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Exploring the sex role identity of female managers and its perceived impact on their career growth opportunities.

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<u>Research Topic:</u> Exploring the Sex Role Identity of Female Managers and its Perceived Impact on their Career Growth Opportunities.

<u>Key Question</u>: Do masculine or androgynous female managers experience discrimination (agentic backlash)-do they perceive their career growth opportunities to be limited?

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DECLARATION

A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by coursework and Research Report in the filed of Industrial Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 28 May 2010.

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university M.F Nkuna, 28 May 2010.

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ABSTRACT:

This study aimed to uncover and document experiences of female managers by focusing on the sex role identities they adopt and what they perceive the impact of these (sex role identities) on their career growth to be. Thus this study draws on the field of sex role identity, particularly Bem's (1974) Theory of Androgyny. This theory has made a major contribution in shifting the study of leadership and management behaviour from relying on gender role approach to focusing more on sex role identity. Gender role approach tends to predict leadership behaviour on the basis of sex, while sex role identity predicts leadership on the basis of social roles that people assume in their lives (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Gedney, 1999; Korabik & Ayman, 1987; Park, 1997).

The present study builds on the contestations between research that suggests that masculine and androgynous management styles are the most desirable and successful (Korabik & Ayman, 1987) versus one that argues that the two styles may lead to discrimination (agentic backlash) for female managers (Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001). Further, these aforementioned studies were conducted on American and European populations, and so the present study aimed to investigate if similar findings could be found on a South African sample.

Eleven androgynous female managers from different South African organisations in Johannesburg were interviewed for this study. Major findings indicated that agentic female managers do experience agentic backlash. However, agentic backlash was not perceived by the female managers to have a negative impact on career growth opportunities. Instead perceived work-family conflict and lack of a "supportive" environment were considered to be a hindrance in the career growth of female (managers).

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The present study sets out to explore the experiences of female managers at the workplace. Specifically, the study investigates the sex role identities that females possess at the workplace and their perceived impact on career growth opportunities. This research report proceeds as follows:

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study. It stipulates the purpose of the study, as well as issues to be covered. In particular, the first section provides justification for the study. The succeeding section outlines the aims and objectives.

Chapter 2 is a review of relevant literature. The chapter attempts to identify gaps in the existing literature, some of which, the study hopes to fill. Furthermore, this chapter engages important concepts and theories applied in this study; the gender role approach; sex role identity theory; and agentic backlash.

Following is the methodology chapter. This chapter outlines steps followed in conducting this study; including sampling, the design of the study, instruments and the procedures undertaken in collecting data. It then proceeds to the analysis techniques employed in analyzing data. Lastly, the chapter outlines the ethical considerations undertaken in this study.

Chapter 4 presents the study findings. A thematic content analysis of those results follows and thereafter the concluding chapter.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

This study explores the contradictions between research that proposes masculinity and androgyny as the best management styles Korabik and Ayman, (1987), and research providing that the two may in turn lead to negative evaluations of females and limited career growth opportunities (Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2007). In exploring these contradictions, the study also aims in a broader scope, to examine experiences of female managers in the workplace.

The study achieves the two major objectives stated by specifically looking at the different management styles/sex-role identities displayed by these females when they are at work, and how these may affect their career advancement.

- The first aim of the study is to identify the sex role identity or management style that female mangers display. This served as a filter in selecting the final sample of the study. This means that sex role identity determined who was to be included in the final sample; thus it served as a selection tool.

- Secondly, the study investigates whether androgynous and masculine female managers experience agentic backlash and the perceived impact of this agentic backlash on their career growth opportunities. By so doing, the study seeks to unearth the actual perceptions of androgynous and masculine female managers regarding their experiences in their respective organisations since their appointment in their respective positions.

- In a similar manner, the study also aims to explore whether feminine-type of female managers experience any discrimination, and how the discrimination they may be experiencing might be different from that which masculine and androgynous female managers may experience. The study assumes that discrimination experienced by feminine female managers, if any, may be reflective of more traditional forms of sex discrimination, and thus differ from the agentic backlash which androgynous and masculine female managers may encounter.

- Following that, the last objective of the study is to determine whether the discrimination experienced by androgynous and masculine female mangers is in any way different from traditional forms of sex discrimination (that is, ontological discrimination). Based on the reviewed literature, the main prediction of the study is that female managers may experience different forms of discrimination in the workplace.

1.2 Study Rationale

Historically, management positions and leadership roles have been the preserve of males for a long period (Albertyn, 2003). The present study is of the view that progress has evidently been made in addressing gender stereotypes that position management roles purely as a reserve for males and see males as the only ones who can succeed. However, there are challenges in installing values, attitudes, beliefs, programs and systems that will ensure that this situation is fully overcome by helping females succeed in those positions (Gedney, 1999; Yoder, 2001; Schwartz, 1996). This challenge may perhaps partly explain the insignificant proportions of females in senior management.

As a result of legislation, females have entered the workplace in increasing proportions. In South Africa, by 2009, 45.8% of females, compared to 54.2% males of all races were reported to be economically active in the workforce (www.info.gov.za). However, studies have shown that females in the labour market are still poorly represented in management positions in South Africa, as they are, in many other parts of the world. For instance, the South African Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) Annual Report for 2007-2008 reveals that females only represent 17.8% of all employees at senior management level (www.info.gov.za). While Wood and Lindorff (2001), show that in the United States, only 5% of females are in senior management, in the United Kingdom, females only represent 4%, and only 3% in Australia.

The underrepresentation of females in executive jobs provides the need to conduct research studies, which attempt to understand and disaggregate specific issues inhibiting females from advancing in their careers. Findings from such research can in turn aid in alleviating the situation. By critically examining the experiences of female managers at work, the current study specifically hopes to uncover the factors or critical areas that may hinder or foster the career progress of females. In doing so, the study therefore seeks to add into the body of literature and research that attempts to find ways to make the workplace better suited (conducive) and effective for females.

Further, another critical issue that female managers are faced with concern the management styles they may adopt and how effective these are perceived to be. As already noted under the aims and objectives section of this thesis, past research has produced conflicting results with

regard to what leadership style is most effective. For instance, Korbaik and Ayman (1987) demonstrated that the masculine and androgynous styles of management are the most successful, with the androgynous style being proposed as particularly successful for females. The two researchers' findings showed that there are many organisational benefits and personal success that accompany these two management styles (a detailed discussion is offered in the subsequent chapters). On the contrary, Rudman and Glick (1999, 2001) and Rudman and Phelan's (2007) findings revealed that agentic females (androgynous and masculine) are less likely to be hired for management positions, compared to agentic males (androgynous and masculine). It has also been argued that in cases where females have already made it into management, they may be discriminated at work for displaying masculine and androgynous management styles. This discrimination is referred to as agentic backlash (Korabik, 1990; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2007).

It is considered important to investigate reasons or factors that may contribute to such conflicting results regarding the best management style. The preset study anticipates that investigating sex role identities (management styles) adopted by female managers and their perceived impact on career growth might reveal reasons as to why masculine and androgynous management styles yield different outcomes when displayed by females.

Moreover, the present study is considered of great necessity in South Africa. Albertyn (2003) maintains that while workplace demographic diversity has changed due to large proportions of females entering the workplace in the past two decades, less than sufficient studies have been conducted on females and work, particularly those in management in South Africa. The literature reviewed in this study indicates that of the five studies that attempt to specifically concentrate on females, only one of these studies, Albertyn, (2003) was conducted in South Africa. Even so, this study was not specifically looking at the experiences of females in the workplace but rather at how females politically transformed from being oppressed and only confined in the home environment, to entering the workplace. The five seminal studies reviewed in the present research include; 1) Albertyn (2003) who has already stated, looked at females and their transition into democracy in South Africa. 2) MacRae (2005) who concentrated on issues surrounding women at work (for example, work options, childcare and family concerns, sexual harassment, race and poverty, and glass ceiling). 3) Schein (2001) in her attempt to investigate

the psychological barriers to females' progress in management positions across different parts of the world. 4) Welle and Heilman (2005) in their study of discrimination against females at work. 5) Yoder (2001) titled "making leadership effective for women", specifically deals with exploring strategies that can enhance females' effectiveness as leaders. Note that at no point is the study maintaining that these five studies are the only ones that have been conducted in research; rather the researcher focused on five of these few as these were the most seminal in conducting a study that attempts to focus particularly on females.

To this point, this research report intends to follow the footsteps of the aforementioned researchers by focusing specifically on experiences of female managers at work. This gives one an opportunity to explore all issues that concern female managers, rather than to single out a specific issue to focus on. This might also demonstrate how these multiple issues may be related to one another in formulating the experiences of females at work.

Having laid the background that includes aims and rationale for this study, this report now turns to reviewing the literature relevant to the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of historical as well as contemporary literature on the experiences of females at work. An exploration on traditional gender stereotypes is offered in the following section. The purpose here is to show the transition that females have undergone, from being isolated in the household to being included in the world of business. The section also introduces the concept of Sex-Role Identity as a theoretical approach employed in the study of management/leadership behaviour. This is followed by a detailed discussion on masculinity and androgyny as the most desirable and effective styles of management. Lastly, this chapter explores the possible drawbacks that androgynous and masculine management styles may have on the career growth of female managers.

A study on the sex role identities, agentic backlash experiences, and perceptions of female managers in South Africa, must of necessity, understand the historical role of females in the South African society. This history chronicles shifts in the roles of females in society from being exclusively involved only in the household care to the workplace. Furthermore, it is also a history of patriarchy in society and its influences on female behaviour at the workplace. Thus in attempting to uncover female experiences at the workplace, one needs to look at how the roles of females have evolved and the possible influence of this background into their work experiences today. The following two sections specifically outline the historical background of females and the evolution of sex role identities in society and the workplace.

2.2 Historical Background

In South Africa, popular political struggles prior to 1990 (the apartheid era) were primarily about liberation from racial oppression. However, for females, although the racial oppression issue took dominance and subordinated all else, their struggles have also been more about gender inequality than racial oppression (Albertyn, 2003). It has been argued that the reason for issues of gender inequality being subsumed under the racial oppression struggle was due to the deeply rooted patriarchal societal attitudes and values (held by both females and males) that emphasised competence in males (Albertyn, 2003). In turn, the most visible form of struggles in all spheres of life including family, business and politics was thus male led (Albertyn, 2003).

Arguably, nothing demonstrates the embedded patriarchy, better than the contestations between females and some male members of the constitutional conference in August 1993 during the debate on the bill of rights (Albertyn, 2003). Specifically, the bill of rights debate prominently featured females (more particularly black females) who argued that the bill of rights should protect them against discriminatory cultural laws and traditions (Albertyn, 2003). However, a member of the traditional leader's delegation, Chief Nonkonyana argued against equality for females, believing that gender equality would take away so much from the males. He further argued for the removal of customary law from the bill of rights (Albertyn, 2003). Eventually, the women's position won the day and customary law was included on the bill of rights. Consequently, females have rights to choose what they want to do with their lives.

In theory, the inclusion of customary law to the bill of rights is the best tool to *free* the most oppressed and marginalised, particularly rural females (again mostly black females). Nonetheless, in practice, while females have been granted rights and can engage in various activities, including entering the workplace, this may not necessarily imply that the patriarchal societal attitudes and beliefs have completely been erased. Nor would it imply that females are no longer enduring the effects of this patriarchal society, given the fact that society lived according to these stereotypes for the most part prior to 1994.

The present study proposes that females may still experience discrimination at the workplace despite legislation. The study maintains that this may be due to the fact that traditional views about male competence and dominance may still be held by some males and to some extent, even by some females. More specifically, it can be argued that this situation prevails because gender stereotypes that describe the roles of both females and males still exist. Also, these gender stereotypes might not necessarily and entirely have been wiped off as a result of changes in the legal environment.

2.3 Traditional Gender-Stereotypes

Gender stereotype is an important concept used in this study. In defining gender stereotypes, it is useful to first define the concept of gender. Gender can be referred to as a social attribute that prescribes differentiated roles, responsibilities, expectations, norms and modes of behaviour to males and females (Ridgeway, 2001).

Accordingly, gender roles refer to culturally or socially defined expectations of the duties and responsibilities, rights and privileges of males and females (Ridgeway, 2001). As such, gender stereotypes are defined as the general view held by society that males are overall more competent than females (Ridgeway, 2001). Park (1997) defined gender-role stereotypes as conceptions widely held by society that tend to associate certain sets of personality traits to one sex, and these stereotypes also grant each sex type particular skills and behaviour. Additionally, Ridgeway (2001) offers examples of such stereotypes as she states that males are perceived to possess mechanical skills, while domestic skills are granted to females.

Another definition of gender stereotypes is drawn from views about status beliefs and gender. Status beliefs are defined as cultural beliefs that attribute greater social significance and competence to one group (that is males) compared to the other (that is females) (Carli, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001). For these scholars (Carli, 2001; Carli & Eagly, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001), people behave or are expected to behave according to the standards that society has defined for their biological sex. Sex is simply understood in the present study as a biological attribute used to differentiate between males and females. A similar view to that of the above mentioned scholars is offered by Rudman and Phelan, (2007) who maintain that gender stereotypes are cognitive structures containing knowledge, beliefs and expectations of the perceiver. These cognitive structures exist in people's minds and are shaped by society's general view; they are meant to serve as guidelines to what behaviours are appropriate and inappropriate in society for each sex type (Rudman & Phelan, 2007). In addition, expectations are known to be a powerful source of influence in people's behaviours, thus behaviours that people display are influenced by the knowledge of what is expected of them (Ridgeway, 2001). These stereotypes, defining people's *appropriate* roles and behaviours have served for long periods of time to separate males and females in all spheres of life by portraying males as the most dominant and competent.

The present study adopts the shared view amongst these definitions of gender stereotypes. It therefore defines gender stereotypes as common perceptions of roles and expectations about both sexes.

Gender stereotypes assigns personality traits believed to characterise females more than males, and these are described as feminine; and those that characterise males as masculine (Ridgeway, 2001). Conceptualization of masculinity and femininity is derived from family roles, that is, the

way in which roles for males and females are defined and distributed in the household (Park, 1997). Hofstede (1980) (as cited in Sama and Papamarcos, 2000, p.21) defined masculinity as characterised by "a high emphasis on achievement, assertiveness and competitiveness; a money and 'things' (material) orientation and preference for the strong and successful achiever". Additionally, masculinity also includes such traits as aggressiveness, independence, rationality and decisiveness. Drawing from the family analogy, the role of a male here is to ensure that there is compatibility between the family and the wider environment, and that the family's needs are met (Hofstede, 1980 as cited in Sama and Papamarcos, 2000). Further, these dimensions are commonly associated with instrumental and agentic character traits (Park, 1996, 1997). Femininity on the other hand include characteristics such as being sensitive, emotional, intuitive and warm- they are commonly possessed by females and are associated more with communal traits (Park, 1996, 1997). Moreover, feminine types are perceived to place more emphasis on security, modesty, the spiritual quality of life and tend to have a strong caring for the weak (Park, 1996, 1997).

Following these ideas, the role of a female in the household tends to be focused on the family relationship's needs by showing concern and sensitivity to other people's responses with regard to one's own behaviour, this is also referred to as expressiveness (Sama & Papamarcos, 2000). This division of role in the home-environment perhaps provides a basis for why professionally females occupied roles such as those of nurses and secretaries. One can argue that this is because performance in such roles involves nurturing skills. More particularly it involves looking after other people, and as already stated this type of behaviour or skill is associated with females. In a similar view, male type of roles in the organisation became those that involve thinking, dominance and decision making.

Drawing from the above demonstrated perceptions with regard to male and female roles, one gathers that gender stereotypes tend to place males at a higher social status compared to their female counterparts. It can be argued that the reason why males are at a higher place in the social status is because character traits generally used to describe males emphasize and demand hard work, strength, focus and determination. Thus their traditional roles also demand those types of traits. On the other hand, females are placed at a lower social status due to the fact that personality traits used to describe them appear to be more passive in that they emphasize

kindness and caring for other's needs. These views about gender roles and status beliefs for both males and females have not only defined roles and positions of both sexes in society, but they also tended to inform literature on the study of leadership behaviour in the workplace.

Consequently, traditional leadership theories tended to predict leadership behaviour and success of that behaviour on the basis of gender roles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Gedney, 1999; Ridgeway, 2001). Specifically, the gender role approach tends to associate males with competence and it predicts that males are more likely than females to become successful managers (Korabik& Ayman, 1987). As Schein (2001) argues, this situation occurs because the approach emphasizes that the best managers are most likely to be those who possess characteristics that are commonly associated with males (for example, instrumentality and agency). Moreover, gender role approach also predicts the style which both males and females tend to adopt in management. For instance, it is maintained that female managers are more likely to manage in a feminine type of style (that is, expressiveness-relationship oriented) (Korabik & Ayman, 1987; Park, 1996). This management style tends to be relationship focused as more emphasis is placed on maintaining positive work relationships with subordinates (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Park, 1996). In the same manner, the gender role approach predicts that males are more likely to display the masculine management style in which goal achievement, competitiveness and all the aforementioned characteristics of masculinity remain central (Korabik & Ayman, 1987). The more masculine management style was therefore predicted to be the most successful in the workplace due to its emphasis on deadlines and goal achievement, and by the same token femininity was predicted to be less successful due to its perceived lack of such qualities (Korabik & Ayman, 1987).

In response to the above proposed claims made by the gender role approach, critics have argued that these are merely stereotypes and may not necessarily be accurate or even true. In particular, Park (1997) argues that the gender-role approach overstates the true degree of the differences between the two sex-types, simply because the approach is formulated from stereotypes. This implies that even if differences do exist between masculinity and femininity or between males and females, gender stereotypes tend to assume that these differences are larger than what they actually are. Subsequently, one group comes to be perceived as better than the other in certain aspects.

Additionally, this particular approach does not account for differences that exist between people of the same sex. For example, some researchers have stressed that it is not necessarily true that all females may be feminine, and the same is said to be true for males (Bem, 1974; Korabik & Ayman, 1987). Moreover, it has also been stated that the approach does not adequately explain the differences in male and female behaviour (Park, 1997). This is evidently because people of both sexes have come to assume different roles from what is stereotypically prescribed for their gender (Park, 1997). In a similar view, Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) assert that research or theories trying to predict or explain leadership and management effectiveness on the basis of gender, rather than sex role identity (which is essentially roles that individuals are oriented towards) cannot hold. As such, the utility of gender role approach has been empirically challenged on a number of fronts.

The present study proposes that leadership and management can be best studied using a different approach from the gender role approach. The pioneering contribution on alternative approach was the work by Bem (1974). Bem's (1974) theory of androgyny, which is deeply rooted in the sex role identity approach evolved to provide a better explanation for male and female behaviour. Sex role identity is defined more formally as the pattern and level of masculine and feminine characteristics adopted and displayed in the same manner by a person, irrespective of their sex (Cook, 1985, as cited in Park, 1997). More researchers such as Korabik and Ayman (1987), Park (1997), Vinnicombe and Singh (2002), by drawing from Bem's (1974) propositions, have provided evidence that studying leadership using an approach that is fundamentally based on gender stereotypes can no longer provide adequate explanations to differences observed in leadership behaviour.

The next few paragraphs attempt to outline issues with regard to the changing nature of gender roles in society and their influence in the development of the sex role identity approach.

2.4 The Changing Gender Roles in Society and Sex Role Identity

Females in increasing numbers are entering the workplace and are occupying leadership and management positions in both the public and private sector (Park, 1997; Schein, 2001). However, as demonstrated in the study rationale section of the last chapter, females are still

poorly represented in executive positions, in South Africa, United Sates, United Kingdom and Australia (www.info.gov.za; Wood & Lindorff, 2001).

It is important to recognize that notwithstanding the poor representation of females in management, a major change has occurred with regard to the roles and positions that females have assumed. Females have entered into fields or careers that were previously and traditionally reserved to be for males, amongst others, these fields include medicine, engineering and law (Carli, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001). These changes may have been the result of legislation and the post 1994 changes in the socio-political and economic spheres, but also changes in society's views of sex roles. Moreover, the new realities of both males and females assuming roles which they could not otherwise have done traditionally, implies that competence in any sphere of life can no longer be attributed to one's gender or sex, but possibly to the sex-role identity that they become socialised into (Park, 1996). This is the position held by the sex-role identity theory.

