

**EMPOWERMENT: MAKING SENSE
OF THE VOICES OF WOMEN
ABOUT THEIR JOURNEY
TOWARDS
THEIR LEADERSHIP IDENTITY IN
HIGHER EDUCATION**

Khomotso Moetanalo Hilda Marumo

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HIGHER EDUCATION**

by

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



DEDICATION

To my parents, my father, Mongane, my mother, Matšie Mashianoke, thank you for giving me the foundation of education and unconditional love.

To my husband, Boitumelo, and our daughter, Onkarabile, thank you for your love and support.

To our child, Omphile, you will always be part of my life, this is for you too. You touched me in the morning and walked away from me so soon. It must have been hard to tell me that you have given all you had to give. You left me, as you found me, empty like before to a place where no one has ever been but you are with the Lord. I felt you grow but I failed to feel you when you die. I wish I knew how to protect you when God needed you more than we do. May your soul rest in peace my child.

As Marianne Williamson said:

“Our biggest fear is not that we are inadequate ...
it is that we are powerful beyond measure.”

DECLARATION

I, Khomotšo Moetanalo Hilda Marumo, declare that this study is my own and all the resources used are acknowledged. I declare that this work has never been submitted for examination to this or any other university.

Signature



Date: July 2012

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to make sense out of the voices of women leaders in Higher Education (HE) about their journey towards developing their own leadership identity. Despite the growing body of literature on women in leadership, few studies have empirically investigated the leadership of women – their experience in their journey towards developing their own leadership identity. It is against this background that this study was conducted about the experiences of women in leadership and how they make sense about their journey. In view of empowering other women to become agents of change in constructing their own paths towards idiosyncratic approaches to leadership the women who took part in this study had to narrate their own experiences and achievements. The focus was also on providing direction to potential women leaders in terms of constructing their own paths in empowerment towards innovative and unique leadership in Higher Education.

The study had to reflect on how women leaders at two Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) gained mastery over their own careers and how the obstacles and experiences contributed to their growth and success, with a view to contributing to the development of women in HE and their taking up leadership positions. The study was carried out using the qualitative research method to collect data. The study consisted of eight women participants who are currently in leadership positions at two universities. For focus group interviews four women from the two universities were selected as participants in the survey. For personal interviews four women from two different universities were also selected. The narratives of the women who participated in the focus group and personal interviews as a way of collecting data, made it simple for them to tell the story of their experiences in their journey in leadership positions. Purposive sampling was used to select all the participants. The women who participated volunteered and their identity was kept confidential.

The internal and external determinants that emanated from women story-telling were used as themes for this study. The themes used were the ones that shaped the women's identity formation and gave them directives on how to make their voices heard. In their story-telling women indicated that they had had mentors from their

community and family; some regarded their fathers as mentors, others their teachers, some had to stand up and become mentors to others.

The following objectives were used to make sense of the situation of identity formation in leadership positions:

- To explore identity formation and the development of a female leadership identity in particular
- To explore the empowerment challenges that female leaders encounter in developing their own identity in taking up leadership positions
- To make sense out of the voices of women leaders in Higher Education about their journey towards their own leadership identity.

The focus of the study was on the voices of women in leadership positions in terms of their empowerment and making sense of their own leadership identity. The study was conducted in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The interpretive, qualitative approach was used to collect data. Data collected from both interviews were analyzed using the seven properties of sense-making. This approach has the potential to identify problems that at first appear to have nothing to do with the interface between leadership in institutions. The model is suitable when the goal is to make a successful improvement of an existing interruption that occurs when women become leaders where their individual identity has been interrupted to the extent that it resulted in silencing their voices. This will provide a direction to potential women leaders in terms of constructing their own paths in transforming the existing expectations towards innovative and unique approaches to leadership in HE.

The study findings show that even though women in leadership positions still face challenges, they have developed their own strategies for making their voices heard. Women know well that authenticity in leading like women is the strong indicator of causing their voices to be heard. The findings indicate that all women identities are influenced by the environment and they also influence the environment. Women as leaders have to extract cues to be able to make sense of the situations they find themselves in. The findings suggest that in both institutions barriers to women advancement still exist, and those barriers are silences which end up making

women's voices not to be heard. A lack of power in women is seen as structural barriers inherited in the academic environment. Women as leaders realize that even though they lack power by not being in top positions where decisions are made, they regain power by empowering themselves and other women, by networking and being ambassadors. The lack of power is due to a gender-based construct. Gender is seen as a pervasive symbol of the power relation. Women have a time in their lives when they become pregnant and take maternity leave. This affects the progression of women's academic careers and networking. There are other factors that contribute to a lack of power to women, such as personal and psychological barriers and climate issues (Ramphela 2008).

A number of factors contribute to keep women out of Higher Education leadership. Women are seen by society as people who fulfil the caring and reproductive roles. There should be a revision of the social structure of the institutions so that women as leaders should be empowered. When woman are empowered, the whole nation is empowered. There are a number of women empowerment projects in South Africa and women are given opportunities and recognition. Yet in HEIs, it seems the entry and recognition of women is minimal. This led the researcher to embark on research on the empowerment of women in the context of academia, considering women as agents of social change that have the capacity to foster structural changes.

KEYWORDS

Empowerment, Identity

Identity formation

Leadership identity development

Power

Voice

Sense-making

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUT	Association of University Teachers
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CHESD	Centre for Higher Education
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COP17/CMP7	Conference of the Parties/ Meeting of the Parties
CUT	Central University of Technology, Free State
DVC	Deputy Vice-chancellor
FAWE	Forum of African Women Educationalists
FEW	Family Work Enrichment
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HER-SA	Higher Education (HE) sector in South Africa
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HOD	Head of Department
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT	Information Technology
MBWA	Management by walking around
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MANCOM	Management Committee
MBSA	Management by screening around
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
P	Participant
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
SAASSAP	The South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
UFS	University of the Free State
WFE	Work Family Enrichment

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on women leaders in Higher Education (HE), their empowerment and their strategies for attaining top leadership positions. It also explores how women in leadership positions develop their own identity and unique voices, and how they empower subsequent generations of women leaders. As Clandinin and Connely (2000:121) assert, “Our research interest comes out of our own narratives of experience and shapes our narrative inquiry plotline.” The researcher’s interest in the topic arose from personal experience in middle leadership positions. She regards this as a journey on which she began to question the identity formation of women and why their voices in leadership are not always heard. A feminist view of identity will inform the theoretical framework of the study and will take a qualitative approach and be guided by the researcher’s set of beliefs, feelings about the world and how it should be studied (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:22).

Studies conducted (Chin 2011, Gable 2011, González 2011, Women Watch 2007:5, Ramphela 2008, Ryan & Haslam 2005) show that women in leadership positions have been marginalised in the past and are still currently underrepresented in leadership positions. Although there is also evidence that a few have achieved top positions in leadership, many still remain at lower levels of management (Mathipa & Tsoka 2001:329), which raises the questions of why their voices are not heard and what silences them. What has characterised the identity formation of those who have reached the top positions? To answer these questions, it is first necessary to understand the dynamics behind women’s success and the journey they went through in leadership positions.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Many studies have been conducted on the issue of women in leadership positions, as well as in the field on which this study will focus, namely Higher Education (Davis 2007, Eagly & Carli 2003, Madsen 2010, Ramsay 2000). However, most explored challenges and barriers that women encounter, with findings related to male-dominated culture, selection and procedures. Hostile working environments and leadership styles have been discussed and researched but little has been approached using a sense-making perspective. What has not received so much attention are issues of women in leadership positions, such as how they must make their voices heard and empower other women to be leaders. This study therefore listens to the voices of women in leadership positions, speaking of their empowerment and how they find their own identity in themselves. The study focuses on women in leading academic and administrative positions at two Higher Education institutions (HEIs), namely the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), and the University of the Free State (UFS).

Increasingly, women are using their leadership abilities to transform themselves, their families, institutions and communities, yet these efforts have received little attention or recognition and have not demonstrated the capacity to construct meaning out of their development processes. Women are also using their leadership positions to empower young women, to rise above Paulo Freire's (1972:32) "oppressed constituencies", in which they were previously "unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voices and cheated in the sale of their labour". In the figurative idiom of the employment market, when women have occasionally been afforded the opportunity to "climb the ladder", they have mostly been confronted with a "glass ceiling" (Ryan & Haslam 2005:81).

The issue of empowerment is important to women in leadership positions as it contributes to their thinking and acting, as they exert influence and control over their own decision-making processes. Empowerment may include characteristics such as self-strength, control, power, choice, dignity, values, decision making, freedom, awakening and capability (Nayaran 2002:10). For Kabeer (1999a:435), women's empowerment is "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to

make strategic life choices acquire such an ability”, a definition rooted in the ideology of feminist social change. In this vein, most women's empowerment programmes begin with analyses of situations that show women to be disadvantaged in comparison with the men in their families and communities. Kabeer's (1999a:437) “strategic life choices” include such major decisions as “choice of livelihood, whether and whom to marry,” and recognise that not all choices are equally significant.

Kabeer (1999a) also has apportioned three dimensions to empowerment, namely resources, agency and achievements, each of which builds on the others. The resources can be material, human or social, including physical resources, individual capabilities and claims that the individual can make on others. Kabeer writes that “the terms on which people gain access to resources are as important as the resources themselves when the issue of empowerment is being considered” and that “empowerment entails changes in the terms on which resources are acquired as much as an increase in access to resources” (Kabeer 1999a: 437).

For Kabeer (1999a:438) and Sen (2002:ii), agency includes what human beings can do to improve, together with the meaning, motivation and purpose that they bring to their activity, whilst appealing to their *sense* of agency and “power within”. On the other hand, Mosedale (2005) emphasizes the gendered nature of women’s agency and achievement used to measure empowerment, arguing as follows:

“... we need to remember that many of the women we are referring to are living with multiple disempowerments, and that their empowerment may address these as well as gender based disempowerment and not just when women are working in solidarity with men” (2005:252).

In this study the researcher argues that it is particularly this disempowerment that needs to be amended and the strengthening of women’s voices and agency addressed.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the number of leadership positions that women occupy in Higher Education, their voices in terms of empowerment processes towards developing their own unique leadership identity in the field have not been significantly researched (Mertz 2009:8). This notion is supported by (Lincoln 1993:44 as quoted by Mertz 2009:8), who writes that “until we have literature from the silenced, we will probably not have a full critique of the social order from their perspective. Nor will we have ... the means of sharing their daily worlds”. Freire’s (1993) scenario of the oppressor and the oppressed can also be applied in this context, with women assuming the role of the oppressed and being faced with a situation which Weick (1995:45) refers to as “flight or fight”, where women are not sure where to go and their leadership identity has been interrupted. What women know, is that the map they have in front of them is not sufficient to get them out of this emotional “arousal”. This indicates that if their freedom is curtailed by an oppressor, any leadership they assume may not be authentic, as their leadership roles will largely be regarded and described according to the oppressor’s conceptions, which in this case would be masculine.

In order to counter the state of silence and oppression, researchers need to understand how women who have reached positions of leadership, have developed their own identities in preparing for those top positions. Such development processes do not go without challenges that have to be overcome.

According to the Catalyst report (2003:16), the typical challenges that women are confronted with, such as sexual, ethnic and racial discrimination and harassment in the workplace, as well as a lack of family-friendly workplace policies and the exclusion of women leaders from informal networks, need to be considered. In contrast, Robinson (2011:1 in COP 17/CMP7 CMP17), indicates that “the roles of women as agents of change in their homes, places of work and communities are often underplayed,” but are critical as they have to deal with discriminatory and stereotypical behaviour, which hinder their progress.

Insight into the challenges that women leaders in Higher Education in the past had to deal with and how they managed to overcome the existing barriers and develop their

own identities can be crucial to the development of future women leaders. As they do so, they will also be able to develop their own voices. However, such developmental processes are not without obstacles and challenges, and may cause a duality in the innermost being as women have to make a choice between their own authentic identity and that expected of them in the workplace. Choices like this may result in internalising the image gap between their authentic innermost being and the rules of the dominant party (the oppressor), often resulting in an inability to function or communicate authentically, and creating an environment in which their voices are heard but their identities have been interrupted by the prescriptive form of the authority.

Within the above context, the National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa (NPHE-SA) (2001:5) recognises the difficulties of achieving equity in Higher Education and suggests that plans be put in place to confront the problem. This National Plan provides a framework for ensuring the fitness of the Higher Education system to contribute to the challenges facing South Africa in the 21st century. In line with one of its priorities, to increase the representation of blacks and women in academic and administrative positions, especially at senior levels, the representation of women has grown steadily since then. In 2006, women outnumbered men for the first time, while in 2007 they made up 51% of Higher Education employees. However, as Figure 1.1 below shows, while comprehensive universities and traditional academic universities started to employ more women (52%) than men (48%), universities of technology continued to employ more men (54%) than women (46%).

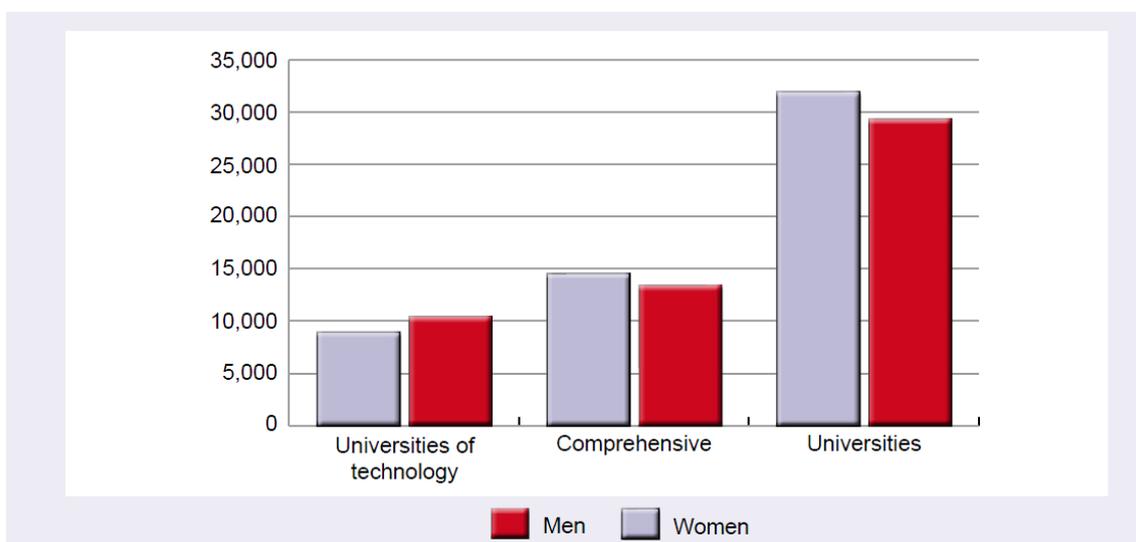


Figure 1.1 Staff (headcount) in public Higher Education by gender and institutional type
(HEMIS-data: CHE 2009:77)

These inequalities can be extended to job categories, where men still hold the majority of management, academic and technical posts but women are in the majority in the specialised support professional and non-professional administration posts. These are reflected in Figure 1.2.

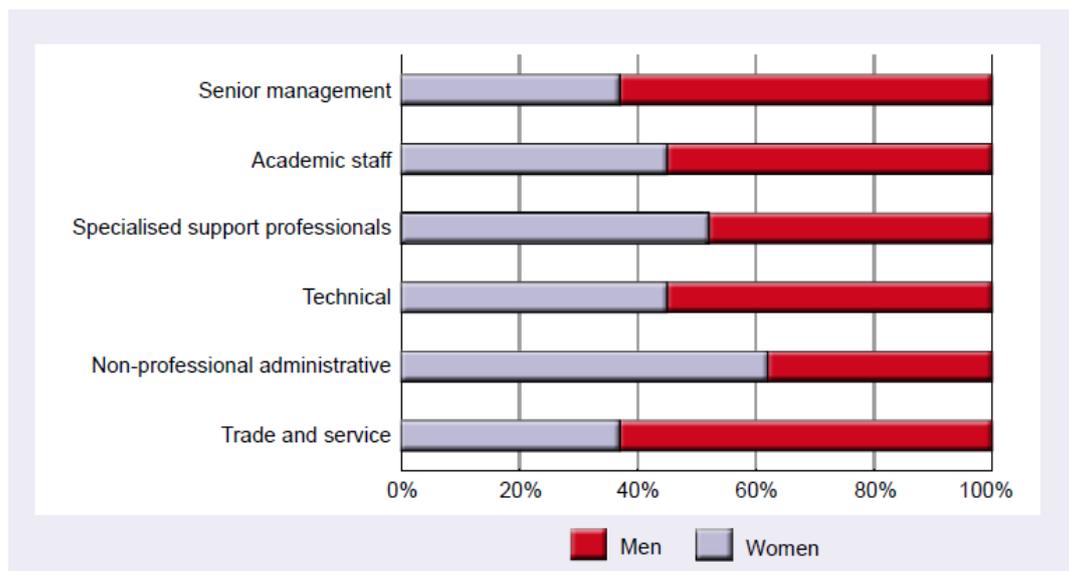


Figure 1.2 Staff (headcount) at public institutions by gender and level of employment
(HEMIS-data: HE 2009:77)

Figure 1.2 shows clearly that Higher Education institutions are characterised by numerous inequalities. In 2004, only 18% of senior management positions at Higher Education institutions were held by women, but this figure increased to 36% in 2009 (Council of Higher Education: CHE, 2009:78). The number of female employees at comprehensive universities has since grown to 31% while those employed by universities of technology has increased by 24% (CHE 2009:78), but despite this progress, relatively few women were in the most senior positions. Only four out of the 23 public institutions, namely the University of Pretoria, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, the Vaal University of Technology and the University of Zululand, have female vice-chancellors, indicating that women continue to be under-

represented at management levels at universities. Figure 1.3 below is a breakdown of the positions women hold in Higher Education.

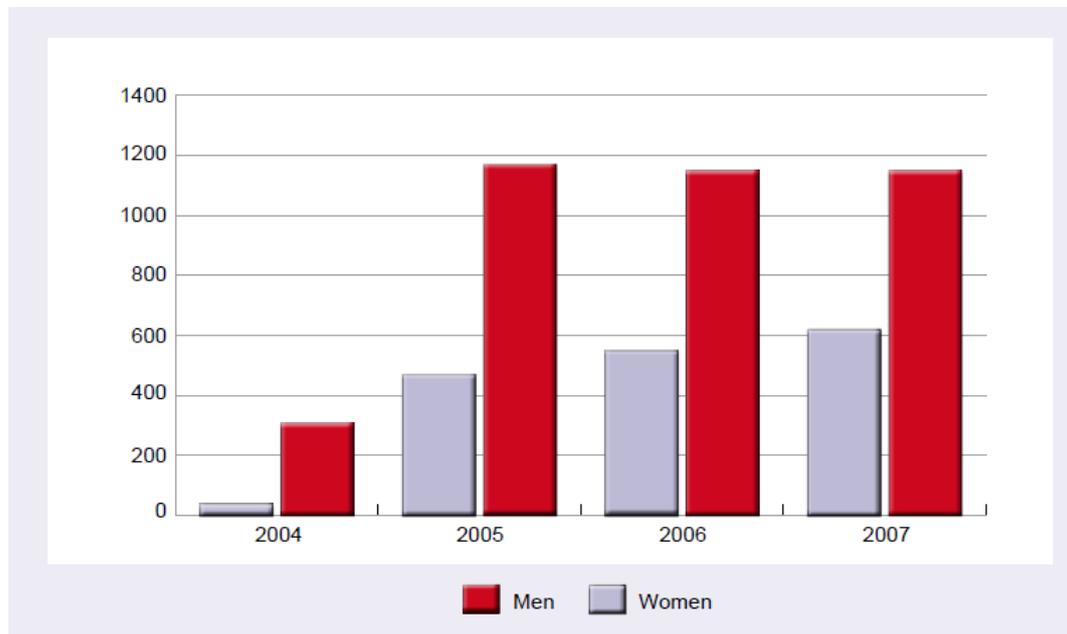


Figure 1.3 Gender breakdown of senior management positions in Higher Education
(HEMIS-data: CHE 2009:78)

These figures substantiate what González (2011:198) has emphasized: women still form the minority in the top echelons of positional power at universities. This lack of power excludes them from networking and mentoring and results in the undermining of their power and their careers reaching a plateau prematurely (González 2011:198). In this regard, Ramphele (2008:1) challenges universities to address the issue of institutional culture that is critically linked to gender-based power. The context in which the universities operate, makes the institutional cultures to keep women away from leadership positions in defiance of employment equity legislation, and the Council of Higher Education, CHE (2009) and Final Report of 2008¹ advocates that, in reaching a state of gender equity in HE, institutions must address issues such as equality of access and retention (Final Report 2008)².

¹ From a Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions.
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001510/151051eo.pdf>

² <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/publications/ReportonHEandTransformation.pdf>

According to Ryan and Haslam (2005:81), HEIs will continue to encounter problems with access and retention as long as men continue to enjoy preferential treatment and attitudes within the workplace suggest that workers prefer males to females as their leaders. Similarly, discriminatory appointment and promotion practices remain barriers in institutions that do not have equal opportunity policies in place. Almost two decades ago, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: UNESCO (1993:22) pointed out that one of the largest barriers facing women was that “they were not men”, that is, they were not readily accepted into informal networks that serve to bond males. Although women frequently have their own community-based female networks, they are mostly not functional in advancing their professional careers.

Studies conducted by Stroh, Brett and Reilly (1992) found that more women left management positions than men (26% and 14% respectively), and that they did not quit their management positions because of family commitments, but rather because they perceived their career as limited.

Research conducted on the leadership challenges that women face, is well documented (Morley 1999, Malhotra, Schuler & Boender 2002, Piterman 2008, Lemmer 2009), and reveals that issues of developing a voice, female leadership identity, and empowerment at an institutional and personal level have not been addressed significantly, particularly in the South African HE context. It is within this context that the following research question for this study emerged:

What are the fundamental empowerment experiences of women leaders in Higher Education (HE) in developing their own leadership identity and how can the researcher make sense of those women about their journeys to leadership? The researcher will need this evidence to contribute to the empowerment of women leaders in the future.

The secondary questions that resulted from the primary research question are:

- How are unique identities formed and how do they impact on leadership identity formation?

- What does the concept of empowerment entail and how do female leaders relate to the challenges of becoming empowered?
- How did women in Higher Education leadership positions at two South African institutions address challenges of empowerment by developing their own identity and what sense can be made of the voices of these women towards their leadership identity and what role can the institution play in this regard?
- How can the experiences of current women leaders in Higher Education contribute to the empowerment of potential women leaders in terms of constructing their own paths and becoming agents of their own empowerment towards innovative and unique leadership?

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In order to answer the main research question, the primary aim of the study was to make sense of how women in HE leadership moved through the process of becoming empowered to develop their own leadership identity. Consequently, this study also had to reflect on how women leaders at two HEIs gained mastery over their own careers and how the obstacles and experiences contributed to their growth and success. This evidence is intended to contribute to the development of women in HE and their taking up leadership positions.

Secondary aims are:

- To explore identity formation and the development of the female leadership identity (Chapter 2)
- To explore the empowerment challenges that female leaders encounter in developing their own identity when taking up leadership positions and why these challenges exist (Chapter 3)
- To make sense out of the voices of the participating women leaders in HE regarding their journeys towards assuming their own leadership identity (Chapters 4 & 5)

- To provide direction to potential women leaders in HE in terms of constructing their own paths and becoming agents of their own empowerment towards innovative and unique leadership and to indicate the role institutions can play in this regard (Chapter 6).

1.5 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study lies in the insights that developed through the sense-making approach of the voices of women leaders in HE as they talked about their journey in becoming empowered to develop their own leadership identity. In turn, this can hold particular value for the empowerment of other women in becoming future agents of change as they construct their own idiosyncratic approaches to leadership.

As Bennis (2003:104) writes:

No leader sets out to be a leader. People set out to live their lives, expressing themselves fully, but when that expression is of value, they become leaders. So the point is not to become a leader. The point is to become yourself, to use yourself completely – all your skills and energies – in order to make your vision manifest. You must withhold nothing. You must, in sum, become the person you started out to be, and to enjoy the process of becoming.

