation and progress to the South African Department of Labour annually. It showed that it has complied with this requirement for the past ten years. According to the Employment Relations Consultant, a male black employee at the Rand Water Head Office:

Rand Water on annual basis, and also the participants in terms of preparing the report on annual basis, we report to the Department of Labour in terms of the current workplace members that we have and also give them the timelines within which to improve in terms of promoting Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDIs), women inclusive, what type of training or skills measures we are putting in place. If come the next year or come the reporting time you are not in a position to meet your projections you need to explain to them from the Department of Labour and what type of mechanism you are taking, so Rand Water is serious and for the past more than ten years without fail we have been reporting our progress to the Department of Labour. We have got a specific committee for employment forum that is comprised of management and the unions and we submit a joint report to the Department of Labour (Interview, Rand Water official, 01-08-2013).

This view seems to suggest that Rand Water is willing to submit reports about its employment situation to the Department of Labour to avoid any punitive action. It

could also be said that the organisation seeks to prove that facts are readily available for the Department's evaluation of the progress that is being made in terms of workplace transformation in general and gender transformation in particular. But it is realistic that divergent and convergent views are held by employees about Rand Water's transformation agenda.

A secretary to an executive manager, a black female at Rand Water Head Office, in an in-depth interview on the issue of applying employment equity legislation as a basis for workplace transformation, said:

> *That is just a typical legislated, l mean because it is for employment equity purposes so l often ask myself that if organisations were not forced to employ women, would they be employing women? Or is it something that they do because they know they will be penalised if they don't so? l don't know if this is success or is it something strategic to do in order to abide by law, right? (Interview, Rand Water official, 05-09-2013).*

This response signifies that some employees are suspicious of the employer's will to employ women at Rand Water. In this view, it is supposed that without statutory legislation, the organisation on its own would not employ women but rather would maintain Rand Water as a male-dominated organisation. This is because Rand Water did not freely decide to employ women until forced by law to do so.

4.11 Women and the Collective Bargaining Process

The same respondent was sceptical about the quality of gender transformation in terms of women's voices in decision-making processes:

> *I can't think of a success in this whole gender transformation agenda. I was talking to some of my Rand Water colleagues, asking*

them to say, guys, you know when we do the wage increase it was my first year. I was expecting women to speak saying as part of our demands, can we have a nursery room on site here at Ridflair for instance. But I mean there is a lot of women that have kids, but l mean l was expecting to hear women speak up saying, can we look at our maternity leave benefits? What are they currently, as we are sitting here? What are they sitting at? Nothing, you know? (Interview, Rand Water employee, 05-09-2013).

This response indicates that women do not take up the challenge to put across their needs as one would expect when given the opportunity at the negotiation forum to do so. They may want to sit and wait for things to happen on their behalf.

4.12 Gender Transformation – "For Women in Upper Echelons"

It has been indicated in line with the gender transformation vision of Rand Water that by 2020, a 50-50 split is expected in terms of women and men at senior management levels of the organisation. It is also projected that women should be massed in all levels of occupation in order to enhance gender equity at Rand Water. The major concern of this agenda is to make sure that women participate equally with men in line with gender mainstreaming whenever it comes to decision-making, policy influence and efficiency. By so doing, women in the organisation can achieve their aspirations.

Increasing numbers of women are entering Rand Water. For most of these women, many of whom have never worked before, the key transformation is in their status as economic actors. Their increased sense of self-worth was evident in a way that showed they were standing on their own feet. They were no longer dependants. They could buy what they needed and did not have to be supplicants before their husbands, boyfriends and family members. There are views that the

increasing number of women at Rand Water is a positive sign of gender transformation.

A project scheduler, a male black employee, said in an interview that:

> *I think personally, l will say the large number of women entering Rand Water is a good thing because at least it gives women opportunity to at least prove themselves now, verses the past where based on your, on your gender then as a woman you were not really regarded as a potential candidate for higher position. But now at least they are given an opportunity to prove themselves in terms of what they are capable of doing, so l guess in that regard then l can say it is a good thing and it gives a balance in the workforce (Interview, Rand Water employee, 04-09-2013).*

The emphasis placed on women occupying higher positions in the organisation shows that women at Rand Water are becoming influential and powerful in terms of how their positions impact on workplace transformation decisions in general. According to the Employment Equity Coordinator at the Rand Water Head Office:

> *If you look at that, I mean, in 2008, for example, our top structure, you know, what we call PIC – Portfolio Integrated Committee – this is all the people that were reporting directly to the chief executive, were l think about eight, with one or two females there, but with the structure we have now we are at least 50-50 split, four males and four females. That is top structure, four males including the chief executive (Interview, Rand Water official, 18-07-2013).*

Another black female respondent at the Vereeniging Purification Station (a works operator) perceives the gender transformation agenda as something for upper-echelon managers. During an in-depth interview, she told the researcher:

> *For that side, l mean gender transformation, l think it is paper or something, that the law has forced the management and they are doing for women who are at the top band. They are enjoying, but there are people like some shop stewards who will be organising forum sometimes and will be talking about your maternity leave, your nursery and so forth (Interview, Rand Water employee, 17-09-2013).*

Due to the subjective nature of the concept of gender transformation, most respondents in this study demonstrated that transformation occurs in diverse ways. As such, one may not be able to assert that the South African gender transformation process has been completed. It is a process that is on-going and that means different things to different people.

4.13 Reverse Discrimination

Reverse discrimination in this context refers to the situation whereby, as a result of policy implications, members of the historically dominant group are socially discriminated against. It may result from affirmative action policies that were created to decrease discrimination in the workplace against minority employees (Allison & Taylor 2013). The workplace transformation laws in South Africa are grounded in the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and aim at eliminating racial, gender and other forms of discrimination in post-apartheid South Africa. It is acknowledged, however, that whenever there is a change, there are victims as well as beneficiaries.

In the gender transformation process at Rand Water, there are gainers and losers as well. Most of the white people at Rand Water fear that their supposed superior status is threatened. This feeling is also present in the minds of some men, particularly black men. According to the Employment Relations Consultant at the

Head Office of Rand Water, in an interview on employees' perceptions on gender transformation:

> *I think the best start here will be educating the Rand Water population, especially the white people who are suspicious of the programmes because they are being sidelined, understand that they will also be considered. It is just that they can't miss to level the playing fields. So in terms of education and awareness, that should be done so that people will have confidence in the programmes…. People especially view gender transformation in Rand Water as reverse discrimination; they call it reverse discrimination (Interview, Rand Water official, 29-07-2013).*

Men in general have their own fears, besides the fear of reverse racial discrimination among white people. Most of them expressed frustration about the transforming working environment into a gender-balanced space where the voices of women affect decisions at the workplace. According to a Project Scheduler who was interviewed at Rand Water Head Office on the impact of gender transformation on him as a male employee:

> *I wouldn't say it affected me so much. Yes, there are those, there are those instances where l would feel that maybe because of this gender transformation, I will, men are being sidelined so the position that one has applied for would, l mean, preferences were then given to women, so in that regard, yes, that has disadvantaged me in a way. But the mandate of the organisation, l had to accept (Interview, Rand Water employee, 04-09-2013).*

The narrative given by the respondents indicates that male dominance at Rand Water is under siege. Also, men are becoming helpless as they come to realise that the social barriers that patriarchy has erected between women's emancipation and

men's dominance are fast dwindling. This is a process that some men find necessary, but are reluctant to live with.

4.14 Threat to Patriarchy

According to Walby (1989), the concept of patriarchy is vital when analysing gender relations. Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices whereby men dominate, oppress and exploit women. In the process, men hold positions of power and influence to themselves and largely exclude women from it (Walby 1989: 214). This system of dominance by men and subordination of women benefits men, especially in the capitalist gendered division of labour.

According to the Radical Feminism theorists, however, patriarchy does not emanate from any other social inequality. This school of thought argues forcefully that patriarchy is not a by-product of capitalism. Patriarchy actually predates and post-dates capitalism. Rather, sexuality is the major site of male dominance over women, whereby the violation through masculinity contests with desire for autonomy and recognition of independence (Walby 1990; Rubin 1997; Benjamin 1983; Jewkes & Morrell 2012).

As has already being mentioned, Rand Water was a male-dominated workplace. Therefore, traditional characteristics of patriarchy formed part of the gender relations culture in the workplace. And because it benefited men, they were apprehensive about letting go of that culture. Again, because of the legislative coercion to transform such workplaces in South Africa, men were not able to openly resist the process for fear of punitive action by the authorities. In effect, some men felt threatened by the gender transformation progress that was being realised at Rand Water. Even though some employees categorically denied that they felt threatened by gender transformation, there were others who explicitly indicated that they felt threatened by the process and progress.

At Rand Water Head Office, a black male employee – the Employment Relations Consultant – told the researcher:

> *I think I'm one of the people that are encouraging and one of the people that appoint the women in terms of developing them so I'm not feeling threatened by their advancement. I'm the one who is assisting them, guiding them, mentoring them and also encouraging them. In my position that is one of my areas that I'm evaluating. So l'm interested in their development (Interview, Rand Water official, 23-07-2013).*

In contrast, another black male employee – the Project Scheduler at Rand Water Head Office – indicated:

> *"Threatened! For sure, l, l, l think women are a threat to men, for sure. I think with that. I, you have to be really outstanding in terms of your skills and the level you pitch at as a man to be able to compete against women. Otherwise, as l said, then preference is given to women because of the agenda that we/the government is pushing. So which then threatens the men's positions in the organisation across the country (Interview, Rand Water employee, 04-09-2013).*

4.15 "One day, women will be more than men."