The sex role identity approach specifically argues that there are other factors, other than biology, that can influence the socialisation process, and these include; culture, education, resources, attitudes and ethnical difference (Park, 1996, 1997). This implies that while some people may assume roles through the sex-typing process (which is essentially through gender roles), others may go through the same process but it may be socially influenced by the aforementioned factors. This study acknowledges that, to a certain degree, one's sex does influence the type of roles that they may come to assume later on in their life. For instance, if an individual is biologically male, society then teaches this individual throughout all their developmental stages to learn and master roles and appropriate behaviours that are associated with males. However, the sex role identity approach asserts that, in addition to biology, people will also assume roles depending on what their culture teaches them, the level of education that they have, and the amount of available resources they have to enable them to become anything else other than what their sex prescribes (Park, 1996). Following this view, the present study assert that females have now assumed roles in the workplace and males have also assumed roles in the home-environment due to the evolvement of sex role identity.

In summary, the premise of the sex-role identity is that people whose' sex role identities become influenced by sex-typing process tend to adopt sex role identities or gender roles that are associated with their biological sex (Park, 1997). Whereas people whose sex role identities

become influenced by factors other than biology (such as culture or education) tend to adopt less traditional roles. This means that they may adopt sex roles identities that may not necessarily be congruent with their biological sex (Park, 1997). For example, a female may assume a leadership position of a manager in an organisation.

In addition to this approach allowing for such flexibility in role adaptation, research has also provided evidence that sex role identity is a better predictor of leadership behaviour compared to the gender role approach (Korabik & Ayman, 1987; Korabik, 1990; Park 1996, 1997). This breakthrough was first brought about by Bem's (1974) theory of androgyny. Further, the theory is considered significant in the present study as much of the issues that the study aims to unpack are centred on the area of sex role identity.

The key thrust of the androgynous theory is that masculinity and femininity are not necessarily positioned on two opposing ends, that is, they are not mutually exclusive (Bem, 1974). Particularly, the androgynous theory is premised on the idea that an individual does not necessarily have to be either masculine or feminine in their personality traits, however one can possess both types of traits and this is referred to as androgyny (Bem, 1974). Bem (1975) argues that gender stereotypes that strictly maintain that individuals can only possess masculine or feminine qualities only serve to prevent individuals from fully developing, which in turn may prevent them from successfully managing different situations. By demonstrating that individuals can adopt sex role identities that may not necessarily be congruent with their sex type, the theory shifted the study of leadership behaviour from being purely based on gender, to being based rather on social roles that people assume in their lives.

Thus the theory also resulted in the development of the androgynous management style; which is essentially a management style that combines masculine and feminine behaviours/qualities (Korabik & Ayman, 1987).

Following the theory, female managers at the workplace can either adopt masculine or feminine sex role identities as behavioural styles, or they can adopt both elements of the two dimensions and become androgynous managers (Bem, 1974; Korabik & Ayman, 1987, Park, 1997). It has been argued that masculine and androgynous management styles are the best suited and most successful, as previously stated.

It is important to realise that this study notes that females may become accustomed to masculine or androgynous sex role identities simply due to pressures of factors such as organisational norms. As Park (1997) argued, some females may be inherently masculine, that is they might be sex-typed into masculinity from the early stages of their lives. However, others may come to adopt masculine and androgynous sex role identities later on in their lives in order to suit specific needs or situations (Park, 1997). In the workplace, females who are not inherently masculine or androgynous may tend to adopt such behaviours in order to fit into their organisations. For instance, in management, the successful manager is described as one who is competitive, self-confident, aggressive, ambitious and independent. As such, feminine females may find the need to adopt these behaviours (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Schein, 2001). Still, the present study does not intend to argue or investigate whether the more masculine or androgynous sex role identities are adopted or actually inherent in these competent female managers. The main concern for the study rather, is to investigate sex role identities displayed by female managers in the workplace, and the perceived impact of these on career growth opportunities.

Korabik and Ayman (1987) advocated Bem's (1974) claims by demonstrating through their findings that gender does not always predict behaviour. Their study comprised of a sample of both female and male managers, and they measured traits possessed by these managers, the leadership style they adopted and how effective the style was according to the managers' own perceptions. Confirming the claims proposed by the androgynous theory, their findings revealed specifically that males and females are not necessarily different in that they may possess a mixture of both masculine and feminine traits (Korabik & Ayman, 1987). These findings support the claim that masculinity and femininity are actually not mutually exclusive like previous research (gender role approach) has argued- one can possess both, or they can be the opposite of what their sex predicts (Bem, 1974, 1975).

Furthermore, with regard to leadership styles, Korabik and Ayman 's (1987) findings showed that leadership styles adopted by these managers varied across the sex role identities, and most importantly leadership style was not associated with one's sex type. Put simply, this means that a female does not necessarily only possess feminine traits and thus tend to manage in a more feminine style. The same may be said for males as not all males may be masculine. Therefore, not all males adapt the masculine style of management. For instance, some male managers were

found to employ the androgynous style in their management positions, which has already mentioned, is a sex role identity that encompasses both feminine and masculine traits (Korabik & Ayman, 1987). Nevertheless, the study also revealed what is expected stereotypically, that is some females will be feminine and therefore tend to manage in feminine ways; even so, many of them were found to be masculine or androgynous and in turn, they tended to adopt the more masculine or androgynous styles of management (Korabik & Ayman, 1987).

DeMatteo (1994) reveals similar findings with Korabik and Ayman (1987), and argues that the position that an individual occupies may be what dictates their traits and behaviour. Fundamentally, the manner in which an individual behaves, whether male or female will be directed by the position in which they are placed. For example, a manager acts in a certain way because their position is that of management and therefore gives them authority to act in that way. Further, this manager exhibits certain traits because their position demands or requires them to do so (DeMatteo, 1994). This implies that if females are placed in the same position with males, they will exhibit the same kind of *successful* traits and behaviour that males seem to exhibit in these positions. Other researchers have clearly supported this view, although they maintained that it is personality traits that enable one to obtain a management position, rather than the reverse. Korabik and Ayman, (1987) for example hold the view that certain qualities enable one to obtain a management position, manage in a particular way in that position, and to succeed in that position. Even so, the present study does not intend to make a case for whether behaviour and personality traits is what causes one to obtain a management position and to succeed, or whether the reverse is true. Both cases may in fact be true.

These views are rather provided in the study to demonstrate that both males and females are in fact capable of displaying the same behaviours when placed in management.

To this end, views emphasising that both males and females are capable of the same management and leadership behaviours have amounted to sex role identity becoming widely acceptable as the best approach in studying leadership and management (Korabik& Ayman, 1987; Park, 1997**).** Additionally, the androgynous and masculine styles were found to be associated with more positive outcomes, these include; job satisfaction, acceptance of leader performance by subordinates, as well as perceived effectiveness of leadership style by the leader/ manager (Korabik & Ayman, 1987; Schein 2001). In this way, these were perceived to be the most

successful styles, with the feminine style being perceived as the least successful and therefore inappropriate for the workplace, particularly management.

Consequently, Korabik and Ayman (1987) further asserted that androgyny would be the best management style for females as they would no longer have to give up their femininity for masculinity. Essentially, in the more traditional leadership theories, females were faced with pressures of having to conform to the masculine organisational norm by giving up their feminine qualities. Androgyny instead gives females a chance to become successful managers in that they can adopt masculinity (which is perceived as the most preferable), but also they can maintain their more feminine qualities instead of having to give them up entirely. Drawing from Bem (1974), Korabik and Ayman (1987) argued that androgyny would be the best management style for females.

Below follows a detailed discussion of the positive outcomes associated with the androgynous style of management.

2.5 The Androgynous Management Style

As noted earlier, the androgynous style of management emerged from Bem's Androgyny Theory (Bem, 1974). The theory proposes that due to their flexibility in terms of possessing both traits of masculinity and femininity, androgynous people are better able to adapt to situations that require both male-type and female-type reactions (that is, they have a variety on masculine and feminine behavioural options) (Bem, 1974). Based on the adaptability model of Bem (1974), McGregor and Tweed (2001) have argued that androgynous managers of each sex type adopt the best of the other sex's qualities in order to become more effective leaders. Put simply, both female and male managers will take positive traits of the other sex and combine those with the positive traits of their own sex. This is what allows these individuals to be more effective in a variety of situations. It is important to acknowledge that while some individuals may consciously adopt androgyny to suit particular roles; others may simply be inherently androgynous (that is they may have adopted androgynous qualities through the sex-typing process). Park (1997) has demonstrated how this process may occur (see a detailed discussion on the previous section).

Given this wider behavioural repertoire, the androgynous manager is able to assess what solution or reaction would be best suited for a particular situation (McGregor & Tweed, 2001).

For instance, in relation to traditional leadership theories, androgynous managers will manage in a task-production oriented manner when that style is more appropriate; and they will manage in more relationship-oriented/employee-centred style when that is required (Park 1997). An effective manager is one who is able to channel employee behaviour to work towards achieving desirable organisational ends, as well as balance concern for people. DeMatteo (1994) clearly substantiates this view by maintaining that management requires a mixture of abilities and skills, and some of these are feminine while others are masculine. This point expresses a shift from traditional views which state that only masculine qualities are appropriate and effective in the workplace. By exploring the experiences of female managers at the workplace; the researcher will be uncovering if the aforementioned ideas hold in the preset study.

Moreover, as it was also provided in the preceding section, earlier researchers revealed that the consequence of this mixture of traits is positive health outcomes; job satisfaction, motivation and lower stress levels and the ability to cope with a variety of situations, as well as acceptance of the performance of the leader (Bem, 1974; Korabik & Ayman, 1987; Park, 1997). However, despite the profound benefits of the androgynous management style, other researchers have found that the most preferable is still the masculine style of management. Schein (2001) for example reveals in her findings that even after all the changes in society that have brought females in organisations and allowed them to occupy management positions, the organisational norm is still that best managers are male or at least they are characterised with qualities that are stereotypically associated with males.

As such, in order to be evaluated positively and to succeed, female managers have to conform to this organisational norm of masculinity.

The present study hopes to uncover this important observation by investigating the sex role identities of female managers and their perceived impact on career growth of these managers.

Following this view, it appears that even though androgyny is offered as an alternative that can enable females to be successful in management and leadership positions, the more masculine management style is still the most preferable (Schein, 2001). As males are traditionally expected to be masculine, one can argue that they do not find themselves faced with the pressures of having to give up their masculine traits (Park, 1996; Sama & Papamarcos, 2000) (see detailed

discussion in the gender stereotypes section of this chapter). Particularly, this study emphasizes that males are at an advantage in that their masculine traits automatically qualifies them to meet the hiring criteria for management positions (as far as personality characteristics are concerned). However, females have to give up their femininity and adopt the organisational norm of masculinity. For this reason, it is argued that conditions defining success for female leaders appear to be much stricter than those defining success for males (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Evidently, there seem to be conflicting ideas regarding what is the best management style, particularly for female managers. This follows from studies advocating for androgynous style as the best for females Bem, (1974) and Korabik and Ayman, 1987), while others maintain that the more masculine style remains the organisational norm (Schein, 2001). While it is not the purpose of the present study to make a case for which management style is best between androgyny and masculinity, it is clear that the two are the most preferable, with the feminine management style being perceived less effective and thus less desirable (Korabik & Ayman, 1987; Park, 1996, 1997).

Moreover, the present study notes that while socio-economic, legislative and political changes may have contributed to the evolution in sex role identities and therefore facilitated and allowed for both sexes to adopt different roles, dominant styles and stereotypes abide.

In particular, in South Africa, Affirmative Action and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 may have partly contributed to such evolution in the sex role identities of South African females. Yet, by the same token, socio-economic, legislative and political changes have led to males having less power as they now have to share their positions and territory with females. To this end, the present study is of the view that there may have been some resistance to this evolution of females by their male counterparts. Resistance often occurs simply because culture, beliefs, values, attitudes and perceptions that have been held for a long time are said to be very difficult to let go of, or to change (Morgan, 2006).

For discussion purposes, given the patriarchal nature of society in South Africa, males have held authority and influence, in both families and the workplace sphere for long periods of time (Albertyn, 2003). Thus one asserts that due to people's tendency to dislike change and perceive it as discomforting, males may find it difficult to let go of their traditional practices and learn to

accommodate females more so in positions of higher authority. This point emphasizes that males have learned to accommodate females in the workplace, as evidence is provided by the Commission of Employment Equity statistics, however they have learned to do so, only to a certain degree. In other words, females have gained access into the workplace, yet once they reach or attempt to go beyond a certain level, males may become uncomfortable and perceive them to be invading their territory. This is something referred to as the glass-ceiling effect where females can only advance to a certain level, due to artificial barriers hindering their progress (Abidin, 2009; Carli & Eagly, 2001; MacRae, 2005).

Carli and Eagly (2001) state that the glass ceiling effect may be present because traditional males who have been at the top of organisations' hierarchy for long periods of time may not necessarily always be willing to accommodate females at that level. Consequently, they may attempt to block these females in reaching the top, by denying them further employment for senior positions. As a result, most females in organisations occupy up to middle level management positions. Following this, the researcher argues that some form or elements of patriarchy may still exist within the broader society and within organisations or the workplace in general. In this way, it is hypothesized that female manager's competence may even today, despite sex role identity evolvement and legislation, be questioned or rather negatively evaluated, and this may be due to lingering traditional gender stereotypes.

Specifically, the present study argues that although masculinity and androgyny are proposed as the best management styles, this may not necessarily always be the case, particularly for females. In fact, the study holds the view that there are still forces such as persisting stereotypes that tend to disfavour the more masculine and androgynous females (that is, agentic backlash). These stereotypes tend to punish those females who may be less feminine (that is, being masculine or androgynous) by negatively evaluating them. In support to this view, researchers have clearly stated that requiring female managers to conform to the masculine ideal may put them in a **double bind** (Korabik, 1990). Thus it is unlikely that females will dominate the world of work and even be selected to become leaders (Ritter & Yoder, 2004).

In fact, it is evident through findings of previous research (Korabik, 1990; Ritter and Yoder, 2004; Rudman and Glick, 1999, 2001; Rudman and Phelan, 2007) that androgynous and masculine management styles, when applied particularly by females, do not always yield all the

positive outcomes that SRI theory has suggested. In an attempt to finding more reasons to why this situation occurs, Rudman and Glick (1999, 2001) have maintained that the situation occurs since androgynous and masculine females possess agentic traits, and agency is a quality that is traditionally associated with males. Therefore females who display agentic traits may be perceived to be lacking in the more feminine aspects, or they may be perceived to be violating prescriptive norms of female niceness, and they referred to these negative evaluations as agentic backlash (Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001).

Moreover, one can argue that this discrimination against agentic females may occur because people generally hold the perception that a person can either be feminine or masculine, and not both. This is the reason why agentic females may be perceived to lack communality aspects that traditionally characterises females. Understood in this manner, female managers are faced with an impression management dilemma where they are doomed if they display only their feminine traits, but also they are evaluated negatively when they display agentic traits because it is often assumed that by so doing, they lack feminine traits. The present study takes the position that these views are perpetuated by traditional gender stereotypes associating agency with males or perceiving that only males should be agentic.

The next section attempts to offer the different forms that these traditional stereotypes may take and the extent to which they may still persist.

2.6 Gender Stereotypes Persist

According to The Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), when females display agentic qualities and assume roles that are stereotypically associated with males such as those associated with management, they may come to be perceived as deviating from the traditional roles and behaviours that society has set for them as females (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Further, the theory maintains that these females may experience role incongruence between the role of females within organisations and the role of the females within the home and personal environment. Following this idea, one is able to deduce that in general, society holds the perception that a female cannot be a successful mother or wife, and at the same time be a successful manager. This is because society believes that a female cannot posses both the type of qualities that will enable them to succeed in household roles, as well as in management roles in the workplace.

Given that, the prevailing view is that due to agency being commonly associated with masculinity, agentic females, despite their ability to demonstrate qualities that are deemed desirable in the workplace, particularly in management, may receive negative evaluations.

More specifically, previous studies have revealed that negative evaluations experienced by agentic females may take the form of discrimination, hostility, dislike and rejection and even to be perceived to be lacking in social skills as a result of their agency, although they possess these skills (see for example Korabik 1990; Rudman & Glick, 1999). While female managers may be negatively evaluated for displaying agentic traits, male managers are however rewarded for displaying interpersonal skills, rather than being perceived as violating masculine norms (Korabik, 1990; Rudman & Glick, 1999). Thus, this study maintains that although males are also stereotyped, the extent to which these stereotypes can be prescriptive tends to be unbalanced in that the range of prescriptive behaviours is often broader for females than it is for males.

Similarly, literature on gender effects on social influence appears to support the view that males have an advantage over females as it indicates that males have more influence on others than females do (Carli, 2001). Specifically, this literature provides that society generally thinks that females are less competent than males and therefore less credible as influence agents. As a consequence, individuals, males in particular will dislike highly competent female managers and reject their authority (Carli, 2001). Moreover, individuals are more likely to devalue the work of female managers, and when that fails, managers' work is attributed to external factors such as help from subordinates or luck, rather than managers' own abilities. Further, in cases where such external attributions cannot be made, female managers may be disliked and even be rejected (Carli, 2001; Heilman, 2001).

To this end, this study asserts that discrimination encountered by agentic females (that is, agentic backlash) may differ from that discrimination which is encountered by other females who do not possess agentic traits (for example, feminine females). Also, this other type of discrimination referred to as ontological may be understood to be reflective of the more traditional or sex typed discrimination. For the purposes of this study, it is important that agentic backlash be distinguished from the more traditional ontological sex discrimination against females. The following section describes in detail the difference between the two forms of discrimination.

2.7 Sex Discrimination, Agentic Backlash and Impact on Career Growth

Sex discrimination, also termed ontological discrimination refers to cases where a person may be denied opportunities for employment or engaging in certain activities on the basis of their biological sex (Albertyn, 2003). When females fought for the provision of gender equality on the bill of rights, they were fighting against removal of such stereotypically formulated views. This form of discrimination still prevails today, although to a lesser degree. As mentioned, this is evident in that more females are continuing to enter the workplace, with some having even entered into management and occupied roles that were traditionally reserved for males. Yet, this accommodation of females at the world of work does not necessarily imply that they are no longer being discriminated against. As already argued, studies have in fact demonstrated that despite all the above mentioned societal changes, the organisation is still viewed as a man's world (Schein, 2001).

However, today's discrimination against females is more subtle and hardly takes the form of refusal to hire females on the basis of their sex, that is, ontologically. In particular, the discrimination tends to take the form of "trait discrimination" which occurs when an employer is willing to hire females but refuses to hire females with *particular* personality traits, more especially *agentic traits* (Yuracko, 2004). Heilman (2001) argues that early social psychology literature uncovered a similar concern when it argued that similar behaviours between males and females may be interpreted differently. Essentially what they found is that males and females can exhibit the same kinds of behaviours; but the behaviours may come to be perceived or interpreted differently, and they referred to this as *double standards* (Heilman, 2001). By investigating whether androgynous and masculine female managers experience agentic backlash, the researcher will essentially reveal if such double standards identified by Heilman (2001) are present in the present study.

Following Yuracko's (2004) distinction between ontological and trait discrimination; one is able to infer that agentic backlash takes the form of trait discrimination in that it discriminates against females who display agentic traits as they tend to be evaluated negatively compared to their male counterparts who display the same qualities (Rudman & Glick, 1999; Yuracko, 2004).

Drawing from Rudman and Glick's (1999, 2001) findings, the present study proposes that perceived agentic backlash may negatively impact on females' career progress. To illustrate this point, Rudman and Glick (1999) emphasized that the new trend called feminisation of management may actually increase pressures faced by female job applicants for senior management positions.