Individuals do not necessarily set out to be leaders but during their development they develop a particular identity, which is influenced by the rules, values and cultural factors of that organisation or institution. They have to understand the differences and expectation of others and attach meaning to the unique skills and talents required to fill a particular position. Bennis (2003) argues that one needs to have a deep understanding of the self in order to be able to share power and in turn empower others. In this context, his study can be considered beneficial to the improvement of upcoming women in HE who aspire to become leaders and, as such, contribute to the existing knowledge on leadership identity formation and empowerment processes.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer the research questions. It describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom and under what conditions the data was obtained (Kerlinger 1986:279, McMillan & Schumacher 1993:31). Qualitative research was chosen as it is the most suitable method for constructing meaning of individuals' views and experiences in interaction with others and for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon (Creswell 2008). This study is a qualitative research study that seeks to provide an understanding and interpretation of the leadership identity formation experiences of twelve women on their empowerment journey to take up leadership positions at two HEIs. According to Creswell (2007:55), "narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals".

The research is exploratory and descriptive by design and is able to "picture the women's experiences through a narrative account" (Lincoln 2000). The issue at stake is "a highly subjective phenomenon" that needs to be interpreted rather than measured (Merriam 1998:48). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) support this and claim that the time for researchers to conduct research by engaging in value-free inquiry is over. The face-to-face conversations with the participants in order to understand their perspectives and use the knowledge they had already constructed, produced and reproduced (Denscombe 2003, Shabalala 2009). The participants were divided into two groups. The first group was for focus group discussion and the second group was for interviews. The qualitative approach is appropriate for feminist research as it is concerned with consciousness-raising as a way of seeing a phenomenon and as a methodological tool (Westmarland 2001).

The view of the researcher in qualitative research is that of a world and institutions that are always changing, as new perspectives are constructed and new knowledge developed. This research methodology allows for the researcher to be involved in the process and use him/herself as a tool to gather data (Guba & Lincoln 1981) that fits this study. With this epistemological assumption, the researcher can "get close to the participants being studied" (Creswell 2007:18). From this point of view, the

researcher had to manage the boundaries of the women being interviewed, and also embark on a journey herself. This is similar to the “traveller” metaphor used by Kvale (1996), who describes the role of the researcher in a sense-making approach for him/herself and for those being researched.

In conducting this study, the following methods were employed.

1.6.1 A literature review

An investigation of the literature on how unique identities are formed and how they impact on female leadership identity formation was used to construct a foundation for empowerment. There are authors whose works are reviewed in this paper who argue that women’s empowerment requires fundamental systemic transformation in challenging patriarchal structures that inhibit women's career development (Batliwala 1994, Kabeer 2000, Mosedale 2005, Sen & Grown 1987). However, the limited number of publications discussing the processes that women leaders in HE undergo in developing their idiosyncratic identities and voices compelled the researcher to explore sources that transcended disciplinary boundaries to establish current thinking on the subject of women in leadership positions.

1.6.2 An empirical investigation

The following elements portray the scope of the empirical investigation.

1.6.2.1 Participant selection

To obtain the data for this study, purposive sampling was carried out in line with Schwandt (2001:232), who emphasizes its relevance because the participants are able to react to the questions based on their knowledge and experience in the field. In this study, the samples of the group are participants who are all women in leadership positions at the Central University of Technology, Free State and the University of the Free State. They were from different race groups and between the ages of 39 and 60 years.

1.6.2.2 Data collection

The data was collected from the participants by means of a focus group discussion and personal interviews, in which they were allowed to express themselves in languages with which they felt comfortable. The focus group discussion was chosen as the qualitative method because it creates a social environment in which group members are stimulated by each other's perceptions and ideas and so increase the quality and richness of data (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:32). The focus group interviews as well as the personal interviews focused on the women's identity formation from their childhood to the present day, exploring the development of their own voices and how they made sense of their positions and the personal empowerment processes they had to undergo. The data was collected in such a way that the researcher needed to be involved in the research process (Guba & Lincoln 1981), and, at the same time, to reflect on her personal experiences. A digital recorder was used to record the data from both focus group discussion and interviews.

By capitalising on the flexibility of focus group discussion and interviews, the researcher could probe by means of follow-up questions and prompt discussions to find strategies for bridging the gaps in terms of future processes and agency formations. In making sense of the women leaders' experiences and views, this research attempts to bridge the gap in the knowledge of empowerment. The tape recording ensured that the whole interview was captured and provides complete data for analysis, so that cues that were missed the first time can be recognised when listening to the recording. Interview questions were structured in a way that made participants conscious of the current situation and allowed them to suggest ways to alter the situation.

1.6.2.3 Data analysis

The results of the data analysis consisted of the participants' experiences and views, which enabled the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the subject matter. The researcher used the semi-structured interview as a way of helping to control and direct the conversation. Unlike other researchers, the researcher did not narrate personal experiences to interviewees, because this might have had a leading affect

on the discussions and interviews, allowing the “object to speak for itself” (Smaling 1994:17) and be sympathetic in answering. The researcher recorded what the participants were saying by making notes of what had been said as a backup of the recorder.

A narrative analysis was used and interpreted using a sense-making approach by applying the seven properties of sense-making as suggested by Weick (1995). This was done in order to make a substantial contribution to the existing knowledge on the dissonances that occur as women become leaders and where their individual identity becomes interrupted to the extent that it resulted in silencing their voices. The seven properties of sense-making are (1) grounded in identity construction; (2) retrospective; (3) enactive of sensible environments; (4) social; (5) ongoing; (6) focused on and by extracted cues; and (7) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (Weick 1995:17-61). An interpretation of the findings was conducted in an interpretive-constructivist manner in search of understanding and meaning making of the emerging data. The recorded and transcribed data was thereafter, analysed and examined for key issues raised by the participants in response to each question and by identifying the themes and clustering the units of meaning.

1.6.2.4 Ethical considerations

The participants were notified by telephone and emails about the study. The aims, purpose, methods and anticipated benefits of this research to participants were also explained to them to increase their comfort and their willingness to participate. No pressure of any kind was applied to encourage any individual to become a subject of the study. The identity of individuals from whom data was gathered was kept strictly confidential. Fictitious names (pseudonyms) were used when data was analysed from the focus group discussions. After the completion of the study, any information that would reveal the identity of individuals was to be, and shall be, destroyed.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following key terms are defined here in the sense in which they are understood in this study.

1.7.1 Empowerment

De Val and Lloyd (2002:3) relate “empowerment” to management, with managers sharing their influence with colleagues and having the power to change things in view of improvement. Marshall (2006) views the concept from an organisational perspective, as an inner-to-outer dynamic moving from silence to communication, collaboration, shared responsibility and the delivery of high quality performance.

1.7.2 Identity

A person's action and the will to develop his/her potential greatly depend on the person's identity, defined by Erikson (1968) as a sense of a continuous self. In this study, identity will be regarded as something that is dynamic due to the development and growth of an individual as influenced by society, groups, ethnicity, gender, culture, social class, sexual orientation and the workplace. For Kroger (2004:34), identity is “a structure or a configuration ... both a conscious subjective experience as well as an unconscious entity”. Every individual has an identity when born, but it is not recognised until the inception of the various developmental stages, and an awareness of certain changes in him/her. Children do not recognise identity until they start engaging with others through interaction.

Erikson (1968) identified seven stages of development: 1) a process that occurs between birth and infancy as the fundamental stage in life. In this stage a development of trust is based on dependability and the quality of the child's caregivers; 2) early childhood, when an individual becomes aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses and might become confident in unique individual qualities, with autonomy vs. shame; 3) play age, with initiative vs. guilt; this is where people around an individual have influence; 4) school age, with industry vs. inferiority; an individual is able to learn, create and acquire new skills; 5) adolescence; development depends on what an individual does for herself, with identity vs. role confusion, 6) young adulthood; an individual creates a satisfying environment, with intimacy and solidarity vs. isolation. If there is no solidarity an individual will feel rejected and isolate; 7) middle adulthood, with generativity vs. self-absorption; an individual becomes occupied with creative and meaningful work and what is in the environment. This is where cultures, values and families become

important; and 8) late adulthood; an individual looks at experiences that took place in life, with integrity vs. despair. Some experiences can make one despair when stages of dissonance occur; a new formation evolves (Buckingham 2008). It is thus necessary for individuals to bridge those gaps at different points in space and time as they construct a future through redefining the “present self” in dialogue with the “past self” (Spurgin 2006:102).

1.7.3 Identity formation

The formation of identity can be regarded as a process that evolves and balances the internal and external sources that delineate a person. Identity formation is defined as a development of the distinct personality of an individual in a particular stage of life in which individual characteristics are possessed and by which a person is recognized. It addresses how culture and identity are interrelated. Identity formation has many components – physical, sexual, social, vocational, moral, ideological and psychological characteristics (Marcia 2003:110). Identity formation begins before adolescence and often extends beyond it into adulthood. However, Marcia (2003) believes that identity is formed because of one’s gender, the time in which one is born and one’s ethnic background. Marcia (2003) mentions that what seems to be a clear unchanging notion of all is that the definition that a person’s identity always remains the same, despite changes. Identity formation is a never-ending process of reflection and transformation as one moves through life. It is linked to cultural characters and happens in “gradual and no conscious ways” (Marcia 2003:133). It is a process of continual decisions, but each decision has identity-forming implications. Identity formation forms the identity structure. According to Marcia (2003:133), identity formation requires reasoning abilities: “It seems that adolescents and adults who can take multiple perspectives on themselves and others also have a firmer and more flexible sense of who they are.” Ryan and Deci (2003:253), however, suggest that, “When human beings emerge into the world, they have no identity,” but they acquire identities over time. As everyone has a unique DNA makeup, each individual will have a unique identity whether it be one’s name, family, heritage or physical characteristics. The identity formation process becomes more complex owing to media and Web-based communications, which complicate the process of adopting identities. “Many of today’s youth are facing the even greater

risk of failing to negotiate the not-so-clear pathways to the adult roles, responsibilities and relationships that secure identities afford” (Ryan & Deci 2003:254). Theories on identity formation have been around for a long time with William James providing a background for identity formation at the end of the nineteenth century. Erik Erikson provides a theory for identity formation in the light of his personality development.

1.7.3 Leadership identity development

In bridging gaps between the development processes, an individual should gain an understanding of the self as a leader as a mental process through which an individual develops self. Komives, Longerman, Mainella and Osteen (2005:606) regard the process of developing a leadership identity as “interaction of developing self through group influences that change one’s view of self with others and broaden the view of leadership in the context of the supports of the developmental influences”.

It is in this context that this study was conducted by focusing on the development processes through which women leaders go in developing their own identity, instead of submitting to the demands of the dominant group. Leadership development, then, becomes a process of self-reflection aimed at personal growth, or a journey inwards (Ambrose 2003:29).

1.7.4 Power

Empowerment, as the term suggests, is embedded in power, which Hébert (2010:3) regards as a driving force with the potential to exert agency for change. It can be argued that power acts on the individual on multiple levels but that it can also be a force impeding actions and potentials.

1.7.5 Voice

Gilligan (1993:xvi) defines “voice” as being similar to “what people mean when they speak of the core of the self”. Gilligan argues that voice is relational, that it speaks within a relationship. One could say that a woman’s voice is “expanded or restricted by relational ties” (Gilligan, 1993:xvi). The concept can only be defined by its tasks, as voice is one’s interpersonal communication that allows one to interpret and make

sense of the world. Robinson (2011:1, in COP 17/CMP7) defines voice as an influence to inject a much needed sense of urgency into a situation where stimuli are present, meaning that the environment and the surrounding circumstances can either silence or stimulate people's voices.

1.7.6 Sense-making

To Weick (1995:4) the concept of sense-making literally means "making sense". It is to make something sensible. A human being only makes sense based on what is experienced. Sense-making involves placing stimuli into some kind of framework. When people put stimuli into frameworks, it allows them to comprehend, understand, explain, attribute, extrapolate and predict. They then begin to communicate, to try to construct meaning and use retrospective accounts to explain surprises. The surprises trigger a need for explanation in a process through which interruption of discrepancies is developed. Sense-making is the process of "structuring the unknown".

Sense-making is the process of social construction that occurs when discrepant cues interrupt individuals' ongoing activity, and involves the retrospective development of plausible meanings that rationalize what people are doing (Weick 1995, Weick *et al.* 2005). Sense-making starts with noticing and bracketing, which is an incipient state of sense-making. Sense-making is about labelling and categorizing to stabilize the streaming of experience. Sense-making is retrospective, social and systemic, is about presumption, action, organizing through communication (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld 2005:411-413). Sense-making enables leaders to have a better grasp of what is going on in their environments, thus facilitating other leadership activities such as visioning, relating and inventing.

Making sense of an individual and organizational sense-making are not the same. For an organization to make sense it needs to manage its people well, in terms of being the provider of information and having the welfare of each individual at heart. The concept sense-making is a process of how people reduce uncertainty or ambiguity and socially negotiate meaning during decision-making events. Weick (1995) states that sense-making refers to how meaning is constructed at both individual and group level. One can make sense and construct meaning when there

is vocabulary and language. Sense-making is the activity that enables us to turn the ongoing complexity of the world into a “situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action” (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld 2005:409).

1.8 DEPARTURES AND LIMITATIONS

The researcher departed from the following stances:

- The researcher had to be the primary collector of data as she was responsible for the final processes of sense-making.
- The researcher had to build a relationship of trust with the participants, which was an important step in collecting narrative data.
- Interviewees needed to understand the scope of the study, therefore it was explained to the participants in detail prior to the data gathering sessions.
- The qualitative research methodology offered a logical and appropriate design for this study.
- The limitations of the study as identified by the researcher are the following (cf. 6.5):
 - The scope of the study was limited (by time, where one of the participants had to leave earlier due to another appointment she had) to twelve women in leadership positions at the Central University of Technology, Free State and the University of the Free State. This study is based on women in leadership positions at the two institutions in the Free State, which means the findings cannot be valid for all women in leadership positions worldwide. The findings of the study can therefore not be generalized to broader populations.
 - The lack of women in leadership positions limited the number of participants to those who already are in leadership positions and who had the time and were prepared to participate in the project.

- The limited scope of literature review on the topic also affected the study. Hence the literature review is limited to the process of women empowerment in leadership and the processes of sense-making were not taken into account.
- Different people interpret events and situations differently, especially when it comes to processes of sense-making. However, the researcher constantly strove to let the objects speak for themselves.

1.9 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

This thesis comprises six chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to and an overview of the thesis.

Chapter 2 explores the way unique identities are formed and how they impact on female leadership identity formation. The literature relevant to this study is reviewed, revealing the determinants of identity and its implications for leadership.

Chapter 3 explores empowerment from a meta-theoretical perspective on the concept and the consequent challenges women in leadership encounter. The chapter investigates the challenges of empowerment that female leaders encounter in taking up leadership positions.

Chapter 4 presents the research design, based on a phenomenological approach by using qualitative research methods. It follows Creswell's (2008) dictum that qualitative research is useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon and appropriate for conducting feminist research as it is concerned with consciousness-raising.

Chapter 5 examines sense-making of the challenges and voices of women leaders in HE in becoming empowered. The data from the qualitative investigation is interpreted in a sense-making approach. From the data collected and organized in terms of the domains that emanated from a study of the literature, themes are analyzed, identified and interpreted from a sense-making approach.

Chapter 6 presents a framework for future empowerment of women leaders in HE, providing direction to potential women leaders and to HEIs to support future leaders.

1.10 CONCLUSION

Women in Higher Education leadership positions are still underrepresented. They are experiencing challenges that are ongoing and their voices are not heard. Given a large number of women in lower management positions in Higher Education Institutions, it is evident that women's voices are not heard as expected. Despite the growing awareness that South Africa has gone through in terms of gender equality and the increased understanding that has developed of the historical causes of the consequent underrepresentation, the progress is still slow and gender equality in educational leadership is still a dominating concern. However, by increasingly drawing women into leadership, the preparation of those women against the changing expectations of leadership roles has introduced new challenges to the Higher Education sector.

To understand the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, their leadership identity and why their voices are not heard, the following chapters will challenge these issues, resulting in a sense-making analysis of the insights of current women leaders. In undertaking this journey towards making sense of the empowerment and the leadership identity of women leaders in Higher Education, the next chapter will introduce the inception phase by providing a theoretical perspective on identity formation.

CHAPTER 2

A META-THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON IDENTITY FORMATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FEMALE LEADERSHIP IDENTITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a theoretical perspective on the formation of unique identities and how they impact on female leadership identity. Conventional wisdom, as portrayed in current scholarly literature, offers a rather broad framework of identity formation. In this study, the research is framed around the development of female leadership identity, which is impinged upon by a number of variables, such as the influence of society, educational background, leadership modelling and fulfilment of social roles. Drawing from varied experiences and using investigative tools from the literature review, inquiry is conducted into identity formation and conceptualization, and internal and external determinants. This is a review of literature from cross-cultural studies and research relating to women in leadership positions, focusing on higher education.

2.2 CONCEPTUALIZING IDENTITY AND IDENTITY FORMATION

To gain an understanding of identity formation, it is necessary to draw on Social Identity Theory, first introduced by Tajfel (1978) and built on by Tajfel and Turner (1979). It is based on a social-psychological theory that is related to cognitive and behavioural patterns in terms of group processes, and takes as a point of departure that people show all kinds of group behaviour as part of their social identity processes.

2.2.1 Conceptualizing identity

The growing appeal of identity across a range of fields in the past few decades has increasingly led scholarly and professional literature to focus on the concept of individual identity, such as the work of Tajfel (1979), Tajfel and Turner (1979), Abrams and Hogg (1990), and Hogg and Turner (1987). This study applies the concept of “identity” in relation to women in leadership positions in the domain of South African higher education, in which the works of Campbell (1992) and Francis (2005, 2006) are regarded as seminal works, although they did not touch on higher education as a domain.

Tajfel (1978) and Tajfel and Turner (1979:35) identified as a key assumption that individuals are intrinsically motivated to achieve positive distinctiveness, by striving towards a positive self-concept. This implies that individuals perceive themselves according to their social identities and would therefore strive to “achieve and maintain positive social identity” (Tajfel & Turner 1979:36). However, Campbell (1992:32-47) criticizes the Social Identity Theory’s tendency to be narrow, and not fully recognize the dynamic nature of society.

Although the concept *identity* clearly includes social and personal dimensions, as individuals strive to find and form a positive perception of themselves through their acceptability by the group or social environment, this may not be seen as static. This notion is supported by Hogg and Turner (1987:234), who emphasize that the way people see themselves depends on how others view them, and this may differ from time to time and from group to group. This is an indication that in most cases people may not be aware of their own behaviour until they start making sense of it through others and seeing how it fluctuates.

In terms of the above, the functioning and defining of identity need to be viewed from both a social and a personal perspective. *Identity* may therefore be defined in terms of a distinctive character belonging to an individual or as viewed by members of a particular social group. The term *identity* originated from the French word *identité*, which means “the same” (Leary & Tangney 2003a:2). The term emphasizes the sharing of a degree of sameness or oneness with others in a particular area or at a

given point in time. Leary and Tangney (2003a:3) aptly relate identity to self-image and self-esteem, and individuality as realized by the *in-group* or in contrast to the *out-group* within a particular context. In-group or out-group bias may then occur as a result of the preferential treatment given to others when they are perceived to be of the same in-group (Tajfel & Turner 1979:39).

When the social construction process begins, the community becomes involved, its role, according to Wenger (1998:5), being “the way of talking about the social configurations in which enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and whether participation is recognizable as competence”. Leary and Tangney (2003) view it as something that is to a significant degree dictated by how individuals view themselves both as persons and in relation to other people and ideas. Here, in- and out-group notions play a role, because women’s identities can be influenced by the environment in which they work, that is, whether they are accepted as part of the in-group and regarded as worthy and competent contributors to their work environment.

In the above context, Wenger (1998) also enters the discourse about identity, by advocating the view that a person can have different identities that can be maintained simultaneously. This is particularly valuable in terms of the multiple roles that one mostly has to fulfil. Wenger (1998:145) posits that identity may include different roles as a person functions in a social environment. This sentiment is echoed by Castells (2004:6), who posits a co-existence of different identities around a primary one, which frames all other identities or roles subscribed to by the individual. The identity is then coloured by the role one plays in a personal context, also by the social context in which people find themselves. Wenger (1998:163) theorizes that identity is lived, negotiated and social in nature, whereby “identity is a becoming; the work of identity is ongoing and pervasive”. To Wenger (1998:146) this means identity is formed through a dialogical process; an experience and its social interpretation inform each other.

Wenger (1998) indicates that identity becomes the bridge between society and the individual. In a workplace, identity takes on specific characteristics, but this does not mean its environment is complex, only that it is an indication of identity formation in that particular context, as compared to another which indicates that identity in a

workplace will be connected to the specific situation. The decisions made and action taken in a particular work environment may differ from those in communities as they are related to the type of work done, implying that each role of identity may have a different status, as it is related to that specific role. Even when a role is distributed to members of a group according to tasks and skills, the outcomes may differ as individuals have different identities in a personal capacity.

Figure 2.1 depicts the different identity dimensions and different roles that an individual can have, as discussed above.

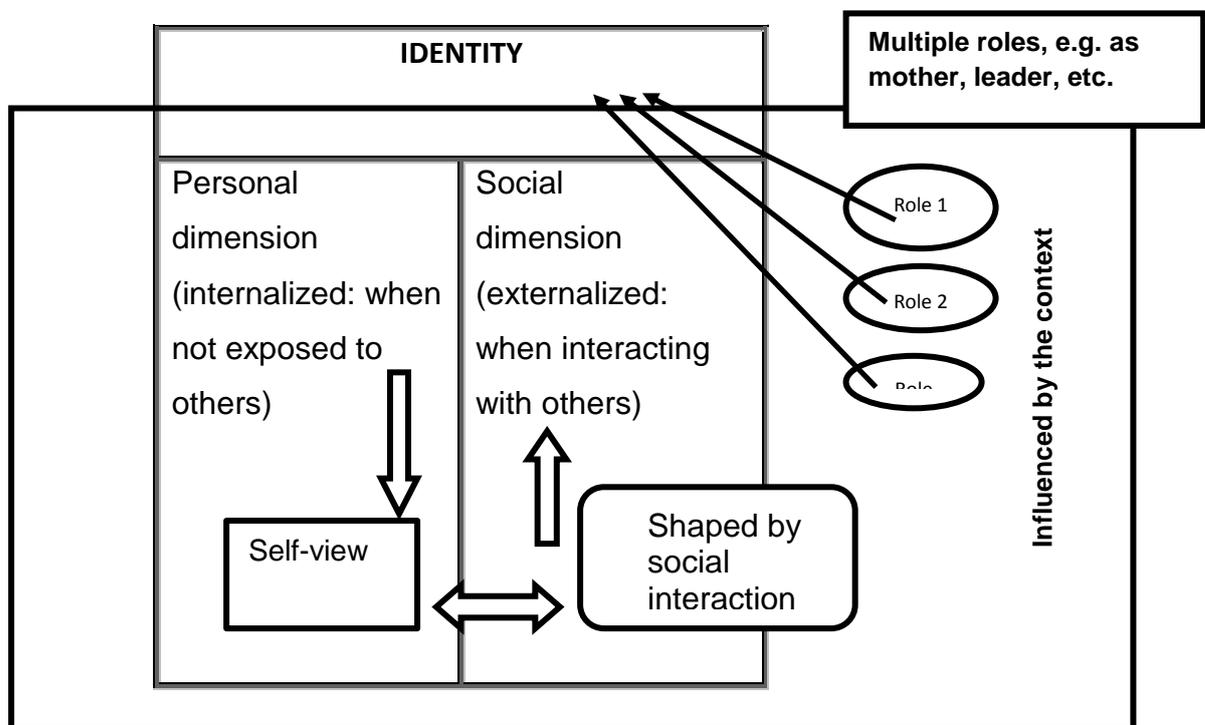


Figure 2.1 Identity dimensions and roles

With all these roles an individual becomes connected to specific groups. For example, women can be connected to other groups of women, church groups, work groups and school committees. This does not mean the individual or self ceases to exist but that the changes during interaction have an influence on an individual's identity. With these changes, Weick (1995:61) refers to identity formation as an ongoing process and never static. The social construction can, therefore, take place in different situations, either at work or in the community. In the work environment,

identity has a strong impact on the use and understanding of the professional work setting.