The patriarchal notion that certain occupational positions are a preserve for men has eluded many men for a long time. This gave them the false impression that, in the capitalist division of labour, positions in the workplace should be apportioned according to one's gender instead of proficiency and competence.

In contrast, however, another respondent at Rand Water Head Office, a female black employee who is secretary to the Strategic Human Resources Portfolio Manager, indicated in an in-depth interview that:

> *Now the number of women in Rand Water has increased and continues to increase in all levels and areas of employment. There are women heading departments, more women as managers and supervisors, more women as operators and in technical areas. So from that way some men behave, especially black men, they feel threatened that one day women will be more than men. But, for the white men, they are worried about increased numbers of blacks at the top management levels (Interview, Rand Water official, 15-07-2013).*

Even though the gender transformation process seems to be doing well at Rand Water, there are pockets of resentment. Most of these resentments are grounded in gender stereotypes. Some men find it difficult to accept that men and women need an equitable working space to pursue their aspirations. Nevertheless, some female respondents are of the view that men at Rand Water are not resentful towards the gender equity agenda. They accommodate women as equal colleagues and are also respected and treated well.

According to a black female employee in the position of Protective Services Officer at Rand Water Head Office, in an in-depth interview:

> *Here in Rand Water, men don't show their self as men or masters to women, no. Because, since l have been here at Rand Water, for ten years already, and l came on shift, l was working, l was the only woman. l have never felt so uncomfortable on those men. l was welcomed home always. I've never been given a hard task to do because l am a woman and l must show l can't do it because it was a man's world before. I have never heard something like that. I feel*

> *much secured equally working with men and women. It depends on the team's spirit. It is not about who you are, it is about what you are doing…. Women feel overwhelmed to work in previously men departments (Interview, 18-09-2013).*

There is an assumption that patriarchal tendencies among some men at Rand Water are becoming difficult to expunge. These tendencies were attributed to the existing culture of patriarchy. Some men find it difficult to accept supervision from women. As a result, there is always latent tension in gender relationships between men and women in the workplace.

The Strategic Finance Portfolio Manager at Rand Water Head Office told the researcher:

> *What needs to change most significantly is the cultural attitude of men's superiority imagination and racial discrimination. These two challenges are still with us strongly and play into how difficult it is for women or black people to supervise whites and other races. We therefore need attitudinal change from traditional concepts of placing men and whites above women and other designated people (Interview, Rand Water official, 21-08-2013).*

4.16 Gender Equity at Rand Water

Gender equity at Rand Water is here examined within the context of gender mainstreaming. According to Grosser and Moon (2005), gender mainstreaming has been defined as a transforming process, which includes, but moves beyond, individual rights for equal treatment and positive action to address group disadvantages. It also involves identifying how organisational systems and structures cause indirect discrimination, and altering or redesigning them as appropriate (Rees 2002).

Most of the respondents in this research indicated that there are on-going transforming processes at Rand Water to ensure gender mainstreaming. These processes were said to be grounded in the Employment Equity Act of 1998. The in-depth interviews also revealed that Rand Water is gradually realising gender equity at the workplace. However, most of the respondents were not aware of any specific policy or programme that the organisation is depending on for the gender transformation process.

According to a female black administrator at the Vereeniging Purification Station, on the question of gender transformation at Rand Water:

> *The country is doing a great job by implementing the employment equity policy so that the organisations adhere to policy by employing women… I don't think Rand Water is doing something different from the employment equity law. They are complying with the policy and you can see that women are, we are happy we don't have problems. I think the programmes are fine. Men and women, I may say, are considered or they consider themselves as equal workers because we respect each other. You cannot say that I am a woman or l am a man, so this and this and that. We are all the same. l think Rand Water is fair to both. The employment equity covers women (Interview, Rand Water employee, 30-09-2013).*

Most of the respondents were also convinced that gender equity was gaining ground at Rand Water. Some of the respondents expressed a lack of knowledge on what gender transformation might mean specifically, but they believed strongly that there was gender equity at Rand Water as a workplace. A female black respondent in the position of Protective Services Officer at Rand Water, in attempting to demonstrate understanding of the Employment Equity Act in relation to gender transformation, told the researcher:

> *Eeim, you take me back now. Eeim, employment equity, haaa, is about what you do, ne? Is what you do at the workplace, if the development is there, it must be there. Eeim, the environment that you are working in, it must be an environment that is fairly. Let me say fairly or satisfiable, and what else? That you are working, it must be fairly especially to us women because we've got even kids and should not be pushed to work overtime. You should choose your choice (Interview, Rand Water employee, 18-09-2013).*

The respondent in this interview showed how domestic activities in the division of labour affect public employment spaces of women at the workplace. The respondent also indicated the need to ensure that flexibility is extended to women in their lives as workers. The respondent further informed the researcher that there was gender equity at Rand Water by saying:

> *At Rand Water, you are here as an employee, not like man or woman. You don't use your gender to do your job, which is most important at Rand Water. Equity is very helpful to women. Surely it does. Because the way they put it, it is fairly, it gives us time to be with our families, it gives you time to go and see or be with your family. And what else I can say? It gives gender equality, it allow us. In Rand Water, here as a woman, I may say is fine. I don't know, but I'm happy where I am (Interview, Rand Water employee, 18-09-2013).*

Most of the employees who were interviewed considered gender equity in terms of an increasing number of women in the organisation. This type of evaluation may lack the sociological consequences of gender transformation from a feminist point of view. Williams and Dellinger (2010) argue that qualitative methodologies are better suited than quantitative ones at documenting the workplace dynamics that reproduce gender equalities. Irrespective of this argument form, some respondents were of the view that increasing the number of women in

employment breaks down the walls of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995) and reduces male dominance in the organisation.

Following from these perceptions, many women are gaining confidence and better understanding of their rights as equal colleagues to men at work. A female black employee at the Vereeniging Purification Station, speaking about gender transformation, told the researcher:

> *Now, there are women in Rand Water as compared to previously and if they are taking people, they want women. So we are now increasing in our numbers. The way the men can work, we can also work like that. The Employment Equity, it is giving us the understanding of our rights and the management rights. Your health and safety, your condition of work, your equity like gender equity and your everything, concerning the work is what l think the employment equity is speaking about (Interview, Rand Water employee, 17-09-2013).*

4.17 Power Relations

Women at Rand Water are counting on their increasing numbers in the workforce as their source of influence and power. In terms of gender equity in connection with access and exposure to equal opportunities, most of the respondents affirmed that there is equity in the process. However, there were some who were of the view that women are still discriminated against when it comes to access to training programmes for employees in the organisation.

A female black employee in the position of secretary to the executive manager at the Head Office of Rand Water expressed her view on training as follows:

> *I think Rand Water could have had a platform where literally they will train young managers, they prepare them for managerial shape.*

> *They don't have that so what happens half of the time is you get these poor young women that get appointed as managers of this, and they still have to deal with complex issues. Just because they are not confident enough to be leaders, they end up fighting (Interview, Rand Water employee, 05-09-2013).*

Other respondents had views contrary to the above respondent's view on equal access to training programmes at Rand Water. During an in-depth interview a black female in the position of Protective Services Officer told the researcher:

> *For example, Rand Water has young professional thing for studies so they promote young ones to study for professional studies. They give opportunity to go and study to upgrade yourself or develop yourself. Management contributes to the study leave, etc. They don't have special chances for women, no. If they take up something, it's for everybody, it's up to you. At Rand Water, we've got so many programmes but it is up to you to involve yourself. It is not about women only. It is about everybody, every employee at Rand Water. It is up to you to do what you want to do. Because sometimes our HR gives us some courses to go and do. It is up to you to decide whether you want to go or not (Interview, Rand Water employee, 18-09-2013).*

This response indicates that gender equity is prevalent at Rand Water, and that training programmes form part of the workplace equity process. Rising literacy among women throughout the world correlates with their increasing participation in the world of work (Giele & Stebbins 2003). Therefore, offering equal opportunity for women to develop skills and training through education programmes is the ideal solution to equal chances for women and men, in leadership, management and productive work (Giele & Stebbins 2003).

In the workplace, management can retard or promote transformative processes through institutional structures, policies and programmes, initiatives and strategies. At Rand Water, the management is said to be progressive and committed to the transformation process in general and to gender transformation in particular. As a result of this commitment, the management has mapped out programmes and strategies for the realisation of transformation in general, and hopes to realise gender transformation in the process. The said programmes are grounded on the provisions of Employment Equity Act of 1998 for workplace transformation in South Africa.

4.18 Specific Programmes for Gender Transformation at Rand Water

One of the programme initiatives that Rand Water has embarked on as a long-term solution to the prolonged dominance by male employees is the "Technogirl" programme. In this programme young girls are offered bursaries to study for the acquisition of critical skills, particularly in the areas of science, mathematics and technology. Besides this long-term plan, the respondents in the study indicated that there were other on-going activities that complemented each other in order to ensure gender transformation, and which were yielding positive results.