This concept of feminisation of management is simply the inclusion of interpersonal skills as a hiring criterion for management positions. This concept accentuates the idea that managers should be socially or interpersonally skilled. Meaning managers should be likable to their subordinates, superiors and colleagues, while at the same time they must possess agentic traits (Rudman & Glick, 1999). However, there is bias in perception in that people view agentic females to be lacking in interpersonal skills, even if they do possess them. In support to this claim, in their study, Rudman and Glick (1999) evaluated job applicants and rated them on traits of communality and agency. Their findings revealed that agentic males were perceived to be more socially, that is, interpersonally skilled and employable than agentic females for jobs that require both agentic and communal qualities (Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001). It can be argued that this situation occurs since traditional females are naturally friendlier and more socially skilled (due to their feminine aspects of communality). Thus agentic females (due to their strong/masculine qualities) are automatically assumed to be lacking in the possession of feminine qualities, even when they do. Yet, agentic males (who possess the same qualities as agentic females) may be perceived to be more capable of such friendly behaviours.

Evidently, there is bias in perception; which positions agentic females as lacking in more feminine aspects, and the reverse is not said about males.

In this way, Rudman and Glick (1999, 2001) assert that agentic females are discriminated against since they are denied employment for management positions on the basis that they are supposedly lacking in interpersonal and social skills; with agentic males being more likely to be employed in those positions. If males and females do not stand an equal chance of being appointed in management positions; one can argue that this situation may limit career growth opportunities for female managers.

Similarly, a study done by Wood and Lindorff (2001), although they did not directly look at agency, reveals that traditional forms of discrimination perpetuated by gender stereotypes that serve to discriminate against females still exists and these do tend to limit females' career growth opportunities. More specifically, these researchers found that gender stereotyping, formal and informal organisation structures, together with organisational policies were viewed by females to serve as barriers in their career advancement. In contrast, male managers did not perceive any of the factors reported by female managers and therefore did not report any form of discrimination to be present (Wood & Lindorff, 2001). This in turn excludes accurate assessment of males' and females' competence. Hence bias in selection, placement and performance evaluation exists in favour of males (Rudman & Phelan, 2007; Wood & Lindorff, 2001). This kind of unfair treatment is representative of forms of discrimination, and may also include things like fewer promotions being awarded to females, underpayment to females, as well as lack of access to organisational resources (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Welle & Heilman, 2005). In this way, these conditions may hinder or make it less likely for females to advance their careers at the rate compared to that of their male counterparts.

Wood and Lindorff's (2001) findings suggest that future studies should look at agency and see whether females who possess this character trait share the same perceptions with regard to factors hindering their career progress, and that is whether at all, they perceive their career progress to be hindered in anyway. Accordingly, a major concern for the present study is agentic backlash. Thus the attempt of the present study is to delve into these aspects by focusing on experiences of female managers at the workplace and their perceptions of different styles of management or the sex role identities they tend to adopt and how this impacts upon their work experience in the form of career growth or lack thereof.

2.8 Conclusion

In summary, it was gathered in the literature reviewed that females ought to display agentic traits in order to be perceived suitable and to be successful in management positions (that is, display masculine or androgynous sex-role identities) (DeMatteo, 1994; Korabik & Ayman, 1987; Schein, 2001). However it has also been demonstrated that when females display agentic traits, they are perceived to be violating the prescriptive norms of female niceness (Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001).

Thus there is an enormous contradiction and double bind. In addition, although females are expected to possess agentic traits in order to be successful, this in turn causes them to be perceived as being interpersonally deficient; because you cannot supposedly be female and possess a combination of both agentic and expressive interpersonal traits. As previously argued, there is bias in perception in that agentic females are automatically assumed to be lacking in the aspect of interpersonal skills, simply because of their strong agentic (masculine) traits, even when they do posses these interpersonal social skills. Additionally, agentic males are even more preferable than agentic females when hiring for management positions, in that they are assumed to be more capable of friendly behaviour and social skills than their agentic female counterparts. Following this, the key argument of the present study is that although masculine and androgynous management styles are displayed as the best, there is still a strong line of existing trait discrimination against agentic females, based on their perceived lack of interpersonal skills and the idea that to be agentic violates norms of femininity.

Consequently, females find themselves faced with impression management dilemma or double bind where they are damned if they don't possess agentic traits, but also damned if they do. Given the possibility of such discrimination, it is understandable that the proportion of females in top executive positions is very low in organisations, both locally and internationally (Schein, 2001; Wood & Lindorff, 2001; www.tinfo.gov.za).

Based on the literature reviewed, the present study maintains that despite legislation and all other changes in society, female managers may still encounter discrimination at the workplace. This discrimination could either be ontological or trait (in the form of agentic backlash), or it could be both. Furthermore, the study proposes that this will impact negatively on their career growth perceptions.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter offers a description of the design and methods employed in conducting the study. The first two sections give the intended purpose of the study, as well as the research questions that it examined. The following section discusses description of the study design, the sample and sampling procedures that were employed. In the third section, the study provides details of the measuring and data collection instrument that were utilised in collecting the data. This section also discusses the reliability and validity of these instruments. Subsequently, all the necessary procedures that were followed in conducting the study, starting from the initial design, data collection and analysis techniques that were employed in analysing the findings are described in the fourth section. The chapter then ends by briefly providing the ethical steps that were taken to ensure that the study had no negative ramifications on the participants in any way.

2.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the contradictions between research that positions androgyny and masculinity as the best management styles and research which positions the two styles as the reason why competent agentic females may be discriminated against and therefore be limited in their career growth opportunities.

Thus, the study proposes that female managers may be discriminated against in the workplace. Furthermore, the study also proposes that experienced discrimination may negatively impact on female manager's perceptions of their career growth opportunities. Research questions investigated in this study were formulated from these propositions. Since the main purpose of the study is to explore if agentic female managers experience agentic backlash, it could only be possible to label this discrimination as agentic, if no other explanations could be offered to this situation. In other words, the study investigates the extent to which discrimination experienced by agentic females, if any, could be attributed to the fact that these females possess agency (that is, agentic backlash) or whether it could be attributed to discrimination in general (that is,

ontological sex discrimination). This is done through carefully exploring the different types of discrimination experienced by female managers at the workplace.

2.4 Research Questions:

Based on the above, the research questions explored in this study were:

- Key research question: Do androgynous female managers experience discrimination (agentic backlash), and do they perceive this to limit their career growth?
- Do masculine female managers encounter agentic backlash, and do they perceive this to limit their career growth?
- Sub-research questions:

Do feminine female managers encounter discrimination and does this differ qualitatively from that which is experienced by agentic female managers (ontological/traditional versus trait/agentic discrimination)?

Does the discrimination experienced by androgynous and masculine female managers differ qualitatively from that which is ontological?

2.5 Design, Procedure and Sample

Design of the study

This is a qualitative study. The aim of qualitative research is to provide an illumination and understanding of the complex psychosocial issues that are most useful for answering humanistic exploratory questions such as why or how (Marshall, 1996). The present study chose to employ the qualitative approach due to the fact that it involves investigating more complex issues such as sex role identities, as well as how and why agentic female managers may be experiencing agentic backlash. Additionally, the researcher needed to obtain as much nuances as possible from these aspects, which would have otherwise been difficult, if not almost impossible to capture had the quantitative approach been used. For this reason, the researcher collected data by interviewing participants; more specifically a semi-structured interview guide was used. It was important to utilize a semi-structured interview since this gives participants a chance to tell their own stories

as they see them, rather than using pre-coded questionnaires which tend to have an influence on the responses given. Subsequently, an analysis of these results is conducted using a qualitative technique called thematic analysis. However, basic information or demographics of the participants were gathered quantitatively, that is using a questionnaire referred to as a Biographical Blank/Questionnaire. Also, a critical part of this research was to identify managers' sex role identities and to do this, another questionnaire was used. More specifically, the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) was used as a tool to identify the sex role orientation of each manager. The BSRI seeks to classify people into four types of categories namely; masculine, feminine androgynous and undifferentiated (neutral).

Additionally, the study was initially designed to have two phases; the first phase involved completion of the questionnaire (including the biographical blank and the BSRI), and the second phase was a follow-up interview. In the first phase, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to each potential sample in all the approached organisations in which access had been obtained. The sampled female managers were given two weeks to complete the questionnaires. After completing the questionnaires, participants who were willing to be contacted for a follow up in-depth interview were asked to provide their contact details in their completed questionnaires in order for the researcher to arrange the interview. Thus the interview made up the second phase of the study. It was considered important to divide the data collection process into two phases because the researcher needed to first identify those people who would fit into the sampling framework. This was done to avoid interviewing people who would later be found not to fit into the sample criteria. Essentially, the researcher sought to categorise and investigate only androgynous, feminine and masculine females. This was for the simple reason that the present study primarily aimed at investigating whether agentic females (that is, masculine and androgynous) females experience agentic backlash and the impact that this could have on their career growth. The reason for also investigating feminine females was because the study needed to show that discrimination experienced by agentic females could be different to that which experienced by traditional (feminine) females. In this way, the researcher would be able to demonstrate that the discrimination experienced by agentic females, if any, can beyond any doubt be referred to as agentic backlash. This would reveal the answer to the forth objective of the study; which essentially is to demonstrate that traditional discrimination may be different to

agentic backlash. That said, there was no reason to include females undifferentiated in the BSRI since the proposed research questions were not designed to explore their experiences.

Sampling Procedure

In the initial process, the study employed probability sampling in obtaining the sample. Particularly, the first stage of selecting the sample involved simple random selection. Probability sampling is a procedure in which every subject of the targeted population has a non-zero probability of being included in the sample, and this probability can be accurately determined (Doherty, 1994). Thus, random sampling ensures that every subject in the sample is randomly selected so that they can likely be representative of the targeted population. In this way, this procedure makes it possible to produce unbiased estimates of the targeted population (Doherty, 1994). In the present study, the first stage of sample selection involved the researcher approaching several organisations where all female managers were asked to volunteer to participate in the study. In the second stage, the final sample was selected based on whether participant could be classified into any of the three categories (feminine, masculine and androgynous) identified by the BSRI. As mentioned, those participants who scored undifferentiated in the BSRI would not be included in this research.

Essentially, selection of the final sample was dependent on whether participants' scores could be classified into the three categories, namely; feminine, masculine and androgynous, as well as participants' willingness to be contacted for a follow up interview. Therefore, in the second stage, the BSRI also served as a criterion in which the sample was selected.

Sample Description

As already mentioned, the targeted sample of the study was female managers who could be identified as masculine, androgynous or feminine on the BSRI. However, the researcher came to realise that in order to get as much information on the experiences and perceptions of female managers, one needed to obtain more analytical variables and so, biological details of the sample were captured. This included race, marital status, age, whether one had children or not, the ages of children, educational level, management level, length of time in management as well as the field of work one belongs to.

The desired sample size was 10-15 participants, and the study was successful in reaching this number as the final interviewed sample size comprised of 11 female managers. These managers were from different organisations in the larger parts of Johannesburg.

The sample also differed in terms of race, which included White, Black, Coloured and Indian. However, the sample was heavily skewed towards the Black population. Furthermore, managers were all between the ages of 30-45. In addition to that, the sample also differed in terms of their level of education or qualification, the field or department of work, ranks they belonged to in their organisation (that is, from junior to senior management levels), as well as the number of years they have occupied their respective positions. Moreover, some of them were married while others were not, and while some had children, others did not. Those who had children also differed in terms of the ages of these dependents. Such diversity in the sample allowed the researcher to obtain comprehensive data, and allowed analysis using these different variables (see Table 1, pgs 49-50).

Nevertheless, there were limitations to the study, as it could not yield the desired response rate; in fact the response rate appeared to be significantly low. In an effort to attempt to solve this situation, the sampling procedure was then changed from probability to non-probability, particularly snowball sampling. This is elaborated further in the following section.

From Probability (Simple Random Sampling) to Non-Probability (Snowball Sampling) Procedure

As already mentioned the study was designed to separate the two phases of the research, that is, completion of the questionnaire and the follow-up interview. However, this process appeared to be time consuming for both the researcher and potential participants. Most people were reluctant to participate since they perceived the whole process to be too lengthy. Participants were first required to complete a questionnaire (biographical blank and BSRI) which was to be collected two weeks later, and subsequently meet the researcher for the interview. It was also stated previously that this questionnaire was to be used as a filter tool in selecting the final sample. Consequently, the researcher realised that the response rate was very low when they returned to the specific organisations to collect the completed questionnaires. The researcher approached five South African organisations in different fields including; accounting, engineering,

government and advertising. The potential sample were white collar workers as they all acquired professional qualifications and skills. As mentioned, the response rate was significantly low, on average, of a total of ten managers who were approached in a particular organisation; only one returned the completed questionnaire.

Consequently, proceeding to the next phase of the study was not feasible. One of the reasons for such low response rates could be that there was no one in the organisation to monitor the whole process. It can be argued that had the researcher been available to monitor and ensure that those female managers who the questionnaires were distributed to, did complete and returned the completed questionnaires, the response rate could possibly have turned out better. However it was not practically possible for the researcher to be present in all the different organisations to oversee such a process. Due to the aforementioned unforeseen circumstances, the sampling procedure was thus changed from probability (simple random sampling) to non-probability, more specifically a snowball sampling procedure.

Doherty, (1994) state that non-probability sampling is often less preferable compared to probability sampling as the latter involves random sampling, which allows for greater generalisation of results while the former does not. However, even in probability sampling, if the sample size is not significant and thus not representative of the target population, generalisation may fail (Doherty, 1994). Non-probability refers to any sampling procedure in which some of the people in the targeted population have no chance of being included in the sample, or where the chance of being in the sample cannot be accurately determined (Doherty, 1994). In simple terms, this procedure involves the selection of elements based on targeted population, which in turn forms the selection criteria. For instance, in this particular case, the elements were that the sample should be female managers in South African organisations, who also fit into three of the categories of the BSRI, and as already mentioned, this became the criteria in selecting the final sample. That said, the present study chose to employ non-probability sampling approach because of reasons explained earlier. In random sampling, the nature of the target population is defined and every member belonging to that population has an equal chance of being selected in the sample (Doherty, 1994). However, some researchers have argued that random sampling may not always be appropriate for qualitative research. For instance, Marshall (1996) argues that studying random sampling allows for generalisation of findings although it is not the most effective way

of unpacking complex issues that relate to human behaviour. For all the above mentioned reasons, the present study felt there was sufficient justification to rely on non-random sampling procedure.

Additionally, in non-probability sampling there are two identified categories, namely; haphazard (convenience) sampling and purposive (judgmental) sampling (Goodman, 1960; Marshall, 1996). The present study followed the latter after experiencing low response rate from the initial process that was followed. The reason for using purposive sampling is that in the present study, the researcher was looking for a specific group or type of people (that is, female managers). More importantly, the study employed purposive sampling due to reasons of time consideration as this procedure allows one to directly approach the potential sample. In support to this, Marshall (1996) declares that in purposive sampling, the researcher is looking for a sample with a purpose in mind, for instance, they are looking for a specific predefined group and they need to obtain the targeted sample quickly. In the present study, purposive sampling was time effective in that the researcher did not have to first approach the organisation, but could approach the individuals they were referred to directly, and most of them responded quickly to the researcher , with regards to whether they would participate in the study or not.

Further, purposive sampling is divided into subcategories, one of which is snowball sampling procedure. In defining snowball sampling, Goodman (1960) provides that this procedure involves drawing from given finite population, where each individual in the sample is asked to identify another person in the population. Put simply, in snowball sampling, the researcher begins by identifying someone who meets the criteria for inclusion in their study. Subsequently, they ask the same people to recommend others who they may know others who also meet the criteria. Although this method would hardly lead to representative samples, there are times when it may be the best method available (Marshall, 1996).

Essentially, in snowball sampling procedure the researcher relies on informal social networks to identify respondents who are often very hard to get hold of. In this study, the researcher was studying female managers who because of their demanding positions are faced with hectic schedules, and thus they were very difficult to locate. Even in cases where they could be located, it was unlikely that they would be willing to participate in the study. A possible advantage in

using snowball procedure is that when a person is referred to by someone they have a relationship with, they may be less likely to be reluctant in participating (Goodman, 1960).

Thus, even in the present study, this particular procedure appeared to be the most effective and efficient in obtaining the targeted sample. It was much quicker, and it ensured the targeted sample size was obtained.

In summary, the final process that was undergone in obtaining the sample and collecting the data was snowball sampling procedure where the researcher asked those few participants gathered from probability sampling (that is, the initial process) to identify one or more persons who were thought to be willing to participate. The researcher then approached those people they were referred to and in turn asked them also to identify other people that they knew and who also met the criteria for being included in the sample. Moreover, both the completion of the questionnaire and the subsequent interview took place on the same day due to reasons already discussed. It is important to note that even in this last process followed, the interview was only conducted where the participant fell in the three categories identified by the BSRI and where they were also willing to participate. Thus changing the sampling procedure did not compromise the quality of the data; instead it allowed the researcher to gather data in a more effective and efficient way.

2.6 Measuring and Data Collection Instruments

Biographical Questionnaire

The biographical blank required completion of participants' age, race, level of education, management level, field or department of work, length of time in management, marital status, whether participants had children or not, as well as the number and ages of the children (see Appendix A).

Bem-Sex Role Inventory

The BSRI is a questionnaire developed by Bem (1975) to measure personality and it was influenced by her theory of androgyny. The inventory was developed as a psychological measure of androgyny (combination of masculinity and femininity). The essence of androgyny is that

there is what may be referred to as psychological gender (sex role identity); which allows for an individual to be masculine or feminine, or be both, irrespective of what biological sex they may be (Bem, 1974).

As a result, BSRI was developed as a measurement of psychological gender. This is done through identifying the type of social roles that individuals may assume later on in their lives (see appendix B).

The BSRI is comprised of 60 items which represent character traits. In this instrument, the first 20 items are associated with males (that is, masculine), the other 20 are believed to be characterising females (that is, feminine) and the last 20 are believed to be neither masculine nor feminine (that is, neutral) (Bem, 1974; Schneider, 2005). The scale yields a score for masculine, feminine, and androgynous items and individuals who obtain a lower score in all the dimensions are referred to as undifferentiated (Schneider, 2005). It is generally considered to be a reliable instrument as it has internal consistency and reliability ranging from 0.75 to 0.87 (Singh & Agrawal, 2007).

According to Bem (1975), in the BSRI, an individual is classified androgynous if they score above the median (high) on both dimensions of femininity and masculinity. Masculine individuals would be those who score high on the masculine dimension and relatively low on feminine and neutral dimensions. Feminine individuals would be those scoring high on the feminine dimension, and relatively low on masculine or neutral dimensions. Lastly, individuals who score low on both dimensions of masculinity and femininity will be classified as neutral.

However, in the present study, the researcher consulted with experts within the fields of statistics who stated that when using the BSRI in one sample of the same gender, the methods of scoring would be different from that which Bem (1975) originally provided. The scale is scored on a 7-point Likert scale; with 1 representing never or almost never, and 7 representing always or almost always true. Thus the scores for each of the three dimensions were calculated in the following method:

- Undifferentiated (neutral) score: The neutral score was calculated by adding up the total of all the item scores for the neutral dimension, and then dividing this total score by half,

which then produces an average score for the neutral dimension. For instance, if the total neutral score is 140, then the average neutral score is 70.

- Masculine score: The masculine score was calculated by adding up each item scores and obtaining a total on this dimension. If the total score on this dimension was higher than the average neutral score and lower than the total score for feminine items, then the items yielded a masculine score. In this case, one would be masculine if their score on this dimension was higher than 70, but also if it was lower than the feminine score.

- Feminine score: The feminine score was obtained by adding up all the items scores on this dimension. If the individual's total score was greater than the average neutral and lower than the total masculine score, then the individual was categorised as feminine.

- Androgyny score: The score was said to be indicating androgyny if both the scores on masculine and feminine are both greater than the average neutral score. Basically an individual was identified androgynous if they scored higher than 70 on both the masculine and feminine dimensions.

For the purpose of this research, it has already been mentioned that only individuals who obtained high scores on masculine, feminine or androgynous were to make up the final sample.