To summarize, identities are rich and complex because they are produced within rich and complex relations of practice, as emphasized by Wenger (1998:162). What characterizes identity is the notion that it is *lived*, which suggests that it is more complex than mere categories, such as personality traits or roles, as it is developed within a particular context. Identity can be regarded as an emerging dynamic entity, depending on the context and the settings. Identity's *social* dimension is rather dominant during the formation process as the community within which it is developed is a formative force. Identity formation is also a *learning process*, as it follows a trajectory that incorporates the past and the future into the meaning of the present. Finally, identity may be seen as a *nexus* of multiple memberships, depending on the person's role or multiple roles. Although Wenger's discussion was not limited to women in leadership, his findings have implications for women in leadership positions in higher education.

2.2.2 Identity formation

Although one cannot separate the essence of identity from the formation process, this section will focus on the latter. From the preceding section, it is evident that identity emerges from a number of intersecting discourses within a person, which are influenced by the social or work environment and the roles one has to fulfil, which are unfixed and constantly changing processes. According to Burke (2006:82), this statement of "who one is" is informed by internal and external components, which contribute to a person's development as a unique and full sense of being. The formation of identity can be regarded as a process that evolves and balances the internal and external sources that delineate a person. Figure 2.2 illustrates the process of identity development.

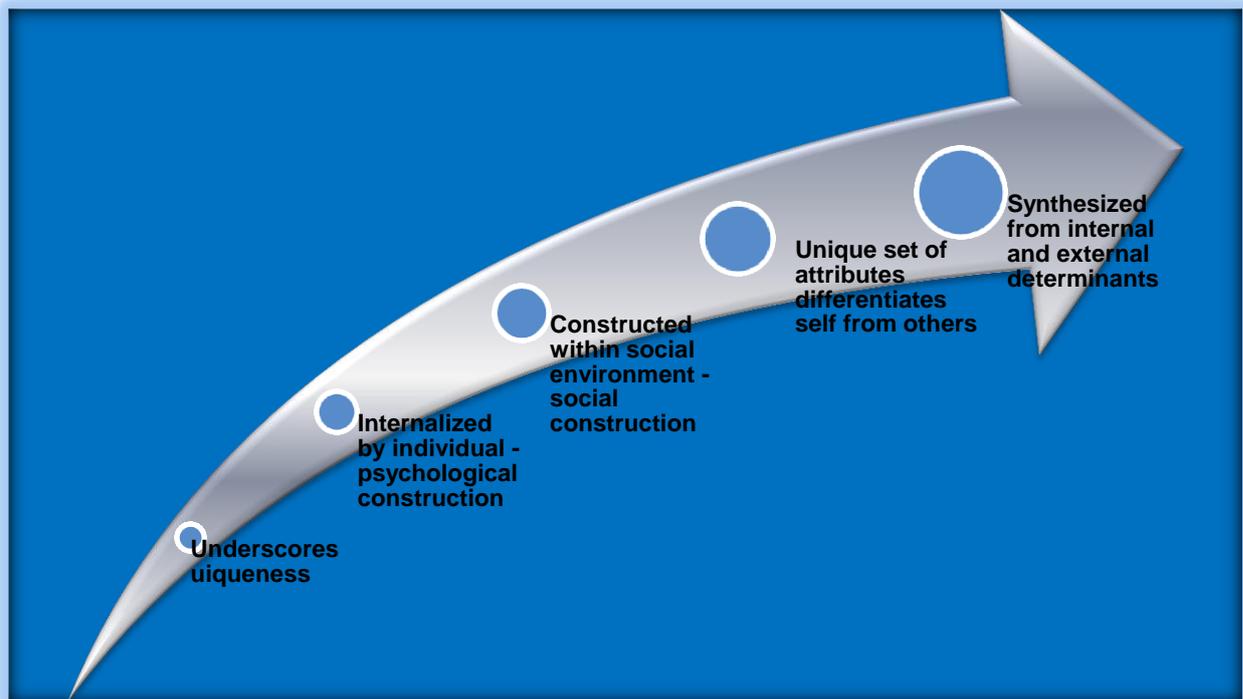


Figure 2.2 The identity formation process

Figure 2.2 above illustrates the processes of identity formation, starting with the **uniqueness of an individual**, the first step in which a person becomes aware of “who he/she is”, as described by Burke (2006) and Cote and Levin (2002:24). A person’s unique individual characteristics define who they are in terms of their emotions, spirituality, physique, intellect and strength. This dynamic relationship among the human attributes constructs identity through an evolutionary process, as it needs to be nurtured and embraced as **internal identity**. For Davis (2007:7) “the awareness of people’s internal identity involves looking inside themselves and knowing what they know to be true about their selves including their core values and beliefs”, and serves as a point of departure. In this context “identity” refers to this idea of selfhood, which originated from anthropologists such as Erikson (1968), and has properties based on uniqueness and individuality. One should be aware of one’s internal identity by looking inside and knowing what one knows in terms of one’s core values and beliefs, as expressed in the context of the **social environment**.

As a person interacts with others in the social environment, the individual identity changes, a process Wenger (1998) referred to as “social construction”, by which some of the personal dimensions change. The construction of meaning within a

social environment will differ for each individual, as a person is influenced by the actions arising from the different interactions, leading to a state where the individual starts to associate the self with a particular social identity (cf. 2.2.2.1). This social identity can also mean the identity of the work environment, according to which a person internalizes what is acceptable or not, relating to Leary and Tangney's (2003) *in-group* or *out-group* context.

The environment, institution or organization's **unique set of attributes** and norms, therefore, play a distinct role in the individual's identity, which may create plurality of identities in terms of self representation and social action. The norms of the institution play a role as they influence individual behaviour through the negotiations and arrangement between the identities of the individual and those of the institution. Identities become sources of meaning as individuals **synthesize the internal and external** influences and start acting out those identities themselves.

It is now necessary to examine both the internal and the external determinants of identity, to fully understand how these determinants are actualized in institutions.

2.2.2.1 Determinants of identity

In this section, identity development is viewed in terms of the influence of the determinants: some internal and some external. However, these determinants impinge on a person's personal and social identity. The majority of these factors are integrated since one cannot talk about the self without mentioning the family, the community and the socialization that reflects on societal identity. The identity of humans is greatly determined by the extent to which they internalize the definitions that are bestowed upon them by society.

Figure 2.3 illustrates the determinants of identity.

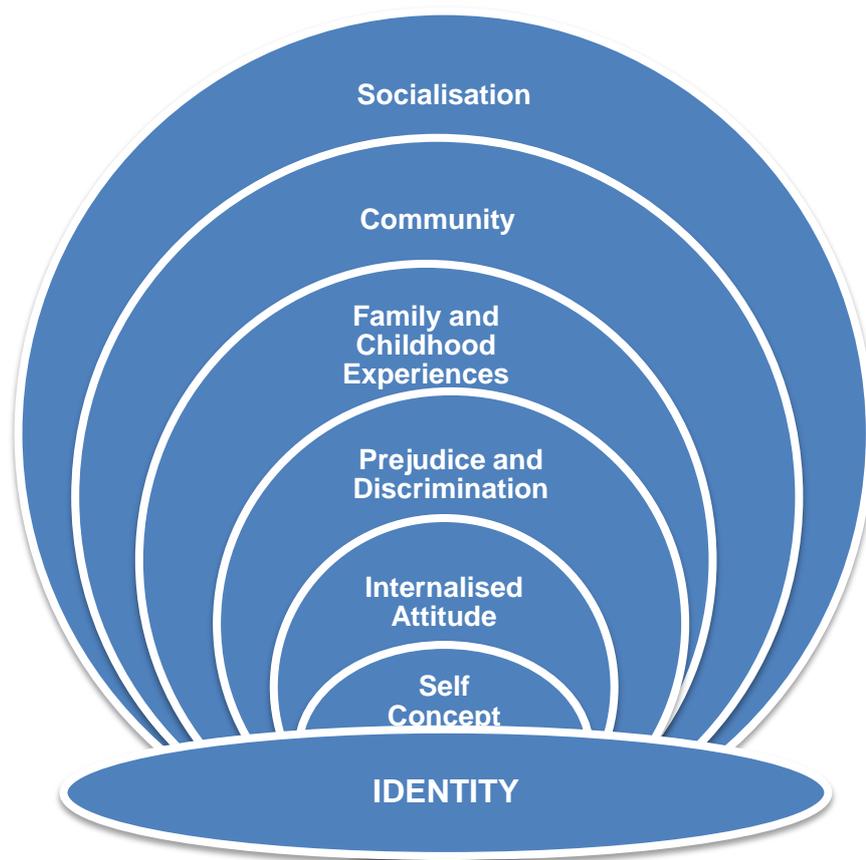


Figure 2.3 Determinants of identity

(a) Self-concept

Self-concept includes physical, psychological and social attributes, which influence the individual's attitudes, habits, beliefs and ideas. These components cannot be collapsed under the general concepts of self-image and self-esteem as people are constantly developing concepts of who they are. Stets and Burke (2003:5) showed that self-image often meant self-esteem, which was in itself affective. In a self-image analysis, factors such as thoughts, feelings and imagination are specified, meaning that they become a set of meanings people hold when they look at themselves. The observations of themselves and the inferences of who they are will then be based on how others act towards them.

However, for the purpose of this study, the term "self-concept" will be used, in the sense espoused by Leary and Tangney (2003:130) and Stets and Burke (2003:5), which means it includes not only idealized views of who one is but also the self-

image and self-esteem imported in situations. Apart from its being subject to constant change and revision based on situational influences, these authors believe that there are as many different selves as there are different positions one espouses in society. There are equally as many different groups who respond to self, which is where identity enters the overall self, with its many identities, each of which is tied to different aspects of personal identity and social identity. One has an identity, an “internalized positional designation” for each of the different positions or role relationships the person holds in society. Stets and Burke (2003) emphasize the role of one’s self-concept in identity formation and see it as a force that directs instantaneous interactions, only changing in a negotiated situation, in which case it may fall back to the more fundamental self-view. The important point of a positive self-concept is that it is associated with good outcomes of personal success, whereas low self-concept is associated with bad outcomes and failure (Leary & Tangney 2003:131, Stets & Burke 2003, 2005).

Theoretically, Hogg and Abrams (1990) propose a relationship between positive social identity and self-concept theory in terms of the in-group and intergroup relations and how those relations elevate or depress self-concept. So, will the self-concept of women largely be influenced by the level of acceptance in their environment? It might then happen that women experience a gap between what their professional identity should be and what they are expected to be if compared to male standards. In a male-oriented environment, this image gap may result in a wide spectrum of sexist patterns, based on what is perceived to be acceptable intellectual, physical and emotional characteristics. Some of these may depress the formation of a positive self-concept when women are ignored in meetings, discouraged from pursuing their ambitions and career goals or fall victim of sarcastic remarks about their competencies and physical appearance. On a more explicit level, women often become the target of overt discrimination when, as applicants, they are turned down because of their maternal role rather than on the grounds of their qualifications or ability to do a job. Therefore, in constructing their professional identity in such settings, women need to address two gaps simultaneously: the image gap as well as the identity gap (Metiu & Obodaru 2008:6).

These examples of discrimination correspond with Freire's (1970) differentiation between two levels in an unjust society, namely the oppressor and the oppressed. He advises educationists to allow the oppressed to regain their humanity and overcome their condition. However, he also emphasizes that, in order for this to take effect, the oppressed must play a critical role in their own liberation, by developing their agency to change things. It is particularly in this regard that Sen (2002) refers to the "agency aspect" in terms of what human beings can do to achieve such improvements, particularly through policy and systemic changes, although this may not be an easy pathway in redeeming emancipation.

In terms of the above, Freire's theory is relevant to the identity formation of women in higher education leadership positions, where they remain oppressed as a result of working in a male-dominated environment in which leadership is still largely regarded in terms of gender. In an oppressed environment, women are often expected to compromise their own identities and internalize what men do as being part of the in-group, consequently forfeiting their authentic voices in leadership positions and hampering the development of a positive self-concept.

It is through the perceived concept of the self that people act to validate their conceptions of who they are, meaning that the self is shaped by the anticipated and observed responses of others. Stets and Burke (2003:2) write that individuals act within the context of a full set of patterns of actions, interactions and resource transfers among all persons who constitute the structures of that environment, whether society or the work environment. When the whole identity is embraced, motivation to achieve their goals emanate from within (Davis 2007:8). With this awareness of a person's identity, it is clear that the effort to reach one's potential ensues from an internalized sense of motivation and sets one free to be oneself. Consequently, high self-esteem is generated from a positive identity verification process, which has the ability to act as a buffer against a negative one. It is probable that the aspiration of self-concept motivates people to create and maintain a situation that agrees with their identity. Additionally, Davis (2007) indicates that without awareness of the inner identity one cannot be authentic, while Lord and Hall (2005) maintain that individual identity develops according to the variety of experiences a person has, implying that if a person's self-concept is positive it will probably also

have a positive influence on their leadership identity, as self-concept is connected to one's goals and attitudes. The latter means that people's own identities play a deterministic role in terms of what they want, what they know and where they are heading, implying that the actions they take consequently form part of their values and beliefs.

Weick (1995:20) attests to the above deterministic view in terms of "who I am, depends on what is out there. Once I know who I am, then I know what is out there," and argues that identity changes continuously as individuals are exposed to crises or sets of interruptions, whereas Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005:416) indicate that who we think we are (identity) shapes what we enact and how we interpret, which affect what outsiders think we are (image) and how they treat us, which stabilizes our identity. As indicated, one's identity lies in the hands of others. To be able to make sense one has to reflect on what others are saying. If their perception about us changes, then our identities may be stabilized and how we are perceived and our receptiveness to new meaning will increase. This shows how life is interrupted in a form of challenges, gaps or crises and to be able to make sense of it the individual undergoes a repeated sense of redefinition associated with the presentation of self to others and the determination of which self is appropriate. This leads the individual to address the key questions about aspects such as values, ideas, future occupation, emotion and sexual identity. Buckingham (2008:1) illustrates that it is through this process of self-reflection and self-definition that the individual arrives at an integrated coherent sense of identity.

The formation of identity is, therefore, an evolutionary process that balances the internal and external factors that define the individual. Having the ability to embrace both the internal and external factors enables the individual to associate with others but still maintain individual uniqueness. When one recognizes, accepts and internalizes an identity that constitutes an internal truth it becomes easier to connect and engage in relationships with others.

According to the Department of Education (2002:39) and the Herbst and Conradie Report (2011:2), Higher Education in South Africa, as in many other countries, such as Australia and the United Kingdom (Piterman 2008), is facing major transformation

challenges that require extraordinary leadership. Additionally, women are faced with challenges of understanding themselves as individuals, as influences in institutions and as playing a role in the development of themselves as future leaders. Women need to be active, be aggressive learners and develop their own unique leadership, all indications of the processes involved in becoming better leaders, as fundamentally grounded in individual identity construction and self-discovery.

Understanding one's strengths and weaknesses is regarded as an essential for conscious personal transformation and development and, according to (Martin 2005 as quoted in Herbst & Conradie 2011:2), women cannot change what they are without consciously being aware of it. If women have a low self-concept it may lead to self-delusion and if as leaders they do not develop their own voices they will lack conviction and commitment. In the institution, it is clear that self-concept is a prerequisite for women's individual growth as well as effective institutional transformation, implying that if institutions still hold perceptions that women are not leaders, they will hinder the development of a positive self-concept, which in turn will hamper transformation in those institutions.

(b) Internalized attitudes

The issue of attitudes in terms of gender is addressed and handled differently in different countries. Assié-Lumumba (2006) examined inequality in Higher Education structures in colonial countries, for example Africa, and found that external factors played a decisive role in the choices made by policymakers, with socio-cultural factors becoming more prominent in the post-colonial era. Due to changes in society, women began to adopt leadership positions in higher education, but this was not a smooth transition. The manner in which institutions treat women has a direct impact on their identity, as they generally internalize the oppression and attitudes of their male counterparts (Harp 2008) and pay attention to the inequalities and socio-cultural barriers in the male-dominated sectors. However, both men and women are aware of gender differences even before they become leaders, as it is noticeable how they are viewed by their community or people in the workplace.

In terms of leadership, interpretations of gender equality and attitudes differ. Carli (2001) suggests that men are accustomed to their domination of leadership positions and see women as lacking the necessary skills and preparation to fill them. On the other hand, women assert that they are professionally isolated and not integrated into the male leadership structures. Many males still resist the existence of women in leadership in an attempt to maintain their power advantage (Carli 2001:727). In South Africa, after liberation from apartheid, values of non-racialism and non-sexism were given priority. The transition to democracy did not necessarily lead to equal inclusion of women but rather to the insertion of a gender equality concern into the democratic debates (Hassim 2003). The transition at least led to a re-examination of the opportunities for women and provided strategic and organizational vehicles for dealing with challenging issues.

To make sense of the existing attitudes towards women, one has to reflect on the past and use historical experience to draw conclusions. The more access one has to the self the more meaning is extracted and imposed on any situation. Weick (1995:20) argues that people make sense of what is happening to them according to where they are involved, and in an organization an individual's self-enhancement and self-consistency is constantly changing. For example, during *self-enhancement*, an individual attempts to seek and maintain a positive cognitive and affective state about the self; in *self-efficiency*, the self's desires to perceive oneself as competent and effective will be dominated; and in *self-consistency* a person's desire to sense and experience coherence and continuity will be at the core (Weick 1995:23). Nathan (2004:183) concurs with Weick (1995) on the theory that identity construction serves as the basis for imparting meaning to information inside of organisations, and, eventually, determining which problems must be solved. Individuals expose the self to determine who to be or which face to put on and make sense with reference to others.

Vaara (2003:863) writes that determining what is going on and what should be done is based on who the sense-maker is, what his or her background is and what attitudes he/she has been exposed to. This means that individuals have to make sense on the basis of what they experience and as they reconstruct identity they also construct what is outside them. Weick (1995:20) points out that sense-making is a

grounded identity construction because it starts within the social milieu, and that it is an ongoing puzzle undergoing a continual redefinition of self. One needs to know one's identity to make sense of the environment and the experience contained in it. To create an identity is to enable one to position self in the world in relation to oneself in order to confront the world. Identity is a set of behavioural characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group³.

A changing environment usually imposes adaptive requirements wherein an individual must forge a suitable identity, with a cumulative result of different identities. Weick (1995) indicates that the greater the number of selves to which one has access, the richer the meanings and interpretations one can impose and extract in any given situation. Some identities are suppressed during the process, as a result of some tasks imposing new requirements, a situation that pulls the individual back into the society. Identity is not a person's choice but rather a sample from among the various identities and attitudes presented to a person by the others in a group.

Extending this to the leadership development of women, individual identity is in a transitional space which is influenced by the attitudes in the environment that was mainly dominated by male identity. These attitudes are then internalized as women incorporate the dominance imposed by males, whom they deem more powerful and supreme. In this kind of system, powerful people control the actions of others by colonizing their mind to accept certain stereotypes about them which makes the powerless accept their own oppression and become their own oppressors (Alavi 2010:18). In this regard, Bell (2007:4) also holds the notion that it is not only the oppressed group that internalize their *subordination*, but also the perpetrators, who internalize the ideas that they hold about their victims, all probably contributing to the formation of a subordinate identity which ends up affecting the emotional level.

(c) Prejudice and discrimination

An individual's identity is exposed to a variety of factors during identity formation, including gender, prejudice and discrimination. A person also avoids defining identity

³ identity. (n.d.). *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved 23 January 2012, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/identity>

because of what is called the “do trap” (Davis 2007:10). As human beings, people are praised for what they do. For example, as children, they are praised when they crawl, learn to stand up and finish eating food. As a child, these praises represent signs of achievement. In the formative years of child identity, the praises are rewards for what was done at school. These “do trap” social experiences extend into adulthood. For example, when people meet someone the first question is, “What do you do?” This attaches more importance to what they do than who they are.

Davis (2007:10) writes that the “do trap” has two conceptual associations, namely “identity by association” and “identity by possession”. Most people are known as someone else’s child, someone else’s wife, someone else’s husband, someone else’s mother, that is, who they are relative to who they are associated with and who they introduce their selves as. Furthermore, some people’s identities are defined in terms of possession, their homes, cars and toys. When one is fully aware and accepting of an identity one does not need to rely on external descriptors to define oneself. People must get to be who they are and, as unique beings, accept their own individual qualities and characters with consciousness and acceptance of internal identity. In this way, they are less likely to fall into a *comparison trap*, which often becomes the cause of discrimination and prejudice. Chae (2001/2002:19) refers to discrimination and prejudice on the basis of ethnic and gender differences, which in turn lead to stereotyping. These debilitating stereotypes may result in other employees not wanting to work for stereotyped groups. Women who are working are putting their family’s stability at stake. Marshall (1994) writes that women tend to believe these stereotypes and also become reluctant to employ women in management positions.

The separation of females from males since childhood is an early indication of gender differentiation, with girl children traditionally facing discrimination up to adulthood as fundamental needs and rights are denied to girls in preference to boys. At present, in South Africa, the situation has improved, and girls generally have a better chance of gaining access to education, without the barriers that were in place in the past. Giving children education gives them a voice and chance to empower themselves, which will contribute to their self-esteem. Although it is not easy to implement the process, closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education

is the only viable path of educating the nation and reaching the goals of capacity building which forms the cornerstone of international development (Randell & Gergel 2009). Without significant change to the traditional curriculum, which, as Randell and Gergel (2009:2) argue, represents women as taking inferior roles, women would find it difficult to aspire to transcend these roles and work towards gender parity. Randell and Gergel (2009:9) emphasize the importance of the South African initiative of “take a girl child to work day” in providing young girls with valuable career orientation and models for future professional success.

Discrimination and stereotyping also influence remuneration. According to the International Labour Office (ILO) (2009:19), progress is slow in reducing the gender pay gap in Europe and Asia. In some countries, evidence shows that differences in wages between men and women still exist. In the United States of America (USA), the gender pay gap is persistent and has narrowed only slightly. In Latin American countries, the sizes of the gap vary, while in African countries, the informal and unpaid work of women is widespread, though there is little official data available about the pay gap.

The ILO has identified pay discrimination as a globally persistent phenomenon throughout most regions, with women paid less for doing the same job as men. Lopez-Claroz and Zahidi (2005:9) illustrate that when measuring the global gender gap, South Africa’s ranked 35 out of 58 countries. Various bodies have been set up to help all citizens realize their potential, regardless of gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability or geographic location. These include the Commission on Gender Equality, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 2011), the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) and the establishment of the Employment Conditions Commission (1997). However, there is little evidence that these attempts have had the comprehensive effect envisaged.

Extending the above examples to women’s situation in leadership positions, women remain exposed to most of the negative factors such as prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. They are still seen as people who cannot be in any leadership role due to the traditional stigma. The invisibility of women in positions of leadership confirms

that the challenges still exist. One of the challenges that Piterman (2008) reports is that leadership generally has been associated with men and with the male leadership style of behaviour, and because females are still few in leadership, women experience lots of challenges. Piterman's (2008:45) study finds that physical appearance is an issue in organizational life. This had made a number of women to believe that their physical appearance works against them in particular organizational environments. Studies on the leadership styles of women suggest that women tend to face unique challenges when they take up leadership roles in male-dominated environments. Some of the challenges are that women have become more sensitive to marginality and a lack of cultural accommodation. Though women try to adjust to the dynamics of a narrow cultural environment, their appearance, according to Piterman (2008:45), has a huge impact on their professional visibility. Society is constantly bombarded with sexist media messages and imagery. Women are constantly criticized for their looks. They finally end up accepting the challenges of life in a straitjacket and internalize the responsibility for the poor cultural fit (Piterman 2008:47). They display the anxieties of the minority in infiltrating and surviving at the top. Some women resort to the contrived stance of an "honorary bloke". They fear association with women's programmes and affirmative action initiatives, as these highlight their "otherness" and denote their need for special treatment.

While there is more research to be undertaken and more policies to be analyzed, compared to the past there is enough knowledge available to guide or eliminate the gender gaps and to expand the institutional/infrastructural capacity for the provision of increased education for both female students and professionals. The expansion can be in the form of creating a gender-sensitive environment across institutional environments and society (Assié-Lumumba 2006:51). To understand this, there needs to be a new theoretical articulation and re-conceptualization of policy frameworks, with thorough, systematic and permanent reflection and the production of knowledge.