According to a black female respondent at Rand Water Head Office in the position of secretary to the Strategic Human Capital Portfolio Manager:

> *Employment Equity Act is specific about transformation of the workplace in terms of designated people. These people include women and people with disabilities. So it is on this basis that gender transformation is promoted. In 2007, Rand Water took the issue of gender transformation more seriously and they are increasing the number of women, especially black, and I may say that this is highly inspired by the gender equity aspects of Employment Equity Act (Interview, Rand Water official, 15-07-2013).*

In the global labour market, significant progress has been made in terms of gender equity (ILO 2004). This progress has been realised as a result of the policies and programmes that have been established to ensure gender equity in the labour market. The strides that Rand Water is making are also grounded on policy and programmes that are based on employment equity laws in South Africa. Steadily at Rand Water, women have moved into occupations, professions, managerial and supervision jobs as well as into areas that were previously reserved for men. This was achieved through the development of an employment equity plan. According to Rand Water management, the stakeholders that were involved in the consultation process prior to the development of the employment equity plan included the Employment Equity Forum, the trade unions (SAMWU and UASA) and employees (Rand Water 2013).

The management of Rand Water continues to express commitment in regular submissions of reports on workplace transformation in general in a document that contains gender transformation progress. This report regards the increasing number of women employees in the organisation as the major sign of gender equity. According to the Employment Equity Consultant at the Rand Water Head Office, commenting on Rand Water's commitment to gender equity at the workplace:

> *Yah, Rand Water on annual basis, I'm also one of the participants of, er, preparing the report on an annual basis. We report to the Department of Labour in terms of the current workplace, er, members that we have and also give them the timelines within which to improve, er, in terms of promoting Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDIs), what type of training or skills measures we are putting in place. So we report on an annual basis, giving them our projections. If comes the next year or come the reporting time you are not in a position to meet your projections, you need to explain to them from the Department of Labour and what type of mechanism*

you are taking, so Rand Water is serious. And for the past more ten years without fail we have been reporting our progress to the Department of Labour. We have got a specific committee for Employment Forum that is comprised of management and the unions, and we submit a joint report to the Department of Labour (Interview, Rand Water official, 23-07-2013).

4.19 "Gender transformation is still a bit of a sour issue."

The submission of annual and quarterly reports by Rand Water to the South African Department of Labour was criticised by some employees, who considered that activity as a window-dressing exercise just to satisfy a legislative requirement as stipulated in the Employment Equity Act. Hassim (2003) argues that the "national machinery" approach for gender transformation in Africa has not functioned effectively to reduce gender inequalities. Accordingly, it has no effect on the vulnerable women who might need transformation most. At the Rand Water Head Office, a black female junior employee in the position of secretary to the executive manager told the researcher in an in-depth interview:

But yes, for employment equity purposes are being put around but even as to whether women are being employed just because of the need to tick the employment equity box, to say we have so and so much number of women in our workplace, is another issue. When they are forced to listen to women, they will, but they will because they are forced. But I still maintain the same question: if they had to do it willingly, we will see different phase (Interview, Rand Water employee, 05-09-2013).

This response suggests that increasing numbers of women in employment, and ensuring that women occupy supervisory, managerial and executive positions, does not really constitute gender transformation. Also, it implies that Rand Water is doing something in the name of gender transformation, which it perceives as a

coercive exercise to satisfy legislative purposes, but not necessarily to transform the working environment in which men and women will feel equal in pursuit of their aspirations. Looking at the concept of gender transformation from a transformation-by-mainstreaming perspective, it goes beyond the increased number of women in an organisation, as Rand Water tends to emphasise.

According to the ILO,

> mainstreaming is not about adding a 'woman's component' or even a 'gender equality component' into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women's participation; it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda. It may entail identifying the need for changes in that agenda. It may require changes in goals, strategies, and actions so that both women and men can influence, participate in, and benefit from development processes. The goal of mainstreaming gender equality is thus the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women (ILO 1996-2013).

A black female respondent in the position of secretary to the executive manager at Rand Water Head Office, during an in-depth interview, indicated:

> *So you know, l look, this gender transformation is still a bit of sour issue. Because l honestly feel that it only applies to women that are 'up there'. In all honesty, l feel that gender transformation right now is actually speaks to your Dillu Habis, Maria Hamus, Sanaam Mohameds, Kinians, and that Kanyi lady in high post, you know. It applies to those your Matshidisos, Themisiles, Phumelos, Molokoane-Mechikas and your Ferhina-Salojees, these are your top, top women. So for now, we are in 2013 and transformation really applies to those women. I feel as a country we cannot yet start celebrating gender transformation. It is still a discussion for now. As for implementation, it is being implemented at the higher level (Interview, Rand Water employee, 11-09-2013).*

Irrespective of the sceptical views of some employees about the reality of the gender transformation process at Rand Water, there are specific areas that employers are expected to cover in terms of transformation. According to the annual report submitted by Rand Water to the Department of Labour in January 2013, affirmative action has been taken to address barriers in job classification and grading, work environment and facilities, performance and evaluation systems, promotions, succession and experience planning, retention of designated groups and reasonable accommodation. These areas were identified in 2010 and projected to be addressed by 2012. As indicated by the report, these barriers were addressed (Rand Water 2013).

4.20 Power, Gender and Corporate Policy Influence

According to the Strategic Human Capital Portfolio Manager at the Rand Water Head Office:

> *Rand Water insists on a continuous process, and in this case we managed to ensure that most of the people recruited are from the designated groups. 45–69% of females were recruited in management positions by the end of the financial year. We have, therefore, consciously increased the capacity of women's representation at crucial decision-making levels so that they are able to influence policy and our corporate decisions at Rand Water (Interview, Rand Water official, 23-07-2013).*

In most cases, wherever most power is exercised, discrimination tends to be profound (ILO 2004). Therefore, the increase in the number of women in influential and decision-making positions at Rand Water can impact positively in terms of power balance. The effective management of organisations and firms in the contemporary world of work is highly dependent on the balanced mix of so-called masculine and feminine attributes. As such, there are more organisations that adopt measures that attract and retain women with the intention to derive

benefit from their qualifications and talent to ensure efficiency in a competitive working environment. It is expected that when women gain economic power, they are able to play key roles in shaping the gender disparities that endure in the workplace (ILO 2004).

Whatever measures there are in an organisation for transformation in general and gender transformation in particular, there is the need for employees to be aware so that they can ensure corporation. In relation to this assertion, the Strategic Human Capital Portfolio Manager told the researcher in an interview that the awareness measures that Rand Water has implemented include:

> *In this year, we gave out formal written communication to about 3000 of our employees. We made available a policy statement in which we included references to employment equity to about 2000 of our employees. As you may observe around, we display the summary of the Act at all the vantage points in the organisation throughout our outlets so that at least about 2000 of our employees can reach. We also provide employment equity training to cover over 116 of our employees and ensure that we continue to provide discrimination or non-discrimination awareness programmes to them (Interview, Rand Water official, 23-07-2013).*

The promulgation of equal opportunity laws and their enforcement have minimised institutional discrimination (ILO 2004). In South Africa, this is reflected in the implementation of the Employment Equity Act as the basis for workplace transformation and equity policy programmes. These laws have made a considerable impact on awareness of employees at Rand Water. Women have increasingly entered most professions which were previously reserved for men. They have also become increasingly aware of their employment rights.

In an in-depth interview with a black female at Rand Water Head Office, she stated:

I was employed as secretary and worked in the general office of the Human Resources Department. Before I joined Rand Water, I worked for a private human resource consortium in Johannesburg for one year. That was in 2004. Vacancies were activated and I applied. We went through rigorous recruitment process and I was fortunate to be employed. I worked in the general office for about six months, and I was sent by Rand Water to be trained as a personal secretary. After that I was trained in human resource management, where l obtained my diploma. After three years of my employment, l was promoted to my current position. My job comprises of general administration and management of the general manager for the Human Resources office. Over the period of my employment, l have received various forms of in-service training which enhance my performance (Interview, Rand Water employee, 15-07-2013).

In corroboration that opportunities are offered to women to upgrade their skills and self-development, a black female in the position of Protective Services Officer at Rand Water Head Office told the researcher:

At Rand Water, we've got so many programmes but it is up to you to involve yourself. It is not about women only. It is about everybody, every employee at Rand Water. It is up to you to do what you want to do. Because sometimes our HR gives us some courses to go and do. It is up to you to decide whether you want to go or not. The last time l checked the statistics, I checked with the committee, I think it was the Educational Committee, it was most of the women who participated in the courses more than men (Interview, Rand Water employee, 18-09-2013).

4.21 Conclusion

In terms of awareness of the employment equity laws among employees, the researcher was told in an in-depth interview with a female black employee in the position of works operator at the Vereeniging Purification Station that:

> *About the employment equity, it is giving us the understanding of our rights and the management rights. Your health and safety, your condition of work, your equity like gender equity, and everything concerning the work is what l think the employment equity is speaking about. I may say positive because everyone is mindful of their position. You know the do's and the don'ts so l may say it is good policy. Unlike those days of oppression, especially before 1994, now with the employment equity legislation in place, everybody is somehow free (Interview, Rand Water employee, 17-09-2013).*

This respondent also told the researcher:

> *My age falls between 28 and 37, I am a black African female, I have tertiary (Higher Diploma), I'm alone in my house. I'm single, I have no child. l live at Tsokoza. I started working with Rand Water in 2006 as works operator; my position is still the same. I am a member of SAMWU. I don't have any position in the union. My work history, ok, I joined this company in 2006 and we were trained at the Vereeniging Purification Station. We were about 20 employees in that training. They trained us in different sections, and after that l am in the water treatment section. We run shift and our supervisor is a woman. They will also give us skill development training, especially when there is new equipment. I have received promotion only once since I was employed (Interview, Rand Water employee, 18-09-2013).*

One of the key elements that has been identified with regard to gender transformation is education. The role of education in the agenda is very crucial. Therefore, emphasis on education in any relevant form has the potential to transform the working space equitably as far as gender transformation at the workplace is concerned.