Interview Guide

Subsequent to identifying who scored high on the masculine, feminine and androgynous dimensions and who agreed for the follow-up interview, a semi- structured interview was conducted with each participant who made up the final sample. The interview survey comprised of eleven questions in which the participants were required to answer in an open-ended manner (with further elaboration/probing where required, see Appendix C). Open-ended questions were used in order to yield as much information as possible, as well as making sure participants fully understood the questions. In designing the questions, probing was enabled for obvious reasons, as different participants required questions to be at times phrased differently in order to stimulate responses. More importantly it allowed the researcher to gather data that is rich and comprehensive. The questions were in a broader scope aimed at uncovering issues experienced by female managers at the workplace. More specifically, the questions were designed to explore

whether agentic female managers in the South African context may be experiencing trait discrimination (specifically agentic backlash) and whether they perceive their career growth opportunities to be limited by such discrimination. The questions were designed to uncover the experiences of female managers, from the period when they entered into management to date and most importantly how they have been able to sustain their positions.

Additionally, in the process of compiling the interview questions, the researcher consulted with experts in the field; including professors as well as subject matter experts to be provided with guidance in order to ensure that the questions would be able to yield the information the researcher was hoping for. This means questions were designed so that they were able to tap into the key issues that the researcher was exploring. This guidance was provided not only to ensure that the interview questions were structured so that they tapped into key issues, but to ensure as far as possible that they did not lead the participants into certain answers or to answering questions in certain ways. Rather, the questions were designed to ensure that participants answer questions as subjective a sense as possible. Furthermore, interviews lasted for about 30-45 minutes per participant on average, but this varied as different individuals were different in that some were more expressive and willing to give elaborate answers than others were.

Reliability and Validity of the Interview Questions

The ability of an interview schedule to be reliable depends on the ability of the interview questions to yield consistent responses over time and accurately represent the total population under that study (Golafshani, 2003). In other words, if the same participants were to be interviewed again under the same methodology, but over a certain period, their responses to the questions should be the same (that is, consistent) to those gathered from the initial interviews (Golafshani, 2003). Unless significant intervening experiences have taken place in between, that would serve to alter responses, for example, counselling.

As mentioned earlier, in designing the interview questions, the researcher consulted with experts in the fields of sex-role identity, androgyny, and qualitative data collection techniques. The final interview guide was thus viewed to be reliable by these people. This is so because questions were designed in such a way that they did not contain hidden meanings. What this means is that the questions were designed to be unambiguous so they could allow participants to answer

accurately and in a consistent manner. Therefore although reliability of the interview schedule could not be calculated, it was believed that if the interviews were to be conducted again over a certain period, all the items could yield the same or rather similar answers because of the way they were developed. Furthermore, as the interview schedule was structured to serve as a guide in directing the questions that were asked to participants, the researcher used probing in cases where participants' responses were not clear.

In this way, probing allowed for the questions to yield answers that were correct and accurate to the specific participants rather than generic answers.

In addition, the interview schedule was also perceived to be valid in that from the initial design, the questions were developed in such a way that they were geared to answer the research questions proposed. This was believed to be the case since validity is defined as the ability of an instrument to measure what it is initially intended to measure (Golafshani, 2003). For example an instrument designed to measure organisational culture will be perceived not to be valid if the responses given by participants to items in the instrument appear to be more related to organisational climate or organisational behaviour rather than organisational culture which the instrument is supposedly measuring (Golafshani, 2003). In the present study, the researcher designed the interview questions to explore the different types of discrimination that female managers could be experiencing at the workplace, and whether they perceived their career growth opportunities to be limited as a consequence of this discrimination (which essentially may be due to the sex-role identities they might display when they are at work). Given that the researcher was mostly satisfied in terms of the responses provided, with regard to the relevance of the answers to the questions that were asked, the interview schedule was thus perceived to be valid. Furthermore, as already mentioned that experts were consulted in the process of designing the questions, this was part of the efforts to ensure that the questions would yield relevant, accurate and correct answers to the key research questions that the present study was attempting to explore. However, generalisation could not be guaranteed as the questions were designed for a specific group, that is female managers in South African organisations.

There are critical issues to consider when administering instruments to groups which the instrument was not originally designed for, amongst those are; the culture of the population, the language, the context in which the instrument is administered, the history of the country, as well

as meaning of concepts since these are likely to influence the way people respond to the questions and therefore impact on the overall results (Hembleton & Patsula, 1998). As such, the interview schedule used in this study could probably be applicable to another similar group and not beyond that.

2.7 Procedure

Following the initial design of the study which intended on using a randomly selected sample, the procedure was as follows: the first step involved the researcher approaching the human resources managers within several organisations in Johannesburg, to request female managers to participate in this study.

After access was granted, the next step was distribution of two consent forms; one in which participants signed that they agree to participating in the study, that is to be interviewed by the researcher (see Appendix D), and another in which participants signed that they agree for the interview to be recorded (see Appendix E). The consent forms were distributed together with a questionnaire (which included both the Biographical Blank and the BSRI), to a potential sample of female managers in those organisations (see Appendices A and B). Participants who completed the questionnaires were treated as having provided consent to participation in the study. These organisations were approached at different times, but each sample in the different organisations was given a maximum of two weeks to complete the questionnaires from the time it was distributed. A sealed box was provided in which participants had to submit completed questionnaires, and these were collected by the researcher after the time period of two weeks had passed.

After collecting the completed questionnaires, the researcher was to arrange a follow up one-on-one interview with those participants who qualified according to the BSRI and were also willing to be contacted for a follow up interview. Interviews were to be arranged for different dates and time, depending on how convenient it was for both the researcher and participants to meet on those particular dates and time.

As mentioned, response rates were poor and slow, so to facilitate greater time efficiency and so to enhance responses, the sampling procedure was changed from random sampling to snowball. Consequently, the first phase (that is, completion of the questionnaire) and second phase (that is, the interview) were later combined to make one phase. This meant that participants completed the questionnaire, and based on their score on the BSRI, the interview subsequently took place. In addition, most participants preferred for the interviews to be arranged during weekdays and to be conducted at their respective workplaces.

Because the questionnaire was short and took only few minutes to score (10-15 minutes), completing it right before the interview commenced did not appear to be time consuming. Rather the new process in fact eliminated problems experienced in the initial process. This definitely resulted in efficient use of time, and willingness to take part in the study on the part of respondents. This in overall yielded higher response rates, as well as participants' satisfaction with the process as compared to random sampling that was initially employed.

Furthermore, each interview was recorded so as to allow the researcher to go back to check whether what the researcher had written down corresponded with what the participant had said. Before the interview process commenced, the researcher always ensured that the venue was appropriate for an interview and that the recording equipment was fully operational. The researcher also ensured that the participant was comfortable with the setting of the venue, as well as the actual recording of the interview. As previously mentioned, in order for the researcher to record the interview, the participants had to sign a consent form indicating that they agree to this (see Appendix E). The step following data collection involved transcribing the data from the recorded interviews. In transcribing the data, the researcher first typed out each actual interview conversation, which was then followed by the process of organising responses in themes for the purposes of analysis. Themes can be predetermined by the research questions asked (which are informed by the literature) or they can emerge from participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the present study, both predetermined and emergent themes were identified.

After interviews were transcribed and analysis themes were developed, the subsequent step involved analysing the data and reporting back the findings to individual participants. However, there was a slight change in this process after the researcher recognized that more data needed to be collected. In particular, the researcher discovered during analysis of the data stage that there

were some data gaps in the data that was already collected. This meant that some of the research questions proposed by the researcher were not adequately answered by the responses that participants provided. Some of the responses participants provided needed to be clarified. Consequently, the researcher did follow-up interviews with a specific purpose of filling up these data gaps. This implied that a second semi-structured interview guide had to be developed in order to follow up on the missing data. This interview guide was designed so it could particularly tap into those issues that were missing. Because these follow-up interviews were only conducted to fill up the missing gaps, they lasted for approximately 15 minutes.

The same process that was involved in designing the first interview guide was also followed in designing the second one, and the same participants were approached for the follow-up interviews (see Appendix F). Moreover, this improved the internal validity and reliability of the of the interview questions as it meant that the interview questions were able to tap and yield answers to the researcher's research questions (a detailed discussion on the reliability and validity of the interview questions is provided on the previous section). Also, the fact that the second interview guide was specifically designed to fill the data gaps means that reliability and internal validity was obtained.

In the following step, analysis of the data was conducted. The same process that was involved in analysing the first data set was also followed in analysing data from the second interviews; in which the tapes were transcribed, and then a thematic content analysis followed. In the last step, the analysis from the initial and follow-up interviews was combined and thereafter, findings were reported back to individual participants. Only a summarised version or general trends was reported. This was done to protect confidentiality of the participants as a summary would make it impossible to identify individual responses.

2.8 Analysis

The BSRI was used to identify the sex-role identity of participants and the biographical blank was used for the purpose of describing the sample. Further analysis of the biographical blank was conducted at a later stage in order to see if any relationships could be established between the responses provided and the variables in the biographical blank. For instance, it could be possible that all married females provide similar responses to the same questions, or that all females with

children or those females belonging to the same race would provide similar responses. If such relationships are found, this could further help the researcher in making sense of the data.

Data from the qualitative interviews was analysed using Content Analysis, more specifically, **Thematic Content Analysis**. In content analysis the researcher analyses those facts (content of the data) only, without adding or relating the data to cultural factors or other factors in the wider environment that could help explain the data (Henning, 2004).

With regard to thematic analysis, the researcher formulates themes from data that is collected in the interviews. Fundamentally, what happens is that, from the information gathered, the researcher is able to identify themes or categories in which different responses fall under (Boyatzis, 1998). The analysis that follows is according to or drawn from those specific categories that could have emerged. Put simply, themes are just categories that classify similar responses by different participants to one specific category which will be then given a name that will define or identify the type of information falling under that specific category. For example, in the present study the researcher discovered that androgynous managers had similar views stating that work-family conflict is a major concern in their jobs; the researcher then decided to classify those responses under one category and name it "perceived work-family conflict/lack of balance between work and family life demands".

After analysing the content of each individual participant's data, the study attempted to determine general trends, that is, analyse all of the participants' responses as one. This was done in order to see if there would be any correlations, and to possibly establish if these findings could be validated, meaning if internal validity could be established (Golafshani, 2003). Basically, this was to see if patterns, similarities or differences could be assumed in all the categories of sex-role identities. If for example, results show that all the female managers in the different sex-role categories (including feminine) experience backlash, then one cannot attribute this experience to the agency trait. An alternative explanation would then have to be sought, which could be that females in general experience discrimination irrespective of whether or not they possess the agency trait. If this is the case, then this discrimination against female managers should rather be defined as sex discrimination as opposed to trait discrimination (this would be if similarities were found in all the different categories).

2.9 Ethics

It was previously mentioned that the researcher distributed two informed consent forms to each participant to sign as an indication that they accepted that the researcher use their data in the present study. One was for the completion of the questionnaire (that is agreeing to participate in the study), and the other was for the interview to be recorded (see Appendices D and E). The consent forms included a brief outline of what the study entailed. It was also to guarantee that privacy (confidentiality) and sensitivity of the participant would be protected.

Anonymity could not be guaranteed for those participants who agreed to do follow-up interviews as they were required to come into face-to-face contact with the researcher.

However, the researcher was able to guarantee that data collected would be used for research purposes only. It was decided that the raw data (the tape recordings of the interviews, transcripts and the questionnaires) would be safely stored by the researcher's supervisor for two years following any publication of the study. If there will be no publication following the study, the data will be kept for a period of six years. Thereafter, the raw data will be destroyed.

2.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, the most critical sections covered in this chapter include the design of the study, the sampling procedure, and the procedures that were followed in collecting data. It particularly covered from the initial intended design, which was random sampling, to snowball which was later employed to address the low response rate that was experienced. The chapter also covered procedures that were undertaken in collecting the data after the sampling procedure was changed. The measuring instruments were also described, together with their reliability and validity. The chapter ended with a discussion on the analysis and ethical considerations of the study. The following chapter provides findings of the study.

CHAPTER F OUR: RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

It has been provided in the previous chapters that the main research question investigated by this study was whether agentic female managers experience agentic backlash. The study expected female managers in the sample to report such a form of discrimination. This expectation or assumption was informed by the literature reviewed in this study. The reviewed literature argued that agentic females, due to their possession of agentic traits, may experience agentic backlash as other people may perceive them to be lacking in the more social aspects of femininity (for a more detailed discussion, see literature review chapter). Additionally, this study noted that there are different forms of discrimination, that is ontological and trait discrimination (agentic backlash). Therefore it was considered critical for the researcher to be able to demonstrate, by offering evidence, that the discrimination identified and reported by agentic female managers can be labelled as agentic backlash rather than other other forms of discrimination.

Given that, the study also investigated if female managers may be experiencing other forms of discrimination, that is, traditional discrimination, in this way, one would be able to distinguish between agentic backlash and more traditional forms of discrimination.

Considering the non-experimental nature of the study, and the complex issues that the study aimed at investigating, a qualitative evaluation was attempted in an in-depth exploration of the more complex issues around challenges facing female managers at the workplace. Following this, the raw data (that is, transcripts from the interviews conducted with the participants) was analyzed into themes that were further analyzed to answer the research questions proposed by the present study.

Thus, this chapter presents findings of the study. Specifically, the following section describes in detail the sample in the study. This is done by looking at the variables measured in the biographical questionnaire and how participants scored across all those variables. A brief summary of biographical details of the sample is presented as Table 1. The purpose of the biographical questionnaire, as already mentioned in the methodology chapter was to give a description of who the sample in the study was.

Note that the purpose of collecting this data was to determine if any of the variables in the biographical questionnaire could somehow be related to females' perceptions and experiences at work. The chapter moves on to discuss findings from the qualitative interviews, and in this section, results are thematically presented and excerpts from the interviews are used to illustrate these themes. As mentioned previously, in qualitative studies, themes can either be predetermined from the literature or the research questions asked (and these are usually informed by the literature review), or they can emerge from responses provided in the interviews by participants. Put differently, things can emerge from the interviews, which the researcher did not initially intend to investigate and this is what the present study refers to as emerging themes.

3.2 Biographical Data

The total sample size was 11 participants. All the eleven managers interviewed scored as androgynous in the BSRI. Therefore they were all included in the final sample since it was provided that the sample would exclude any persons who are neutral in their scoring. Although the study was interested in masculine, feminine and androgynous females, only androgynous females were found in the sample that was obtained.

The first variable measured in the biographical questionnaire was race, and it was coded in the following manner; 1= African, 2=White, 3=Coloured, 4=Indian/Asian, and 5=other. As can be seen from Table 1.on page 49, the sample was heavily skewed towards the African population since seven of the total of eleven participants were Africans, with only two Indians, one White and one Coloured participant.

It was important to capture race given the history of South Africa and the fact that the country is comprised of different cultures, which on their own are characterized by different beliefs and practices. This in turn is likely to influence participants' responses. The importance of recognising the impact of biographical details on the way people respond to questions has also been recognised in the field of psychological testing. For instance, it has been argued that in order for test scores to be meaningful, the language, context and cultural background of the people being tested should be taken into account (Foxcroft, 2004; Meiring, van de Vijver & Barrick, 2005). Put simply, the way participants attempt to answer or respond to whatever issues

are being investigated will be influenced by their history, their cultural and societal beliefs, the language they speak, as well as many other factors that basically define who they are.

In South Africa for instance, in the African culture in particular, females were previously perceived to be more suited in the home environment and males were more suited to the work environment (Albertyn, 2003). Even though African females have fought over such stereotypical views, this does not necessarily imply that such views have completely been erased from societal consciousness. Thus it appears likely that females from different race groups and different cultures may have unique stories to tell about their experiences at the workplace. Further, according to Barnejee (2006), Africans are likely to perceive greater workplace discrimination as compared to Whites. The researcher thus sought to establish if this claim holds true within the present study.

Participants' age was also assessed and ranged between 24 and 44 years of age. Age was captured as a necessary variable in describing the sample. This variable was included as the study also intended to determine, at a basic level, if the responses participants provide could be related to their age. For instance, younger people may be expected to report different experiences compared to older people who have entered the workplace a longer time ago (pre 1994) and therefore would likely have had to endure the effects of a far more patriarchal society. Further, age has also been identified by previous research as a predictor of discrimination. For instance, in research conducted on females and discrimination at work, older workers were more likely to report that they are discriminated against compared to younger workers (see for example; Benso & Jerdee, 1976; Finkelstein, Burke & Raju, 1995; Waldman,& Avolio, 1986).

With regards to marital status and age, younger people who are not married and have no children may hold different perceptions to older individuals who may be married and have children, and possibly have reached a certain level in their careers. Thus the variable marital status was captured and also coded in a similar manner to race; that is, 1=married, 2=divorced, 3=widowed and 4=never married. Seven participants never married, while the other four were married. Holan and Gilbert (1979) (as cited in Ballout, 2008) argued that married people may be expected to have different experiences to unmarried people. This is because unmarried people are less likely to have family responsibilities such as children and a husband/wife to look after. On the contrary,

married people will have family responsibilities while at the same time they also have work demands and targets that they need to fulfil.

Following this idea, with regard to career progress, people with no or less family responsibilities may be more likely to pursue a career and become successful at that, simply because they have more time and effort to devote to their careers, unlike those people who have to divide their time between family and work (Holan and Gilbert, (1979) as cited in Ballout, 2008; Schwartz, 1996). For this reason, this variable was included in the biographical questionnaire, in order to see if females' experiences differed according to marital status for the sample in the present study. This would also reveal if married and unmarried females hold different perceptions with regard to factors impacting on their career growth.

Moving on to educational qualification, this variable assessed the education levels of participants; with 1=did not complete grade7/standard 5, 2=completed grade 7/standard 5, 3=been to high school but never passed matric, 4=passed matric and 5=passed matric and have a university, technikon degree/certificate/diploma. Of the eleven participants, nine had tertiary level qualification, while two had only passed matric. In a study conducted by Barnejee (2006), educational level was identified as one of the factors that impact on perceptions of workplace discrimination. For this reason, the present study included educational qualification as one of biographical details, to see whether the discrimination could be associated with their level of qualification.

The sixth variable measured was the management level of the participants, with 1=junior, 2=middle and 3=senior. Abidin's (2009) findings revealed that females in higher management positions are more likely to report different experiences, with regard to work-family conflict compared to females in lower status positions. The present study's attempt was to also determine if this claim would hold for the South African sample. Five of the participants reported to be in senior management level, another three were junior, and the last three were middle level management. Further, this variable was also included for the same reason as educational/qualification level.

Additionally, the variable children assessed whether participants had children or not; with 1=Yes (participant had children) and 2= No, (participant had no children). Seven participants had

children, while the other four had no children. This variable was also assessed for the same reason as marital status. People who have children and therefore family responsibilities are likely to report different experiences to those with no child responsibilities, as previous research argues (Lo, 2003; Schwartz, 1996). That said, it may appear logical to reason that those with young children who need more care are likely to report different experiences compared to those who have relatively older children who do not need as much attention and care, since they can to a certain extent, take care of themselves. In support of this claim, Holan and Gilbert (1979) (as cited in Ballout, 2008) claim that working parents as compared to non-parents are more likely to encounter work-family conflict as both domains may demand greater time and effort from these people. Supporting this claim, other researchers have argued that younger children are important predictors of work-family conflict (Ballout, 2008). Thus the study expected that those participants with younger children would have different experiences to report as compared to those with older children. For this mentioned reason, ages of children were also assessed. In referring to the majority of participants who reported to have children, those children were said to be teenagers, with two being young adults (21 and above) and four being relatively very young as they were below the age of ten.

Additionally, the field or department in which participants work was also considered important to assess as it was expected that the experiences that females encounter at work may be related to the specific work environment they find themselves in. The study holds the view that participants in different fields of work would have unique experiences to share as different departments are characterized by different factors, starting from the work culture, the typical gender found in that particular field of work and/or the typical age of people in that department. Also, it is these different factors that make up the different experiences at work, and so it was important for this study to also look at the field of work as another variable. In conjunction with these claims, Hayes and Hollan (1995) (as cited in Abidin, 2009) assert that the field in which one works may influence their perception of discrimination. For instance; it has been argued that accountancy is still a male dominated profession, hence barriers that females in this field face are argued to be greater than what females in other fields, for example teaching or nursing, may encounter Hayes & Hollan, (1996) (as cited in Abidin, 2009). In the sample of the present study, two participants were in the field of finance (accounting), two were in operations where they deal with different kinds of government projects in the transport sector, another two were also in operations in

which they dealt with skills development and education and training. Additionally, there were another two in the field of banking, while two reported to be in the consulting business. The last participant provided that she deals with company secretarial work where she registers new companies.