(d) Family and childhood experiences

Lifestyle and identity are influenced by a person's heritage of family values and other cultural factors. People's childhood interactions and peer relations add to their composite image of self, while families and teachers generate an impact on the formation of identity and sense of the self (Davis 2007). According to Lorenzen (1996:24) an individual's history is an inseparable part of any professional life, as it represents parts of the present. Madsen (2007) argues that as children grow there are some individuals in society who influence their childhood behaviour. These individuals include parents, religious leaders, aunts, friends or grandmothers, coming from the same society as the child and who share their values as a group or society. Galambos and Hughes (2000:22) state that from childhood, adult development is focused on five aspects, namely (1) the capacity of intimacy; (2) the capacity to nurture; (3) engagement in productive activity; (4) the establishment of balance between dependence and independence and (5) the capacity to transcend personal concerns.

How a child develops starts during the formative life of the child, and the process of identity formation begins at infancy (Erikson 1968, Marcia 2002). All the developmental stages from childhood through adolescence and throughout adulthood are the formations of identity and become part of personal development. After the adolescent stage, children spend much time unsupervised with friends and become exposed to influences and sources of information outside the family. During the adolescent stage, they return to their parents for advice with regard to the making of serious positive decisions. Families help children to construct meaning in their lives, and the importance of parents does not diminish as children age (Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe 2004:84). When a child begins to discover himself/herself as part of a personal identity, he/she can recognize an identity change in work and move into different workplace environments.

Strong bonds in the family help to keep it together, and without a stable, caring family, life may be chaotic and impact negatively on the development of children's identities. Young (2007) found that family bonds are created by spending time together, caring for one another and sharing family experiences in good and bad

times. Families that spend holidays together and dine together, instil values of togetherness in their children. The role of family identities in individuals is important, as doing things together as a family has an influence on children's lives that extends into adulthood and the workplace. Family is the first society in which one learns much about things that can either help or harm a person as he/she begins to deal with people outside the family.

Young (2007) indicates that extended families also provide support and a sense of identity through family feedback and emotional backup. A family gives a sense of knowing that one is loved unconditionally, and one with strong bonds brings security and gives children a safe base on which to develop and reach out. The strong family bond can be shared with the extended family as children associate with those family members more often. Medhus (2001:69) mentions that creating a family identity is an effective way of instilling in children a sense of permanence, belonging and stability, thus paving the way for raising confident, independent and moral children. The stronger the identities of the family the more comfortable the children will be in their own skins because they will have become unique parts of a strong in-group. The family helps children to develop their own ways of making choices vis-à-vis relying on peer pressure. Medhus (2001:69) indicates that "since family is our children's first 'pack' it is important to do all we can to satisfy that intense pack to feel accepted by others". The things that make the "I" become the "we" can affect individual identity, which explains why one cannot talk of the first person singular pronoun in the workplace as the personal space is now occupied by many different identities.

Research into childhood influences on women as leaders (Hennig & Jardim 1977, Madsen 2007, Nivala & Hujala 2002, Robinson 1996, Stephens 2003) has revealed that successful leaders have masculine attributes such as the desire to be respected for their ability, the ability to deal with competition and the capacity to take risks. Hennig and Jardim (1977:68) found that these attributes are mostly developed during childhood, which emphasizes the crucial role of the family as a nuclear unit.

In a study conducted by Hennig and Jardim (1977:91), it was found that numerous women leaders had experienced their mothers as inferior to their fathers when they were children and they highly admired their fathers as they regarded them as the

only one who had power and an occupation. Contrary to this, Stephens (2003:51) conducted studies on 35 powerful women leaders in church, business and higher education and found that most remembered having had “strong voices and a keen sense of competency as little girls”. They stood up for themselves, experienced achievements throughout their childhood and so gained confidence, but that was a result of having been afforded the space to do so in the family.

Sills (1994:6) examined the decrease of self-concept in girls between the ages of eleven and fourteen as they lost their enthusiasm for school, gave up hopes of independence and career and dropped out into a dead-end life. Whereas at the age of eight and nine they had felt confident, assertive and authoritative, when they grew up their identity changed and the influence of others contributed to a loss of self-esteem. Sills (1994) maintains that activities and experiences that could be applied to prevent this loss of female self-fulfilment and leadership are very important, as well as challenging and motivating young girls during the middle school years. This indicates that much of the development occurs during childhood, when challenges faced during relationships combine with developmental activities, opportunities and experiences to produce a whole human individual. This kind of social development has a dynamic influence on upbringing.

Family identities have a great influence on individual identity in the workplace, where individuals from a strong family in terms of moral behaviour, values and sharing, create positive attitudes (Erikson 1968). One learns of social support from the family, and it becomes the key resource that leads someone at work. An individual who has learnt to be loved, cared for and valued from the family, will share with others in the workplace, especially in leadership positions. Women as leaders who had strong family childhood identities have more opportunities to experience pleasurable moods at work because they have learnt in childhood to share. The strong family support that women had as children, including that from extended families, has helped them in their leadership to provide purpose, with greater psychological meaningfulness and in turn contributing to greater engagement (Wayne, Randel & Stevens 2006:448).

If women in leadership are supported on issues of culture, beliefs and values, workplace policies and other structures of the organizations will fall into place. It should be the prerogative of institutional management to balance work and family as this will improve productivity. There will thus be less work stress as “balancing work and family will most likely influence the degree to which employees feel truly supported and experience positive affect at work to benefit their family lives” (Wayne, Randel & Stevens 2006:449).

However, there are two support systems which influence the workplace that should be taken into consideration, namely *instrumental* and *emotional* support. The former refers to the behaviour and attitudes of family members aimed at assisting day-to-day household activities, such as relieving the employee of household tasks or otherwise accommodating the employee’s work requirements (King *et al.* 1995 as quoted by Wayne, Randel & Stevens 2006:450). Family instrumental support, according to Wayne *et al.* (2006), has an influence on both life and job satisfaction and thus on individual functioning at work. This support provides positive energy that makes individuals transfer to work a greater experience with family work enrichment. *Emotional support* contributes to the behaviour and attitude of the individual in the workplace, expressing feelings to enhance their effect or behaviour. These emotions and types of behaviour in the family can positively alter individual experiences of positive effect and, ultimately, functioning within the work domain. If women in leadership positions receive emotional support from families such as from spouses, workplace stress can be reduced. Also, apart from emotional support being able to reduce negative experiences, it has also been found to relate positively to life and job satisfaction, and influences life and work (Wayne, Randel & Stevens 2006:450). In the workplace, family and childhood identities play a major role in individual leadership processes. The individual differences that a leader has, such as work and families’ identity, influence leadership styles.

As childhood lays such an important foundation for the development of a person, childhood personalities and perceptions have a direct influence on leadership style. During childhood, self-awareness grows and changes occur as a result of observation, preferences and competencies. Though Madsen’s (2007) research focus was not on Higher Education, it is believed that most leadership challenges

faced by women revolve around masculine attributes which manifest as an achievement-oriented approach and the desire to be respected for one's abilities, as well as the enjoyment of competition and taking risks. The above emphasizes the importance of the family at all levels of the development of a leadership identity during childhood or when functioning in the workplace.

Hennig and Jardim (1977:82) assert that childhood experiences and career behaviour tend to be more masculine than feminine. In their research, they found that fathers involved girls in boys' activities with the result that they moved away from a typical traditional female type of activity. This was due to many families having more girls than boys. As a result masculine activities motivated girls to be high achievers in schools. This research by Hennig and Jardim (1977) can now be read in a context in which women increasingly take charge and become social leaders and members of organizations.

According to Young (2007:21):

No matter how busy we are, we should continue to build strong bonds with our families and continue to celebrate and create traditions that give generational stability to your children. When we feel safe and secure in our own home, we know we have a place to go if life gets to us. If we learn strong bonds in our families, we will have no trouble building them later with others'. A strong family is the nucleus that helps hold it together. Many survive without it, but more survive with it than without it (Young, 2007).

Extending this to the leadership development of women, women will still reframe the "good mother" image into their work to fit their lifestyle and interest. Buzzanell, Meisenback, Remke, Liu, Bowers and Conn (2005:262) wrote that for women to be seen as good leaders was an irony because of the traditional belief that they were not supposed to lead. Moreover, how women express and construct meaning of their leadership positions and choices during times of discrimination, prejudice and stereotype has made young ones aspire to be leaders. Women as leaders are able to address work and family conflict by engaging in micro-managing and having

someone to look after their children. Some even slow down their career and slow down birth (Castells 2004:197). As leaders, and as good working mothers, women manage to arrange quality childcare for their children. In addressing the way women in leadership construct meanings and manage competing tensions and ideologies, sense-making provides a framework not only to study how these women express or make meaning of their individual choices, but also to see how sense-making both supports and challenges collective (organizational and societal) thinking and action (Marshall 1995, Weick 1995 as quoted in Buzzanell *et al.* 2005:264). Sense-making is chosen because it provides a highly developed set of diagnostics which will allow the interpretation of reactions caused by uncertainty and interruptions (Marumo 2008:3). Sense-making can be used to interpret, identify and perhaps rectify fundamental problems.

The changed role of women in the South African society therefore necessitates reflection on the conceptualization of their identities. These changes have allowed women to deal with multiple spaces and complex positions in which they also need to look at their identity (Geldenhuys & De Lange 2007:118). However, external social influences and the cultural environment in which they are located, contribute to the challenges of under-representation in higher education and leadership positions.

(e) Community

From childhood, women attend schools and participate in activities that influence their upbringing. Some leadership skills, such as decision-making and developing a visionary outlook, are variously developed by means of family activities, interactions and school experiences. All these happen in the individual's lifetime and, as noted by Cubillo and Brown (2003:289), women's early histories of childhood and school activities play an important role in shaping their thinking and enabling them to aspire to higher education and role achievement. They thus learn leadership skills in schools, homes, and religious and spiritual settings, particularly during their childhood.

Researchers (Fels 2004:9, Madsen 2007:103) indicate that girls command a stronger repertoire of verbal skills than boys during childhood, yet they tend to

receive less recognition than boys in this area. This can be attributable to a school environment in which teachers praise boys more often than girls, and as a result of their being more accepted during class discussions, they are at an academic advantage. These discrepancies may contribute to girls becoming assertive and standing up for themselves. Baraka-Love 1986 (as quoted by Madsen 2007:104) found that successful women leaders in different fields were achievement-orientated during their school years, and so motivated in their growth, development and success.

Robinson (1996:49) conducted a study of fourteen African-American women leaders in community colleges and found that during childhood, they had recognized “leadership” as a social phenomenon and a personality quality. These women knew from the age of five that they were leaders among their friends and classmates, and were taught that leadership was an honour and duty for one with ability. Fels’s (2004:54) study of the ambition of women found that they “too frequently seek to deflect attention from themselves”, and often ambitions in youth were suppressed and attenuated during adulthood as a result of experiencing a lack of recognition, which reinforces the absence of ambition. The daily lives of women in childhood were characterized by micro-encounters, in which quiet withdrawals and the diversion of available attention to other activities were expected, particularly in the presence of men. Fels (2004:54) also indicates that this continuity of “ceding of available attention to others” decreased the desire to participate in opportunities that may help young women develop important skills and competencies for effective leadership in the future.

The discussion above indicates that the community plays a major role in the formation of identity and that a person does not live in isolation. The findings of the research show that the self, family, and community seem to have a significant impact on a woman as a child because of the norms, customs, values and standards that she has to adhere to in a community. Linking the above with leadership, the influence of community empowers one to treat others with respect, and as leaders, to treat each other as part of the common group. It gives women as leaders a sense of direction and purpose. Identity and self have an influence on leaders as they work within the constraints of pre-existing identities handed down to them by others. In the

current context, the above helps women leaders to focus and unite a group as followers.

(f) Socialization

As one matures, the environment and social values move stealthily into one's personality and definition of identity. Together with societal influences, they have a profound effect on identity, particularly in terms of one's need for social acceptance. Repeatedly, external acceptance takes precedence over self-acceptance as the gauge by which we appraise values and worth. Davis (2007) writes that the lifestyle and the manner in which people were raised to socialize determine the extent to which their sense of identity is affected by the values of the community in which they grew up. Peer community, local community, nationality and global factors influence personal identity formation, and each moment of social action becomes part of identity. People tend to express their identity in the present by embracing their identity as authentic, while the future is impacted by their identity and ambitions. The actions they choose each day are seemingly propelled from the present moment into their future.

Chae (2001/2002:19) argues that learning one's culture is a prominent aspect of ethnic socialization, and as learning ethnic culture differs from one individual to another, so a woman's leadership development also varies. This learning process may vary due to the type of people one will work with as well as the workplace environment, but the historical and cultural aspects that women learn in childhood will tend to impact on their identity formation in leadership. Ethnic socialization varies among ethnic groups as women are taught to be quiet in the broad spectrum of culture. As children they learnt from their father that they wanted to be leaders when they grew up, and they observed their mother being treated as a minor while admiring their father, whom they saw as strong and assertive.

According to Weidman, Twale and Stein (2001:6) socialization should also be viewed from a professional point of view as a subconscious process whereby a person internalizes behavioural norms and standards, forming a sense of identity and commitment to a professional field. This shows that the primary goal of

socialization in identity formation is an internalization of the culture and the development of identity. This happens as a result of the interaction with and within society. Social identity is flexible because of the interaction that takes place, and individuals in a group are likely to change the identity while undergoing transformation (Cornelissen *et al.* 2007 as quoted by Gal & Kjaergaard 2009). Changes in organizational environment require modification for individuals to be able to interpret them. The role that organizations play in informing individuals in the organization is important. Organizational action is informed by organizational identity, and every organization has its own identities that are informed by vision, policies and procedures. However, social skills learnt earlier in their lives play an important role in how they adapt to the organizational environment.

Buckingham (2008:3) examines an argument by Erikson that status was universal, and while people in different cultures undergo the same sequence of identity formation, each culture reacts differently. It is a situation where Gilligan (as quoted by Buckingham 2008:3) argues that “the moral development takes a different path for males and females, which again implies that such generalized models may take a sufficient account of social differences”.

To understand the formation of the unique identity and how it is implicated in female leadership, one has to unpack the historical progression of female leadership with respect to how women cast themselves in a male dominated sector, given their role and style of leadership. Davis (2007) argues that less attention should be given to notions such as gender and more to improving leadership and management systems and the way in which they operate.

To summarize the determinants: An individual does not exist in isolation, but rather characteristics that emanate from family and community produce an impact on individual identity. The emotions of an individual are affected by the cultures, values, standards and religions which surround them, and immediately identity formation develops, one loses identity, with consequences on the emotional level. Therefore the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual characteristics of the internal part of identity are to be discussed as formation of self-image, gaining experience, experience of attitudes and exposure to prejudice, discrimination and diversity.

2.3 IDENTITY IN THE WORKPLACE

How individuals develop in a workplace identity is important, for here, as employees, they have an individual as well as a workplace identity. What is done differently at their workplace adds to the individual's identity by requiring him/her also to take on an identity based on the nature of the work (Agostino 2004). If an individual is asked, "Where do you work?" the workplace identity will to a great extent dominate the individual identity. This underscores the power of the workplace and the social environment implied by it. It also highlights the role the institutional culture plays as it influences individual behaviour and consequently identity.

Creating a "workplace identity" may sound unimportant but it is really an important point to achieve success in one's job. Without workplace identity, failure of institutions can occur. One has to understand what it means to create a successful workplace identity, including performance habits, integrity, reliability and commitment, which mostly fall under the vision and mission of institutions. It is also what institutional management expects from their employees, and in adhering to the points mentioned above, one enhances the prospects of success in a job.

To formulate workplace identity does not mean acting in the same way as one's employer. In today's environment one cannot lead in isolation, and the singular "boss" concept is losing traction in the workplace, to be replaced by multiple "bosses". Even if a single person governs the workplace, it is essential to carve out an identity with that individual that creates reasonable and reliable expectations for workplace performance. While the social identity approach (Haslam 2004) has made a useful and rigorous contribution to the field of identity, the discussion about identity is still avoided. However, as preference is in engaging with the related concepts of interests or false consciousness, labour process theory can help to advance the understanding of the role of identity in the workplace. Identity and workplace can thus be seen as mutually constituted.

2.3.1 The importance of identity in the workplace

According to Schippers and Martens (2003:286), "identity is a stable characteristic of persons or groups, embedded in ethnical distinctions". This explanation is supported

by Erikson (1968), where he mentions seven stages of development (cf. 1.7.2). People are born, categorized and attributed a certain identity, but the focus is on differences rather than commonalities, since these indicate that men and women will have different approaches in a workplace. A consequence of these reifications may be the consolidation of what exists, and the impossibility of acknowledging the inevitable transformation of identities. Identity is very important in an institutional setting because every employee has a unique identity. From the preceding section, it is evident that a person cannot work in isolation as their individual identity is influenced by institutional factors such as culture, policies and procedures. In a workplace, identity is linked directly with expertise, which links directly to the ability of the institution to get things done. A different understanding of identity that accepts the other in his or her changing singularity is more fruitful and relevant. Schippers and Martens (2003:285) claim that in a socio-cultural context many initiatives are taken to improve intercultural communication or to manage diversity. The activities are mostly aimed at presenting the differences and similarities among cultures. While these exercises may contribute to an understanding of the relativity of one's cultural frame of reference, they may also stress and pinpoint the differences (Schippers & Martens 2003).

2.3.2 How workplace dynamics affect women in leadership positions and the role of institutions in women's leadership

A workplace is a situation of intercultural communication, where people react as typical members of their culture. The perspective assumes that all forms of intercultural interaction will reveal culture specific traits, a point of view that is specific and situational. By dividing people into categories, they are attributed a certain identity construction, with identity seen as a stable characteristic of persons or groups, embedded in ethnical distinctions. This implies that certain actions, knowledge and attributes are expected while others are not. Differences are reified, leaving neither room nor energy for becoming other (Janssens & Steyaert 2001, Janssens 2002 as quoted in Schippers & Martens 2003:286). This division has led to stereotyping in the workplace and women and men occupying different leadership positions.

Women aspiring to enter the male-dominated echelons are experiencing difficulties, with factors such as isolation, the institutional culture, the institutional environment and relationship styles limiting their progress.

From the preliminary survey on women in leadership, Haslam (2004:24) argues that participation in the activities of a professional association advances the cause of one group. Men are taught to compete with one another whereas women are seen as less adept at negotiating the competitive environment and have difficulty in gaining strategic benefit from the workplace. This makes the role of women in leadership positions less effective as they lack support and recognition. Of course this makes women to behave in a certain way because they are brought up to believe that society expects of them to behave that way (Mathipa & Tsoka 2001:325). Although society does have an influence on women's role in leadership, the role of women in the workplace is changing, as is the management of institutions. The so-called glass ceiling, which alluded to discriminatory barriers that kept them from moving to higher level of positions in the workplace, is breaking. Many articles (Piterman 2008, Davis 2007) have addressed the issue of leadership positions in the workplace but few studies have focused on women. Although women are underrepresented, they have achieved leadership positions, many in leadership positions in Higher Education, thus changing the viewpoint of society about them. Though there are still some barriers (Chliwniak 1997a, Burkhart 1999 as quoted in Jones 2005:1) argue that men possibly possess fear towards the feminizing of leadership roles and so intentionally omit women from leadership positions. This has devalued their positions, prestige, and ultimately value within higher education.

Alcoff (1988:406) note some of the impediments to transformation that women have experienced, such as sexism and misogynist discourses. The self-definition of women is grounded in a concept that they must deconstruct and de-essentialize in all aspects. Men feel women can be defined, delineated, captured, understood, explained and diagnosed, but not heard. Women's nature is seen as over-determined by behaviour, with limited intellectual endeavours, as men define women by their activities and attributes. This gives rise to a fear that men will dominate and control that which is necessary to them, namely "the life energy of women" (Alcoff

1988:408). To overcome this, the institution must promote women by encouraging freedom of movement and end their restriction to child-centred activities.

According to the University of Venus (University of Venus is just a name, not a real institution), a blog for Generation X females in higher education, women are at the forefront of change in academia:

We are the students, the faculty, and the administration ... we are more collaborative and solution-oriented than men. We are less likely to compete purely for the sake of competition. In our universities, we face a daily barrage of game-playing, power-grabbing, ladder-climbing, and an overall loss of perspective on why we are in higher education ... [but] we should never lose sight of learning, of students, of faculty. Too often, a wounded ego takes centre stage in the decision-making process.

To indicate how women have managed to overcome the challenges in leadership positions, some have opted to remain single and childless. Women are having fewer children at a later age as the peak years of children coincide with the peak years for their career development (Piterman 2008:18). According to Castells (2004:197), some women opt not to have children at all and remain single because of their work, and an increasing number choose to remain single. However, these changes do not correspond to changes in workplace responsibilities, or support for women's life out of work. Women still experience discrimination at the workplace and those who do aspire to leadership roles, hesitate to be involved as there are many changes in the career path and work patterns that lead to setbacks to leadership, including remuneration discrepancies.

The move for workplace diversity promotes identity beyond the surface level of differences (Jayne & Dipboye 2004:415). The role of the institution in leadership by women is to give support and acknowledge their presence in leadership positions. As institutions are faced with a task of managing diversity in the workplace, an institutional culture that encourages employee involvement and creates a sense of ownership, belonging and responsibility, becomes important. By developing this, management will create a feeling of readiness to develop and empower all its

employees, not only those who contribute to diversity but also those who make the workplace productive and contribute to effective management (Guidroz, Kotrba, Denison 2005-2009:4).

Institutional culture is important in uncovering the positive effects on the leadership positions of women. It has to show consistent relationships with organizational performance and the institution must be able to integrate to avoid the negative effects of discrimination. Senior management must be committed to and accountable for developing women in leadership positions, ensuring policies of the institutions are implemented. The institutional culture does not accommodate women out of work, many of whom work long hours and so cannot balance time spent with children and taking care of their families. As women have out of work responsibilities, they are excluded from key roles, informal networks, projects and opportunities (Piterman 2008) which is seen as “role conflict”. Women become torn between their work and family. Lack of organizational flexibility and loss of female talent from management thus persist.

Institutional top management must be able to articulate the importance of having women in leadership positions, as this will help the entire institution to respect the leadership of women and employees will be united (Guidroz, Kotrba, Denison 2005-2009). The structure of the higher education workplace is still organized according to the male model, hierarchical and competitive, to which women in leadership positions have had to adapt, while they are often still viewed as of little or no worth (Moses 1997 as quoted by Jones 2005:1). The institutional culture has been universalized by the experiences of men and thus female and minority groups have been treated as anomalies (Hammonds-Byrne 1995 as quoted by Jones 2005:1).

The American Council on Education (1995-2003 as quoted by Jones 2005:1) points out that women and minorities hold a greater percentage of the top positions in colleges and universities but are underrepresented in faculty and senior staff positions. Brown (as quoted in Jones 2005:2) argues that a better balance in roles in top leadership positions might change the climate. There are times where gender perception plays a major role in the leadership position of women in higher education, with decision-making policies still favouring men. The gender perceptions

are stimulated when male senior executives display aggressive characteristics and female executives display nourishing characteristics in making strategic decisions.

Eagly and Carli (2007) write of building social capital within organizations as being vital to advancement. This involves increasing visibility, forming good relationships with people at all levels of an organization, and taking a more strategic approach to networking and relationship-building. Organizational supports such as mentoring, formal networks and leadership development programmes are influential in assisting women to maximize their social capital.

Numerically, the gender gap in higher education leadership is still widening. HEIs therefore need to ensure that they are able to draw on the widest possible pool of women in recruiting and encourage men to lose their traditional perceptions. The over-representation of males in leadership positions has an impact on women, affecting performance outcomes and the treatment of women and entire communities in the workplace. There are perceptions about women in leadership, some of which are self-generated. Some of these perceptions include, for instance, exaggerations about psychological and behavioural differences between individuals. Some women “mirror” men in leadership styles, doing what men do as they adopt male practices and techniques in order to gain acceptance in male-dominated work settings. Individuals feel under pressure to differentiate themselves from their own group at work and behave in a manner that is more consistent with characteristics they associate with the dominant culture (Ely 1995:596). Women do not evaluate themselves based on requirement for success, despite a relatively unfavourable evaluation they may give to their group.