There are also other stakeholders in the gender transformation process at Rand Water. Their contribution has also been quite useful in the process. They may include organised labour unions and employees. The next chapter deals with their participation and involvement in the process.

CHAPTER 5

Gender Transformation and Trade Unions

5.1 The Role of Trade Unions in Gender Transformation at Rand Water

This chapter explores the perceptions and experiences of SAMWU officers and their representatives, including shop stewards, as well as the general workforce's contributions to gender transformation at the workplace. The chapter presents accounts of the strategies pursued by the union in order to achieve this goal through initiatives in the workplace and through internal union structures. It also discusses their views of progress towards gender transformation, and the challenges that remain to be overcome.

Trade unions by their nature have a role to play in ensuring a sound and equitable atmosphere which is indispensable for gender transformation at the workplace. They also play a role in improving the employment conditions of women and advancing gender equality in employment (Tavora 2012; GTUC 2004). In research conducted by Geoffrey Modisha (2006), a respondent, Rudy Dicks, echoed the importance of leadership and argued that it is important for trade unions to accelerate leadership empowerment at all levels by engaging with the implementation of the Employment Equity policy. One expects that this crucial role would be championed by shop stewards because they are mostly based at the workplace. They are to ensure monitoring and the enforcement of the implementation process at the workplace (Modisha 2006)

The role of SAMWU in the Rand Water gender transformation process is discussed within the theoretical concept of union/management partnership. In Ireland, trade unions identified workplace partnership as a way of strengthening their influence in the workplace, and inspiring and maintaining rank-and-file

support for trade union representation and function. Broadly speaking, the notion of partnership allows for representative participation and direct employee participation (Geary & Roche 2002). This is the strategy that informs SAMWU's participation in the transformation process in general and gender transformation in particular at Rand Water.

Transformation within the South African context encompasses the attainment of equality for persons who have previously suffered discrimination in the social, economic and political spheres. Such persons were labelled by their race, disabilities and gender (if they were women). The emphasis of transformation is on the emancipation of women as well as addressing gender inequalities within the various sectors of society (Buhlungu 2006).

This research project has focused on gender transformation and gender equality, with an emphasis on women as a previously discriminated-against group, as well as on the progress that has been made at the workplace. This was done by locating the study at Rand Water in Johannesburg, in relation to the South African Municipal Workers' Union.

The concept of gender transformation was established as a global strategy for the promotion of gender equality and mainstreaming in the platform for action which was adopted at Beijing in 1995. Mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit from development efforts. Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making.

In order to realise this agenda, it may require changes in goals, strategies and actions so that both men and women can influence, participate in, and benefit

from development processes, thus transforming unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women (ILO 1996).

Labour's role in social transformation is divided into those who believe that labour's role in social change is inherently limited and those who believe labour has the potential to play a central role in the transformation of society. Hyman (1971) refers to the former as the pessimist tradition within Marxism, which holds that trade unions do not facilitate, and may in fact inhibit, the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society (Adler & Webster 2000).

5.2 Women in SAMWU

Since 2004, there has been an increase in women's activism in the union. Unfortunately, this is not reflected in their representation in the leadership (Buhlungu 2006; Britwum, Douglas & Ledwith 2012). This argument does not remain static, because SAMWU has recorded increased representation of women in leadership positions in the union's federation (COSATU). A recent publication by COSATU (2012) shows significant improvement in women's representation in leadership positions in SAMWU. Out of 59 women in COSATU's Central Executive Committee (CEC), 23 are from SAMWU, representing 39%. Again, out of 27 women in the National Executive Council (NEC), 10 are from SAMWU, representing 37%. And out of a total of 6 National Office Bearers (NOBs), 2 are from SAMWU, representing 33% (COSATU 2012).

It is also imperative to consider the call for women in the workplace to take up the challenge of claiming leadership positions in top and middle management as well as in trade unions. As a result of this call, women have achieved significantly recognisable emancipation in various spheres due to their own efforts. In South Africa, the likes of Emma Mashinini, Maggie Magubane and Lydia Kompe served as role models for the struggles for women's participation and representation in the frontline activities of trade unionism in the 1920s and 1930s (Tshoaedi 1999; Tshoaedi & Hlela 2006; Buhlungu 2006).

Trade unions have remained dominated by male activists (Tshoaedi & Hlela 2006), reinforcing hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005). Britwum, Douglas and Ledwith (2012) share a similar view with Buhlungu (2006). However, they acknowledge that, in recent times, more women are participating as members than men. The underrepresentation of women in leadership and powerful positions in the trade unions has been widely attributed to the patriarchal social and organisational structure of the institution. Buhlungu (2006) observes that the South African labour movement has not seen much participation and representation of women, particularly at leadership level and in powerful positions, despite the long involvement of women in labour struggles.

Numerical strength and leadership by women in trade unions is one of the key elements of gender transformation in South Africa's workplaces. This is especially so at Rand Water and SAMWU. According to a female SAMWU shop steward at the Vereeniging Purification Station:

> *Gender transformation and gender equity is very much progressive among SAMWU members in Rand Water. The only problem is that we need more women to participate more in union activities. They should come forward when it comes to shop floor steward elections or programmes. But most of them are always looking up to the men to be doing those things (Interview, SAMWU official, 30-09-2013).*

In the above quote, the respondent acknowledged that women's participation in the trade union was minimal. The unwillingness of many women to offer to be part of the trade union was found to be problematic in the sense that they alienate themselves from unions, rather than being pushed out by men. However, it has been observed that most married women's activism in the trade unions is limited by their spouses, who feel uncomfortable with their wives' involvement (Tshoaedi 2013).

These exclusions were explained in a SAMWU educational document which states that in South Africa, women, especially black working-class women, identified with feminism in solidarity against race, class and gender oppressions in which women suffer most in the world of work. However, many of them detached themselves from being called feminists because of the misconception that feminists were "men haters". Rather, they preferred to be referred to as gender activists. These group choices underpin a weak structural solidarity front of women in SAMWU (SAMWU 2003).

There are some SAMWU women who held the view that women's minimal interest in trade union activities is motivated by their indifference. In an interview with a female shop steward at the Vereeniging Purification Station, the researcher was told:

> *Women should show interest. For me, we can't blame the men too much for taking most of the positions in the shop stewards. Now, the awareness is there, we have been talking about this gender thing for a long time, and for me the women must be seen to be getting involved (Interview, SAMWU official, 30-09-2013).*

Indeed, the issue of gender transformation has been widely propagated, so that many women are becoming aware of the various strategies that are available for the fulfilment of the process. It is therefore imperative to find women taking up the challenge with enthusiasm in order to achieve progress.

The increases in women's representation in leadership positions in the union, and the corresponding population of women ascending to positions of management, has been widely construed as a march forward in the gender transformation process at the workplace. This study, therefore, sought to find out about the impact of SAMWU in the transformation process within the context of sociological experiences and perceptions among employees at Rand Water.

5.3 Partner Strategies in Workplace Transformation

At Rand Water, SAMWU, in collaboration with management, employs a partnership strategy in the workplace transformation and gender transformation process. Key to the concept of partnership in union/management co-operation is exercising control on the balance of workers' and employers' needs and encouraging activists and rank-and-file participation (Geary & Roche 2002).

Under the concept of Participation, Co-ordination and Partnership SAMWU and its members are major stakeholders in the Rand Water workplace transformation agenda. The union does not itself have a specific gender transformation policy document that guides participation in the process at the workplace, but contributes significantly to the agenda through partnership.

Geary and Roche (2002) identify that union/management partnership is associated with dangers of centralisation within unions and alienation of shop stewards and union activists. There is also danger of the "elite corps" syndrome, whereby the leadership of the union forms an upper echelon that displaces lay activists. Intra-union conflict can also be a problem, and can eventually lead to the abandonment of the partnership (Geary & Roche 2002).

Nevertheless, there are many different ways in which SAMWU members at Rand Water, individually and collectively, are contributing to workplace and gender transformation. The SAMWU Provincial Treasurer in Gauteng, who is also a full-time shop steward at Rand Water, had the following to say on the context in which gender transformation at the workplace is perceived:

> *Our understanding of transformation is that we need to set up programmes that ensure gender is mainstreamed, especially your previously disadvantaged. Women were very much disadvantaged previously, and our understanding is that they need to be brought*

> *into the mainstream at the workplace. In other words, they need to be treated with respect; they need to be promoted and paid equal pay for equal work just like men, so there shouldn't be any difference or discrimination on the basis of the fact that a person is a woman. So, we propagate equality of men and women, equal treatment for both male and female. So that is how we define gender transformation (Interview, SAMWU national official, 31-07-2013).*

Throughout gender equality campaigns across the globe, there has not been a universally agreed definition for gender transformation. However, every campaign group seek to achieve a common platform through which both men and women pursue their aspirations without any form of discrimination which may result from their gender. Again, the various organisations that promote gender equity depend on policies, programmes and various forms of initiatives to advance their cause. At the workplace, these policies and programmes are incorporated as part of state policy, legislation and strategy in which managers, workers and unions reconstitute workplace regimes (Von Holdt 2003). The role of each component body is significant in the workplace transformation trajectory.