The last variable to be measured in the biographical questionnaire was length of time in management. In this, three participants provided that they have been in management for over ten years, three had been in management for four years and above, while the last five had been in management for not more than two years. This variable was included for the same reason as participants' age, because length of time in management is more likely to be related to participant's age and length of time in management could account for how much or how little discrimination a person still encounters.

The following table gives a brief summary of respondent's biographical information.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Race	African	7
	White	1
	Coloured	1
	Indian/Asian	2
Age	24-30	2
	31-39	5
	40-45	4
Marital Status	Married	4
	Divorced	0
	Widowed	0
	Never married	7
	Yes	7

Children	No	4
Ages of Children	1month-10yrs	4
	11-19	5
	20-23	2
Highest Educational Qualification	Left before grade7/standard 5	
	Completed grade7/standard5 but never been to high school	
	Have been to high school but not passed matric	
	Have passed matric	2
	Have passed matric and have a university or technickon degree/certificate/diploma	9
Field or Department of work	Banking	2
	Finance	2
	Consulting	1
	Education & Training	1
	IT Consulting	1
	Transport	2
	Skills Development	1
	Company Secretarial	1
Management Level	Lower level	3
	Milddle level	3
	Upper level	5
Length of Time in Management	Imonth-2years	5

	3-9years	3
	10-12 years	3

3.3 Qualitative Analysis: Thematic Analysis

This section of the chapter presents data from the qualitative interviews that were conducted by the researcher. These results are presented thematically, with extracts from the interviews being used to illustrate these themes. In the three themes that were predetermined from the reviewed literature, the first theme whose results are presented is the perceived traditional forms of discrimination (including sex discrimination, age discrimination and patriarchy).This is followed by a presentation of results on the second theme, agentic backlash. The third theme is the perceived impact of agentic backlash on managers' perceptions of career growth opportunities. In the last three themes, which emerged from the interviews, the first emerging theme presented is the perceived work-family conflict/lack of balance between work and family demands. Subsequent to that is a discussion of the emerging theme on the perceived lack of exposure to the work environment due to history or the patriarchal society. The last emerging theme is the perceived lack of a conducive or supporting environment that is believed to impact negatively on career growth opportunities for female managers.

3.3.1 Traditional/Ontological Forms of Discrimination

The researcher asked participants general questions about what they perceived to be the hiring criteria for a management position and whether they perceived these criteria to be equally represented across all the sexes. This exploration also included participants identifying challenges that they think would confront female job applicants for management positions in their respective organisations. The aim of these questions was to determine if other forms of discrimination, more particularly traditional discrimination, was experienced by working females. Findings revealed in broader terms that seven of the eleven female managers (P1, P2,

P3, P4, P5, P7 and P8) perceived traditional forms of discrimination to be still in existence. More specifically P1, P2, P4, P5, P7 and P8 reported that female managers who are perceived to be emotional, thus lacking in the more agentic/masculine traits, may be discriminated against. This was understood by the study to be representative of sex discrimination. The following excerpts make this point clear:

Perceived Sex Discrimination

Extract one:

Interviewer: Generally and in your organisation- do you think both males and females see the same things as being required from them?

P4: *I do not think so, I think [it*] *has been [a] great strive in trying to level the play field. I think as women you go into positions as well short changing yourself and also feeling a bit insecure about your competence levels, and you find that people play on that and discriminate accordingly.*

P4*: ...What you miss is that there is a detriment into wanting to fit into these views [masculine views] but sometimes they do it and they fit into the club. Those who are not able to do this may be subject to discrimination and looked upon as people who may not have competence because they are not able to assert themselves as their counterparts can.*

Extract two:

P8: *Honestly on paper, yes it is definitely* [*equal but], it is a case of this is the criteria and you need to fit into it...so there is theory and there is practical. In theory it is not biased but really in practice of-course men are more assertive….In the boardroom.., in practice it is generally more biased towards men but in theory it shouldn't be.*

P8: *....you almost need to think like a man. Although there is something to be said about maintaining your femininity, it is just that there is a risk that if you do, you are not part of the boys' club. You need to fit in, almost talk like them, think like them, sound like them and that for me would be the challenge.*

Extract three:

P5: *Not always [is the criteria equal]. Unfortunately when we do hire, and I have seen it in other organisations as well, we tend to expect women to change their make-up, which I guess is just because of the society that we living in, which is paternalistic….. A few females experience that but males generally tend in interviews to come across as very confident, very comfortable, articulate, can crack a joke in the interview and they then tend to exhibit the kind of fit that you would be looking for as an organisation…..*

P5: *The first barrier for a female really is how they present themselves. If you don't come across as decisive, it becomes a barrier even during the interview… I have found that females' major challenge is confidence…. So I have I found that female barriers are all about confidence, decision-making, generating solutions and all those things that as a manager you have to do.*

Evidently, feminine females face sex discrimination in organisations even today. P5 occupies a senior position, and is therefore also involved in the hiring process. She mentioned that in her organisation when hiring for management positions, there are certain characteristics (these include assertiveness, expressiveness, confidence and good and quick decision-making) that they require applicants to possess. These characteristics are stereotypically perceived to be male characteristics. In this, the participant was implying that organisations do not consciously set rules or procedures to specifically discriminate against females; however the required skills and qualities in management positions is what automatically discriminate against the feminine female. She further maintained that males are found to fit well in these criteria as opposed to how well females do. At this point, the study deduced from androgynous female managers that the less aggressive and less assertive, that is more feminine females, are discriminated against as they are less preferred when hiring for management positions.

Moreover, another junior manager (P8) provided a similar view, and perhaps a more interesting one when she indicated that in theory, the hiring criteria for management is made to appear equal, while in practice, the situation is far from being fair and equal across the sexes. This participant offered an explanation for this situation by providing that, it is rather females' perceived and stereotypical characteristics of being nurturers, which makes them very emotional beings, which in turn leads to discrimination against them. Essentially feminine females are

discriminated against as they are perceived to be lacking in those qualities required in management (assertiveness, confidence, expressiveness and quick decision making). The same participant indicated that a female almost need to think and behave like a male in order for her to be successful at the workplace and in management positions.

In support of the perception that traditional feminine females are discriminated against when hiring for management positions, androgynous managers also indicated that even though they have managed to escape this barrier faced by the more traditionally feminine females, nonetheless they still felt that they were discriminated against in that their competence was still negatively evaluated, compared to that of their male counterparts. They stated that they were put under constant pressure of having to prove that they can do their jobs. More specifically, one participant (P7) indicated that when she first occupied the position of executive officer, which was a position previously held by a male in her organisation, many of her colleagues did not trust her competence to do the job. She was constantly asked about what her strategies and plans were, and many of her decisions were questioned. When the participant was asked to justify her perceptions, she answered that she felt that this was because she was a female since the previous male executive officer was not put under such conditions of having to prove himself constantly. She further stressed that instead, people automatically trusted the previous male manager's competence. In this way, this was also understood in the study to be representative of traditional sex discrimination whereby females are expected to be less likely to succeed in management than their male counterparts.

P7: .....*Exactly, because I worked together with the EO who was here and he was not put into such positions, he was trusted. But when I started I was put into such conditions.*

From these conversations, the common view amongst participants was that feminine females are less likely to be employed in management positions. Specifically, the study found that six participants (P1, P2, P4, P5, P7 and P8) experienced sex discrimination; with one participant providing that sex discrimination exists even though she does not personally experience it. As such this demonstrates that females in South African organisations still experience discrimination in that even though they may demonstrate their competence through their educational levels, accomplishments and having obtained management positions Further, some females do not make it into management because their traditional feminine qualities are

considered less suitable for the workplace, particularly management and they never actually get hired in the first place.

Perceived Age Discrimination:

It was interesting to find that two of the participants (P2 and P4) indicated that they felt they were being discriminated against because of their age. Particularly these participants stated that it was the older employees who were discriminating against them. For P2, this discrimination often occurred in the form of older subordinates refusing to take instruction, as well disrespecting her as a manager. And for P4, discrimination occurred mainly in the form of disrespect. The following extracts serve to demonstrate this point:

Extract four:

Interviewer: How do you think people responded to your being appointed to your current position, other than those who appointed you?

P2: *I have experienced a situation where I instructed one of the managers reporting to me that they need to do things in certain ways. Instead of doing what I told him, he went to seek a second opinion from my superior. And this was not the first time an incident like this happened. One of my female managers also did the same thing before and I took it light.*

Interviewer*:* So in basic terms, these people are actually challenging your authority?

P2: *Exactly…. I am thinking that this is because when I first joined the organisation this person was already there and they were reporting to him [the previous manager] before I came. .. I told them that maybe you are thinking that he is a still better manager than I am, and because he is a man or whatever that may be…..*

P2: .....*To me that was an undermining statement because I felt that this person would not have done so to the former boss who occupied a position higher than mine. First I am junior to him by birth, and secondly he is a male and I am a young female.*

Extract five:

P4: *.....And I think for me it was the age, as well as gender issue. You find that a young business owner is treated very differently from an older one. So you find that you always have to prove your competence much earlier than your counterparts would have to. It is always assumed that you are young and so you probably still have more years that you need to put in, but maybe you could actually deliver at the same time, or even better.*

As demonstrated in the above extracts, two participants (P2 and P4) stated that some of the discrimination they experienced was because they were young. It was maintained that older employees displayed a negative attitude towards these two participants when they first entered in their current positions. P2 mentioned that she experienced a very negative reaction to her appointment when her junior male manager who was reporting to her, could not take instruction as ordered. The same participant also experienced a situation whereby the same junior manager told her that he did not want to carry on with his responsibilities but demanded to be assigned different tasks. This situation evidently demonstrates lack of respect for her authority.

When asked what she thought could be the reason for such a response, P2 expressed that she felt her authority was being challenged and she believed this was because she is younger to the person in terms of age, and also because she is a female. Similarly, P4 also related a situation where she was in charge of a meeting held with her fellow business partners, and she reported that that she felt she was not given the respect and attention she deserves due to her age, as well as gender.

Perceived Patriarchal Beliefs and Attitudes

It was also revealed in the interviews that three participants (P3, P5 and P11) shared the view that males, *as well as some females* still hold patriarchal attitudes and beliefs which also serve to discriminate against females in favour of males. In fact, such views underpin much of the sex discrimination against females, mainly taking the position that females are more suitable and dominant in the home environment, with male roles being particularly those that are in the workplace as bread winners. This theme is elaborated in the following extracts:

Extract six:

Interviewer*:* You mentioned earlier your industry is male dominated-would you consider this to be one of challenges that could be facing a female manager?

P3: *That could be more of a threat, because if you come in, especially as a new individual in the organisation and you are working in a male-dominated industry, they judge you, size you-up, they expect you to have the knowledge and experience, they are critical, they are negative, they make you feel incompetent.*

P3: *Now I am talking years back, when I first entered. They will judge you, they will be very critical and negative…*

P3*: … I find that sometimes instruction from myself to a member of another race group is taken well and it is executed 100%. … [But] in the same race group there is conflict…. maybe they [males] want to prove they are still better than you or it comes from the background also. Like Muslim people, even Black Indians, or Black Africans, we were brought up to be a little bit subservient to the males…. So when they [males] see you as an equal sitting across the table, it raises some conflict in them.*

In the above quote, P3 made an interesting point. This participant asserted she feels that there is more conflict or discrimination within the same ethnic groups in that when she instructs a member of a different race group from that of her own, instruction is taken and executed well. However, when she instructs a member of her cultural group, there is always a negative reaction. She also mentioned that her own Indian male counterparts are the ones who judge her and size her up and she emphasized that this may be due to the patriarchal nature of the her cultural group. It was maintained by the same participants that this may be because females from Indian and Black African cultures were brought up to serve their husbands and look after families. Fundamentally, what this participant pointed out was that males do not like it when they see females at the workplace occupying the same or even higher positions to them. In fact this situation challenges and threatens them because they see the workplace and higher positions being exclusively their territory. She emphasised that it is for this reason that they respond negatively to females in such positions. These views are representative of the patriarchal nature of the society that females today may still be subjected to. The same participant (P3) further

stated that negative evaluations were not only experienced from male counterparts, but from other females as well.

In addition, P11 was asked by the researcher to justify why she felt females, including competent females, may still experience discrimination in the workplace. She responded by saying that even though she does not internally experience discrimination in the workplace (referring to her particular organisation), she feels that patriarchal attitudes and beliefs are still part of our world and they are the reason why females may experience discrimination. This point is illustrated in the excerpt below:

P11: *I think you said it, mainly this is a very patriarchal society…. well personally I don't necessarily experience that internally, but I experience it externally, getting to be accepted within my industry… So it's not even so much about being accepted or negatively evaluated, it's possibly because it's just traditionally being a female manager in a male dominated environment*.

In conclusion, up to this point, results demonstrates that female managers perceived that the workplace still holds very negative views about the feminine characteristics of females in the workplace. It is maintained the more masculine or agentic type of characterises are the most desirable in management. Consequently, traditional females are discriminated against when hiring for management because they often lack assertiveness, faster decision making, confidence and ability to express their views. One can therefore infer from these ideas that feminine (that is, traditional) females may encounter traditional discrimination and that is, sex discrimination in the workplace, whereby they are denied employment on the basis that they lack the required desirable agentic traits. However, what this does study reveal is that even when females display the desired traits, that is, masculine traits, they are still discriminated against. Thus even masculine or androgynous females may encounter discrimination in the workplace. While this discrimination may take the more traditional forms of age discrimination and traditional sex discrimination, the latter which is linked to patriarchal discriminatory attitudes, these women also encounter trait discrimination (agentic backlash). This is discussed in the next theme.

3.3.2 Perceived Agentic Backlash

In trying to determine whether androgynous female managers experience agentic backlash, the researcher asked those participants who reported to have experienced any form of discrimination, whether or not they perceived the discrimination they experienced to have anything to do with their androgynous sex-role identity. Disrespect, undermining or challenging of the managers' authority, lack of trust in the leader's competence, and other negative reactions directed towards competent female managers were identified by participants as some of the negative evaluations received by females in management. These reactions are in the present study understood to be representative of agentic backlash form of discrimination. The critical issue was to determine and demonstrate whether androgynous female managers in the present study associated any of the negative evaluations they may have reported with their androgynous sex role identities.

It is important to point out that the question of whether discrimination encountered could be associated with the androgynous sex role identity appeared to be a difficult question for the participants to answer. This is so since some participants could only say "maybe" to a certain extent the discrimination could be associated with the androgynous sex role identity. Some believed to answer the question accurately; they would have had to interact with those displaying the discrimination in order for them to find out the cause of such actions. Other participants however, were willing to answer the question as accurately as they believed their perceptions to be a reflection of their experiences. Findings revealed that eight participants (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, and P11) believed that agentic female managers may experience agentic backlash in the workplace. Even though others were not particularly referring to their own specific situations, they still appear to hold the perception that agentic backlash can be experienced by competent female managers who display the agentic traits as these are more stereotypically understood to be masculine qualities. In the following extract, the researcher asked the participant if she felt she was being discriminated against as a result of her androgynous qualities.

Extract seven:

P1: *In a way, I would assume that yes, you can relate the two [the experienced discrimination and the androgynous sex role identity] ….. I suppose the two can be related in that way.*

P1….*You know what I don't think that I displayed anything, I was just my normal self, and I didn't boast about it. It was just me doing my normal work. It is what people saw in me and I think like I said, it is partly because I am confident and that could have been a barrier for us.*

In the following extract, P10 articulates that she encounters agentic backlash because that those agentic traits she possesses are interpreted as masculine type of character traits. She further emphasizes that this occurs since historically, management positions were dominated by males and this led to qualities displayed in management being labeled as masculine. In short, P10 believes that she may have been discriminated against due to her agentic qualities, and she believes this is only because people misinterpret agentic traits as masculine traits, instead of perceiving them as management required traits.

Extract eight:

P10: *…… historically the majority of the people who you would find in most organisations to be in those types of senior levels … were mainly male people. As a result of that, now it is kind of interpreted as if those are male characteristics. But if you think about it, it is not that, it was just because back in those days, there weren't females as such, who would play roles like that…..And yes they might be reacting towards that character you are displaying because back in their minds, they still think, as a woman they would expect you to be a sympathetic type of a woman…*

In the following extract, P4, as already stated, maintained that she felt that more of the discrimination she experienced was age, as well as sex discrimination. However she holds the view that being androgynous could be another explanation to the situation. P4 supports this claim by further stating that sometimes the people she works with expect her to be sympathetic, motherly and show all other characteristics of the more traditional feminine female and when she does not display those qualities, she is negatively evaluated. P4, P7, and P9 also expressed similar views.

Extract nine:

P4: *People will be quick to label you and to pass comments or statements of you being overly aggressive, a woman that is over compensating, is trying too hard to be a man.... So I think the labelling comes through quite a lot in those kinds of situations.*

P4: *I think it's really around when you stand your ground and you are firm about a decision or a position that you have taken. Instead of it being evaluated as she is really committed into this decision or she really believes in this decision, you are argued to be aggressive and not open to other ideas or options.*

Extract ten:

P7: *.....as a woman sometimes you get very much criticism if you come across as very bold, very strong and not showing that empathy.*

Extract eleven:

P4*: ...there is definitely still a lot of stereotypes as well, so even women who are very confident and very driven, because of stereotypes, you always feel that the same standards are not applied to you as you are the counterpart.*

Extract twelve:

P9: *Sometimes I have been told that I am a little too hard and people don't like it. So it is difficult to strike a balance because on the one hand you are being told you need to be aggressive in terms of addressing performance and people stepping out of line, and on the other hand when you do it, they turn around and say you are so hard or unapproachable.*

To this end, the study reveals that eight androgynous female managers share the perception that agentic female managers experience trait discrimination in the form of agentic backlash. Moreover, what also appears to be common amongst participants who reported to have experienced agentic backlash, as well as traditional forms of discrimination is that, they all indicate that these negative evaluations were in most cases, experienced when they first entered into their respective positions. Positively, participants hold the view that as time went on, the discrimination alleviated in that people began to trust their competence. Further, the most

common explanation offered by participants as to why the situation neutralized with time was that they fought harder to be part of the organisation and they fought harder to prove that they could do their jobs as well or even better than males.

In this way, one can assert that the biggest challenge facing female managers in the workplace is that even though they have the necessary skills and qualities required to occupy management positions, the majority of them feel they still have to prove their competence despite their qualification, the necessary qualities and the experience they may have accumulated from previous management position, and they perceived this to be a barrier to their performance. For instance, P10 declared that:

"You first need to prove yourself that I might be a woman but I can deliver, and hence when you walk into an organisation where there is such a perception, it can actually work against you because you do not have a clear vision of things that you need to achieve".

The point illustrated in this conversation is that concentrating on proving one's competence, rather than focusing on the objectives of the job may negatively impact on work performance.

The study also investigated whether agentic backlash reported to be encountered by majority of the participants impacted on their perceptions of career growth opportunities. The study expected these female managers who believed they were experiencing agentic backlash to hold the perception that their career growth opportunities would be limited by such forms of discrimination. Contrary to what was expected, it was found that even though managers reported they were experiencing agentic backlash, they still believed in their ability to attain higher management positions. In particular, P2, P4 and P10 accentuated that even though the workplace is still discriminating in that there are still gender stereotypic views that constantly position females as incompetent, such views should however not be encouraged, instead females need to fight their way through. Furthermore, many of them (P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10 and P11) explicitly stated that their organisations provide opportunities for females to further and develop their careers and so, they maintained that the challenge is rather within the individual herself.

P10: *I think if there are any barriers, it will through lack of personal drive from myself or shift my focus. We must acknowledge that females can face gender stereotypes but we most not accept or promote that.*

Following these ideas, a theme identified was while managers' acknowledged that they do experience agentic backlash this backlash has no impact on their "perception" of their career growth opportunities. The observation made by the study is that because these females are agentic, it is unlikely that they will be receptive to agentic backlash; rather they will fight against and continue to want to grow their careers. One can be able to associate the determination to fight against agentic backlash, to the fact that they agentic by their very nature.