Professional identity formation is a relationship between the professional and personal aspects of life (Wenger 1998), and an expanding dynamic that includes negotiations over the personal development of a professional identity, in the individual in a specific context. This sense of being becomes a core awareness that leaders can be transformed through knowledge as it becomes meaningful in different situations. More about this is presented in Chapter six.

2.3.3 Addressing the gender pay gap in higher education

An annual report and accounts by the Equal Opportunities Commission (2007:7) recommended that HEIs set objectives to address the causes of gender pay gap, examples of which are discrimination, occupational segregation and the impact of caring responsibilities.

2.3.3.1 Discrimination

Discrimination includes pay, pregnancy and isolation. The policies and practices of institutions must be revised if the discrimination aspects exist, which will help to eliminate harassment and discrimination. Higher education institutions must look into the framework the employee signed, and where it has pledged to improve recruitment and retention of staff, it must ensure equal pay for work of equal value, and tackle the problem of low pay, recognize and reward individual contributions, and underpin opportunities for career and organizational development (Equal Opportunities Commission 2007:25). It is important that if policies and practices are at risk of discriminating, in order to meet the general duty of paying due regard to the elimination of discrimination and harassment, the employer must take action to address this. Institutions will be encouraged to monitor and review the impact of the new arrangements by undertaking periodic equal pay audits, in line with the guidelines. The majority of HEIs have now introduced new pay structures under the terms of the framework, and the remainder are expected to do so shortly. Conducting an equal pay review as part of the implementation of the national framework for pay arrangements should provide HEIs with a starting point for their work on meeting their pay responsibilities under the gender equality framework.

2.3.3.2 Occupational segregation

The number of women in the workplace has generally increased at the professional level though not at senior level, and their attainment of leadership positions is still rare. Occupational segregation persists, with women being over-represented in lower paid posts such as cleaning, catering and clerical jobs, and underrepresented in senior levels within organizations. Segregation is noticed in both professional and support staff in HEIs, with a high percentage of men employed as gardeners,

electricians, maintenance workers and drivers. If the higher education institutions can employ men and women to do the same job, the issue of gender will be less of a problem (HESA 2004/05).

2.3.3.3 The impact of caring responsibilities on academic staff

The impact of caring responsibilities (such as a lack of flexibility or part-time work at senior levels) is affecting women more because of their multiple roles and their reduction of working hours and length of career due to time constraints. HESA figures for 2003/04 show that 37,6% of female academic staff as opposed to 22,9% of male academic staff are working part-time⁴. Evidence from the Association of University Teachers (AUT) highlighted two problems which illustrate the impact of caring responsibilities on women academics: firstly the “career killer”, where career breaks, extended maternity leave, reductions in working time and parental leave actually marginalize staff. Secondly, the move towards “casualisation” has seen an increasing number of fixed-term or hourly paid contracts, with holders losing out on contractual benefits that are only available to permanent academic staff. The promotion of quality part-time work for both men and women, with an emphasis on quality not quantity for promotion or appropriate research output targets, is needed.

The expectation of career mobility for academic staff, particularly those in the sciences, can have a negative effect on women’s career progression. Women are not as mobile as men due to the impact of caring responsibilities. The pressure to be mobile reflects the value of diverse experience but also the prevalence of fixed-term positions. Male and female academic couples are quite common in the sciences, which may place additional pressures on the female partner in particular, seeking to combine the demands of a mobile research career with their personal lives. In many cases women fall behind in this process as male careers gain priority (Gender, Mobility and Progression in Science Careers 2005:3).

Just as being a mother can have negative effects on a career, so male academics feel they should be acknowledged as fathers, but often the culture of the institution draws a distinct line between work and personal life. There is a prevalent culture

⁴ http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/eo/gender/GED_and_Higher_Education_%20guidance.pdf

where it is felt that long hours spent working are essential to establishing a career, but this is incompatible with family life (Gender, Mobility and Progression in Science Careers 2005:27).

2.3.4 Changing identities in the changing workplace

Although it may now be the case that women are able to enter managerial hierarchies “through the front door”, at some point they hit an invisible barrier that blocks any further upward movement and continue to experience resistance from male counterparts. Organizations are much more likely to give women part-time contracts, which allow them to be paid much less than their male counterparts in full-time employment. Piterman (2008:12) suggests that the perception of excellence in leadership needs to be re-examined, which requires challenging the norms that determine leadership eligibility.

Most jobs in higher education institutions were previously held solely by men and instead of creating new words for women in those professions, the nouns remained masculine. However, the main problem that has arisen through the integration of women in the workplace is the lack of help that women are receiving from the institutions in terms of support (Taylor 2011). This led women to try to balance their multiple roles of being mother, wife, sister and employee, instead of men helping them take care of the home and children, or institutions developing and empowering them.

The issue of stereotyping still exists in the workplace, where males do not see it fit to help women in leadership positions. Due to lack of help and support from their husbands, women opt to work fewer hours or half days due to obligations to maintain their homes, and are resultantly paid less. Even women who have risen to unprecedented career heights are targeted by negative attitudes about them as leaders and attitudes women themselves still harbour (Tahmincioglu 2007).

Stereotypes block women’s progress through a complex leadership labyrinth in two ways: (1) by casting doubts about their leadership abilities; and (2) by forcing them to personally conform to those doubts. Women in leadership positions experience the

challenge of having their leadership competency questioned, which then requires them to outperform men and to be seen as equally competent (McDonagh 2010:42). Freire (1970) regards this phenomenon as women internalizing what men do to them in order to overcome the oppression they face.

A workplace environment that is not welcoming has an influence on the leadership positions of women. One cannot live in a sexist society without internalizing some of the comments made. Janet Lever, professor of Sociology at California State University in Los Angeles, has been reported as saying that this makes women feel worse about themselves, and their self-confidence and self-esteem are affected to the extent that they lose self-worth (Tahmincioglu 2007).

With regard to leadership styles, there are attributes that are already assigned to men and women leaders (Heilman 2001:26). Women are seen as caring and nurturing while men are seen as taking charge and being assertive. The challenge is that when these attributes are mapped onto the workplace, the male attributes are much more sought after. There is a lack of “fit” in this because female attributes are perceived as unfit for those in leadership positions (Heilman 2001). However, there is no conclusive evidence that the female leadership style is distinctively different to the male leadership style (Rhode 2003, Blackmore 2002, 1999), although Rhodes acknowledges that there is a greater diversity to promote effective leadership. This is why there is a need for a workforce with diversity of backgrounds, styles, experiences and leadership. It is acknowledged that both men and female have different characteristics required for effective performance in leadership. Rhode (2003:18) also believes that gender differences do make some differences, and they need to be registered in leadership positions.

When women achieve leadership positions, they are disapproved of by everyone, male or female. Prejudice also plays a major role in the workplace. When people visualize top leaders in institutions they picture men in leadership roles, thus providing women with another hurdle. Men can be sarcastic when women get a leadership position.

Lockwood (2004:7) indicates that it is harder for women to advance in the workplace as they have to prove themselves more, chasing a dilemma of trying to be ambitious without overdoing it. Women become reserved as they are afraid to be called names if they are confident and aggressive, yet they do not want to be called indecisive or emotional. In the workplace, to be a leader one needs to be decisive and take charge. Women are not seen as having the same leadership potential as men. According to Ramani and Malema (in *Mail & Guardian* 13 April 2012) women in the workplace struggle to find the time to achieve a measure of success in their research and professional activities. Most of these struggles were lonely battles, waged against a gender-weighted institutional culture that made it extremely difficult for women to be taken seriously as academics or scholars. There are factors that make it extremely difficult for women to achieve success.

Stereotypical feminine gender roles are based on (a) socialization experiences external to a college, (b) socialization within the college's organizational culture, and (c) the individual's construction and negotiation of gender identity. Many different concrete mechanisms may be responsible for this obstruction, including women managers' isolation from important informal networks or more subtle sexist attitudes that place women at a disadvantage. Whatever the specific mechanism, the glass ceiling hypothesis argues that the relative disadvantages women face in getting jobs and promotion are greater on the upper level (Baxter & Wright 2000:276).

2.3.5 The role of women in the workplace

When women come to the workplace, they want to be successful (Hennig & Jardim 1977, Madsen 2007, 2008, 2010, Robinson 1996, Stephens 2003) and seek to be satisfied. They will look for employees who inspire them and aspire to emulate. They will form a new social group with people who will contribute a positive and distinctive sense of self and colleagues who will become role models. As leaders in the workplace, women will not want to be associated with failure, which emanates from their childhood, when as girls they associated themselves with their father, while they saw the mother being mistreated by a society that denied her recognition. The interaction between a woman's life at work and away from work is complex. The complexity of the workplace in terms of barriers that women come across has led

them to make changes in their personal lives. Helgesen and Johnson (2010) have indicated that women occupying leadership positions in the workplace benefit not only the organization but other women as well. Organizations that have women in leadership positions may give a return on shareholders and government when performances improve in these organizations. Despite the fact that women make up 40% of leadership in South African HEIs, women are still experiencing resistance from men in leadership positions. Gender stereotyped organizational cultures exist, while over half of both women and men agree that promotions and job opportunities in their workplace are not always awarded on merit, and that their workplace offers no flexibility.

There is no flexible time to start or finish work to accommodate women who are in leadership positions and who are mothers. Most women want their current employer to improve the provision of time in the workplace. By lacking flexible time they exclude women from key roles, projects and opportunities due to work structure and a culture that does not accommodate their needs. Many women do not want to be in leadership positions because they prefer to have more flexibility and more choice and dedicate more time to and focus on other elements of their lives. Helgesen and Johnson have shown that women in the workplace provide a critical piece of social infrastructure. They bring skills and policy formerly restricted to the domestic sphere. This is evident in organizations and universities that now have a crèche, a clinic and a wellness programme. These skills are recognized as having both public and marketplace value, which is how organizations identify and pursue and view their internal responsibilities. This breakdown of barriers has added the voices of women in the workplace and given them impetus by entry into the public arena. Workplace policies have changed whereby home can even become work-like, and people feel comfortable to bring the family to work (Helgesen & Johnson 2010).

Women are facing an “enemy from within” in a hostile masculine domain in the form of internalizing doubts about their ability to develop into fully professional persons, as characterized by how they see themselves currently and how they are desired to be seen as a future development. Women feel they have to change in order to be accepted in this environment and survive, so they change their behaviour. Metiu and Obodaru (2008) theorize that women become aggressive on the premise that

adopting aggressive behaviour might contradict the communal aspects. They identify themselves as “freaks” because they feel alone and discouraged. However, a freak can either be positive or negative, and a term that can be used to denote anger, sarcasm, sadness and disenchantment (Metiu & Obodaru 2008). When women feel they are facing an enemy, they become negative. From a positive side, sometimes a woman who has not experienced male sarcasm might call herself “a freak” or “stupid”, as an epitome of the difficulties encountered while forging an identity in a male-dominated environment.

Eagly and Carli (2007:2) write that to prevent women from advancing is to block their path with overt, absolute barriers. The barriers consist of explicit rules and clear-cut norms. Perceptions persist that women lack legal and political equality as in the past they were not allowed to vote or open a bank account without their husband’s authorization. There are some other concerns when women advance on the leadership ladder. For instance, in the 1990s a woman was appointed as the first female judge in the High Court of South Africa but on her first day at work she discovered that the court building did not have toilets for female judges, because no one had ever thought of a woman being a judge during the apartheid era (De Vos 2010). This was repeated in 2011, when two women were appointed as advocates, and Minister Jeff Radebe justified it thus: “There is no controversy about the appointment of two women, when everybody talks about women empowerment and the advancement of women. But when the president appoints two competent, fit and properly qualified women, people cry.”

The qualifications of these women had to be mentioned to try to show how they can also be leaders, as the National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa (NPA) announced Jiba’s and Mokhatla’s appointment (in *Times* newspaper, 17 January 2011:4), and the *Mail & Guardian* (16 January 2011). In working environments, women do not gain the same credentials as men, hence the concern of some people when a woman becomes a judge. This situation still occurs in higher education institutions where, although women are appointed for their intellectual distinctions and administrative work, their positions and roles are still challenged. This creates a conflict in their function because, as women are to act as agents of change, they are

required to deliver according to institutional objectives where they have to carry dual identities, that of an academic and a leader.

2.4 THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE IN IDENTITY FORMATION

Workplace culture contributes to changes in the identity of both the individual and the workplace. Institutional culture should encourage involvement and create a sense of ownership of responsibilities. It is understandable that institutional culture will be influenced by the diversity of its staff, and that this has particular implications for the leaders and managers. Schein (1992), the father of institutional culture, holds a firm view that this culture is closely related to leadership and performance, which implies that management has to create an environment in which the individual, as well as institutional identity, can flourish. However, it is generally acceptable that no organization is “stable” and always “enabling”, and in this regard Van Dick and Haslam (2006:4) indicate that changes in an organization can be a source of uncertainty, frustration and confusion. However, they also point out that changes can provide stimulation and opportunities for growth in the workplace. In this regard, the complexity of change urges many organizations to attend to the social identity of the environment in assisting the staff to deal with the influence of the changes.

A question could be asked as to why it is necessary for the workplace to attend to the social dimension. For the development of the employees, both social identity theory and self-categorization theory play a role. Both these theories emphasize the potential of individuals to derive a sense of the self from their membership with social groups, and that this originates from the larger social identity (Stets & Burke 2000:225). Self-categorization results from an accentuation of the perceived similarities between the self and the other in-groups, while it also accentuates the perceived differences between the self and group members. This accentuation includes the evaluation and possible readjustment of attitudes, beliefs, values, affective relations, behavioural norms, styles of speech and other properties relevant to inter-group socialization. In this regard, Stets and Burke (2000:225) refer to an individual’s self-esteem that can be either enhanced or harmed by comparing oneself to the in- and the out-group dimensions in terms of what is regarded as acceptable. As indicated above, socialization and a person’s self-esteem play a

crucial role in identity formation, which is also valid for the workplace environment, because individuals derive their identity or sense of the self from the social categories to which they belong.

As indicated, identity formation is dependent on a set of social identities that constitute uniqueness, which may mean that organizations or institutions have to account for the effect a workplace may have on the development of a leadership identity. If the development of the leadership identity of women in the workplace is considered, women also need to be able to define themselves (who they think they are) according to their social context and not merely in personal terms – rather as “us” and “we” and not only as “I” and “me” (Van Dick & Haslam 2006:6). As women develop into leaders they have to perceive themselves to be part of the group and institution, so that they become motivated to strive towards common goals. Organizations or institutions are, therefore, expected to establish a conducive environment in which women are “allowed” to become part of the system.

Hennig and Jardim (1977), Madsen (2007, 2008 & 2010), Robinson (1996) and Stephens (2003) stress women’s desire to grow and develop into effective leaders, which means that the social identity in the workplace must be of such a nature that women leaders will be able to define themselves as women in the institution, carrying the in-group category with them. This notion has also been emphasized by Carli (2001:727) and Gilligan (1982 as quoted by Lemmer 2009), who re-evaluated the applicability of identity theory to women by affirming that identity is constructed according to the way they are connected to others. Against this background, women leaders will probably seek other women in the workplace in order to validate themselves and understand issues that relate to their social and individual identity. Because women also carry with them their family and nurturing identity, their unique identity may be lost to the workplace identity, especially if they want to protect themselves against sexist stereotyping and victimization. Once women have established themselves in terms of who they are in the workplace, their social identity may change gradually to suit the institutional culture and they may even realize that what they need may be found in the out-group members (Van Dick & Haslam 2006). Weick (1995) also indicates that identity changes because of the environment in which one lives and works and the related social aspects that affect

sense of the self. This suggests that, irrespective of gender, all leaders must be developed by the institution and be empowered within the workplace. The development and empowerment of women as leaders will contribute to the culture of the institutions and consequently to institutional performance.

The issue of culture not only arises when women are in leadership positions. According to Lafreniere and Longman (in *Time*, 26 October 2009:5), a woman reading the magazine 40 years previously would probably have bought it with her husband's money. They also indicated that in the past if a woman had to undergo a mastectomy the husband had to sign for approval on the authorization forms (Gibbs 2009:27). This was part of the stereotype and culture that women remained submissive to their husbands, including in matters regarding their health. Though this has changed in terms of gender equality within the field of higher education, the percentage of women in it has eclipsed the percentage of men. However, despite the growth, in the midst of shifting demographics, women are still underrepresented (Lafreniere & Longman as quoted by *Times*, 26 October 2009:5).

According to *The Times* newspaper (17 January 2011:4), this could also be a result of the stereotypes of what people still have or believe. In the same newspaper (2011) the South African Minister of Justice defended the appointment of a female judge, indicating that the president of the country should be commended for appointing a woman of the calibre of the mentioned advocate. He indicated there was no controversy in appointing a woman since there was talk about female empowerment and advancement. He emphasized that people "cry" when women are appointed, an indication that people still believe that leadership positions are mainly for men.

Culture exists in every organization and involves all members in an organization, irrespective of hierarchical level. The function of culture is to hold people together in an organization and reduce uncertainty by offering interpretation. The unique culture provides a sense of order to let members know what is expected and contribute to a sense of continuity. A powerful force of any organization, culture is considered as "the pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand institutional functioning and thus provide them with norms for behaviour in the organization"

(Deshpande & Sethi 2010:27). It is what individuals learn as a group over a period of time regarding cognitive, behavioural and affective aspects of functioning inside the organization (Schein 1992).

If one accepts that no culture is inherently better than any other, and similarly with identity formation, it is important to understand how institutional culture influences individual identity formation and how culture helps individuals as leaders to understand the new space they are in. Only then can institutional culture provide support to identity formation, as various subcultures will exist in departments or teams. Because each culture is distinct, the workspace cannot support each other without culture. Tharp (2009) argues that an organization must be collaborative in emphasizing teamwork as they deal with different cultures. It must be able to control different cultures and thrive to maintain structure, stability and continuity. An organization must have a culture based on competitive needs to operate openly and be able to adapt to change. It must be creative to foster innovation, risk-taking and individual initiative, with as little structuring as necessary. Figure 2.4 depicts how space can support institutional culture.

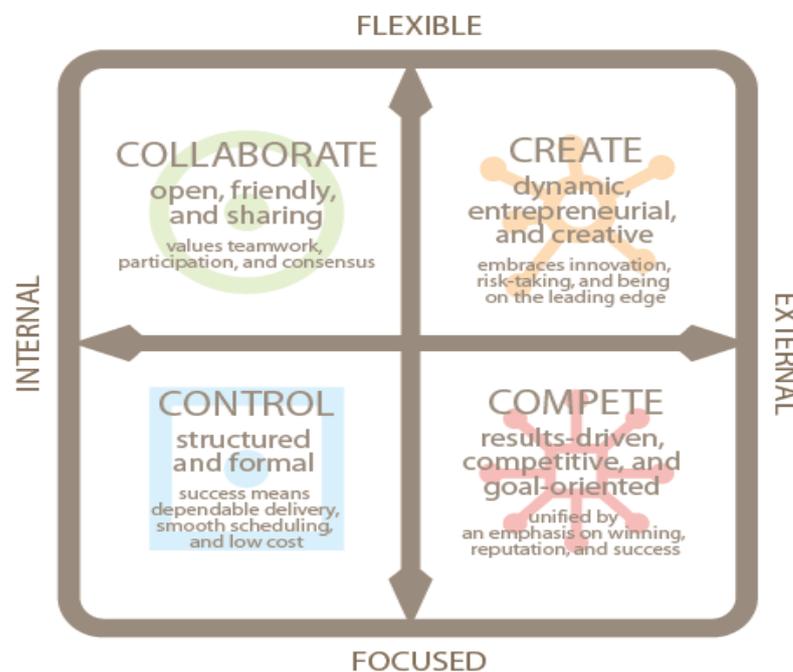


Figure 2.4 How space can support institutional culture and identity⁵

⁵ http://www.haworth-europe.com/en/content/download/30883/1230768/file/white-paper_Four-Organizational-Culture-Types.pdf

How institutional culture influences leadership and the extent to which leadership styles vary in accordance with cultural specifications are questions that do not have answers, but there is a process as discussed above. The role of identity in institutional culture is important, with personal identity reflecting the individual attributes that cannot be shared, and social identity refers to individual perceptions and social identity. Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000) argue that identity is rooted in a deep cultural level of an organization, and that to understand the role of institutional culture in identity formation, individual (personal), social and organizational aspects must be put together. Despite the apparent distinctions between the levels, there are similarities that help in understanding the identities holistically in an institutional context. Personal and social identities play a role in constructing meaning in an organization, drawing upon social discourses on how to act. The self-concept emerges and develops, as the behaviour that ties an individual to social surroundings cannot be formed without the individual being engaged in action and interaction that are formed by self. These cause the two forms of identity to intertwine (Gal & Kjaergaard 2009).

Each leader has implicit theories (beliefs, convictions and assumptions) that differ from other leaders. Values such as religion, respect, trust, honesty, loyalty, hard work and perseverance are the core values. Values and beliefs held by individuals influence the degree to which the behaviour of individuals, groups and institutions within a culture are enacted and the degree to which they are viewed as legitimate, acceptable and effective. Societal cultural values and practices affect institutional culture and practices, through the shared values that result from dominant cultural values, beliefs, assumption and implicit motives. Institutional cultures also affect what leaders do, often responding to institutional culture and altering their behaviour and leadership style. Therefore, these cause societal and institutional culture to influence the process by which people come to share implicit theories of leadership (House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, Dorfman, Javidan & Van Dickson 1999).

Cultural factors (rules, values and behaviour) affect the level of support for women in leadership positions, and influence the behaviour of men and women similarly. Drawing from this, cultural diversity, values and experience matter in leadership positions. Individuals express their culture through the values they hold about life

and the world in which they live. Values affecting their attitudes change the behaviour ,team performance (Stahl, Maznevski, Voight, Jonsen 2009:3) and reveal the underlying reasons the leadership styles of men and women tend to differ, not only in their actual social behaviour but also in the way they are expected to behave in society.

2.5 WORK AND FAMILY

Work and family become individual self-definition as they become relevant to enrichment, because they reflect aspects of an individual's self-concept, though not thoroughly examined. Individuals invest effort in identities on which they place importance, as it is the case with those who have strong career identities and so invest more effort into a career as opposed to those with weaker career identities who invest in emotions. Individuals have more opportunities to experience pleasurable moods, caused by multiple identities. The identities that are important in individuals tend to be cognitively prominent in the mind and can be drawn to another role. The strong identities will provide a great earning and purpose and greater psychological meaningfulness that contributes to greater engagement. Such engagement will show and reflect the experiences of enthusiasm, alertness, energy and pleasant mood to transfer across roles (Wayne, Randel & Stevens 2006).

The indirect empirical evidence suggests that importance of identities relate to enrichment. The number of hours spent at work shows commitment to an identity which has a positive prediction, whereas the expectation is that individuals with strong identities are likely to have pleasure and joy from the role and transfer it to another one (Wayne, Randel & Stevens 2006:448). The way women enter leadership positions has a bearing on their identity, with most women doing so because of the pressure and change of policies in the country. Some were not yet ready to be there but because of time and space they had to be. The development is conceptualized on several time levels.

Women as employees have to identify themselves with an institution as part of the collective group. The institutional values, norms and interests become part of the self-concept as employees increasingly identify with the workplace. Women will also identify themselves with the outside roles or their true self, such as being a parent or

having religious affiliations and community activities. Women as leaders must be able to manage their true self-identification as identity is fragmented and constructed through a number of interactions within and outside the workplace. However, identities can be in conflict when the balance of work and life is affected. Women have to perform with a work identity, not a mother identity, if they are to align themselves with the institution.

The HEIs are aware of how important work-life balance is as it improves productivity. If employees receive support from the institution, they have a lower incentive to leave it and in turn they give the institution greater pride. This allows employees to become advocates of the institution and recommend others to work there. Institutions must offer different programmes, such as flexible working hours in the form of part-time work from home. More proactive employers can provide compulsory leave, strict maximum hours and foster an environment that encourages employees not to continue working after hours. Institutions must not operate with a uniform policy, and some can make the institution amend the policy or work outside the policy parameters. Sometimes women are reluctant to take a part-time option in the workplace as they see it as an “occupational dead end” (Williams 2000).