In an interview with the Gauteng Provincial Treasurer of SAMWU, the researcher was told that:

> *Indeed we are, in fact we are having programmes that were made towards achieving this particular objective, even at or in our constitution for that matter. Our constitution, SAMWU constitution, stipulates that at least in every union structure women should be represented at 1/3. We are saying at least 1/3 of the delegates to all the, or of all the structure should be women. So, that is how we try to implement the, the issue of gender equality in relation to transformation (Interview, SAMWU national official, 31-07-2013).*

So, much emphasis seems to be placed on increases of numbers of women in union leadership as well as managerial positions in organisations, with minimal attention being paid to the quality of women representation in terms of knowledge, competence, expertise and experience. This is because of the long-standing notion that hierarchical dominance by men over women, through the agency of hegemonic masculinity, is socially constructed (Connell 2005).

It has also been argued that the constituting of a large proportion of women members exerts pressure on the union to attend to specific women's concerns because of growing gender equity consciousness in the workplace (Tshoaedi & Hlela 2006). Therefore, it is important to ensure quality membership as well as to increase the proportion of women in the union structure in order to empower women in terms of participation in decision-making processes.

5.4 "Gender equality at the workplace has moved beyond masculine and feminine."

It is possible to have a small number of women in leadership positions in an organisation and yet their contribution to efficiency can be more significant than that of men. Walby (1989) points out that patriarchy constitutes a system of social structures and practices whereby men dominate, oppress and exploit women by holding positions of power to themselves and largely excluding women from it. This argument explains the internal contestation by the unions to increase women's representation in order to ensure a better gender split in leadership and managerial positions. However, Walby (1989) argues further that every man is not necessarily superior to women in terms of knowledge, competence, expertise and experience. It is arguable, therefore, that increasing women's participation in terms of numbers does not necessarily translate into gender equity and transformation.

> The problems of social stratification and its association with gender equality, especially at the workplace, have moved beyond masculine and feminine and therefore, calls for mainstreaming. Gender

> mainstreaming requires that conscientious effort in made to broaden women's integrity, dignity, participation and representation at all decision-making and influential levels within a reconfigured social system. In order to realize this agenda, changes in goals, attitudes, strategies and actions of both men and women can influence, participate in, and benefit from development processes and thus transforming unequal social and institutional structures for both men and women (ILO 1996).

Gender relations always fall within spaces of tension and contestation, whereby the social hierarchy of the world's gender inequality has been socially arrogated to men. The tendency to impose sovereignty by one over the other has always characterised the relationship between male and female (De Beauvoir 1949 [2009]). Rand Water is not an exceptional working space in which gendered tension and contestation is an issue, bearing in mind that it was hitherto a male-dominated organisation (Rand Water 2012).

As stated earlier, SAMWU depends on its constitution to strategise, in partnership with Rand Water, the gender transformation process. Also, according to the Gauteng Provincial Treasurer of SAMWU, the union is motivated as follows:

> *Our experiences as a society – you remember that we are coming from a society that has been oppressed for too long, especially in this country, and therefore women were more oppressed than men, because their, their gender. That is the first thing. And secondly, especially women, they were oppressed because of their disadvantages as women. So, l mean, taking into account that they are women, we look at the conscious decision as a union that we are going to ensure that we liberate our women. Remember, we have been doing these things side by side during our struggle, with women, but as far as we are concerned, they were more oppressed than us as men. Hence that conscious decision to say we are going to put up programmes that would ensure that women are liberated and there is equality. And we think the workplace, even in our societies, we can start. That is what we are propagating at or as SAMWU, to*

say women need to be free, women need to be equal with men in every aspect (Interview, SAMWU national official, 31-07-2013).

There are no doubts that the oppression of women has a great deal to do with advantages that a male-dominated society establishes for men at the expense of women. That notwithstanding, it would be misplaced to create the impression that the emancipation of women from social discrimination is the sole responsibility of men, and that women can attain equality with men only when men decree it to be so. It is appreciable that men are beginning to come to the realisation that they have a stake in transforming the gendered space towards the attainment of equality. Changes in social acceptance of gender equality have been primarily due to changing perceptions among women and men themselves (ILO 2004).

It has been argued by some women that it is the duty of every woman to pursue emancipation and equity through voluntary participation. This argument continues to say that even though the oppression and marginalisation that have been suffered over the years could be traced to patriarchy, women should take responsibility as individuals and collectively where possible to attain equality and transformation. Education and self-development is one of the tools that has been identified as necessary for women's transformation (Melanie 2005). A female black shop steward at Rand Water Head Office said this on what should be the guiding principle for women's progress at the workplace:

I think it is your performance and your skill you have. You can't just get promotion just like that without doing anything just because you are a woman. You must achieve something so that you can get upgraded (Interview, Rand Water employee, 18-09-2013).

In the spirit and letter of partnership, the Gauteng Provincial Treasurer of SAMWU, a black male, indicated that:

At the workplace we ensure that policies that get implemented by management take into account the fact that they are women and we have in terms of equity, we have a structure at the workplace which SAMWU participates on it. We call it Employment Equity Committee, which I chair incidentally. We ensure that women are represented there and other categories of workers because, of course, we have disabled people and all that, but we ensure that women are respected and treated as women. They are represented, we have a Women's Committee in Rand Water that deals with women issues. We push our members to that particular Women's Committee and therefore, when that issue affects women and then those issues that are raised there, they get fed into the Employment Equity Forum whereby they discuss. I mean, if, for instance, women think that it is a bit of problematic for them to leave work early, we take that into consideration. There could be a reason, probably because they've got young ones that they must take to school first. There are times, you remember, that women are expected to take children to clinic and all that, so if they raise that we ensure that when management make policies we take issues into account (Interview, SAMWU national official, 18-09-2013).

Policy effectiveness is important and concerned with its relationship to the set goals and the adequacy of the policy in terms of how it meets the needs for which it was formulated (Ayee 2000). It also important to consider the structural arrangement through which the policy is implemented. The use of the Employment Equity Committee to address the issue of workplace transformation raises questions of policy availability and its effectiveness from some union members in the organisation. According to a female SAMWU shop steward, who is the Structural Organisation Secretary (SOC) at Rand Water Head Office:

There isn't any policy by SAMWU for gender or women uplifting in Rand Water. I have been in Rand Water since 2009 and there really

> *has never been anything specific, you know, specific for the upliftment of women. But I know that at the beginning of 2013, just earlier this year, it is only then that there was just a bit of information as such to say, guys, lets meet, we need to form a women's forum, and at this point there is something that is being discussed. There is not anything tangible; just would be a discussion document to say, ok, this is the idea. But then when I asked around of those of them who have been around Rand Water for so many years, they have shared that there used to be a women's forum but it is apparently just phased out, sort of. So then it comes back to the union because we need formal structures inside Rand Water. So therefore, we, we, we haven't really started doing anything in that regard (Interview, SAMWU official, 11-09-2013).*

There are internal contestations about SAMWU policy and programmes for Rand Water, in which different views are expressed by various union officials. While some are of the view that there are policies in place, others think otherwise. These contestations can be explained in the sense that there are not universally agreed definitions for gender transformation so, whatever activities are going on in the name of gender transformation, they may raise doubts in different people.

In fact, on Monday, 15 July 2013 the researcher had the privilege to be at the Women's Forum at Rand Water Head Office. On that occasion, 13 people attended. The convener of the Forum – a black female – called off the meeting due to poor attendance. During a brief conversation, she informed the researcher that:

> *This has been the trend over the years. Women in Rand Water fail to turn up for such forums without reason.*

Therefore, she considered the Forum as non-functional, but rather something that just exists in name. She indicated, however, that women at Rand Water did turn

out in their numbers on Women's Day celebrations. So, when the opportunity avails itself, certain important issues are discussed briefly, but enough time was usually not made for such important programmes.

It was observed that apathy was shown by women when it comes to attending public forums for the discussion of important issues on women's interests at the workplace. Rather, emphasis was placed on social gatherings such as Women's Day celebrations. The views expressed by respondents were varied. They perceived and interpreted activities differently. This trend can be attributed to a lack of coordination and internal education on union strategies in the workplace. A black female, age 28-37, who has a Higher Diploma, is single, and in the position of works operator at the Vereeniging Purification Station, and who has been in employment since 2006, informed the researcher about her views on the role of unions in gender transformation:

> *They call meetings and we make contributions to the collective bargaining process. We have our women's day and so forth. That is, every month the union organises forum women, but l don't think it reflects true gender transformation. I must say that Rand Water women in general do contribute a lot and they are given the chance to progress. The union, especially SAMWU, is very vibrant and there are women in, just that men are more than women, but the few women are doing their best to support the men without any tension between them (Interview, Rand Water employee, 17-09-2013).*

5.5 "Gender transformation is blurred in definition."