3.3.3 Lack of Impact of Agentic Backlash on Managers' Perception of Career Growth Opportunities

The following extract provides responses that participants offered when they were asked to talk about factors that could hinder them from reaching their aspired goals, for example, a senior management position. This theme is demonstrated in the following extracts.

Extract thirteen:

P2*: The biggest challenge is within the individual. But in my organisation, we have the whole concept of 'women upliftment so they encourage women to apply for higher positions, they are encouraging them to go school to get educated, to empower themselves so they can be able to occupy those positions that we are perceiving as male dominated type of jobs.*

Extract fourteen:

P10*:...the advantage that we have is that our organisational culture gives a chance to female managers and female professionals in a sense that the opportunity gets presented to you and at the end of the day it is about what you do with it.*

P10*: ....I think if there are any barriers, it will be through lack of personal drive from myself or a shift in my focus...*

Extract fifteen:

P1: *…Organisational factors that could inhibit me would be maybe the different criteria because for senior management position, I have only matric and diploma in banking, so I would have to study and I do realize that, and I think that is the only thing that could stop me.*

Extract sixteen:

P5: *….If your individual preferences do not fit in with the organisation then you will not go there.....it is all about culture and your fit, other than that I do not see any barrier.*

Drawing from the above extracts, it is evident that these agentic female managers, despite having experienced agentic backlash and traditional discrimination displayed towards them by either some of their subordinates, superiors or co-workers, still hold the view that their respective organisations or rather the workplace in general is still able to provide opportunities for them to grow their careers further (P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P10 and P11). Additionally, the same participants maintained that the only thing that could ever stop them from reaching their career objectives is themselves, that is, their personal choices, their ability to believe in themselves and lack of personal ambition. In support to this view, two participants (P9 and P2) mentioned that their particular organisations had programs put into place that were dedicated to helping females who have potential. Another participant (P10) also mentioned that even though there are still gender stereotypes that may make it hard for female managers to occupy higher management positions compared to males, her organisation and particularly her boss, who is male, provides her and all the other female managers in her organisation with opportunities to develop themselves.

Nonetheless, all participants (except P6) were of the view that there are other factors that may limit their opportunities and thus hinder their career progress. Specifically, the majority of these females seem to hold the common perception that there are factors that could inhibit them from reaching their aspired further management positions. These factors are; work family conflict, lack of supportive environment and having to catch up on historical disadvantage.

Following the above mentioned findings, it is evident that agentic female managers do experience agentic backlash. However contrary to expected results that perceived agentic backlash may negatively impact on the managers' perceptions of their career growth opportunities, the findings of this study suggest otherwise. The researcher hold a different view in that the fact that agentic female managers have been found to encounter agentic backlash

could possibly mean that their career growth may in some level may be limited and that individuals themselves, are not cognisant of this. This point is examined in the discussion chapter.

3.3.4 Perceived Work-Family Conflict/Lack of Balance between Work and Family Life Demands

A particular sub-theme that emerged as a possible factor that could hinder career progress of female managers was perceived conflict between work and family demands. This view was demonstrated by P1, P2, P8 and P9. Particularly, two of the eight participants (P8 and P9) who reported agentic backlash, maintained that while agentic backlash was not a particular inhibiting factor in their career growth, work-family conflict certainly was. These participants stated that they did not aspire for senior positions as this may imply that they need to spend less time with their families, or that even if it does not require them to do so, it would be hard to strike a balance between the two. The following extract illustrates this discussion:

Extract seventeen:

P9: *It is very much the usual fact that you are just a female, you end up having children as opposed to chasing a career. Perhaps you have to look after a marriage, so the possibility of you working long hours might not be as easy as it would be for the male counterpart.*

Personally my situation was very different up until I had a baby. If I worked late, my husband never complained, it was never an issue, so I could do some of the things my male counterparts were doing and play with them on an even field.

I have been with this institution for many years and I have sacrificed of myself and of my time for those many years. [However], I then chose to have a baby, and my priorities are completely different now, I do not aspire to go any further in terms of a management position.

Extract eighteen:

P8: *A woman in my organisation has a lot of challenges….. But the typical challenges a woman would face would be, if you had kids to drop off at school at 7:00 in the morning or kids to pick up after school in the afternoon, you can't do that. You can't, because typically we work from 6:00am-19:00pm every day, the nature of the work demands long hours.*

Interviewer: Do you aspire for a further management position?

P8: *To be honest I am at crossroads, if you asked me that two years ago, it would be yes, definitely. However, I don't know if I am wrong but I think in real life I have come to realize that it comes with a sacrifice and I just need to decide for myself if I am willing to sacrifice. If I want to go up, it will cost my family something, if I want to have children and a husband, I won't be at home when he comes home and make sure the food is prepared by me and not by our maid. If I want such things, I can't be a manager, I can't be a senior executive, I can't be a CEO, you can't, it is just the way the world works.*

Another participant (P2) substantiated this view, although she was not particularly referring to herself;

"*the challenge might be lying within the individual herself-a female can limit herself just because of marital responsibilities, or it might be hard finding a balance ….People may choose not to apply for a higher position because they still want to be a mother and have a family, and they know that striking a balance might be difficult..*

What seemed to be frequent amongst these participants (P1, P2, P8 and P9) is the idea that aspiring for a further management position is accompanied by more responsibilities on the job and less time to spend with families. This was stated as the reason why many females would only aspire to get to a certain level and not beyond that. For example, P9 mentioned she did not want a higher position because she wanted to spend more time with her young child. She further indicated that she would in the future, when her child is a little older, aspire and chase after a higher management position. The same participant also asserted that she used to work very long hours while she was still aspiring for the management position that she currently holds. However, after attaining this position and having had a baby, she did not work long hours

anymore. She also maintained that after she had her baby, she told her superior that her priorities had changed and she was therefore not going to be working as hard. This point clearly demonstrates that some females can make a conscious decision of devoting less time and effort to their work when they are faced with family and work life responsibilities. In turn, this substantiates the claim that the perceived incongruity between roles of a female manager and a mother or wife can ultimately negatively impact on their career progress.

Likewise, P2 reported that females sometimes can limit their opportunities to advance their career by choosing to look after their families. Additionally, P8 maintained she was of the view that one has to make a personal decision, which is either family or work, and she had chosen that family is the most important as compared to a higher position. The same participant illustrated this point further when she emphasized that a female manager with child responsibilities would not be able to excel in both their job as a manager and their job as a mother. Further, P8 gave a more interesting idea when she mentioned that part of the solution that organisations can offer to this situation is to build a childcare facility whereby employees can bring their children after school to be looked after. This would therefore make it possible for female managers to work late in that they would be able to check on their children while they are working at the same time. In this way, the above findings revealed that perceived conflict or lack of balance between work and family life demands is considered a major barrier to female managers' career growth.

3.3.5 Perceived Lack of Exposure due to History/Patriarchal Society

In addition to career barriers for female managers, four participants (P1, P3, P7 and P11) stated that in the specific industries in which they work, another challenge they experience is lack of exposure or background information due to the fact the industry was previously dominated by males, and more specifically by White males. It was maintained that this situation occurs due to the history of our country which previously allowed for sex discrimination against females, setting aside specific jobs or work industries for males. As a result, females are often a few steps behind, thus they have to work harder in order to bridge those gaps that were created. In the following extract, this view is demonstrated clearly:

Extract nineteen:

P3: *We are still adjusting to technical processes due to lack of exposure in the past. Now we are having female artisans, we never had that in the past, and we also have woman trainers training guys. There is a change but due to lack of exposure in the past, these are areas that you are not really instilled in and you need more exposure, and there are obviously weaknesses on your side.*

In the above quote, P3 stressed that as a manager, it becomes a weakness when one lacks exposure to the industry and technicalities of the job in that it may negatively impact on work performance. Similarly, P11 and P7 also mentioned that when they first entered into their specific industry, their biggest challenge was that they did not understand the technical languages of the industry. Thus in meetings where those technical terms were predominant, the situation was challenging. Additionally, the common factor amongst these participants (P3, P7 and P11) is that they are in the same industry, the transport industry. Moreover, these participants maintained that even though in the beginning it was very difficult for them to adjust to the technical issues of the industry, they eventually learned how to deal with those issues and they were able to bridge the gaps, and consequently perform well in their jobs. P1 also mentioned that as a female, she lacked exposure when she entered the banking industry, due to the fact that jobs in such industries were previously preserved for males.

3.3.6 Perceived Impact of Lack of Conducive/Supportive Environment on the Career Growth of Female Managers

Findings also revealed that female managers perceived that there was lack of organisational support and societal support, mentorship programs and reference points; all which would serve to create an environment that would enable them to succeed in their positions and advance their careers. As such, the following extract is used to demonstrate the perception that another major barrier to females' career progress is lack of a conducive environment:

Extract twenty:

P4: *I think there are challenges in that in as much as the workplace is a discriminating environment; I think females are not prepared enough for it. So I do think that opportunities for*

mentorship are needed, where women are mentored and prepared, where you are being made to feel comfortable, that you should as a woman allow yourself to be judged according to your competence and your skill level and nothing else.

Extract twenty one:

P5*: .....The only barrier I am starting to realize, maybe it is my own perception. I have realized that South Africa has moved incredibly very fast to empower women or to give women an opportunity, but we come from a society that does not regard us in that way. And I have found that there seem to be a tension in workplace settings or even in our society, we are creating opportunities for women but are we matching or making the environment conducive for them?*

P5*: We are creating opportunities for women but we are not making the environment that is conducive for women leadership to come forth…if you look at our country from 1994, many women have been appointed in leadership positions, from director generals (DGs) and CEOs of organisations, right?... But, all those women had to start from scratch; they had nobody to look up to as a reference point….. Now from 1994 to 2009 in South Africa, we do not have as yet, that body of knowledge for young upcoming women to learn from ….Also, you find that in your personal life, your partner will tell you that 'you are not the CEO here; when you come back from work, please do me a favour, take of your CEO hat and be a woman in this house'. So there is that tension in society…..For me female empowerment is not appointing a female in a leadership position, female empowerment is beyond that. Once you have appointed them, so what, how do you sustain their stay, how do you make sure that they make the contribution they are suppose to make, how do you make this a reference point and how do you support them over a sustained period?*

In support to this view expressed by P5, six participants (P3, P4, P7, P8, P9 and P10) held the perception that even though they may occupy management positions, the conditions that are required to help them succeed and grow their careers further are not created. Instead these managers provided that they find themselves under constant negative evaluations where they have to always prove their competence. This meant that they had to work harder than their male counterparts.

As mentioned, work-family conflict was also perceived as an inhibiting factor and this links into the theme of 'lack of a supportive environment'. Essentially, females experiencing work-family conflict indicated that organisational support, in the form of flexible work conditions, as well as child-care facilities would enable them to balance their work and family demands. Further, participants were also of the view that such organisational initiatives would impact positively on their career growth, as they would be able to aspire and work towards a higher position.

For example, P8 and P9 indicated that they would aspire for a further management position if they could work flexible hours where they would be able to work certain hours in the office and work the rest of the hours from home, while also spending time with their families. Additionally, P8 stated that child-care facilities would also help female managers in that they would be able to aspire for higher positions when they know that they would have good support systems at work which would alleviate the perceived conflict between work and life spheres. Similarly P1 reported that she finds it emotionally draining that she cannot spend as much time as she would like with her family. Further, she maintained that she aspires for a further management position and she believes that while this may increase the conflict between her family and work; with organisational support, she could succeed.

P5 provided rather a unique perception when she maintained that there is lack of reference points where females can learn from; she mentioned that opportunities are created for females, however there are no conditions that are created in order to help females succeed.

Thus she stressed that it is for this reason that females are finding it hard to climb up the corporate ladder and therefore explaining the very low proportions of females that are found in higher management positions.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter was aimed at describing results found in the study. In doing this, the chapter first organized the responses in themes, where themes that were predetermined from the literature review were discussed as well as those that "emerged" from participants' responses in the interviews. Ideas arising from these findings were the following; the study deduced from the

perceptions of androgynous managers that feminine, as well as androgynous females may face traditional forms of discrimination and this includes; age discrimination, sex discrimination and patriarchy. Androgynous female managers also reported that they experienced trait discrimination, that is, agentic backlash at the workplace, particularly when they first entered into positions of management, as well as when they first occupied their current positions. However,, findings did demonstrate that androgynous female managers did not perceive agentic backlash to have any impact on their career growth. Instead, female managers maintained that perceived work- family conflict, lack of exposure for females into the workplace due to the history of the country, as well as lack of a supportive environment is what would hinder the career progress of females.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The results presented in the previous chapter revealed responses provided by participants in the interviews conducted. This chapter is dedicated at providing an in-depth thematic analysis with an attempt to give meaning to those responses provided by participants. It also explores whether or not the main research questions the study aimed to investigate were answered.

The chapter proceeds as follows: it first provides briefly the major findings of the study. The chapter then moves on to analyse correlations between participants' biographical variables and their perceptions of their experiences at the workplace. This first detailed section deals with an analysis of the ontological discrimination, specifically referring to sex discrimination, age discrimination and patriarchy. In the following section, issues around agentic backlash are discussed. The chapter moves on to providing an analysis on perceived relationship between agentic backlash and career growth. As work-family conflict was also amongst the themes emerging from this research, the association between work-family conflict and career growth constitute the subsequent section. The last finding discussed in this chapter concern the relationship between a supportive work environment and career growth of female managers.

4.2 Summary of Key findings

Fundamentally, the present study confirmed previous research by Korabik and Ayman (2001) and Schein (2001) in their argument that although androgynous and masculine sex role identities/management styles are the most desirable, those females who utilise masculine and androgynous styles may be discriminated against By re-producing these contradicting ideas, the present study was able to answer the main objective of the study; that is, agentic female managers do encounter agentic backlash in the workplace.

The study findings revealed that androgynous female managers believed that in order to be employed in management, one must possess masculine or androgynous qualities (particularly agency), or else they are not hired in such positions. These managers substantiated this view by maintaining that traditional feminine females are less likely to be employed in management since they are perceived to lack the desirable qualities.

However, when asked about their experiences in the workplace, eight managers believe that the very same agentic traits that enable them to be employed in management in the first place, may also in turn serve to discriminate against them, and this is referred to as agentic backlash.

Agentic backlash was not the only form of discrimination found to be present in the workplace. Traditional discrimination was also found to be present. More specifically sex discrimination, age discrimination and patriarchy[1] were also part of the major research findings.

Additionally, amongst other factors, work-family conflict was regarded as barrier in female managers' career growth. Participants with children expressed the challenges they experience with regard to balancing their work and family; maintaining that the imbalance negatively impacted on the amount of time and energy they have to dedicate to their work. Consequently their careers suffer.

Discrimination encountered by traditional feminine managers was identified as traditional sex discrimination, and that which encountered by agentic female managers was identified as both traditional discrimination and agentic backlash. Evidently discrimination experienced by feminine females may differ to that which is encountered by agentic females in that they (feminine females) only experience one type of discrimination, that is, the traditional type. It was understood in this study that feminine managers can be argued to experience agentic backlash, and this is so because by their very nature, they do not possess the agency traits.

The following section provides an analysis of the biographical details of the sample. In this, the main purpose for the study is to establish if there are any relationships between participants' biographical information and their perceptions of their experiences in the workplace.

4.2.3 Analysis of Biographical Variables

As already stated in the previous chapter, biographical details of the sample were included in order to determine if there were any correlations between participants' responses and each of those variables. Barnejee, (2006) has predicted that African people would be more likely to

[1] Patriarchy was perceived to perpetuate the view that males are more suitable for the workplace, thus causing females' competence to be negatively evaluated.

perceive greater workplace discrimination than members of other races. This is because of the apartheid experiences that African people had to endure. Further, African females have been discriminated against in the workplace, due to the patriarchal attitudes and beliefs held amongst the African population (Albertyn, 2003). Following these ideas, it was expected that African females in the present study may be more likely to perceive workplace discrimination than members of other races; without specifying the type of discrimination.

However, this prediction was difficult to determine in the present study as seven of the eleven managers were all African. Although these seven African female managers did report discrimination in the workplace, one could not associate this with their race. Essentially, with seven participants belonging to one race, the study could not determine whether members of other races would have held different or similar views. Also, all the members of the different races in the sample reported to have experienced, at least some form of discrimination. As such, all participants, despite their race, experienced workplace discrimination. More importantly, discrimination reported by participants took the form of traditional discrimination (including age discrimination, sex discrimination and patriarchal discriminatory attitudes) and/or agentic backlash. This serves to substantiate the view that although Africans perceive discrimination to exist in the workplace; within this study, they do not however attribute this discrimination to race.

Following this, this study did not find discrimination in the workplace to be related to female managers' race. This is in contradiction with previous research which has indicated that Africans are more likely to perceive greater discrimination at the workplace (Barnejee, 2006).

To this end, this study asserts that discrimination encountered by participants should rather be associated with other factors shared by participants. In essence, the study is of the view that female managers across the different races, experience workplace discrimination due to other factors they may have in common, other than race.

With regard to participants' age, the study had anticipated that there would be a pattern in younger workers reporting less discriminatory perceptions as compared to older workers who may have had to live and endure the consequences of the patriarchal society. For this same reason, it was also anticipated that female managers who have been in management positions for

longer periods of time (possibly reflecting their age) would more likely report discrimination compared to those who have been in those positions for shorter periods.

According to Benso and Jerdee (1976) stereotypes regarding older employees' physical, cognitive and emotional characteristics lead to discrimination against older employees. Similarly, other researchers have also claimed that in terms of job performance, older employees are more likely to receive lower ratings and less favourable ratings than younger ones (see for example; Finkelstein et al.1995; Waldman & Avolio, 1986).

However, results of this study did not support these claims. In fact, the present study found that both young and older participants reported either traditional forms of discrimination or agentic backlash. Thereby supporting the view that experiences of discrimination at the workplace did not differ according to participants' age. For instance, there was a nine years age gap between two participants (P2 and P4) who reported being discriminated on account of age. Also, P1, P2 and P7 (amongst the least) reported their competence to have been negatively evaluated, and the ages of these participants were different. There were also age differences amongst the eight participants who reported to have experienced agentic backlash.

The results chapter indicated that two participants experienced age discrimination. However, the study maintains that while this may have been the experiences of some participants, others certainly did not relate their experiences to age. Additionally, previous researchers quoted earlier had predicted that it is older workers who are more likely to experience age discrimination. Contrary to this, those participants experiencing age discrimination in this study (P2 and P4) mentioned that it was the older employees who were exerting such actions and attitudes. This point also substantiates the observation that the discrimination was not associated with age, at least for most of the participants. Gathering from this observation, it appears that in African society, older people are venerated and therefore, those that are younger may encounter more disrespect as oppose to older people.

In addition, perceptions of discrimination were also not found to be related to the length of time in management. For example, P4, P7, P10 and P11, all reported traditional sex discrimination, as well as agentic backlash. P4 and P10 had been in management for not less than two years and the others for10 years and above, yet they all reported discrimination to be present in their respective

organisations. This shows that even younger females, who might not necessarily have lived during a greater patriarchal society, believe that discrimination still exists in the workplace even today. That said, it can be reasoned that the fact that even younger females experience discrimination, means that the workplace might not necessarily have had anything different to offer to females, ever since they were allowed to enter the workplace.

Following this, it makes logical sense for one to argue that if females were offered something different, older females would have unique stories to tell, compared to younger ones. Put differently, if the workplace had learned to treat females differently, younger females in this present study would not have reported the different forms of discrimination that were also reported by older females. As argued in the literature, although legislation and sex role identity evolvement may have allowed for females to enter the workplace, it might not necessary imply the workplace is no longer discriminatory towards females. In fact, this study has revealed that females in the workplace today are still faced with many kinds of discrimination.

The fourth and fifth biographical variables to be included in the sample were educational qualification and management level. Barnejee (2006) predicts that educational level and occupation influences perception of discrimination in the workplace. It was particularly argued that educated individuals are more likely to believe they are experiencing discrimination, than uneducated individuals.