Even with a more flexible schedule, working mothers opt not to work part-time because these positions typically receive less interesting and challenging assignments and may hinder advancement and growth. Some women may not take advantage of it because they do not want to be marginalized. Greenhaus and Power (as quoted by Wayne, Randel & Stevens 2006:446) define the work and family enrichment as “the extent to which the experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role”. Enrichment in the workplace leads to job satisfaction and increased effort, but it requires a relationship between work and family identities, and formal and informal institutional support. The support includes work and family culture and the two types of support, namely instrumental and emotional. Work and family enrichment, when one is involved in work and family roles, have positive consequences. To be engaged in multiple roles benefits one’s mental and physical health, and if this is extended to leadership positions of women in higher education, it shows that work and family cannot be separated. Women are still married, mothers

and take care of families, even when they are leaders. If work and family are both acknowledged, leadership will be approached in a different way.

Family work support is important to the outcome of employees' efforts, and is more important to enrichment than policies. A supportive family culture has general managerial support of family-related needs, and accommodates employees who devote time to family, though there are norms that are not excessive regarding the appropriate amount of time devoted to work. Culture is an important influence in employees' attitudes and behaviour. In a work environment, there are some expectations that are unwritten but are more important and powerful than written ones. On a daily basis, balancing work and family will most likely influence the degree to which employees feel truly supported and experience a positive affect at work to benefit their family lives. If the environment is supportive, there will be flexibility and advice and self-acceptance. When individuals feel supported by management in balancing work and family, there will be fewer work demands on family time and there will be fewer negative career consequences associated with family choices such as culture fosters. When culture is conducive to work, family matters become less negative (Wayne, Randel & Stevens 2006).

The above discussion has revealed that the construction of women's identity in the workplace opens up avenues for making sense of women's empowerment journey towards leadership. It extends the deeper understanding of women leaders' attitudes, feelings and behaviour, which will be viewed more extensively in the next chapters. According to Wayne, Randel and Stevens (2006), enrichment is bi-directional, such that work-family-enrichment (WFE) is a positive impact of one's work role and the family, whereas family-work-enrichment (FEW) is a positive impact of one's family role on the work role. Enrichment only takes place when resource gains generated by one role promote performance in or affect the other role.

2.6 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IDENTITY

Leadership development may imply an identity transition that constitutes profound transformation in what people think, feel and value. It unfolds as an identity transition

in which people disengage from central behavioural anchored identity while exploring new possible selves and integrating new alternative identities (Ibarra, Snook & Ramo 2008). To better understand the leadership development identity, one needs to define identity as it is in Chapter 1 (cf. 1.7.2). There are social identities such as race, sexual orientation and gender that play a major role in defining identity, while leadership identity is formed by the two key roles of developmental theory, namely psychological and cognitive. Leadership development involves learning opportunities in one environment over time to build one's capacity or efficacy to engage in leadership (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella & Osteen 2006). For Bernal (2009), leadership development is linked to the development of people's egos from egocentric leaders to the leader who works across different value systems. The development focuses on how leaders develop in terms of their moral value system, as it often occurs when one narrates one's life story.

Eagly, Karau and Makhijani (1995), and Melero (2004), found that beyond social beliefs there are gender behavioural stereotypes based on how men and women in leadership positions lead. Stereotypical differences in gender roles assume that because of either nature or nurture, they become more pronounced as women penetrate the leadership positions into management levels. Women score highly as transformational, showing intense interpersonal interactions during mentorship of subordinates, serving as role models, being proactive and stimulating other employees' interest in the work. On the other hand, men score highly in "management by default" and "laissez-faire" styles, as they delegate more and are less proactive in supervision tasks.

This can be due to perceptions, stereotyping and prejudice, lending credence to the idea that women cannot perform well in leadership positions because of having children, for example. Women also struggle to find their voices and positions within male-dominated professional cultures, and it is perceived that they may present their own barriers to progress due to the way they treat one another in the workplace (Jones & Palmer 2011:190). Though there are changes in terms of policies, structures and procedures, the issue of women's values in leadership remains a concern as it is not well addressed in South Africa, including at HEIs. There is still an absence of structures and policies to deal with discriminations or to support women

in their multiple roles of wives, mothers and professionals. Sometimes even where policies and structures are in place, women are not yet successful. This is evident in the data from the USA, Finland and France, which indicates that policies and structures have not yet made a major change (UNESCO 1993). Little research has been conducted into why women in leadership positions are still discussed, why their voices are not heard and what silences them.

Watson (2009:2) points out that the concept of women's voices, how they are heard, not heard and how they are silenced are still a concern. The concern is what happens once women have voiced their concerns, a largely under-researched area. Historically, women have been excluded from leadership positions due to the socio-political background which left them occupying powerless positions even when they achieved leadership. This led them to develop a different voice, which Ferguson calls "submerged discourse".

The leadership development identity is a cycle, starting with a leadership identity that has six stages: awareness, exploration/engagement, leader identified, leadership differentiated, generativity and integrations synthesis. All these stages integrate to form leadership development identity. From stages one to five, there are transition influences that take place. Each stage explores the changing views of leadership developing, group influences and developmental influences (Komives *et al.* 2006:402). In the **awareness stage** one is dependent on what others say or do, with the recognition of leaders in national and authority figures, for instance teachers or parents. One is just a follower, not being aware of leaders or leadership at all. One recognizes that leadership is around when one gets exposure to involvement, otherwise one thinks leadership is happening "out there somewhere", where one is not physically involved (Komives *et al.* 2006:406).

The behaviour of an individual in this stage is that of seeking friendships, as affirmation of one's sense of self is developed, and taking recognition very seriously as one still regards the self as "I am not a leader, I do not have the capacity to influence others". These figures still have little sense of self or personal identity and their view of leadership is external, which means they see "others" as leaders, not themselves. This is where transition starts to take place, and their leadership is

recognized. The recognition of their potential encourages them to think more about what leadership is and to recognize the leaders around them.

In the **exploration/engagement stage**, the interaction in a group is experienced, with one starting to seek opportunities to explore numerous interests. For example, when women come to leadership they first want to associate themselves with a group of women, but during transition they learn that one can also learn from the other gender. They start to explore and want to associate themselves with people to whom they aspire and who inspire them. In leadership development, an individual starts to be involved in a variety of activities in a group. Women as individuals play developmental influences in changing views of self and broadening views of leadership. They start to develop personal skills and an ability to interact in a group as they now see the need for a change in their behaviour as their self-confidence and self-concept are built. They start to see themselves as leaders and desire to do more and make a difference. This leads them to be more responsible and take leadership roles. They realize that one exists because of others, and their view of leadership from external factors change. The thought of “I am not a leader” changes during the transitions as they recognize their potential, reinforced by admiring elders and role models. For them, being labelled as leaders makes a difference in themselves, as ultimately the shift in their consciousness is motivated by a desire to make a difference and to do something meaningful. They want to explore and try new things, and take on increasing responsibility and leadership skills (Komives *et al.* 2006:406).

Some researchers, for example Marcia (1966), see exploration as being based on adolescents searching for alternatives with respect to their goals, values and convictions before making commitments. On the other hand, Bosma (1985 as quoted by Luyckx, Schwartz, Goossens, Soenens & Beyers 2008) and Meeus (1996) argue that exploration may also entail an in-depth evaluation of one’s current commitments and choices, which becomes in-depth exploration. Exploration in-depth accompanies current commitments and implies that identity formation is an ongoing evaluative process. This final process causes commitment to be treated as a multidimensional process, as in exploration. Marcia (1966) defines commitment as the degree to which adolescents have made choices about important identity-relevant issues. This

dimension is referred to as *commitment making*. Whereas Bosma (1985 as quoted by Luyckx *et al.* 2008:587) argues that, apart from the degree to which one has made identity commitments, the degree to which adolescents identify with and feel certain about their choices is also an important component of identity formation. This is *identification with commitment*. Thus, the making of identity-relevant choices is important in the cycle of identity formation, but it is not an endpoint (Grotevant 1987 as quoted by Luyckx *et al.* 2008:597).

According to Luyckx *et al.* (2008:597), exploration requires active questioning and consideration of various alternatives in gathering information about what the individual might be in life, whereas information can be gathered through the experience of trying new things such as values, roles and ideas. Observing and perceiving opinions of others through exploration can help to gather information. For one to explore requires patience and ability to handle certain levels of anxiety, flexibility and commitment. If a person is committed during exploration, one will be able to form the alternatives that have been explored and that are calls for making choices and settling on self-definition (Frame 2000). As a result, exploration is best treated as a being multidimensional rather than comprising a singular dimension.

Viewed from the **leader identified stage**, leadership is a position, and if one is not a leader, one is a follower who looks for direction from leaders. This becomes complex and signals two phases of *emerging* and *immersion*. In the emerging phase, new skills are identified as ways of relating when women move in these stages of leadership. They start to look at more experienced people as role models and learn how to get things done. At this stage one starts to feel comfortable and enter the immersion phase, as one moves in and out of groups.

Different leadership styles are explored in this phase as ways of accomplishing goals. Behaviour changes as one starts to be more responsible, seeing oneself as a leader and more position-driven and relying on older people as mentors. Women become aware of their leadership potential and view a group as a hierarchical organization. They narrow the number of group involvements to those that hold meaning for them, and their change in view of self in relation to others. The broadening of leadership makes them view themselves in relation to others, and to

experience leadership in one or two pathways. The transition is that they felt *independent* when they held leadership positions and *dependent* when in a follower's role. Regardless of these pathways, they solidify their belief that leaders lead and others have to follow. Reflective learning becomes critical, including participation in workshops (Komives *et al.* 2006:407).

In the stage of **leadership differentiated**, women start to differentiate how they view leadership by way of comparison and see leadership as a process. In the emerging phase they recognize that leadership is not positional, but can come from anywhere in a group, meaning anyone can be a leader from the group. If they were a member of the group they would feel a new sense of empowerment, but they also struggle to define what leadership means as it can come from anywhere. On the other hand, in the immersion phase, women gain confidence in working towards building the feeling of community in the group. They become committed and engaged in a group so as to be effective leaders from within the group. The envelopment, self-interacting within the group influence, makes them aware of the ability to work with diverse others. Skills include teamwork, developing trust, developing talent in individual members, and creating an environment that supports growth in interdependence. Women start to internalize leadership identity, in a transition that is realised with the passion they develop. They want to contribute their time and energy to serving a larger purpose and make meaning from every experience, with the help of a mentor (Komives *et al.* 2006:409).

Looking at leadership Cain (2002 as quoted by Hess, Adams, Grammer and Kleck 2009) maintains that a woman's self in the educational environment reflects her class, gender and race within these dimensions. The intersection of the psychological and social construction of self is challenged on a daily basis. One needs to understand how women experience their sense of self in society. They experience oppression and obstacles, which give them insight into what could be expected in leadership positions. They have to acknowledge and honour their experience since this is part of the society from which they emanate. The experience is a ladder to coping in a new career choice. If they can understand how their childhood has influenced their growth and development, they will be in a position to be more effective and shape new careers in work situations (Hess *et al.* 2009:7).

In the stage of generativity, individual identity does not exist. Women look beyond themselves and express a passion for their commitment and the welfare of others (Erikson 1968). They start to make choices based on their interest, as mentioned in stage three. Their personal philosophies of leadership take place. The transition period in this stage is when they can identify their beliefs and values embedded in their actions that led to their passion. They use that passion to mentor others and their personal values and personal integrity to reflect, as they start to look for meaning in others as a reflective practice. Women start to acknowledge that as leaders, they have become elders and have the responsibilities to develop others; they start to work together (Komives *et al.* 2006:411). In the final stage, that of integration/synthesis, women recognize that they are able to lead as they have gained confidence. They also recognize that they can learn from others as leadership is a process. With knowledge they gained they can assess the situation when changes occur. This stage is identified as a commitment to life-long learning development and growth as a leader (Komives *et al.* 2006:412).

There are various meanings of identity that are attached to oneself by self and others. The social identities and personal identities have been discussed in terms of internal and external determinants. There is evidence that leaders learn leadership skills by practice, observation and direct work experience. The challenges are there to help new leaders to bridge the interval between gaining insight (knowing) and translating that insight into new behaviour (doing) (Van Knippenberg & Hogg 2003). The researchers (Lord & Hall 2005, Lord & Brown 2004, Van Knippenberg & Hogg 2003) argue that to understand identity in the workplace one needs to link identity and leadership development.

Research has been conducted about leadership development (Avolio & Gardner 2005, Lord & Hall 2005), and these researchers call attention to the importance of a leader's self-concept by focusing on the potential gap between "doing" and "being". Lord and Hall (2005), for example, posit a model of development wherein leadership development behaviour, knowledge and perceptions emerge along with personal identities, and in which leadership roles and skills become more central to a person's sense of self. They also call attention to the importance of a leader's self-concept and focus on the potential gap between "doing" and "being".

In the workplace, during such transition, there are things that need to change. The question is what and in which institutional structure. Policies, processes and development are some of the things that need to change to accommodate new leaders. An individual needs to understand old actions to be able to understand new actions. Leadership is defined as a type of work or activity rather than a formal position. Secondly, I assume that self-understanding and experiences are mutually constructive. During changes, there are transformations that extend beyond new competencies to a new way of thinking about the organization and its purpose, work value and future possibilities. One needs to be a “systems thinker,” as described by Ibarra, Snook and Ramo (2008); one must begin to consider an alternative career in similar roles in which one feels a sense of making a difference. What needs to change in leadership development is a person’s capacity to exercise interpersonal influence to move and shape complex social systems by aligning and motivating diverse stakeholders. Being a systems thinker as a leader will assist a multi-cultural organization, where no culture or identity formation is regarded as better than another.

Based on the above stages, as Al-Suwaihel (2009:54) indicates, leadership involves aspects such as self-awareness, organization of ongoing communication and reinforcement, a shared future vision and motivation. Leaders in the workplace have different leadership styles as individuals who work for them to attain institutional goals, and to satisfy the employer. To be an effective leader one has to identify their goals and other organization objectives, demonstrate productivity and provide open communication channels and have criteria in place for performance that fits with the time and space (Manning & Haddock 1989 as quoted by Al-Suwaihel 2009). As leaders have different styles, so they also have behaviour that varies according to each leader, particularly in reacting to situations. Depending on gender, culture knowledge, experiences, communication skills and relationships, some of these forms of behaviour are influenced by different cultural expectations of men and women, and even institutional culture. Smith (2006 as quoted in Al-Suwaihel 2009:55) adds that there are task behaviours that concentrate on attaining the organization’s objectives (autocratic structure), and relationship behaviour, which is concerned with developing a healthy atmosphere in which personnel feel comfortable (democratic structure). These forms of behaviour are influenced by

culture, and every society has its own culture and attitudes towards leaders. The culture ultimately determines the attitudes of the leaders (House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman 2002).

The questions remain as to how women can change in leadership development and how they collaborate with identity development. How can women create a new identity and current practices? Women can create new learning and patterns of behaviour and with personal insight and self-renewal become motivated to change the social systems outside the scope of individuality. It is through separation that all forms of change begin. This might start with dissatisfaction, where one experiences ruptures, loss of formal authority, institutional positions, physical dislocation and psychological separation from doing work. Women need to interact to create new meaning of who they are and who they want to become. Leadership programmes design and create projects that separate participants from their home organization and immerse them in a new peer community. To be in transit means to be in the process of leaving one thing, without having fully left it and at the same time entering something else without being fully part of it. People in transit feel they are in between identities and describe their state in terms of being “in a vacuum,” “in midair,” “neither here nor there” and “at a loose end” (Bridged 1980, Ebaig 1988, Ibarra 2002a, Osherton 1980, Settles 2004 as quoted by Ibarra, Snook & Ramo 2008:15).

2.6.1 The impact of education on leadership development

Education is important to everyone but more to girls and women as they belong to a previously disadvantaged group. Many researchers from different backgrounds (MDG, CIDA and UNESCO) have observed that previously a boy was the one who went to school and acquired an education, while a girl was seen as someone who got married and found someone to take care of her. On the other hand, some argue that if no women were educated the entire nation would be crippled and that investing in a girl’s education is one of the most effective ways of reducing poverty. According to a Renton article, 2010 (Millennium Development Goals) statistics show, worldwide, that girls with basic education marry later in their lives and have a smaller family to look after.

Education is most important in empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary for full participation in the development process. Access to education for women was limited and women's educational pursuits were often discouraged. Instead, women were expected to take on the additional responsibilities of caring and supporting their families. An example is taking care of their parents or assisting in earning money to pay for life's needs (Escandon & Kamungi 2008).

Although studies (Howell 1999, Mac 1996 as quoted by Abu-Rabia-Queder 2008:381) have examined the role of higher education in the lives of women from patriarchal societies and the conflicting role it introduces in their lives, such as the dual role conflict, the generation gap and the complexity in finding a mate (Abu-Rabia-Queder 2008:381), none have evaluated these conflicts vis-à-vis liberal humanistic discourse. None has yet challenged the modern discourse on the conception of education and enlightenment. Education is seen as a vehicle for social mobility in terms of progress, personal change and social change.

Abu-Rabia-Queder (2008) points out that education is not a female phenomenon. Conversation with women researchers indicates that education features high on their agenda for post-conflict construction. Education is seen as a means to build human capacity and improve changes of employment after a conflict has been settled. Education is highly valued, even though girls and women are often denied education for social or political reasons. Education accords power to women. Moreover, women with professional knowledge, especially those in high-status occupations, are able to challenge the boundaries using their expertise to determine their destiny (Abu-Rabia-Queder 2008:395). Moreover, such discrimination may be rooted in the past and raises the question: "Does one have to be defined differently in order to accomplish the task required?" Rephrased, this can be taken to be: "Does a woman need to change her identity in order to be accommodated in the workplace?"

People often feel a shift in their identity when they make a work transition, irrespective of gender, but does this shift occur immediately after one is in the new role? Hess *et al.* (2009) suggest that "culture shock" is still an outstanding issue. Once a person is hired, the workplace does not emphasize creating or sustaining a career identity, but instead demands growth such as efficiency, time, commitment

and results in the form of profit. The question is: “Should identity be tainted by integration with career?” Freire (1970) argues that teachers are responsible for challenging and questioning learners and should not remain silent, especially on social inequalities.

Women must not accept what is demanded from them but must question the things that influenced their initial career choices as well as the changes which are causing the current work situations to be dissatisfying. As discussed above, some researchers assert that some women learn leadership from their fathers as they see them as assertive and observe their mothers as silent, and so choose to be like their fathers. This is an indication that the identity formation of women in leadership positions has been influenced more by their upbringing than their career transitions.

Ryan and Deci (2000:242) have found that women feel they are entering a male dominated workplace and so lose their autonomy, which involves being volitional, acting from one’s sense of self and endorsing one’s actions. It does not entail being separate from, not relying upon or being independent from others.

2.6.2 The role of policies and procedures in identity formation in the workplace

Diversity in higher education still exists, even though it is slowly responding to the issues raised, such as changing institutional practices. Some see diversity as a competing reason for altering the institutional climate in higher education and the reason why it is only reluctantly promoted, is the perception that it has become an end in itself rather than a means to an end, and because many institutions have failed to establish the fundamental link between diversity and their educational mission (Aquirre & Martinez 2002).

The issue of diversity alienates females from male culture. Another challenge is that institutions operate without policies or legislation that ensures the full participation of women. Although there are offices that address the issues of equity in higher education, there is still much to be done. For instance, there are no structures or policies to deal with the discrimination of women in their multiple roles of wife, mother, professional and colleague. Sometimes, and in spite of policies and

structures being in place, women still face discrimination in the daily operation of the institutions. Although the number of women in top positions has expanded, this is a quantitative change (with increases in numbers of female leaders) and not qualitative (with changes in gender perceptions) (Abu-Rabia-Queder 2008:394). The ripple effect of this trend is observable among women in other levels of management. The glass ceiling is not broken, except perhaps in middle management areas, and there is a requirement for someone who understands institutional culture, someone to trust and someone committed to the job. Perceptions abound that such a person would not be a woman because she would bear children (UNESCO 1993).

Even if women can muster a good network or an effective community-based female network, it does not earn them kudos to advance their professional careers. Women still feel inferior to males in a semi-formal work-related context and males still resist the presence of women in HE leadership positions. Men are still reluctant to cede or share their powers in leadership with women. Women feel threatened that they are not good enough if their male counterparts do not trust them to share the power and authority. Women imitate men in order to be accepted, some establishing their credibility by being better than men. Women try to be perfect in whatever they do and this finally creates stress for them. They try to change their identity to be accepted by men and show that they are under pressure by trying to adopt the tactics of high-performing men in a competitive culture. They try to beat men at their own game.

There are still several pitfalls which women face on their path to high-level positions (Eagly & Carli 2007). The ways in which they are appointed to leadership positions highlight the impact of family responsibilities on careers. Women often face trade-offs between family and career. Although male input in domestic work has never been higher, men do not fully share domestic responsibility with women. This forces women to a trade-off between family and work, putting them in a situation in which they are obliged to take more leave, maternity leave and work more regular hours.

First and foremost, in virtually all sectors of the paid workforce, women are underrepresented in leadership positions. The issue of policies, equal employment opportunity and affirmative action has limited impact on the positions of senior

women in universities (White 2003). When one looks at Australian universities, the policies on Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Affirmative Action had limited impact on the positions of senior women, whereas in the United Kingdom universities were encouraged into offering equal treatment for women. Halls (1995:23) points out that another factor that delays progress in having more women in leadership positions is the issue of their being devalued in society and the structural reproduction of discrimination. Society still believes that leadership is a male role. When comparing this with South African women in higher education, the under-representation of women in leadership generally is still a concern.

2.7 SUMMARY

It has been argued that identity from cultural, social and personal perspectives has an influence on the individual. This in turn has an influence on leadership positions and the leadership identity of women. Internalization refers to the gradual process by which external interactions between self and others are taken in and replaced by the internal representation of the interaction. People use internal and external feedback to evaluate their work identity. They use internal assessment to compare their public behaviour with their representation of the kind of person they really are or would like to be, making participation in a variety of social experiences important.

Women still have their individual identity, which is influenced by internal and external factors. For women to hear their voices, they need to hear and understand their identity. Weick (1995:30) asks, "How can I know what we did until I see what we produce?" In order to construct meaning women must know and understand that their identity in a male-dominated environment can still be effective and that they can be authentic leaders, learn from males and not internalize all that males do. Every individual has to understand his/her identity, which means that if one does not understand the identity or acknowledge the changes that happen when identity is developed, it will not be easy to cope in a male-dominated field. Even though leadership is male-dominated, the leadership style that women have must be based on their own identity.