"Transformation in the workplace did not only involve adjustment of wages and benefits, it also involved adjustment in terms of managerial control, industrial relations, working conditions and training" (Masondo, 2005: 150). These are processes and activities that need collective input to ensure their success. The active commitment to collective action depends on equal participation of both

men and women. Unfortunately, the commitment of SAMWU's women members to voluntarily get along with their male counterparts at Rand Water has been slow. In an in-depth interview with a female black shop steward at Rand Water Head Office, the researcher was told:

> *Gender transformation is absolutely blurred. As I say, for me putting together some little event on Women's Day – that, that is not, I'm sorry, that is just not, l mean, it is just another event, you know. So obviously, going back to SAMWU, well you know, l live with all the women there, and, you know, the feeling is definitely not as you will expect it to be when it comes to gender transformation. For instance, when we have our first committee meeting, um, to start with, men felt that they, you know, it is a gender issue and they just have got nothing to do with it. So already, that was the first issue that we got to tackle. So they don't link gender transformation with the reality, you know, current reality, so we have a long way to go obviously (Interview, Rand Water employee, 11-09-2013).*

Gender transformation is subjective in meaning, and therefore people assign different meanings to the notion. As a complex social phenomenon, it is subjected to varied perceptions and interpretations. While some may consider it from a welfare point of view, others look at it in other ways, such as power, economic, representation, participation, skill, professional, career and higher education and training. For example, in the view of liberal feminist theorists, changes that occur in the lives of women as patriarchal dominance reduces, open up new fields for women in areas such as traditionally male jobs, educational opportunities, high political positions and other advancements by women (Walby 1990).

At individual levels, the women of Rand Water have been taking initiatives to ensure women's participation in activities that hinder women's development in the organisation. According to the Gauteng Provincial Treasurer of SAMWU, a black male and also a full-time shop steward at Rand Water Head Office:

> *Women's Committee was initiated at Rand Water by one of the women who was a SAMWU shop steward, but she did not initiate it on behalf of SAMWU. She was doing it on behalf of all the women, although she was a SAMWU shop steward, but she was doing it for all women. So l use all, or SAMWU participated because the persons who are participating in that committee are the shop stewards, but it is not an initiative of SAMWU or a SAMWU committee. It is a committee that was organised by the women for women, and we as SAMWU are supporting it (Interview, SAMWU national official, 31-07-2013).*

The programmes that are implemented at Rand Water to ensure gender transformation need the input of the workforce so that employees can appreciate their effectiveness. Employees look to the union to help them understand and implement policy decisions. Unions usually operate within a mandate from the rank and file through resolutions, meetings and other forms of mobilisation of workers to advance the union members' interests.

In an in-depth interview with a black female respondent in the position of Filter Station operator at the Vereeniging Purification Station, she stated:

> *The union is part of the decision-making on policies that affect employees. Ok (Interview, Rand Water employee, 27-08-2013).*

This response indicates that employees invest confidence in the leadership of the union and therefore are convinced that, at the decision-making level, employees have representation. It also observable that whatever decisions are made in the organisation, unions form part of the policy make-up. What is not clear is the level of involvement and influence that the union has on the decision-making processes that they are involved in. To be part of the decision-making process does not necessarily mean that the decision will work in favour of the employees. The

decision may not even be implemented. Therefore, there is a need to monitor the implementation process. Some employees expressed confidence in the watchdog role that the union plays in order to ensure that policies and programmes are implemented according to plan. At the Vereeniging Purification Station, a black female in the position of administrator told the researcher in an in-depth interview that:

> *The union makes sure that the policies are adhered to (Interview, Rand Water employee, 30-09-2013).*

The impact of material working lives, especially of female employees, is important in the workplace. Therefore, there is a need to link gender and union activities at the workplace in terms of collective bargaining. In a study conducted by Britwum *et al.* (2012) the collective bargaining process in three countries was examined – Canada, the Philippines and Turkey. The study sought to find out which issues other than pay get to the bargaining table, in the face of the Bargaining Agenda for Gender (BAG).

In Canada, the report examined the "status of women workplaces, society and within the union", and made the following six recommendations: bargaining to support women; applying equality throughout the union; education and training for women; leadership development for women; more effective union meetings and ways to involve members; and creating a more representative union structure (Britwum *et al.* 2012). In the case of the Philippines, the report shows that much progress has been made in terms of promoting and protecting women's rights. This is due to several interactive factors such as a strong women's movement, legislation promoting gender equality and rights of women, and strong ILO gender and women's involvement in collective bargaining. In the Philippines, many unions have strong gender equity programmes at the workplace. Workers have unsuppressed chance to be influential in the collective bargaining process, and are able to push the bargaining agenda (Britwum *et al.* 2012). It was reported that in Turkey, anti-union legislation plays a role in making it difficult for women

to have access to unions at the workplace; therefore, women have weak representation in union negotiations in Turkey. In the three example that were shown above, Canada and the Philippines were indicative of progressive processes in women's representation in unions. However, in Turkey, it can be seen that the voices of women in the collective bargaining process are suppressed (Britwum *et al.* 2012).

5.6 SAMWU's Understanding of Gender Transformation

Unions may be part of management's decision-making process, but the effectiveness of such arrangements depends largely on the content of what is discussed at the bargaining table and how it impacts employees. Also important is how those decisions can transform the gendered workplace in order to ensure gender equity in line with policy processes. In relation to the negotiation process at Rand Water, a black female shop steward in the Vereeniging Purification Station told the researcher:

> *For me to pinpoint, like, a policy document, that one, l will not be in position to show anything like that. But l can say that when we go to the negotiations with management, we try to put the needs of union across, and management is doing well to respond. It is not perfect but compared to other places, l may say Rand Water is committed to gender equity. Women in Rand Water are not facing any discrimination that I know. There may be some difficulties here and there but they are always addressed* (Interview, Rand Water employee).

Most respondents in this study acknowledged that there is collaboration and cooperation between SAMWU and Rand Water, with the common intention of achieving gender transformation. However, the issue of a policy document that forms the basis for the process is something that is contentious. Some officials claimed that SAMWU has policy documents that spell out the gender

transformation processes for the workplace. Others indicated that the policy for workplace gender transformation is stimulated by the constitutional provisions for both general and gender equity at the workplace. In an interview with the Gender Equity Officer, a coloured female and SAMWU official, she had the following to say about policies, programmes and initiatives on workplace gender transformation:

> *Those are, well, our constitutional work, because our constitution, and involve our constituency members and our constituency as well. Also that is how we are defined in our union in terms of relationship with the workplace. And of course that relationship is that of the employer and the employee. The worker and we (the union) represent the employee – the worker at the workplace, so it is in truth to our work and our existence (Interview, SAMWU national official, 13-08-2013).*

The basic concept of gender that cuts across the gender equity discourse is generally based on roles of men and women. In Ghana, gender and gender equity have been differentiated and defined as social implications of being male or female. Gender encompasses social roles, responsibilities, status, expectations, opportunities and expected behaviour patterns that arise from being female or male in a particular society at a particular time. Gender equity, on the other hand, is understood to mean fair and proportionate attention to the differential needs and interests of women and men, as well as opportunities for representation and participation (Ghana Trade Union Congress 2012).

It is upon these understanding that the Ghana Trade Union Congress (GTUC) as a federation mapped out a clear gender policy trajectory for its affiliate unions to adopt and implement through their chosen strategies. Similarly in South Africa, COSATU has mapped out a gender policy trajectory to be implemented by the affiliate national unions. This is the document the guides SAMWU's participation in gender equity promotion activities, especially at the workplace.

It was observed that SAMWU has an interest in promoting gender equity at the workplace, but that there are no clearly stated goals that the union has set to pursue this. Instead, the union tends to be reactive rather than being proactive in its quest to ensure gender transformation at the workplace. It is clear that SAMWU participates actively at collective and individual levels to promote gender transformation in the various workplaces, especially at Rand Water.

However, it also clear that most of the initiatives are taken by management or by individual employees in the organisation. This notwithstanding, the union shows commitment in various forms of activities that impact positively on the workplace gender equity and transformation processes at Rand Water. In the absence of a clear definition for gender transformation by SAMWU, the Gauteng Provincial Treasurer, a black male and a shop steward who is stationed at Rand Water Head Office, gave the union's understanding of gender transformation as follows:

> *Our understanding of gender transformation is that we need to set up programmes that ensure that gender is mainstreamed, especially your previously disadvantaged. Women were very much disadvantaged previously, and our understanding is that they need to be brought into the mainstream at the workplace. In other words, they need to be treated with respect; they need to be promoted and paid equal pay for equal work just like men, so there should not be any difference or discrimination on the basis of the fact that a person is a woman. So we propagate equality of men and women, equal treatment for both male and female. So that is how we define gender transformation (Interview, SAMWU national official, 31-07-2013).*

5.7 Masculinity, Women and the Trade Union – "You need the balls of steel."

It is deducible that these understandings formed the basis for SAMWU's participation in partnership with Rand Water in pursuit of workplace gender transformation. This is because the goals that the organisation sets out to accomplish mesh with SAMWU's understanding of gender transformation. The shared experiences among women at Rand Water showed that this understanding is being followed in the organisation to their satisfaction and appreciation.

However, women's participation in the union towards achieving gender transformation has been minimal. This can be explained within the context of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005), whereby women are expected to assume the posture of the masculine in order to be able to attract the necessary robust representation of men for leadership. Trade union activism largely assumes that all its participants are men (Tshoaedi 2012). In a study conducted by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in 2008, it was found that:

> When women join a union they must adapt to unfamiliar thinking and male ways of talking. If they want to represent fellow workers they must try keep up with male standards, withstand disputes and fight for positions in ways that don't come easily (ITUC 2008).