In contradiction with such views, female managers' experiences in this study did not appear to be related to their educational qualification or management level. In fact, the sample was comprised of managers from junior (for example, team manager) to the highest level of management (for example, CEO). Managers across all these levels reported to have experienced some form of discrimination. Given that female managers in different hierarchies mentioned that they experienced discrimination at some point in their management positions, regardless of which form of discrimination, one cannot infer that their experiences are related to their level of management. For illustration purposes; P5 (in a CEO position) held the view that feminine females in her organisation are discriminated when hiring for management. Equally, P6, P4 and P10 who occupy junior and middle level management positions perceive sex discrimination and

agentic backlash to be present in their organisation. This point demonstrates the view that the two variables have no influence on female managers' perceptions of their experiences at work.

Moreover, it would be logical for one to reason that discrimination can differ according to educational qualification or management level, if all the managers belonging to one hierarchy reported similar forms of discrimination. The fact that this was not the case indicates that females at work are faced with difficult situations in which neither education or the power they have in their positions can save them.

Marital status and whether or not one had children, as well as the ages of those children were also included as demographical variables. Ballout, (2008), Lo, (2003) and Schwartz, (1996) have taken the position that females with children, and those with young children to be more particular, are more likely to experience work-family conflict than unmarried and childless individuals.

Confirming these propositions, the present study finds that married people are the ones who report work-family conflict. For married females with children, those with younger children perceive more work-family conflict than those with older children. For illustration purposes; P9 who has a young child states that she does not work longer hours anymore because she needs to be with her child. P8 indicates that she has no children and is therefore able to work longer hours. Yet she is aware that this situation could change if she settled down to have a family with children in that she would want to spend more time with them. Conversely, P5, P2 and P7 are relatively older in terms of age and they have relatively older children, this could perhaps explain why these three participants even though they have children, do not report any work-family conflict. P4 and P10 who have no family responsibilities because they are neither married nor have children also do not report any work-family conflict. Thus supporting previous research's claims that, for married people with children, specifically young children, work demands may spill over to the family sphere (or the reverse), and in turn negatively impact on females' career growth (Ballout 2008; Lo, 2003; Schwartz (1996).

This finding is however not surprising in that those who are married, will understandably have family responsibilities. Similarly, those with children are expected to have more responsibilities since they will have to take care of their children. In the same manner, those with younger

children will need to spend more time and energy caring for their young children. In this way, the present's study findings are supportive of previous research (Ballout, 2008; Schwartz, 1996). This point is discussed again under work-family conflict and career growth section, pg 85.

The last variable to be included in the biographical details was field or department of work. Participants' perceptions of discrimination are expected to differ according to the field in which one works. Hayes and Hollan, 1995 (as cited in Abidin, 2009) have argued that accountancy is male dominated and so females in this profession experience more workplace discrimination than females in other fields.

These claims were found to partially hold for the sample in the present study. For example; three participants (P3, P7 and P11) stated that technical issues of the industry were the biggest challenge for them when they first entered into the organisation and their respective positions. These participants also indicated that their industry (the transport industry/sector) is male dominated, and this often implies that they have to deal with a lot of stereotypical individuals. Consequently, the three participants reported sex discrimination and patriarchal discriminatory attitudes to exist in their industry at large. The type of discrimination experienced by these female managers can be explained by the fact that, during the time when females were discriminated against, there were certain industries or certain types of jobs they would not enter into, simply because they were females (Ridgeway, 2001). The transport industry was one of those that were preserved for males only; therefore females in those types of organisations may still be enduring the effects of such historical practices.

Additionally, two participants both working in a bank (P9 and P1) reported agentic backlash, while two participants (P2 and P10) working in the financial industry (accounting) reported both sex discrimination, as well as agentic backlash.

To this end, this study does consent that some participants' responses may be partly associated with nature of their industry or field of department, however this may not necessarily hold for others. This is because P1 and P9 were not the only ones who reported sex discrimination or even agentic backlash. P2 and P10, for example, also did. Discrimination encountered could be partially associated with the nature of their industries; but possibly more due to sex and gender stereotypes still held by the workplace and society in general. In fact the study was able to

demonstrate that discrimination encountered in the workplace can take different forms, and all these make up the experiences of female mangers in the workplace. Sex discrimination and patriarchal beliefs and attitudes/ gender stereotypes are discussed in the following section as some of these discrimination forms.

In the following sections, major findings of the present study are discussed in detail.

4.3 Key findings:

4.3.1 Ontological Discrimination

One of the research questions investigated in this study was whether feminine female managers experience any forms of discrimination and if this differed qualitatively from that discrimination which is experienced by agentic (androgynous and masculine) female managers. It has already been stated that only androgynous female managers made up the final sample. Consequently, the study deduced from androgynous female managers' perceptions that feminine females do experience discrimination at the workplace. Ontological discrimination has been reported as one of the different forms of discrimination experienced by female managers in the workplace.

As mentioned already, previous researchers have argued that masculine and androgynous management styles are the most preferable in the workplace, with femininity being less preferable and less successful (Korabik & Ayman, 1987; Park, 1996, 1997; Schein, 2001). This means that successful female managers in the workplace are those who either conform to the masculine norm or those that are androgynous. Conversely, feminine qualities alone or the more feminine style of management is not only the least preferred, but is also the least successful in management.

These findings of previous studies were also emulated in the present study. To be more specific, four participants (P2, P4, P5 and P8) reported that those females who do not possess masculine or agentic qualities are not perceived to be hireable for management positions. This view was emphasized when the managers maintained that those with feminine qualities are expected to fit into the masculine norm, in order to be hired in management. Further, one of the executive managers confirmed this when she articulated that in her organisation particularly, when they hire, they expect females to fit into the masculine norm (that is, they should posses agentic traits)

or else they do not hire them. She further emphasised that males are more likely to fit into this organisational norm of masculinity, and so they are more likely to be hired in management compared to females.

This finding is consistent with previous research which has tended to argue that masculinity is still the most desirable management style (Korabik and Ayman, 1987; Schein, 2001). This discrimination encountered by feminine female managers can be understood as sex type of discrimination, as it is based on feminine female managers' lack of desirable agentic qualities.

It was argued in the literature review chapter, that when the workplace discriminated against females before they gained their independence, it was mainly because their feminine qualities were perceived undesirable and ineffective in the workplace. Females' feminine qualities were rather perceived to be effective in the home-environment (see for example, Albertyn, 2003; Carli, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001). Additionally, Ridgeway (2001) advocated that such views are merely stereotypes that tend to perpetuate discrimination against females in the workplace, on the basis that their emotional beings are not effective in the world of business. P4, P8 and P5 confirmed that such stereotypical views still serve to discriminate against traditional feminine females. This supports the observation that androgynous and masculine sex role identities are the most effective (Korabik and Ayman, 1987; Schein 2001; DeMatteo, 1994).

As already argued, the present study holds the view that it is not that these feminine females have proven to be less competent or that they do not have the necessary qualifications. Rather it is the organisational norm of masculinity which tends to put them at a disadvantage. In this way, the present study supports Ridgeway's (2001) argument that stereotypical views which consistently position males and their agentic qualities as the most successful in the workplace, also directly discriminate or serve to discriminate against feminine females. To this end, one can argue that although females have been allowed to enter the world of work; there are still forces creating artificial barriers that only enable them to penetrate the business word to a certain level, and not beyond that. This may perhaps explain why females are insignificantly represented in higher management (see literature review chapter, pg4, for specific figures). More of these forces hindering career growth of female managers are discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

To this end, discrimination experienced by feminine female managers does differ to that which may be encountered by agentic female managers. This was established after results showed that discrimination encountered by feminine females is more likely to take the form of traditional sex discrimination. Agentic female managers reported to be experiencing agentic backlash (this point is fully discussed in the following section). Nonetheless, agentic female managers did also report traditional sex discrimination.

As mentioned earlier, the answer to the question of whether feminine female managers experience a different type of discrimination was inferred from androgynous managers' perceptions.

It is a possibility that had the researcher been able to obtain feminine female managers in the sample, this would have provided the researcher with an opportunity to gather data that is more comprehensive, through directly exploring feminine managers' perceptions.

4.3.2 Agentic Backlash

Previous studies have argued that agentic females may experience agentic backlash. It was further emphasised that this situation may occur because agentic qualities are commonly associated with males; females who display them may consequently be perceived to be violating prescriptive norms of female niceness. Moreover, the study argued that there is bias in perception in that agentic females are automatically assumed to be lacking in the more social and interpersonal skills aspects (Korabik & Glick, 1999; 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2007). Findings in the present study validated these claims.

To be more particular, it was reported that eight agentic female managers (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, and P11) believe agentic backlash to be present in their organisations. To illustrate further; the participants maintained that sometimes as female managers they are expected to be sympathetic and understanding, thereby representing their traditional feminine qualities. However, when they do not appear to represent the traditional feminine female (which is often seen by displaying qualities or behaviours such as empathy or understanding), people consequently discriminate against them. This discrimination occurred in the form of negatively

evaluating the managers, referring to them as being "more harsh, not open enough, more aggressive, trying too hard to be like males", and other similar statements. Androgynous female managers stated that the aforementioned qualities are those that people (both male and female) do not like to see in a strong female manager. Instead people view this type of a female as having a shortcoming of feminine qualities and trying too hard to fit into the masculine norm, thus violating female prescriptive norms (Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001).

Such views demonstrate what previous scholars have termed the *impression management dilemma or double bind*. This situation proves to be a dilemma because on the one hand females are required to have agentic traits (that is, they must be masculine or androgynous) in order to be hired and to succeed in management; yet when they display these character traits, their subordinates, superiors or co-workers tend to negatively evaluate them (Korabik, 1990; Rudman & Glick, 1999; 2001). Faced with such a predicament it is unlikely that females will be able to succeed and dominate in the world of business (Korabik, 1990; Ritter & Yoder, 2004).

The study also aimed to investigate whether masculine female managers experienced agentic backlash and the possible impact of this backlash upon their career growth. As mentioned earlier the final sample comprised of eleven androgynous female managers. This means that the researcher was unable to capture the actual perceptions of masculine female managers. Consequently, the answer to the second research question (like the third research question), was deduced from perceptions of androgynous female managers. The eight androgynous managers who reported agentic backlash also mentioned that even competent female managers are discriminated against. The study deduced that by competent females, participants were referring to both masculine and androgynous females. This follows after previous studies (Heilman, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001) have referred to competent female as those who possess agentic traits. Further, as stated earlier in this study (see literature review chapter) androgynous and masculine female managers have a common characteristic, which is agency. In this way, it stands to reason that by competent females, participants were essentially referring to androgynous and masculine managers.

Following that, the study deduced that masculine female managers may also encounter agentic backlash type of discrimination in the workplace. To substantiate this observation; P4 mentioned that a competent female may sometimes be labelled as "overly aggressive and trying to hard to

be a man" instead of being evaluated as competent. She stressed that this may occur particularly when the manager remains firm to a decision that she has made. Likewise, P7 asserted that sometimes as a female manager, she is criticised when she shows bold and strong qualities in terms of her personality.

In an attempt to finding an explanation as to why this situation may occur, P9 and P10 argued that the problem is that qualities that are needed in management positions are misinterpreted as masculine rather than actually being seen as management type of qualities. Furthermore, it was emphasized that this is so as management positions were previously, predominantly preserved for males. Thus when females possess those qualities, they may be discriminated against due to this misinterpretation.

It appears logical for female managers to reason that they experience agentic backlash because agency traits are misinterpreted as masculine or *manly* type of qualities. In support of this view, previous studies emphasized, as shown in one of the preceding chapters, that agentic females may experience backlash because agentic traits are commonly associated with males (Rudman& Glick, 2001). Consequently, females who display them come to be evaluated negatively since people do not like to see that in a female.

Essentially, Rudman and Glick (1999; 2001) summed-up this argument when they advocated that agentic females may be discriminated against because they are automatically assumed to be lacking in the aspects of social and interpersonal skills, females niceness/communality. It can then be argued that the empathy, sympathy and understanding that individuals would like to see in the androgynous managers, are part of the female niceness/communality or social and interpersonal skills mentioned by the aforementioned scholars.

To this end, masculine and androgynous female managers may experience agentic backlash when they display agentic (masculine qualities). This finding is supported by previous research (Korabik, 1990; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2007).

As mentioned already, the question of whether masculine female managers experience agentic backlash in the workplace, was answered from androgynous female managers' perceptions. That said, exploring the actual perceptions of masculine female managers could possibly have allowed the researcher to unpack these issues concerning masculine managers' experiences in a greater

detail. It is important to note that this was the intention of the present study; however masculine managers were not identified in the sample.

4.3.3 Agentic backlash and Career Growth Opportunities

The study also aims to explore whether agentic backlash experienced by androgynous, as well as masculine female managers have any impact on their perceptions of their career growth opportunities. In their findings, Rudman and Glick (2001) demonstrates that agentic females experience agentic backlash and are denied employment for management positions as they are perceived to be lacking with regard to social skills. Further, it is also argued that female managers perceive their career growth opportunities to be limited in that their male counterparts are the ones who receive salary increases and the big promotions (Ridgeway, 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2007). These claims are partly supported by the present study in that participants did perceive their career growth opportunities to be limited.

However, female managers in this study are of the view that while they are faced with traditional discrimination and agentic backlash; they are determined to eliminate such views by working harder and proving their competence. In support to this, it was maintained that while gender stereotypes have proved to be persistent in the workplace; females should fight harder to win against negative perceptions. In this way, participants maintained that agentic backlash does not negatively impact in their careers.

To this end, one can argue that agentic backlash may in reality be hindering career advancement for female managers, however they do not perceive this to be so. The fact that they are determined to fight against such negative views could in fact be their defence against any unconscious perceptions that they may have about being discriminated against based on their agentic traits. They acknowledge that they are disliked for their agentic traits and therefore although they do not acknowledge it, one can not discount the fact that dislike of androgynous female managers may hamper their career growth progress. It is perhaps understandable that statistics provided earlier in the literature review showed that proportions of females in management are fewer compared to males.

It has also been argued that agentic backlash may lead to discrimination when hiring, promotions and salary increases are concerned (Rudman and Phelan, 2007). If a superior dislikes agentic female mangers, for the different reasons already discussed; this may impact on managers' career progress when important decisions are made. To make this point clear; in many organisations, such important decisions are often made by superiors. Thus, one can argue that it is unlikely that a superior can recommend a promotion for androgynous or masculine manager that they may dislike. Some of the participants in the study mentioned that it was their superiors who were discriminating against them and telling them that they were too harsh. In such situations, one cannot reason that the very same superior who is not in agreement with the sex role identity or the management style displayed by the androgynous manager, would in turn promote them to a higher level. In this way, career advancement is limited.

Also, in some organisations promotions are based on feedback received from other employees of the company, amongst other things. Consequently, if agentic managers are negatively evaluated, it may also temper their chances of being considered for promotions.

This in turn also supports the argument that, although female managers did not take consciously acknowledge the position that agentic backlash could negatively impact on their career growth (possibly because they believe they can fight this); the study asserts that agentic backlash may, in reality hinder career progress of female managers.

Nonetheless, results show that there are other factors that female managers believe may hinder their career advancement. Amongst these factors, work-family conflict was identified as a major barrier. The following section discusses the relationship between work-family conflict and career growth of female managers.

4.3.4 Work-Family Conflict and Career Growth

Abidin's (2009) results show that some females are unable to advance their careers because they may choose not to apply for a more senior position. This situation is said to occur because these female may believe that they will be unable to maintain a balance between their work and life domains due to the higher position. Further, other previous researchers have asserted that females faced with outside work responsibilities; a working spouse and a family with precise emotional and logistical demands are less likely to succeed in the workplace (Schwartz, 1996).

On the contrary, men who have outside support, non-working spouses and a family with fulfilling emotional and logistical needs have been said to be at a better position to compete in the work place, therefore they tend to succeed. That said it follows that the main difference between males and females is pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood (Schwartz, 1996). These aforementioned differences can perhaps explain the insignificant proportions of females in management. Evidently, with family and children responsibilities, females are not able to equally compete with males, who do not have such obstructive issues to deal with.

Fundamentally, it has been argued that married females with children are less likely to have the time and effort to devote to developing their career than unmarried and childless females (Holan and Gilbert (1979) as cited in Ballout, 2008; Schwartz, 1996). This implies that when females struggle to balance their work with family, it is most likely that they will choose family over career (De Cieri, Abbott & Iverson, 1998; Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Schein (1978) (as cited in Ballout, 2008).

These claims made by the aforementioned researchers were found to be consistent with findings of the present study. To substantiate this, most of the participants who believed nothing could inhibit them from reaching their goals were those participants who either had relatively older children and those who had no children at all. P1 and P9 had very young children and thus reported work-family conflict. This may help explain why these participants held the perception that it would be hard for them to reach their career goals as they would struggle to maintain a balance between their work and families. P8 had no children and thus reported no work-family conflict, nonetheless she was aware that this situation is more likely to change when she settles down to have a family, as she will need to split her time and effort accordingly. Conversely, P2, P3, P5, P7 and P11 had relatively older children and none of them reported any work-family conflict, instead they all believed they could attain higher positions at some point in their careers. Additionally, P10, P4, and P6 however had no children; therefore they did not experience work-family conflict. For that reason, participants indicate that they do aspire for higher management positions and believe they will attain such positions.

In supporting these views, Schein 1978 (as cited in Ballout, 2008) asserts that issues of work and careers are closely related to personal issues of self-development, the stage that one is in their life, their motives and talent, as well as their family and the work setting in which they find

themselves. Consequently, employee's perceptions about how supportive their organisation is towards work-family conflict aspects will impact on their attitudes, dispositions and orientations towards their careers. For example, it was stated that when workers experience conflict at work and this spill over into their home environment or personal life, they may become preoccupied with finding a balance between the two. Moreover, lack of this balance may negatively impact on their career growth through reducing their commitment to work Schein (1978) (as cited in Ballout, 2008). Evidently, work family conflict has a direct impact on career growth as females appear to make their career decisions based on it.

In one of the preceding paragraphs, the study showed that female managers who did not report work-family conflict were more willing and prepared to advance their careers and the reverse was true. In particular, findings of the present study showed that four participants (P1, P2, P8 and P9) perceived work-family conflict to be present in most working females' lives and they believed this could limit their career advancement.

Work-family conflict was directly associated with a negative impact on career growth. This follows after participants stated that in order to ease this conflict; they would choose their families over career (see the previous paragraphs also). As such, this study support previous research finding that females' careers are more likely to be negatively impacted on by work-family conflict (Abidin, 2009; Holan & Gilbert, (1979) (as cited in Ballout, 2008); Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Lo, 2003).

With regard to how this situation could be alleviated, previous researchers have argued that organisations should initiate policies such as flexible work hours, as well as in-house child care facilities (Lo, 2003; Schwartz, 1996). In a similar view, Mckeen and Burke (1994) in their attempt to measure initiatives valued by managerial females, also revealed that females with family responsibility rated family-friendly policies, as well as time off as more important. Mckeen and Burke (1994) particularly found that flexible working conditions were perceived by female managers to make managing work and life domains easier. This is said to have a positive impact on career growth of female managers (Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Schwarz, 1989; 1996).

Consistent to the above mentioned claims, the present study has also found less work-family conflict to be positively associated with career growth. This follows after results showed that

female managers experiencing work-family conflict believed that the provision of child care, as well as flexible working conditions would eventually ease the perceived conflict. This in turn would allow female managers to be able to devote adequate time and effort to growing their careers. For instance, if one works from 8am-4pm, they can knock off at that time to pick up their children and bring them to the child care centre in their organisation. Also if one is still not finished with the work they have to do, then can take the work home and work on it later. In this way, participants can do their work at home while they spend time with their families. This may in turn ensure that females are able to play with their male counterparts on an even field.

To this end, flexible work scheduling or building childcare facilities inside organisations are understood as a way in which organisations can create a more supporting environment (the study returns to this point later in the following section). This supportive workplace has a chance to ensure that females are not placed at a disadvantage while their male counterparts have all they need in order to reach their goals and further their careers.