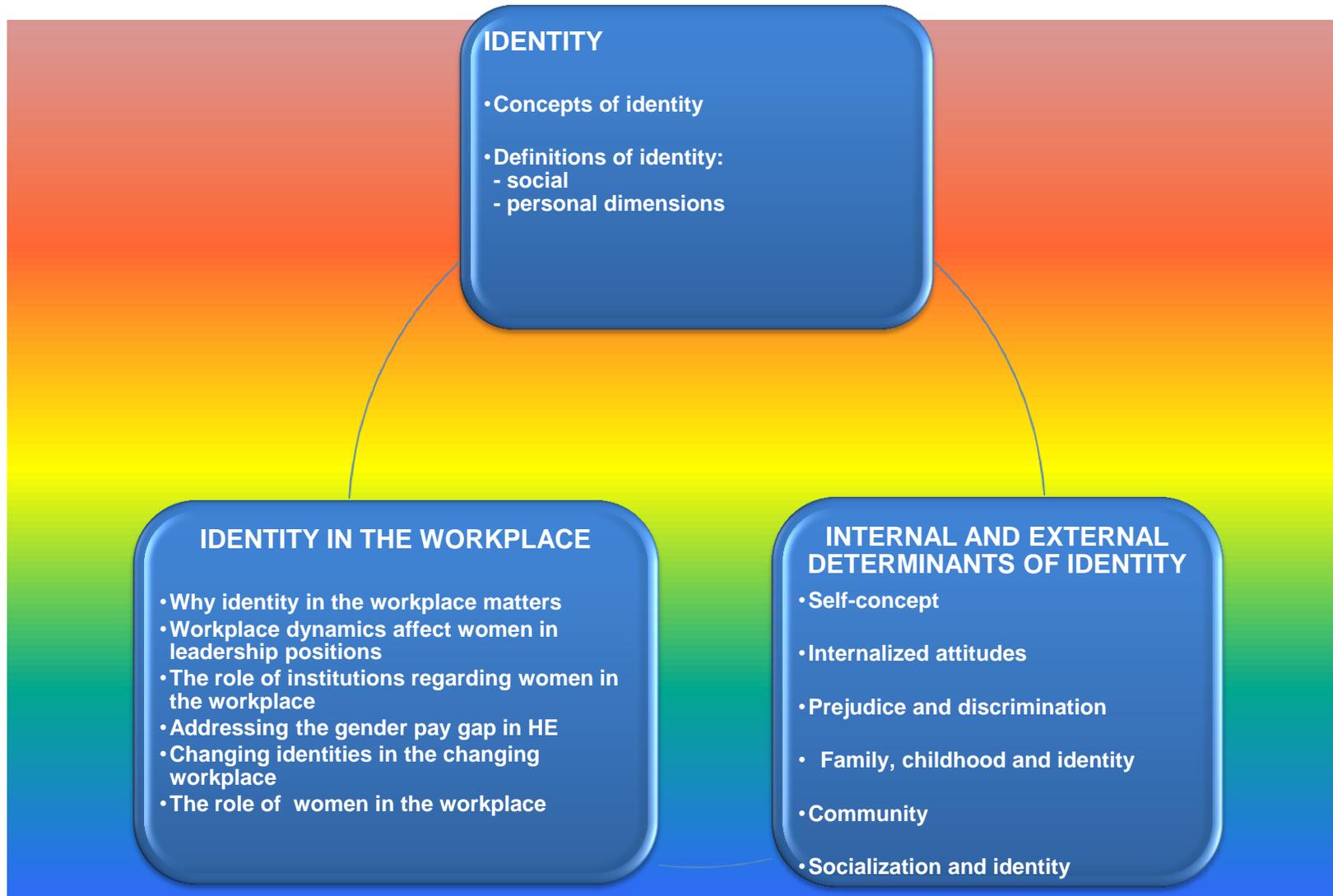


Figure 2.5 Summary of Chapter 2

CHAPTER 3

EMPOWERMENT: A META-THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONCEPT AND THE CONSEQUENT CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A meta-theoretical perspective of the concept and the consequent challenges encountered by women in leadership positions will be presented in this chapter. An extensive range of literature that assisted in building the theory and understanding of this topic will be reviewed. The theoretical and conceptual framework is based on the findings presented in the literature review in Chapter Two, which explored historical and current literature relating to the different identities that women acquire on their journey to leadership positions. It identified the different experiences for men and women pursuing management roles, based on different attributes.

One of the important factors is to make sense out of the challenges that female leaders encounter when taking up leadership positions, and to determine how power and empowerment can influence their subsequent identities, how they empower themselves to deal with the leadership development and the implications this has for their leadership identity as women. The findings from the literature review will help form the basis for the development of the conceptual framework underpinning this study, the first stage of which is the identification of the terms *power* and *empowerment* in the existing research and the research approaches used previously. The second stage is to identify the process of empowerment, which will then be used to develop the research approach and its focus. The third stage is to discuss *empowerment* and *leadership*, the fourth *empowerment*, *leadership* and

women, and the fifth the *challenges* that women encounter in leadership positions and their *expectations*.

3.2 POWER AS AN ELEMENT IN EMPOWERMENT

The concept of power has been used in many ways and differently for specific purposes, and the ways it is used and described in a situation have influenced individuals, society and the workplace. The literature review reveals (Barker 2001, Havel 1990, VeneKlasen and Miller 2002)⁶ that the influence of power can be either positive or negative, depending on the situation and the way it has been exercised, while Foucault as interviewed by Bess (1980), Page and Czuba (1999) indicates that power is never exercised in isolation but rather involves people anywhere and everywhere in a society. To understand power within the context of this study, one must view it as it manifests itself in society or an organization. Power is evident when there is a relationship between two free subjects as indicated by Foucault in the interview by Bess (1980), and if such a relationship is unbalanced it becomes oppressive (Freire 1970), resulting in oppressive actions. Oppressive and repressive practices of power are usually coerciveness and negative, and give rise to resistance from the oppressed. It then happens that the invisible nature of power is transformed into visible resistive action, and such resistance can in turn bring about change and transformation, which in itself harnesses power.

However, power is not always repressive and power relations can be open with the potential to bring about positive change, which is when “empowerment” begins to play a vital role, such as in the context of this study as it relates to equipping women with the necessary power to take up leadership positions and to lead effectively. This is when power becomes *visible* (VeneKlasen & Miller 2002), as in decision making, relationships, and the way people are influenced, while existing practices and models are challenged. It can imply that organizational rules, strategies and structures are challenged and transformed. Conversely, power may also bear an invisible character (Hérbert 2010:5, VeneKlasen & Miller 2002:40), which makes it

⁶ http://www.justassociates.org/publications_files/MCH3.pdf

difficult to manage. It can also lead to hidden agendas that break down the organizational structures and the people involved.

An ideal is that power is exercised positively and shared with others (VeneKlasen & Miller 2002), bringing into play empowerment. In this study, the concepts “power” and “empowerment” will be clarified and used in terms of their relation to women in leadership. Women in positions of leadership acquire power by having access to and possessing certain resources that others desire, such as physical or personal resources. A third element, gender, is seen by Bourdieu (1994) as a construct that operates in a highly complex, differentiated and vital symbolic order. Bourdieu embodies this symbolic order of gender in the individual, implying a gender-specific *habitus*, which refers to an identity that internalizes the division of labour between the genders, and takes the discourse to the influence of power on gender positioning in the labour market and in leadership.

The concepts of power and leadership are interconnected, because the way leaders use power is largely related to how they perform the tasks involved. A leader who has power has authority in the organisation, is able to reward people, use expertise to influence development and share relevant information (Bal *et al.* 2008). When leaders share their power through development and mentorship, they establish trust and repair the other person’s self-image.

Because women hold far fewer leadership positions in Higher Education institutions (cf. Figure 1.1 & 1.3), they mostly have little impact on decision making or policy formulation, which has called for actions to break “the culture of silence” (Freire 1983:15). In the South African Higher Education domain, there have been some tangible successes such as, an increase in the number of women participating in institutional leadership, but there are also frustrations and concerns about the fragility of initiatives to secure equality. Freire (1983:32) refers to the “struggle to change structures,” and argues that as long as women do not have sufficient say at all levels, this struggle it will continue.

It is thus evident that women’s participation and ascent in the professional academic leadership domain are restricted and that they are in many cases equated to their

submissive role or to domestic responsibilities. It is problematic that these perceptions rely on normalized discursive framing of women in relation to their construction within the traditional family. By emphasizing the presumed bimodal character of women's lives, their marginalization in male-dominated fields is guaranteed. It can be assumed that inferences about leaders are based on the social and agentic attributes rather than on leading the environment in which knowledge and scholarship should be generated (Niemann 2002).

In order to address power issues adequately there is a need to create a world in which women's labour is supported as much as that of men, and where women's career aspirations are acknowledged by changing the existing structures and by developing their own "voices". This deprivation of their voices is described by Freire (1983:32) as being "cheated in the sale of their labour", and to prevent this they have endowed themselves in their rightful share of institutional power.

3.3 EMPOWERMENT

The concept "empowerment" is one of the most used in various disciplines, and is defined from different perspectives for a variety of situations. The most challenging part of the process of empowerment of women in organizations lies in the implementation of programmes, particularly those involving the sharing of power, which leaders fail to understand but commit themselves to the spin-offs it may have for the organization rather than tackle its complexities. Empowerment is not an "overnight" process, especially for organizations in the process of genuine cultural change and institutional transformation. It is therefore important first to attempt to define it.

3.3.1 Defining empowerment

According to Short and Greer (2002:12), empowerment as a concept emerged around the 1940s and 1950s through an approach to participative decision making, but only became popular in education during the 1980s. In order to understand the concept, one needs first to look at its meaning. For Block (1987:65) it was "a state of mind as well as the result of positions, policies and practices", whereas later, Lord

and Hutchinson (1993) envisaged it as operating on three levels: personal, group and community, which were to work collectively. Each level could be viewed as an outcome in itself, as well as a progression to the next level. On the individual level, people gain experience and increased control and influence over their daily lives and their participation in the community. In the group context experiences are shared and analyzed to reach the collective goals, which can then be shared and utilized to enhance performance and benefit the community.

From the above, it is clear that empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that enables people to gain control over their own lives and their careers. Short and Greer (1997) believe it might mean the loss of power for one person or group to strengthen another, but since power is an infinite commodity this does not mean the exhaustion of the initial power source, but rather increased power to the leader through “giving it away”. In this context, it can be deduced that the ability to take care of one’s own growth and problems allows for the improvement of other people’s situations.

Empowerment has to be taken to the root of the concept, which is power in the context of empowerment. Foucault (1980:52) describes the impossibility of detaching power from knowledge:

The exercise of power creates and causes the emergence of new objects of knowledge ... the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and knowledge constantly induces effects of power ... It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge and it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power.

Empowerment can thus not be associated with loss of power, but rather with generating new knowledge. If it is interpreted against the backdrop of Higher Education, it is imperative that the core business of the education sector, knowledge generation, is placed at the centre of its agenda. As Hoy and Miskel (2001:217) argue, it requires the ability to get others to do what they should be doing, a point developed by Owens (2001:236), who emphasizes “the capacity to influence others” held by the leadership.

Empowerment cannot be defined and implemented in isolation, as the common dimensions rotate around sharing, information, knowledge and influence. If people are empowered they will be able to use the knowledge gained to construct meaning and be competent in sharing it, with a positive impact on others. If people are empowered they will have a sense of meaning and of competence, and the power to influence others. Empowered people will consequently be able to make sense of the situations in which they find themselves, have their voices heard and share their skills and power with those in need.

3.3.2 Empowerment as a process

The concepts related to empowerment that are identified and used most, are growth, change, development, power, poverty, productivity and leadership, which placed together make up a process. As with power, empowerment cannot exist outside these relationships, and because it requires sharing it constitutes a process in which development, education, social movement and training take place. Matthys (2010) indicates that empowerment is situation-bound and that the process is largely determined by the conditions or situations of people or organizations at that time, depending on the situation. Empowerment can thus result in different outcomes and expectations, which can mean that individuals are empowered in one situation but not in another.

As a process, empowerment entails change, sharing of knowledge, high involvement in decision making and sharing of power (Page & Czuba 1999). It is mostly used as a strategic approach and process to achieve goals, so the question arises as to whether it can be used to promote women's empowerment by integrating them into development programmes, thus becoming a journey to development in which action takes place. During empowering connections, individuals will probably be able to increase their capacity for making choices and transforming themselves, and make them take care of their own growth and improve their quality of life. The time dimension of empowerment is particularly emphasized by Agrawal (2009), who reflects that the empowerment process is not a once-off event but that its outcomes have long-term implications.

In terms of human development, Sen (1989) made groundbreaking contributions in this regard, stressing the role of universities as crucial to development by drawing on the notion of collective agency in promoting development. The work of Sen contains two central theses about people and development: (i) the “evaluative aspect”, and (ii) the “agency aspect”. The former is concerned with evaluating improvements in human lives as an explicit development objective and using these as key indicators of progress, while the latter refers to *what* human beings can do to achieve such improvements, particularly through policy and systemic changes. Central to empowerment are universities as major role players in the development process. This does not mean that individual agency disappears, but rather that universities face new challenges in attaining the position of development agents and in enhancing their levels of authority by becoming recognized in, and supported by the social community. This requires universities to decide which capabilities are most important. The range of human capabilities is infinite and the value that individuals assign to each one can vary from person to person and from social community to social community (Sen 1989). However, the authority of the institution is largely dependent on what type of development is valued by the individual and community. In these terms, women in the Higher Education sector also have particular needs and capabilities that they value, implying that such quests must be considered, renewed and reshaped from time to time, this being a lifelong endeavour.

Quinn and Davies (1999:340) argued that if empowerment is to be ethical, it should not be enforced on an employee by management, but that management can make sure the environment is conducive for the employee to act in an empowered manner. As such, they have to remove the restraints that prevent people from gaining the power themselves, “breaking the chains”, removing barriers and sharing knowledge without the fear of being judged or losing their identity. When people have the power, they are able to accept change and take control of the situation with the resources available and be able to make sense out of the environment they find themselves in (Lord & Hutchison 1993:3).

Unfortunately, some believe that empowerment means letting their employees loose on a project, meaning that they are empowered to do whatever they want. This happens when people are given authority and responsibilities without being trained

(Pastor 1996:6). The challenge, in this regard, is that this is about not only women in leadership but also the way institutions view or define empowerment in relation to men and women. The mistake of giving people authority and responsibility without training is that people will do as it pleases them and not the institutions, which may be influenced by their limited perspective (Pastor 1996:6). For workplace empowerment, the focus should be on integrating personal development, responsibility, accountability and risk-taking.

Through empowerment, people should become engaged in a changing process in which they have to gain control. McClelland 1975 (as quoted by Lord & Hutchinson 1993:3) suggests that people have to gain information about themselves and their environment first, and by so doing will be able to take power as they will understand their situation and have authority to do so. This is where the “agency” concept becomes appropriate, for people must be able to identify the changes that are needed in and around their environments, become involved in processes and gain greater awareness and knowledge of their choices, that is, taking agency of the changes and developing their own voices. Becoming agents and gaining a voice is discussed by Joof (2010), for whom the process of empowerment is not wresting power from an individual or group and handing it over to another, but rather as a means to an end, not an end in itself. As a process, empowerment tips the unequal balance of power in favour of those who have less power, bestowing on them the ability to challenge power, be in control and be able to achieve success.

3.3.3 Empowerment, leadership and women

Daft and Lane (2007:245) argue that in leadership, empowerment involves delegating authority, based on the belief that people have the ability to take responsibility and give them more power to make decisions and exercise their initiative and imaginations. It requires the sharing of power and knowledge with subordinates, and understanding the role of being a leader and the purpose of leadership. Leaders, therefore, must be able to define and understand the situations in which they operate and be able to train the empowered employees. When empowered employees make decisions, they contribute to the positive strategy and objectives of the institutions. Leaders have power, which needs to be shared, as this

will make the employees accountable for their actions and identify their responsibilities. Empowered people still need access to information that will enable them to make informed decisions. It is important, therefore, for leaders to have trust and confidence in the employees, to let them be free to explore and find new meaning.

Female leadership is challenged by stereotypical views that successful leadership is associated with a masculine approach (Early & Carli, 2003:826), while feminist arguments advocate the need to develop the voices of women. Due to many changes in leadership, men have resisted women in leadership positions and leadership has acquired different meanings in term of building relationships and rapport (Lips 2010:4 of 6). Through building relationships, women are able to encourage and influence others to become empowered, but they have to form their own definitions of leadership and choose to use their influence in a way that best serves that definition (Lips 2010: 4 of 6).

Carter (2009:39) sees transformational leadership as enabling and helping others to achieve influence within the organization and to take responsibility for fulfilling their ambitions. Lack of trust in their employees by managers can create a setback and contribute to failure. If an employee is empowered with the support of a good leader through mentoring, then he or she acquires the critical thinking skills necessary to assess different situations and draw reasonable conclusions. Transformational leadership includes empowering others, for empowerment is a process whereby leadership enables and helps others to achieve influence within the organization (Carter 2009:39). If leaders empower employees, an empowered leader is able to take responsibility for their own life and encourage development of internal commitment to individuals who will be committed to a particular project based on their reason (Carter 2009).

In terms of women in leadership, it is necessary that forces that oppress women must be acknowledged. To empower women for leadership does not mean disempowering men, although this happens because the concept of “power” is incorrectly viewed in a one-dimensional context (as discussed above). The empowerment of women should rather lead to the liberation of men from false value

systems and ideologies of oppression. Batliwala (1994:131), however, is of the opinion that it is through empowerment that the situation will change and each person will become a whole being, regardless of gender, able to fulfil the potential to construct a more humane environment for all. Oxaal and Baden (1997) support this argument, writing that men must also benefit from the results of women's empowerment, with the chance to live in a more equitable society and explore new roles.

In the workplace, empowerment is a process that is led by the management or leaders of the organisation. Pastor (1996:6) mentions five stages of autonomy and empowerment that managers can use with a team. These stages are here related to women in leadership positions in Higher Education based on the processes that they go through and also to help to understand what empowerment of women in leadership positions entails. These are steps that show how empowerment can fail in leadership positions if not applied correctly. **Stage one**, the manager makes a decision alone and informs the team. The manager does not bother about the team's input. **Stage two**, the manager asks the team for suggestions and makes the decision based on the suggestions from the team and informs the team. **Stage three**, both the manager and the team discuss the situation at length, proposals are asked from the team and input encouraged. This does not mean that all will be adopted as discussed, but the decision will be made and the team informed. **Stage four**, the building of the relationship continues; the decision is now made cooperatively between management and the team. **Stage five**, the manager now delegates the decision making to the team, who now operates autonomously, making crucial decisions. Although they may not adopt them all, they will use their own discretion and inform management. The decision is based on what the team know as they were part of the discussion.

In this process, the team operates autonomously based on what they know was their input. Autonomy and empowerment are driven by communication between the manager and the team, as when the manager and the team were in operation. Most organisations give people authority and responsibilities without training, but all these stages are the process of training and building a relationship. Extending this to empowerment of women in leadership positions, it is likely that when women are left

alone without development and training they will act autonomously and implement their decisions without guidance. The results might be poor as some important omissions occur, not because they wanted to but because there was no initial training. Poor results will lead to conflict, fear, dissolutions, anger and hesitation. The moral of empowerment is that one cannot let the group of women go into action until they have been thoroughly trained and developed. In leadership positions, women must learn all the evolution of autonomy and empowerment by understanding the nature, process and the stages of its development. Empowerment must integrate key aspects of responsibility, accountability and shared risk-taking. This will lead to strong communication skills and help overcome the obstacles to powerful team development and successful ongoing operations. Before women can be empowered they must understand the evolution of the institution, in this case the university.

From the above, there is a clear necessity for women to express themselves freely and participate in meetings, decision-making structures and discussions previously regarded as the male terrain, thus requiring them to develop their own *voices*. It is here that women need to be conscious not to abuse that power; they must not bring up issues that will make other women and men resist being empowered. Freire (1972:36) writes that “the dominating groups almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people’s ability to think and to know”.

In conclusion, the concept of empowerment is not a new one, although the processes can differ. The empowerment of women becomes different because when they are empowered they have agency to do what they want, and higher equality between men and women is established. It is mentioned that the empowerment of women is an ability to allocate responsibilities that in the past belonged to men. Through empowerment, women acquire a power that will enable them to tackle gender inequalities and assert themselves in various aspects of their lives. They gain the ability to learn and access skills of leadership and to make decisions. Although there are many definitions, each depends on the situation it serves.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the empowerment process.

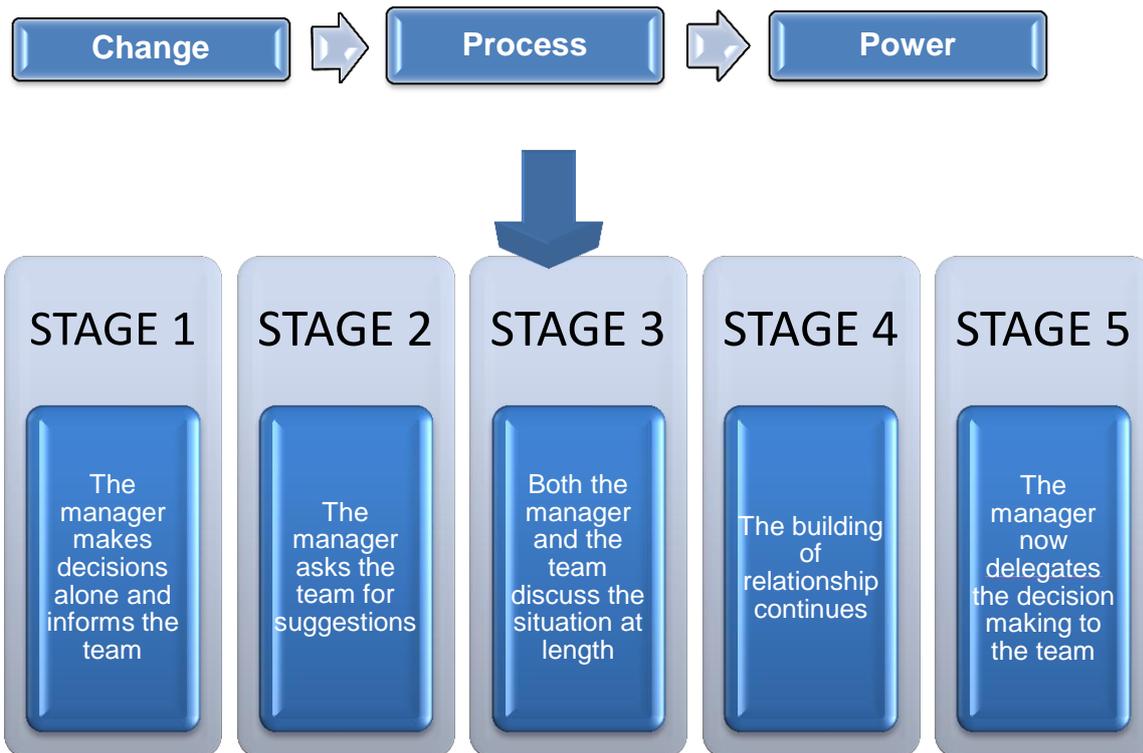


Figure 3.1 The empowerment process

Empowerment is a process of change, both strategic and as social action, allowing for agency and the development of voices to oppose and transform oppressive relationships. When a person is empowered, he or she has power and can change. These stages are driven by authentic communication between management and employee to determine the optional stage on which to operate.

3.4 CHALLENGES OF WOMEN LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

South African HEIs have undergone extensive transformation from an overt system of racial and gender disparity to one that is covertly non-sexist and non-racist. In the past, educational opportunities were apportioned according to race, class and gender, but the “new South Africa”, though it constitutionally rejects discrimination on the basis of race, class, gender, marital status, ethnicity, colour, sexual orientation, religion, culture, language, birth and disability, still has a long way to go in addressing these issues (Mabokela 2001:207).

Statistically, in HEIs, women in leadership positions are still fewer in number than men (Mathipa & Tsoka 2001:324, Ramsay 2000), despite outnumbering men as a proportion of the total staff. Even though internationally, there have been significant development in the area of women on board and the representation of women at decision-making levels, Maürtin-Cairncross (2009) estimates that the gender composition of South African public universities senior leadership still shows higher statistics for men, with a dearth of women in senior positions, as is evident in Table 3.1. By 2007, women constituted 51% of the total staff at public HEIs. At universities and comprehensive universities, 52% of staff were women, while at Universities of Technology, 46% of staff were women (CHE, 2007).

	Vice-chancellor		Deputy vice-chancellor		Registrar		Executive director		Deans	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Number	19	4	71	14	18	5	101	21	151	41
% Female	17%		16%		22%		17%		28%	

TABLE 3.1 Gender Composition of South African Public Universities' Senior Leadership, April 2007 (Higher Education Resource Services 2007).

The table shows that the leadership in South African Higher Education is still predominantly male, and although the government has been committed to gender equality and female empowerment, the process is very slow and the institutions are not quick to follow the government's example. The gender representation of staff in HEIs is still a sensitive issue of debate.

Challenges women are facing in leadership positions are underrepresentation in senior positions of leadership and still being the minority in positions. As Ramsay (2000:4) argues, this is a concern on the grounds not only of equal opportunity and basic human rights but also the productivity of the Higher Education sector at institutional, national, regional and global levels. It also affects the equal numbers and proportions at more senior levels as students gain only one perspective, that of males, as they are in the majority. Given the lack of female role models, women must challenge these hierarchical relations by making their identity fit a male environment, making their demands and claims along with others powerfully and

passionately (Mathipa & Tsoka 2001:325). They must develop an authoritative voice and know who they are as people with the right to be treated fairly.