This point was buttressed by a female black SAMWU shop steward at the Rand Water Head Office, who told the researcher:

> *To be able to survive the union heat, you just have to push your way through. This means looking at the second skin – very tough skin – and use a bit of language we use in my social network. You just basically become a woman that has got balls of steel, and be just extremely robust and be fearless (Interview, SAMWU shop steward, 05-09-2013).*

These male chauvinistic perceptions characterised most of the unions in the various labour organisations, and can explain why many women are reluctant to take up leadership positions in the unions. According to Sehapi (2013),

> most unions turn to violence or open confrontation as opposed to dialogue to express their demands. Violence and open confrontation are usually associated with the macho whereas dialogue is regarded as feminine. Women do not often identify with this tactic and will therefore distance themselves from trade unions.

However, as stated by the shop steward respondent above, it is the expression of extreme masculinities that attracts some women into taking up a leadership role in the union. Significant success in terms of gender transformation has been achieved in South Africa, as illustrated in the case of Rand Water (Wood & Dibben 2006). But this attitude of extreme masculinity reproduces gender stereotypes and male chauvinism in trade unions, and therefore tends to undermine the gender equity campaign at the workplace in South Africa.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the perceptions and experiences of SAMWU national officials and shop stewards were explored. Individual efforts towards the achievement of gender transformation by the general workforce of SAMWU members at Rand Water were also discussed. It is appreciable from the process that strategies such as individual initiatives and collective union/management partnership policies and programmes that were being pursued have proven to be effective. However, it was observed that perceptions and structural challenges continue to slow down the achievement of the desired gender transformation goals in the speedy manner in which it is expected to occur.

Central to the workplace and gender transformation agenda in South Africa is the promulgation and implementation of the Employment Equity Act. Therefore, it is necessary for trade unions to revise their gender transformation policies to reflect the aspirations of the EEA. This is so because the majority of the workforce

interviewed in this study showed that workplace transformation in general and gender transformation in particular is grounded on the EEA.

By deducing the particular from the general situation (Burawoy 1998), the role of SAMWU in workplace gender transformation was discussed within the theoretical concept of union/management partnership (Geary & Roche 2002). This process allowed for rank-and-file support, non-gendered representative participation and direct employee participation in union roles. This is the major strategy that underlay SAMWU's gender transformation process at Rand Water.

Buhlungu (2006) observes that South Africa's labour movement has not seen much participation and representation of women, particularly at leadership level and in powerful positions. This point was profound despite the early involvement of women in trade union organisation and labour struggles. However, the situation is changing for the better, even though with some challenges, especially in terms of women in SAMWU and at Rand Water.

Society has been gendered for a very long time. This gendered societal challenge is widely attributed to patriarchal tendencies. It is women who have suffered the brunt of this situation, both in private from unpaid domestic labour and in the public wage labour domain. It is inspiring to note, however, that gender equality has transcended feminine and masculine boundaries. As such, the notion of gender mainstreaming requires that a conscientious effort is made in order to broaden women's integrity, dignity, participation and representation at all decision-making and influential levels within a reconfigured social system.

Some of the literature that was reviewed in this study showed that institutions such as the trade union are structured to favour men more than women in terms of participation and leadership positions. This is the case to a large extent, both in society and in the workplace. However, the situation in SAMWU and at Rand Water is quite different. In COSATU's 2012 situation report, it was indicated that women's participation and representation in leadership positions is increasing.

Also, many women interviewed in the study at Rand Water showed that the gendered terrain is transforming to the satisfaction of women. The respondents in the study, most of who were women, indicated that equal opportunities are offered to both males and females at Rand Water to improve their employment and career capacities. They are further encouraged to participate in all levels of union activities. Some of the male respondents buttressed this point during the interviews.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

In this study, gender transformation and the role of the trade union at Rand Water was examined. The study was carried out within the context of lived experiences and perceptions of women. Cognisance was also taken of men's perceptions on the issue. The study provides a deeper understanding of women's experiences and how they are affecting gender transformation in the post-apartheid workplace.

This research was undertaken within three significant categorisations. First, it provided an historical overview of Rand Water prior to 1994 when apartheid was proscribed, and argued that Rand Water was dominated by men during the apartheid regime. This male-dominated culture was explained within the theoretical context of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005). Secondly, the study illustrated that oppressive laws that governed apartheid South Africa and its workplace were used to perpetrate many forms of unfair discrimination against black people, people with disabilities and black women. What is interesting is that women are part of all three designated groups that were identified as suffering unfair discrimination in both domestic and public spheres. Also, racial discrimination was deeply entrenched in the South African workplace.

As a result of these challenges, the Employment Equity Act was promulgated into law, as legislative processes were put in place to solve unfair discrimination in the workplace in post-apartheid South Africa after 1994. Based upon these legislative provisions, the research found that Rand Water professed commitment to the process of workplace transformation and had mapped out policies, programmes and initiatives to facilitate general workplace transformation, with particular emphasis on gender equity and representation, especially at the upper echelons of the organisational structure. In the process of transforming the organisation, the general workforce was involved at various stages as stakeholders.

Third, the study established that Rand Water, in collaboration with organised labour, involves employees through various platforms within the context of stakeholders' partnership (Geary & Roche 2002). The context of partnership comprises a management–union–employee platform at which employment issues are harmonised. SAMWU, a majority union at Rand Water that organises the company's workers and makes ample contribution to the gender transformation process, was important in the study. However, it was revealed during the study that there is a democracy deficit in the union (Ledwith 2012). This revelation came from the fact that trade unions in general are not doing enough to ensure that women are actively involved and proportionally represented in union structures.

This study sought to contribute to research on gender equity at the workplace, to discover whether quality progress has been made in women's working lives in the post-apartheid and democratic workplace, and to examine how trade unions are contributing to the process. It also attempted to provide a deeper understanding of perceptions and experiences and how they impact gender transformation at Rand Water, for the purposes of replicating the same in other workplaces. As a result, the research questions examined gender transformation from a feminist perspective of reading transformation within historical moments. These processes are marked by sexuality, gender, race and class ideology, including their tensions and contradictions. It also considers aspects that marked the relational positions in society, devoid of intrinsic qualities (Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Chacko 2004).

The researcher engaged mostly with women, and gained insight into context-dependent knowledge and experiences, with the context-bound nature of gender equality, in which the level of gender equity is appreciated by women in the organisation (Wendy 2005; Flyvbjerg 2001). It was revealed in the study that an increasing number of women are gaining employment in the organisation, getting promotions to top management echelons, and deriving satisfaction from the equitable availability of opportunities such as training and development of capacity.

The study findings further showed that there was contention on the nature and extent of gender transformation in the organisation. Some employees, both male and female, indicated that the gender transformation project was to some extent cosmetic, with the intent of satisfying the legislative requirement to the South African Department of Labour. Irrespective of this scepticism, it was noted by the Department of Labour that most public-sector organisations such as Rand Water are progressing steadily by increasing the number of women in the upper echelons of their organisational structures. It was observed in the study that women are generally appreciative of gaining access to employment in a previously male-dominated organisation. The various training programmes that are provided for the employees give women satisfaction and hope of sustainable gender equity. However, in terms of racial and gender balance, there are indications that the white workers as well as males of all races, particularly blacks, feel threatened that women and black people would eventually dominate the future workforce of Rand Water.

Some challenges were revealed in the process of transformation at Rand Water. It was observed that the majority of the SAMWU shop stewards at Rand Water are still men. Nevertheless, the few women shop stewards are very active in the union and make significant contributions to the gender equity process in the organisation. However, the lack of an increased number of women in the union at that level was explained by indifference and apathy, as well as by domestic responsibilities that still heavily burden women's involvement outside the home.

Apart from that it was also found that SAMWU, as a national union, does not have a clear policy for gender transformation at the workplace. Ironically, SAMWU's office of gender equity at national level was found to be highly handicapped in terms of being abreast with workplace gender transformation issues and at Rand Water in particular. This poses a big challenge when it come to the evaluation of advocating increased representation of women in leadership positions in the organisation structure of the union.

The research showed that Rand Water in partnership with the trade union is transforming in terms of gender equity and women's representation at all levels of occupation, progressively and gradually.

From the findings of the research, it is clear that trade unions can play an important role in improving the employment of women and advancing gender equity in the workplace (Tavora 2012). Traditionally, the bargaining agenda pursued by unions has been masculine-centred, but with an increase in women's employment, the engagement of women's concerns at the workplace is begging to gain recognition and importance (Tavora 2012). At Rand Water, gender transformation is gradually gaining root, and an increasing number of women are gaining employment and receiving capacity-building development. These are essential elements of union revitalisation strategies. Also, through their union, employees are playing a partnership role in the process. However, the issue of increased representation of women in statistical form has been overemphasised.

It would be expedient, therefore, to expand the scope of employee training to enable those who feel the brunt of reverse discrimination to come to appreciate the need to balance the equity equation in order to achieve industrial harmony. The women who have made it to the top at Rand Water should be able to open up to those at the bottom of the progression ladder to enhance the realisation of sustainable gender equity.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Information Sheet

Title of study: **"GENDER TRANSFORMATION AT THE WORKPLACE AND THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA": A CASE STUDY IN RAND WATER (PTY) LTD. SOUTH AFRICA".**

My name is Libanus Quanson, a student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. But, before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done, and what exactly it will involve. Kindly read the following information sheet carefully and if you wish, you may discuss it with others. Please feel free to ask anything that is not clear to you or ask for further information.