4.3.5 Supportive Work Environment and Career Growth

Schwartz's (1996) have argued that despite females' participation in the workplace and them having attained junior to middle level management positions, there seem to be a range of factors that persistently place females in a less able situation to be able to reach the top. Moreover, in her study, titled, "*Management women and the new facts of life"*, Schwartz (1989) emphasized that the business world needs to recognize that management females represent a critical component of its talented pool that needs to be retained and developed. Furthermore, a sample of female managers obtained in Asian Hotels and interviewed for research purposes stated that they were unable to advance their careers due to stereotyping, sexual discrimination, work-family conflict and lack of mentor support, as well as lack of access network (Li & Leung, 2001). Similarly, De Cieri et al. (1998) have also argued that organisations need to be able to not only attract, but as well as maintain its talented employees. All these ideas are emphasising that, it is not enough for females to only be appointed in management; organisations need to find a way in which they can create an enabling and supportive environment. This supportive environment, which can also be referred to as "an even field", may serve to dismantle the glass ceiling effect by allowing female managers an opportunity to climb up the corporate ladder.

In agreeing with Li and Leung (2001), findings of the present study showed that P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9 and P10 believe that many females are unable to progress in their careers because they lack an environment that will enable them to do so. Furthermore, lack of mentorship programs and reference points were identified in this study as representing a less supportive environment. P4 expressed the view that mentorship programs will definitely improve females' confidence in management and will also help them succeed in such positions. Along the same line, P5 argued that females in South African have no reference points to learn from; and this is why they are less likely to succeed in the workplace. This participant maintained that many powerful females have been removed from their powerful positions; thus leaving no path for upcoming dynamic females to learn from. Subsequently, one can argue that if these reference points were available, it would be possible and perhaps easier to initiate and develop mentoring programs. Essentially, these references could serve to mentor upcoming young females on issues of how to maintain the balance between work and family, as well as how to develop their careers.

Following this view, it appears logical to reason that South African females would be better served if they have their own people, who can serve as reference points for them to learn from. Arguably, there are females in other parts of the world who would also make good reference points for South African females. Even so, it is important to realise that learning from foreign countries may appear to have cost and time implications. Additionally, it is not always guaranteed that practices from foreign countries may be well adopted into the South African context. This is not to imply that South African females can only learn from their fellow South Africans. In fact, the present study maintains that it would be beneficial for them to learn from foreign countries what appears to be more relevant, but as well as have their own reference points, in their own country.

In addition to mentorship programs and good reference points; flexible working hours and provision of child-care facilities can also be understood as representative of organisational or supportive workplace.

Previous research has argued that developing and implementing policies and organisational structures that will help reconcile the perceived conflict between work and family life roles may in turn contribute in enhancing career growth for females. By the same token, such policies will also aid in dismantling the glass ceiling; which essentially is what prevents females from

reaching the top in growing numbers, and at a much faster rate than that which is currently being experienced by the world (Abidin, 2009; Frye & Breaugh; 2004; Schwartz, 1996).To substantiate this, Schwartz (1989) reviewed a study conducted on four Johnson and Johnson companies in their attempt to explore the impact of work-family initiatives. Findings showed that indicators of a company's policies contribute in the retention of those who utilize them.

Moreover, it also decreases the negative spill-over to family and life, as well as increases loyalty to the organisation and job satisfaction (Schwartz, 1989). To be more specific, it was argued that extended leaves (maternity leave), part-time work, flexibility and family supports, as well as parenting leave for males and child care would enable companies to retain talented females who without these programs which might help them attain the balance they desire between their work and family life, might otherwise leave (De Cieri et al. 1989; Schwartz, 1989). In Mckeen and Burke (1994), flexible working conditions, family emergency days off and flexible vacation arrangements were identified as some of the factors that may help females develop satisfying and productive careers with their organisations.

This study stated earlier that flexible work hours, in-house child care facilities and organisational support are also representative of ways in which organisations can create a supportive work-environment for females. Additionally, support from supervisor is one of the many ways to create a supportive workplace environment. This is because supervisor support has been associated with less work-family conflict (Frye & Breaugh, 2004). Participants in the present study confirmed this since they pointed out that with support from their superiors, they would manage work-family conflict better. For example; P1 maintained that while she aspires for a further management position, she is aware that this would be accompanied by greater work demands; nonetheless, she believes supervisor support would enable her to manage the two.

Evidently, a supportive workplace has been associated with positive outcomes. For instance, Bond (1987) reviewed a study conducted by the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) on mothers in the workplace. Findings revealing that females who work in more supportive organisations reported that they were satisfied with their jobs, sick less often, took less sick days, worked more in their own time, worked later in their pregnancies, and also, they were more likely to return to work as compared to females who worked in less supporting organisations

(Bond, 1987). Evidently, a supportive workplace would have greater positive impact on female managers' career growth.

4.4 Conclusion

The present study investigated in a broader scope, the sex role identities of female managers in the workplace, with the hope of uncovering their experiences. More specifically, the study explored discrimination types experienced by these females, as well as the impact of this discrimination on their career growth opportunities. The study revealed that androgynous female managers experience agentic backlash. As the study indicated that masculine females were not identified in the sample; it was only inferred that masculine female managers experience agentic backlash. The study found that androgynous female managers do not perceive agentic backlash to have any impact on their career growth opportunities. This was concluded after participants indicated that they believe in their ability to fight against agentic backlash. The study also demonstrated through its findings that traditional forms of discrimination, particularly sex discrimination, is still experienced by the more feminine type of female managers when hiring decisions are made for management positions. It is important to note that as the study did not identify feminine managers in its sample, thus it could only be inferred that feminine females experience traditional forms of discrimination, which is different to trait discrimination. This observation provided an answer to the third research question.

As feminine managers were reported to experience traditional discrimination; and agentic females experienced agentic backlash; the two sub-research questions were also answered (however this was indirectly through inference, as already mentioned).

Contrary to what the study expected, agentic (masculine and feminine) female managers were also found to experience traditional forms of discrimination (sex discrimination, age discrimination and patriarchal discriminatory attitudes.

Regardless of what form of discrimination, the study found that discrimination occurred in most instances when the female managers first entered into management. Participants maintained they

had to fight harder against this discrimination and work harder in their jobs to ensure that they are finally accepted by their organisations.

Perceived conflict between work and family was identified as a major barrier in the career development of female managers. Following this, the study argued for a more conducive workplace that has potential to provide programs and policies that are specifically designed and aimed at creating a more even playing field for both males and females. Allowing females to have flexible work schedules, take longer parental leaves, amongst others things already mentioned, will have a more positive impact on career development of females.

To end this discussion, it is clear that females in the workplace are faced with greater challenges that they need to deal with. These challenges are what finally make up their experiences.

One would have thought that legislation would have completely erased traditional sex type of discrimination. However, the present study demonstrated that gender stereotypes are still operating in the workplace and in society in general. These stereotypes serve even today, to perpetuate the view that males are more competent than females in the workplace. Following this, it can be argued that society has not yet learned to be completely comfortable with the notion of sex role identity, particularly the theory of androgyny (which suggests that an individual can possess any type of qualities, despite what their sex predicts). It is logical to reason that if society was completely comfortable with the sex role identity phenomenon; agentic females would possibly not encounter agentic backlash.

The experiences of females in the workplace today also include having to compete with males in an unequal field. This is a difficult situation for females in that the workplace does not seem to be able to offer them an equal opportunity to be successful as it does to the males. It is important to note that due to the patriarchal society, the workplace was initially designed for males. Accordingly it should not be surprising that males are better able to succeed than females. Fundamentally, society has created the workplace as an environment or domain in which only males can participate. Further, this also implies that organisations were created to function under a “male culture”, and this may be the reason why females may be struggling to dominate the business world. To change this situation, the workplace may have to re-create organisations to have a culture that will cater for both males’ and females’ needs. This may subsequently reduce

workplace discrimination and work-family conflict experienced by females. Moreover, this change may as a consequence assist females in climbing up the ladder, as well as succeeding in what they do. In essence, the point being emphasised is that a change in culture or organisational operational norms, may create a whole new experience for females in the workplace.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

It was revealed earlier in the study that gender-stereotypes which society has lived according to, served for so many years to discriminate against females in the workplace, specifically positioning their competence to lie solely in the home environment (Albertyn, 2003; Carli, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001). However females fought against such views and gained entrance into the workplace, with some even occupying management positions. The issue that arose since has been identifying a management style that would be best for females in terms of helping them to succeed in their roles. For a long time, the workplace have been operating under the ideology that that masculine style is the best. It can be argued that this is mainly because females never used to be in the workplace before, let alone occupy management positions. Thus when females gained entry into these positions of authority, they had to manage in a masculine type of style, because this was the organisational norm.

This situation often meant that traditional females had to adopt masculine qualities and give up their traditional feminine traits, if they wanted to be successful managers. A more interesting idea was brought about by Bem (1974) who argued that masculinity and femininity are not mutually exclusive, instead one can possess both masculine and feminine traits, and she referred to this as androgyny. It was further proposed that androgyny has an advantage of giving one a wider behavioural repertoire, which then allows them to act according to the appropriateness of their response to different kinds of situations. In response to these claims, Korabik and Ayman (1987) proposed that androgyny would be the best management style for female managers in that they would no longer have to give up their traditional feminine traits, but they could combine these with masculine ones. This would in turn allow them to have a wider scope of responses they can display to situations in management.

To this end, one would have thought that females would be able to manage effectively and become successful in their roles, and consequently climb up the corporate ladder. However, statistics across different parts of the world have shown that even with these changes, females are underrepresented in higher positions. In fact, the majority of them occupy from lower to middle management positions only. It was revealed in this study and others quoted within this study that this situation may occur because the proposed masculine and androgynous styles which previous research has proposed to be the most desirable and successful may not necessarily yield those

benefits when applied by females. Exploring this predicament formulated the main purpose of the present study. As the reviewed studies were conducted on foreign populations, the study also aimed to investigate if patterns, similarities or differences could be found on a South African sample.

The main prediction of this study was that agentic female manages might experience agentic backlash, and research questions that were later investigated were formulated from this main prediction. It was important for the study to be able to demonstrate that discrimination encountered by agentic female managers (if they reported any discrimination at all) is representative of agentic forms of discrimination rather than other forms of discrimination, that is, ontological discrimination. In order to do this, the study investigated if discrimination experienced by traditional feminine female managers differed in any way, to that which agentic female managers may encounter. The impact of agentic backlash on career growth of female managers was also examined.

The study obtained a final sample of eleven female managers who were all found to be androgynous on the BSRI. Essentially, in the initial design, the data collection process was divided into two phases. The first phase required completion of the questionnaire (BSRI and biographical information). The BSRI would identify females falling into the three categories of masculinity, androgyny and femininity. Those who did not fall into any of the three categories (that is, neutral) were not included in the sample. Interestingly all females fitted into the BSRI as they were all androgynous. The second phase was the interview phase in which a one-on-one interview was to be conducted with those who would be considered fitting the sample criteria according to the BSRI, and also if they would be willing to do a follow-up interview.

In following this initial two-phase design, it was realised that the response rate from those organisations in which the researcher had gained access was significantly low, making it difficult to proceed to the second phase. A challenge that emerged from this realisation was to obtain an adequate sample in a very short time period that was left. Consequently, non-probability sampling procedure, more specifically snowball sampling was later employed in the study. This procedure was effective and efficient in obtaining the desired sample size. Another major change occurred in the data collection process, which could have possible constituted the third phase. Specifically the researcher realised during the analysis stage that some data was missing.

This implied that some research questions were not adequately answered, thus the researcher needed to fill these gaps by arranging for follow-up interviews.

The major findings of the study revealed that agentic female managers (androgynous) experience agentic backlash in the workplace. It was also deduced from androgynous managers' perceptions that masculine female managers may also encounter agentic backlash in the workplace. In addition, females reported that they experienced traditional discrimination as well when they first entered into management or when they entered into management in a new organisation. These findings were in conjunction with what past literature has proposed and what researchers have demonstrated in their studies (Korabik, 1990; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2007).

Additionally, this study also revealed that feminine females experience traditional discrimination in that they are not perceived suitable for management positions due to their feminine qualities, or perceived lack of agency. Again, it is important to note that this observation was inferred from androgynous managers' perceptions. Another major finding of the study was that perceived conflict between family and work life demands was considered by participants as a major barrier to their career success. This finding was also supportive of previous research (see for example, Abidin, 2009; Holan & Gilbert, (1979) (as cited in Ballout, 2008); Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Lo, 2003).

Participants further indicated that initiatives such as child-care facilities inside work premises and flexible working conditions would alleviate this conflict, thus enable them to devote as much time and effort in their work. They argued that this would subsequently help them advance in their careers. Again, these findings validated claims made by previous research (see for example, Schwartz, 1996).

Research Implications

The present study intended to obtain androgynous, feminine and masculine female managers in the final sample; however all the females were found to be androgynous after calculating their scores on the BSRI. The purpose of targeting the different types (in terms of sex role identity) of female managers was to be able to capture as much information as possible, with an attempt to extrapolate if these females report the same or different experiences.

The fact that only androgynous females were found in the sample implied that the researcher could not capture the actual perceptions of feminine, as well as masculine female managers. Although the study was able to answer the proposed research questions; it could only do so to a certain extent since the answers to two of the research questions could only be inferred from perceptions of androgynous females. That said, it remains that feminine and masculine female managers may have unique stories to tell about their experiences at work, and these still need to be captured. Future research should therefore investigate the actual perceptions of experiences of feminine and masculine female managers as well.

This will add into the body of literature that attempts to explore challenges faced by females in the workplace and thus aid in examining how such issues could be alleviated.

The researcher took the position that agentic backlash may have a negative impact on female managers' career growth; yet, the determination to fight against such views may be the reason why females in this study did not perceive agentic backlash to be impacting on their careers. Future research should investigate why the sample in the present study did not believe agentic backlash could hinder their career progress, even after they reported its presence in their workplaces.

To end this discussion, the proposed programs and policies that could alleviate the perceived conflict between family and work have been argued to reveal conflicting results with regard to their impact on career growth of female managers. For instance, Schwartz (1996) assert that other researchers have found or rather have reported that some females hold the view that the use of extended parental leaves as well as flexible work scheduling might negatively impact on their career growth by making them to look less committed. It was further maintained that the result for this is that they are more resistant towards the use of such policies. Future research should continue to investigate the impact of such programs and policies, and explore why these programs yield different impact on different organisations or female managers who employ them. This future research could investigate issues such as organisational culture, organisational climate, individual differences, as well as employee's perceptions towards such policies and programs. These factors could be contributing to the impact of these programs on female managers' career progress. Additionally, it is critical that in implementing such initiatives, organisations in turn also evaluate their impact and document these for research purposes.

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APPENDICES..

APPENDIX A:

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please provide the following information for research purposes only!!!

1.Race (For research purposes only!!!)

African	White	Colored	Indian/Asian	Other
1	2	3	4	5

2. How old are you?

_____

3. Marital Status

Married	Divorced	Widowed	Never Married

4. Do you have any children?

Yes	No

5. Ages of children

6. What is your highest educational qualification? (Cross one answer only)

Went to school but left before grade7/ standard 5	1
Completed grade7/standard5 but never been to high school	2
Have been to high school, but have not passed matric	3
Have passed matric	4
Have passed matric and have a university or technickon degree/certificate/diploma	5

7. Field /Department of Work

_____

8. Management level

_____

9. Length of time in management

_____

NOTE: Your answers to this survey will be treated strictly confidential!

APPENDIX B

The Bem Sex Role Inventory

Below you will find a list of personality characteristics. Please indicate on a scale from 1 to 7 how true each of these characteristics is in describing yourself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never or almost never	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Always or almost always true

Defend my own beliefs		Adaptable		Flatterable	
Affectionate		Dominant		Theatrical	
Conscientious		Tender		Self-sufficient	
Independent		Conceited		Loyal	
Sympathetic		Willing to take a stand		Happy	
Moody		Love children		Individualistic	
Assertive		Tactful		Soft-spoken	
Sensitive to needs of others		Aggressive		Unpredictable	
Reliable		Gentle		Masculine	
Strong personality		Conventional		Gullible	

Understanding		Self-reliant		Solemn	
Jealous		Yielding		Competitive	
Forceful		Helpful		Childlike	
Compassionate		Athletic		Likeable	
Truthful		Cheerful		Ambitious	
Have leadership abilities		Unsystematic		Do not use harsh language	
Eager to soothe hurt feelings		Analytical		Sincere	
Secretive		Shy		Act as a leader	
Willing to take risks		Inefficient		Feminine	
Warm		Make decisions easily		Friendly	

APPENDIX C

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. What do you perceive the hiring criteria for a management position to be in general?
2. What are the hiring criteria for a management position in your organisation?
3. Do you perceive these criteria to be equal across all sexes (both male and female)?
4. To what do you attribute your being appointed to your current position?
5. How do you think people responded to your appointment to this position (colleagues, subordinates, superiors other than those that appointed you – probe)
6. Identify one particular incident that you can recall that best describes what you have just told me and elaborate on that.
7. Do you think there are the challenges facing female job applicants for management positions in your organisation? If so, what are these challenges? probe
8. Do you aspire for a further management promotion?
9. If yes, are there factors that may help you attain this position and/or those that may inhibit you- probe (organisational or individual factors)
10. For those female manager(s) who have attained higher position(s) in your organisation, what factors could you attribute to their achievements? /What do you think is the reason for them to have attained such a position?
11. Are there any current problems you are experiencing as a female manager - if any, what are these problems and what factors do you attribute to these problems?
12. Given all that that you have described above, explain in detail how all this makes you feel emotionally about your job/ work environment/ yourself?
13. **Debriefing and Probing** – based on your filling in of the BSRI, this is how you scored:

Sex Role Identity refers to roles that people come to assume-both at work and in the home environment. Some people are oriented towards roles that are stereotypically perceived to be more for men, some to roles that are perceived to be for females, and some are oriented towards both type of roles or they can assume both type of roles (androgynous). It is important to realise that this has nothing to do with one's biological gender or sexual orientation; rather it is concerned with social roles. People who identify with masculine roles tend to be achievement driven, competitive, perhaps more self-confident and they tend to focus more on results and performance. People who identify with feminine roles tend to be communal, caring and sensitive and focus more on their relationship to and concern for other people. While people who are androgynous identity have a wider behavioural scope (as they have both types of characteristics), that is, they can be both achievement driven, competitive, self-confident and focusing more on results and performance and they can be communal, caring and sensitive and focus on relationships with and concern for other people. This ability to focus on both allows them to respond with a wider range of behaviours to different situations. In other words they are able to deal with situations that may at times require more masculine type of behaviours and those that may at times require more feminine type of behaviours.

14. Do you feel that the BSRI score is a true reflection of you? How does this make you feel emotionally.

15. With all that you feel about your workplace, would you consider leaving if there was an option or better offer?

APPENDIX D

Consent Form (Interview/Participation)

I _____ consent to being interviewed by _____ for his/her study on _____. I understand that:

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

Signed _____

APPENDIX E

Consent Form (Recording)

I _____ consent to my interview with _____ for his/her study on _____ being tape-recorded. I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher.
- All tape recordings will be destroyed or stored by the researcher after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed _____

APPENDIX F

Follow-Up Interview Guide

1. Based on our previous discussion, you mentioned that when you first entered into your current position/management, you experienced discrimination in ……(tailor made to each participant's experiences)
2. Do you feel that you being androgynous (that is a combination of masculine and feminine qualities) could be a reason you experienced the discrimination that you said you experienced?-do you feel that the people you mentioned were discriminating against you were doing so because you showed competence, assertiveness, quick-decision making and all other qualities that are stereotypically associated with males?
3. How do you think people expect you to behave as a female manager?-do you feel there are certain qualities you are expected to display as a female, despite the fact that here at work you are a manager?
4. How do you think people respond when you do not display those female qualities that they may be expecting you to show?
5. Are there any specific behaviors that you think may cause your subordinates/ colleagues/superiors to discriminate against you?-identify a specific incident where you were discriminated against because you showed specific qualities?
6. Can you please identify specific qualities that may reduce the discrimination-in other words, please give me a specific incident in which you displayed specific qualities and you were liked and appraised positively for that.