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the experiences and perceptions especially of women in gender transformation and the role of trade unions at the workplace in South Africa. Also, to understand SAMWU's gender policy for workplace and how it played itself in Rand Water gender transformation. Again, to explore, understand women and their experiences of transformation at Rand Water; to explore and understand SAMWU women's understanding of the role of trade union in transformation, sociological and labour activity profile of women in the workplace.

The research will be done by me alone. I will be conducting interviews with skilled and professional workers, SAMWU shop stewards, Top and senior management staff in Rand Water as well as SAMWU National Union and department of Labour officials. The interviews are expected to last for about one hour each, with possibility of conducting further interviews. All that is asked of you as a participant is that you try to be as open and honest as possible during the interviews and discussion groups. You have been chosen as a potential participant

for this study because of your role in the organization, which is directly related to this study. Taking part in this study is purely voluntary.

If you decide to participate, then this information sheet will be given to you to keep and I will kindly ask you to sign a consent form. By signing a consent form, you are agreeing to participate in this study. But in case at any point you change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the study and you will not be required to provide reason for doing so. In case you decide from the beginning that you do not wish to participate in the study, your decision will be respected and there will not be any negative consequences to your decision.

With your permission, an audio-recording device will be used to record all interviews and discussion groups. The purpose of this is to help me to be able to quote what you say as accurately as possible. However, if you do not wish to be recorded, note-taking will be used as a means of reinforcing the recording of the information that you give.

All of the data collected from this study will be strictly kept confidential. Furthermore, your anonymity will be protected in the final report through the use of pseudonym. Also, please note that I will not discuss any information shared with other participants. It is essential to guarantee the protection of this information so that all participants can feel at ease to discuss these topics without fear of negative repercussions. The information you provide during the interview will be completely anonymous. But, should there be a discussion group, anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because of the presence of other participants. At the end of writing the research report, you will not be identified by name, but you may be quoted under a pseudonym. Any information that could be used to reveal your true identity will not be used. Every effort will be made throughout the research process to ensure that your identity remains anonymous.

This study is in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Masters' Degree and therefore the report will be submitted to and be available at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. I will not disclose any identifying information such as your name.

In case you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at oremiopium@gmail.com

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study.

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule/Questionnaire

In-depth Interview with skilled, semi-skilled, professional and some management staff mainly women and some men.
By Libanus Quanson (697739)

RESEARCH TOPIC
"Gender Transformation at the Workplace and the role of Trade Unions in South Africa – A case study in Rand Water (Pty) Ltd. South Africa".

The aim of this research is to explore the state of gender transformation and the role of trade unions at the workplace in post-apartheid South Africa. The study seeks to understand the experiences and perceptions of transformation at Rand Water and for academic purpose only, and any information given by the respondent is voluntary and will be handled with strict anonymity and confidentiality.

Date of interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Notes:_____
_____
_____

SECTION A: Biographical information:

1. Age of respondent:

1	18-27yrs.	2	28-37yrs.	3	38-47yrs.	4	48-57yrs.	5	›58yrs.

2. Race of Respondent:

1	African	2	White	3	Coloured	4	Indian	5	Others

3. Gender:

1	Female	2	Male

4. What is the highest level of education that you have received?

1	Grade R-7	2	Grade 8-11	3	Grade 12/Metric	*4	Tertiary (specify type)	5	No Formal Education

*please specify type of Tertiary qualification

1	Higher Diploma	2	Post Higher Diploma (Masters, Doctoral Diploma)	3	B A Degree	4	Post Graduate Diploma	5	Honours Degree
6	Higher Degree (Masters/Ph.D.)	7	Others						

5. What is the total number of people in your household? (No. of people residing in the house)

6. Please what is your Marital Status?

1	Married	2	Single	3	Divorce	4	Widowed	5	Others

7. How many children do you have?

8. Where do you live (Place in Gauteng)?

9. When did you start working in Rand water (Date & Year)?

10. At what position were you first employed?

11. What is your position currently?

12. Are/were you a member of a trade union? If yes, then which union?

13. Do you/did you hold any position in the trade union (i.e. shop floor steward executive)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. If yes, then what has being your role in gender transformation process in Rand Water?

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION B: Information on Transformation:

1. Kindly share with me briefly, your work history such as number of years in employment, nature of your job assignment, profession/skills, promotion(s), participation in decision making processes and in-service training.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Kindly share with me your ideas on workplace transformation in South Africa, especially in relation to women.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. May I kindly know your view about the implementation of Employment Equity Act [EEA] (Act. No. 55 of 1998) at Rand Water? Please elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Please tell me how the EEA programmes and initiatives has affected you as a worker. Please elaborate.

_____

_____

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5. Are there any programmes designed in line with EEA for gender transformation in Rand Water that women benefit from? Please explain briefly.

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6. What role does the trade union play in the transformation process at Rand Water?

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7. Kindly share with me any other information on gender transformation at Rand Water:

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Thank you for your cooperation and time.

APPENDIX C

Interview Schedule/Questionnaire

Semi-structured interview with Trade Union Representative
(i.e. South African Municipal Workers' Union)
by Libanus Quanson (697739)

RESEARCH TOPIC

"Gender Transformation at the Workplace and the role of Trade Unions in South Africa – A case study in rand Water (Pty) Ltd. South Africa".

The aim of this research is to explore the state of gender transformation and the role of trade unions at the workplace in post-apartheid South Africa. The study seeks to understand the experiences and perceptions of transformation at Rand Water and for academic purpose only, and information given by the respondent is voluntary and will be handled with strict anonymity and confidentiality.

Date of Interview:
_____

Location of Interview:_____

1. What is your position in the union?

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2. How does the trade union define and understand gender transformation in the workplace? Is your trade union in support of gender transformation? Why, please elaborate?

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3. What policies/programmes/initiatives does SAMWU have for gender transformation at the workplace? Please elaborate.

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4. What strategies has the union used to implement these policies/ programmes initiative? Please elaborate:

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5. About union's policies and implementation, is there anything that needs to change or done better?

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6. Please give a brief history of Rand Water, concerning gender transformation. Has the process of transformation changed or stayed the same (good or bad)? Why? Please elaborate.

7. What role has the trade union and its members (shop floor stewards) played in Rand Water's gender transformation process?

8. Are women involved in the formulation and implementation processes of SAMWU's gender policy and programme decisions?

9. If yes, then what role do they play?

10. What are the union's challenges with regard to gender transformation in the workplace? What solutions has the union adopted to overcome the challenges?

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11. What are the positive experiences and successes in gender transformation agenda at the workplace? What can you attribute these successes to (union leadership, managements, etc.)?

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12. Kindly share with me any other information about gender transformation at the workplace and the role that women play, particularly in Rand Water:

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13. Is there anything else you want to share with me related to this research?

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Thank you for your cooperation and time.

APPENDIX D

Profile of Respondents

Respondents	Age range	Race	Gender	Year of Employment	Interview date	Station/Place.
Employment Equity Officer	38-47	Black	Male	1999	23-07-2013	Rand Water H/O
Executive office manager	28-37	Black	Female	2005	15-07-2013	Rand Water H/O
Electrician	38-47	Coloured	Female	1999	15-07-2013	Rand Water H/O
Protective Service Officer	38-47	Black	Female	2003	18-09-2013	Rand Water H/O
Executive office Manager	28-37	Black	Female	2009	11-09-2013	Rand Water H/O
Works Operator	28-37	Black	Male	2006	17-09-2013	VPS
Protective Service Officer	38-47	Black	Female	2005	30-09-2013	VPS
Administrator	48-57	Black	Female	1996	30-09-2013	VPS
Receptionist	38-47	Black	Female	2000	30-09-2013	VPS
Strategic Finance Portfolio Manager	38-47	Black	Female	2003	21-08-2013	Rand Water H/O
Employment Equity Co-ordinator	38-47	Black	Male	1999	18-07-2013	Rand Water H/O
Project Scheduler	28-37	Black	Male	2011	04-09-2013	Rand Water H/O
Employment Equity Inspector		Black	Male		29-07-2013	Dept. of Labour, SA.
Team Leader Inspection & Equity Services		Black	Male		05-08-2013	Dept. of Labour, SA.

Inspections Manager		Black	Female		05-08-2013	Dept. of Labour, SA.
Provincial Treasurer & Shop Steward		Black	Male		31-07-2013	SAMWU.Gauteng.
National Gender Equity Officer		Coloured	Female	2013	13-08-2013	SAMWU. Gauteng
Structural Organizing Secretary	28-37	Black	Female	2009	05-09-2013	SAMWU, Gauteng
Customer Care Officer	28-37	White	Female	2002	15-07-2013	Rand Water H/O
Filter Station Operator	38-47	Black	Female	1999	27-08-2013	VPS
Maintenance & Operations	48-57	White	Male	2000	18-09-2013	VPS
Works Operator	38-47	Black	Female	2003	18-09-2013	VPS
Works operator	28-37	Black	Female	2002	18-09-2013	VPS
Protective Service Officer	38-47	Black	Female	1999	30-09-2013	VPS
Works operator	38-47	Black	Female	2000	27-09-2013	VPS
Strategic Human Capital Portfolio	48-57	Black	Male	1998	15-07-2013 31-07-2013	Rand Water H/O
Employment Relations Consultant	48-57	Black	Male	2002	23-07-2013	Rand Water Head Office.