Society must start accepting women as capable of accomplishing anything, and success should not be dependent on gender. As Summers writes: "...a society that does not establish pathways to leadership for all of its citizens is a society that is denying itself a possibility of excellence".⁷ For Mathipa and Tsoka (2001:325) women as members of a democratic society deserve equal treatment, in line with the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), which states, "everyone has the right to fair labour practices". Men and women must be promoted equally to leadership positions, based on their qualities, qualifications and skills. By giving women equal treatment, society will also be honouring the imperatives embodied in the principle of social justice whose injunctions are that "every individual or social group has equal intrinsic value, hence, is entitled to equal labour, civil, social, educational and economic rights, liberties and treatment under equal constraints" (Gil 1992:xviii).

Mathipa and Tsoka (2001:326) point out that among the challenges women face in networking is a need to be confident in themselves and their ability to do anything any man can do. Even if they acknowledge that their leadership contributions and further potential continue to be neglected, under-recognized and insufficiently integrated (Ramsay 2000) in the management structures of the universities, they can only reverse this if they are empowered, and are able to share knowledge gained and understand the existing situation as male-dominated. If women in leadership positions can be equal in numbers to men, universities would benefit from their different perspectives, experience and additional educational knowledge. The continuing underrepresentation of women in leadership positions wastes the talent they have and undermines their ability to respond to change, while also threatening their future viability (Ramsay 2000). Women must challenge their underrepresentation in leadership positions by developing their own strategies since institutional progress on gender equality and women's empowerment remains slow, and still lacks targeted strategies to develop women in leadership positions and to create a successful alliance with them. To speed up the process, change the

⁷ <http://www.leadership-central.com/challenges-of-women-in-leadership-roles.html#ixzz1IbDBqEdC>

institutional culture and recognize the business value inherent in diverse leadership, institutions must have the following strategies in place: (1) develop women leaders; (2) be concerned with the retention of women once they reach leadership levels; and (3) ensure they have the full range of necessary skills for senior leadership positions. If institutions can have these in place, they will help with diversity and improved leadership (O'Neill 2011). Men are overrepresented in top positions, such as supervisors, managers and executives, whereas women tend to be overrepresented in the lower paid professions, such as secretarial work and lectureships.

Women must also develop strategies to protect their own integrity and identity, and become available when opportunities in leadership positions occur. This is supported by White (2003:47), who argues for a range of resistance strategies which include “keeping one’s head down”; creating a “separate world”; challenging the social structure of the institutions; tackling issues that are part of organizational structure that are not women-friendly; and exposing aspects of gendered career structures. None of these strategies are new in seeking to re-define an elitist and intransigent management culture, but what is required is a reconstruction of differences as less significant and the construction of a new difference as continuity.

Women may have recognised the existence of the “glass ceiling” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, McDonagh 2010) but not yet broken it. They are now in numbers in leadership positions but there are still barriers that make them drop out or disappear from a highly professional workforce. There are powerful, invisible barriers to women’s advancement relating to the institutional hierarchical (workplace) structure, gender stereotyping, men’s attitudes, leaders’ identity, career paths, culture and cultural expectations of women in leadership, cultural beliefs and role models (Eagly & Carli 2007). True diversity in institutions does not exist, and as Hewlett (2007) argues, the inhospitable workplace and the male-dominated workplaces are at the root of preventing women from succeeding.

Women still face such barriers as the “glass cliff” phenomenon, being given high positions that will lead them to failure. For instance, when companies are underperforming or in unstable situations (Ryan & Haslam 2005), the post advertised will be given to a woman, because it is believed she is likely to fail anyway and will

therefore become a scapegoat. Women in leadership positions still have to deal with the gender inequality of the institutions, and as Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011) argue, developing women's capacity to lead change may be even more critical as they are selected to lead in turnaround, high-risk situations.

However, despite the barriers or challenges, institutions must see diversity as a business imperative (Williams-Martin 2010) that should be boldly approached. In addition, this can be done by creating a leadership style in different ways of communicating and interacting as a way of empowering the leadership pool. Considering the limitations mentioned above, the challenges faced by women in the institutions can be better understood if they are identified and discussed. One can also better understand how to address them by looking at gender stereotyping as a challenge.

South African HEIs find themselves in daunting environments with changing approaches to coping effectively with the complexities of having women as leaders. The old leadership identity of institutions needs to change from being male-dominated to gender-neutral. There should be common ground reached in the sense of identifying shared values and community of practice to operate in a diverse multicultural environment where women and men are both leaders. This is a great challenge that HEIs and institutional management must look into, and actively change the policies, procedures and strategies to allow everyone a chance and a life that will create a good working environment. However, as institutional management is/was predominantly male, this has raised concerns in society and institutions regarding the accommodation of women in leadership positions. Traditionally, women were not supposed to lead but rather to belong to the home. This became a challenge in leadership, where males had to begin to accommodate women as their counterparts in leadership positions.

Women in leadership positions who want to work with an ethos of facilitation, support and empowerment find themselves forced by the process and structures of the institutions to become different kinds of leaders. They follow what is in the structure and culture of the institution as compared to what is needed as a leader. As women enter leadership positions the progression through the ranks has been outmoded

(Cotterill, Jackson & Letherby 2007), with a number of insecure positions increasing, accompanied by a reduction in career satisfaction and progression possibilities due to family responsibilities. Women need to use their agency to challenge their under-representations in leadership positions, with strategies to accommodate and/or balance home, work and emotional labour.

3.4.1 Family, work and emotional challenges

Women are expected to act in a professional manner, that is, with efficiency, expertise, unemotional behaviour and other harder characteristics. According to stereotypical gender assumptions, women are associated with kindness, care and support (Cotterill, Jackson & Letherby 2007:4), which implies that they may find it difficult to be regarded as eligible for leadership positions. It may also imply that the nurturing and caring abilities may pass unappreciated in the workplace, and women have domestic responsibilities which make them suffer the “double burden” of paid and unpaid labour, which leads to emotional labour at work because of the expectation by male colleagues that they will care for their and students’ emotional needs (Cotterill, Jackson & Letherby 2007). However, this does not mean that men do not have caring responsibilities at home and at work, but rather that the expectation and experiences are gendered. Care has become a maternal, feminized feature, both in the wider community and the Higher Education community. Women suffer from emotional labour as they are expected at work to excel more than their male counterparts in leadership positions.

Consequently, Higher Education can be contradictory and confusing for women as it prepares them for higher status in leadership positions while challenging expected feminine roles and behaviour (Cotterill, Jackson & Letherby 2007:5). In many instances, women are judged not on their performance but on the basis of whether they are married or have children.

To summarise, having identified the common challenges that women are facing within leadership positions, institutions must take a lead in resolving these challenges. Jacobs and Schain (2009:99) mention that despite this conclusion, women still encounter a number of difficulties and misperceptions that affect their performance in the workplace. The notion that men and women have leadership

styles that are different makes people believe that the leadership style attributes of women reduce their effectiveness in the workplace. Women's leadership style is viewed to be less likely to inspire productivity among workers. Institutions must make sure they strengthen the opportunities of having women in leadership positions where they can make decisions. Institutions must invest in infrastructure to reduce women's burdens and help them with flexible times for work as both leader and, if necessary, as partner and mother. This does not mean women must be given fewer tasks but that their multi-tasking skills should be recognized. Women's rights must be guaranteed, as upheld in the Constitution. The institutions must eliminate gender inequalities by decreasing women's reliance on occupying lower positions and close the gender gap in earnings. By so doing, institutions will be allowing women to participate in empowering themselves and improving on their flexible time of work. Institutions must realise that to be able to meet all the requirement of academic projects, the human project must first be analyzed. Happy employees will improve the production of the institution and empower women with the authority to perform.

Institutions must understand the relationship between homes, the workplace and the family, and look into work-family conflict, particularly aspects that affect productivity and working women. The extended hours must be revised for women in leadership positions, as many in the workplace still have children at home. Although some children are older, they still require motherly advice and care. Percel and Menaghan (1994 as quoted by Jacobs & Schain 2009:100) have indicated that the lack of sensitive, responsive and consistent care from overworked parents or substitute providers can lead to children having decreased cognitive and social skills, and insecurity. In the workplace, most working women have rigid schedules that dissuade them from pursuing leadership positions. It is the institution's responsibility to address this issue in a way that empowers women (Jacobs & Schain, 2009:100).

3.4.2 The accountability of Higher Education to women in leadership positions

Researchers (Dominici, Busch-Vishniac, Landau, Jarosz, Stokes, Gillian, Lebo, Thompson, Zeger, Johnson, Fried 2009)⁸ have indicated that despite good

⁸ www.biostat.jhsph.edu/~fdominic/NIHwomen/extra1/rootCauses.doc

intentions and selected interventions by leaders in Higher Education, women are still significantly underrepresented in academic leadership positions, absolutely and relative to the eligible pool of tenured women. These researchers identified four root causes of the underrepresentation of women in Higher Education leadership, all to be found in routine practices and in cultural assumptions about leadership potential and effectiveness. The root causes of under representation of women in leadership are as follows:

- Paths to leadership are slower or more often blocked for women.
- Leadership positions, as currently defined and implemented or enacted, are less attractive to women, and possibly to an increasing number of men.
- Women already in leadership roles are not as well recognized or appropriately rewarded within their institutions.
- Women are mostly excluded from the informal network of intellectual leadership.

3.4.2.1 Paths to leadership are slower or more often blocked for women

Paths to leadership roles are not aligned to a pattern of jobs or roles, and institutions are expected to look into careers as representing academic progress. To do this, they must move away from a well-defined hierarchy that has progressive and uniform ranks, as these leave women underrepresented. Findings of research conducted by (Dominici *et al.* 2009) highlight the importance of discipline-specific leadership that is offering a person a position that would enhance his or her credibility as a scholarly leader within a certain field. Also, if women are division directors they will be able to develop skills and credentials relevant to that field and gain a track record of effectiveness as a basis for competitiveness for leadership roles of greater seniority. If institutions are accountable for women in leadership, women will be able to increase their leadership visibility both internally and externally in terms of career progression, and be visible as effective leaders. It also provides the opportunity for women to determine, through experience, whether longer-term careers in academic administration are attractive, and for them to give relevant mentorship and role modelling to others.

3.4.2.2 Leadership positions, as currently defined and implemented or enacted, are less attractive to women, and possibly to an increasing number of men

Leadership roles appear to be under-resourced, with leaders having to perform extensive duties to close the gap. Thus, women need support from the institutions and their families in their professional and personal roles. When a woman is in a leadership position, she works at any time and for long hours. This makes leadership roles less attractive to many women, due to their personal obligations as spouses, parents, siblings, and members of the community (Dominici *et al.* 2009).

3.4.2.3 Women already in leadership roles are not as well recognized or appropriately rewarded within their institutions

Dominici *et al.* (2009:6) indicated that although there are many women who provide leadership within institutions, they are still less recognized and respected as leaders by their colleagues within the institutions, as most in leadership positions do not have designated positions such as deputy vice-chancellors. There are few in South African HEIs, as mentioned in Chapter 1 (cf. figure 1), but ironically, those who are there are recognized nationally and internationally as leaders in their field of expertise. Institutions must therefore develop centres or programmes that address important needs, and so benefit the institutions by producing significant scholarship. Institutions must address the issue of the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and so encourage younger women to take a similar initiative and emulate them. If not, young women may think that the substantial time and effort involved are unfairly onerous and that they are not recognized or valued by the institutions.

Vanderslice (1998:6) argues that if the leadership gap can be closed, institutions would be more centred. Universities are looking at a comprehensive balanced form of leadership, where the development of women should be geared towards helping them gain some characteristics that make men effective and vice versa (Wolverton 2002).

3.4.2.4 Women are mostly excluded from the informal network of intellectual leadership

Institutions must be able to cultivate the intellectual leadership capabilities and productivity of leaders. Women in leadership positions rely much on top leadership positions for support and for the transition to the collegial culture of the institution as well as for mentoring, networking and critically reflective dialogue towards developing a robust research agenda that complements or enhances established research streams. This acculturation process for new positions builds on the natural affinities of experiences, outlook and interests shared with senior colleagues. However, men tend to build substantive collegial relationships with other men, who are in the majority, leaving women in newly acquired leadership positions to fend for themselves. This is less the result of gender bias and more because of an existing culture of informal networks that appears to contribute to lessened mentorship and guidance towards leadership positions, and increased likelihood of marginalization (Dominici *et al.* 2009:7).

The political ideologies in Higher Education in the past still affect Higher Education, which has been increasingly forced into transformation in different countries. The expansion in student numbers at South African institutions does affect the educational opportunities, with most now following entrepreneurial trends. This becomes a disadvantage to the working and learning relationship. The internal and external reviews of institutions are also a challenge to women in leadership positions, as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) encourage the development of particular management focus within the institutions to ensure improved performance on the criteria valued by the producers. These two bodies are gendered and contribute to skewed employment regimes.

The accountability of Higher Education is still a challenge to women in leadership positions because there are still discrepancies in teaching, learning and research as gender activities. Women are more in teaching and men are more in research (Morley 2003), and the underrepresentation of women in institutions widens the gap. Institutions are now focusing on research with academics increasingly being pressured into publishing. Given the various roles of women, they will become

increasingly stereotyped as “less research active” (Morley 2003). So their aim in leadership positions is to change and challenge the conceptual base of discipline and how and why things can be known and investigated. On the other hand, some feminists are doubtful whether women should concern themselves with theory because traditionally it has been used as a weapon by men against women (Robinson 1996).

In conclusion, the social, internal and government barriers discussed above have played a major role in the accountability of Higher Education in the leadership positions of women. The institutional structure, still dominated by males, needs to be changed. The glass ceiling that still exists to prevent women from reaching top positions must be broken, and institutions must have a method to detect discrimination in the workplace. Institutions must come with a support effort that will benefit both men and women, because men also need institutional support as they still have some resistance to women in leadership positions.

3.4.3 Gender discrimination and stereotyping as challenge

The issue of how gender stereotypes (Ryan & Haslam 2005) relate to perceptions of leadership positions is still contentious, particularly the way gender bias in the culture and organization interferes with the identity and work of women leaders. Women are now in management positions in different organizations around the world, yet they remain dramatically underrepresented at senior level. CHE (2007) indicated that women are best represented in the universities, where they make up 51% of senior management. In 2007, women in senior management in universities in South Africa totalled 637 compared to 1 155 men. The percentage of women in leadership positions in many institutions has increased, yet the gaps widen negatively, even when their empowerment has been advocated. The ratio of women in leadership positions remains a concern as they tend not to be permanent. At the same time, organizations have policies prohibiting sex discrimination. This has opened doors for women but has failed to close the gender gap at more senior levels.

The impediments to women’s advancement are more complex and elusive than deliberate forms of sex discrimination (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011), with the continuity of

the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions having shifted from a focus on intentional efforts to excluding them to a consideration of so called “second generation forms” of gender bias. Women have to deal with the inherent patriarchal structures that pervade people’s lives (Kiamba 2008) and are still assigned a secondary place, even in leadership, by the prevailing customs and culture, caused by a lack of implementation from anti-discrimination policies (Kiamba 2008).

Some organizations now run programmes on leadership development specifically for women (McCracken 2000), which are intended to ensure that the best and brightest are fulfilling their potential (Hewlett 2007, Zahidi & Ibarra 2010). For Mugweni, Mufanechiya and Dhlomo (2011), leadership positions are seen as playing a transformational role, with women becoming agents of change and thus challenging gender stereotypes. In South Africa, most change has started to take place since 1994, with affirmative action projects giving women positions in leadership. The stereotypical view becomes a challenge to women as it assumes and demands a determined personality that challenges and transforms the status quo. Obstacles must be identified and overcome (Eagly & Carli 2007:6) to shrink the gender stereotyping in leadership positions. This is when power becomes negative, visible and oppressive, as it gives rise to resistance from the oppressors, namely the men dominating leadership with resistive action, because discrimination and stereotyping hinder women in leadership positions, and society’s attitude is still largely that only men are leaders, while women are not encouraged to seek leadership positions.

Traditionally there has been little social networking of women in leadership positions, compared to men, who had membership of exclusive clubs. Long hours of work impacted on women as they had to care for the home and family. Women have had to compromise and act differently so that they can be regarded as suitable for leadership positions. In other words, when women leaders act in a way that is consistent with gender stereotypes, trying to build a relationship, expressing their concern with people’s perspectives, they can be seen as less competent leaders. Catalyst (2007:13) and the White Paper (2012:11) argue that when women act in ways that are inconsistent with such stereotypes, acting assertively, focusing on the task at hand and displaying ambition, their behaviour can be judged as too tough and unfeminine.

Pande and Ford (2011:7) write that the challenge to women in leadership positions has become a “demand and supply” issue. On the supply side, women are challenged by preference and cost entry, aspirations and aversion to competition, while on the demand side they are not well placed in leadership, but are still discriminated against and the biased systems of selection persist. The preference and cost entry, women’s responsibilities of being mothers, becomes a high cost of entering and continues in Higher Education. Careers are interrupted due to the working hours that institutions follow. When coming to criteria for promotion, fewer women will be selected for the senior positions. On the issue of aspiration, they are not motivated unless they see other women filling similar positions. The aspiration gap between male and female challenges women as they lack female predecessors and role models placed where women are successful. The aversion to completion occurs when women’s preferences prevent them from advancing to leadership positions. Women prefer a competitive environment, more especially when they compete with men. The demand side of women in leadership is noticed from the traditional and personal taste of people who still regard men as the only leaders. This taste of discrimination is rooted in social norms that women should not be leaders, and will lead to statistical discrimination where there is lack of information about the abilities of women.

As women are in a minority in leadership, there is a bias which reflects the inefficient statistical discrimination and which undervalues the performance of women. The statistical discrimination leads to biased systems of selection which restrict the demands of women as leaders (Pande & Ford 2011:7). These challenges are realised as the institutional hierarchical structures of HEIs are still in the process of change, where leadership today, particularly in South Africa, is confronted not only by transformation but also the task of simultaneously moving universities forward (Koen & Britzer 2010). There is still a lack of support and encouragement for women from senior management, and at leadership level, it is recommended that senior managers be mentors for their subordinates (Österlind & Haake 2010). The management support is influential in shaping the institutional commitment among men and women, as support will help women feel that they are not in these positions only because they are women. Managers will thus be sharing power and empowering women, but not in isolation. Senior managers should see to it that

knowledge is created as it endues the effect of power, then their power will be realized through the knowledge shared.

Family-related matters also affect the decision of women to become leaders, as those cannot just be ignored. Being a woman is not the only incentive for becoming a leader (Österlind & Haake 2010), as women are seen as having a weaker position within an institution (Österlind & Haake 2010, Rowe 2006). If family matters become barriers to women in leadership positions, the interventions on women's relationships at home must be looked at.

In summary, societal gender stereotyping still seems to be active. Men are largely regarded as leaders and women not, even though women tend to be collaborative and supportive as leaders. Issues of stereotyping block women's progress through the complex leadership labyrinth by fuelling people's doubts about their leadership abilities and by making them personally anxious about confirming those doubts. Women's leadership competency is questioned, which forces them to outperform men so that they may be seen as equally competent: "You have to work twice as hard to be seen as half as good as a man" (McDonagh 2010:42). Unfortunately, such stereotypical attitudes are still evident in most workplaces though in more subtle ways. The behaviour of men and women in the workplace is similar. Differences may have existed in the past but these are rapidly disappearing. Perhaps what needs to be examined is why these differences are disappearing (Jacobs & Schain 2009:99).

3.4.4 The institutional hierarchical structure as challenge

The hierarchical structures of many institutions still favour men (Hall & Cohn 2010; McGinley, 2009), with practices that equate leadership with a form of behaviour believed to be more common or appropriate to them. This communicates powerfully, if unwittingly, that women are ill-suited for leadership roles, and that men are still recommended for leadership opportunities when they arise (Eagly & Carli 2007). The bias interferes with women's ability to see themselves and to be seen by others as leaders, and the underrepresentation in leadership positions is used to validate entrance systems and beliefs that prompt and support men's bids for leadership. Institutions have to expand beyond the anti-discrimination paradigm and traction to

improve the conditions shaping individuals' participation in the workplace and manage the relationship of them to a broader profession and society (Sturm 2006). Institutions are challenged by new normative frameworks to orient and justify diversity, which must involve different stakeholders with creative strategies and tools for implementation. This will require expanding beyond the anti-discrimination as institutions pursue what Sturm (2006:251) has called the "organizational catalyst". This will act as an information entrepreneur and bridge-builder, creating institutional roles that place people with knowledge and credibility in positions where they can influence practice at pivotal locations against gender and racial bias (Sturm 2006).

Women also are challenged because they still have their individual identity. Hanna, (2003:32 as quoted by Pityana 2003) has indicated that HE is forced to transform its decision-making process and radically change the way it operates. The major changes are to serve students effectively and have competent leaders, irrespective of gender. There are cultural elements that are undergoing change in Higher Education, such as curriculum adjustment and the representation of women in leadership. The external and internal pressures do force HE to change, but it has to look at its mandates to develop policies that address the inequalities and inefficiencies inherited from the apartheid era and to respond to contemporary social, cultural and economic demands. This pressure made HE facilitate the entry of women as most were not empowered or developed in such disciplines as science and technology (Rowena 1997:388).

These external pressures came in the form of transformation, equity, affirmative action, economic and demographic realities, gender issues, as well as governmental, political and legal challenges, whereas the internal factors are students, teaching methods, organizational planning, personal lives, organizational change, structures, policies, vision and mission. The internal pressure can be in the form of promotion, succession planning, structure and responsibilities. Koen and Bitzer (2010) suggested that leadership should create a diverse culture, develop a strategic planning process, consult others, learn from others and think strategically.

Those in the management of the institutional change must calculate how to cultivate inclusive institutions when there are problems with race and gender. Most

inequalities in institutions emanate from institutional and cultural dynamics that produce patterns of under-participation and exclusion. Institutional cultures tend to preserve these exclusionary dynamics without inviting scrutiny of their validity (Sturm 2006:257). Sufficient women's representation cannot be achieved if the issues of cultural norms and multi-level decisions are not dealt with. Institutions must be mindful to change and pay careful attention to decisions that determine whether women and men of all races have equal opportunities. There should also be ongoing learning about problems revealed and an examination of the pattern of decision-making over time, to create ways to address the problems and improve academic quality.

To summarize the above, institutional hierarchical structures need to change. The top management of institutions has to lead by example whereby they show that they are in the process of changing the cultural norms of the institutions. Most of the institutions that are still dominated by men and women are still underrepresented. The anti-discrimination policy of most institutions has not yet been implemented as there are still discrimination and stereotyping challenges. Change requires a process of institutional mindfulness, that is, institutions must enable careful attention to decisions that ultimately will determine whether women and men of all races will have the opportunities to thrive, succeed and advance (Sturm 2006:262). Institutions must empower women by creating an occasion and incentives for people in leadership positions who care about gender to press for change. Institutions must do this by detecting gender issues when they arise and making sure they become subject to explicit discussion. Institutions must put on the agenda issues affecting women's participation and have them discussed. Institutions can help to create multiple constituencies for change. Institutions must contribute to empower women by arranging meetings with women in leadership positions and listening to them. The evidence collected from such meetings must be used to demonstrate the existence of the problems and construct a case for action (Sturm 2006:276). To empower women, institutional structures must orient diversity, and be able to bridge the gap in the existing situation.

3.4.5 The attitudes of men as a challenge

The notion that leadership represents masculinity and the belief that men make better leaders than women is still common, even today. The attitudes of men are the strongest challenge that women face in leadership positions, but it is for women to change men's perceptions. This could be done by being a hard worker and changing the perception that women have more responsibilities of caring at home. Communal attributes, such as a participatory approach, democratically looking for power and information sharing, being more sensitive and more nurturing than men, focussing on relationships and enabling others to make contributions through delegations can also be useful (De la Rey 2005; Grole & Montgomery 2000:4). For women to change men's attitudes they should work with rather than compete with them. Women must apply the attribute of "respect" to their benefit, as it will be of no value to compete and lose.

The exclusion of woman in the workplace is recognized as a symptom of deeper problems requiring solutions that focus on the existing culture (White 2003:50). If women are promoted, they pay the price for the position, which White (2003) refers to as "The Benchmark Men". Ironically, many women who achieve leadership roles at universities merely replicate the behaviour of this narrow management profile, because senior managers tend to promote "token women" (Bagilhole 2000a:9, 1994:241 as quoted in White 2003:51). Once token women are promoted into top academic positions, they are made ineffectual, not permitted to recruit more women and not allowed to compete with men for top positions. This leaves men dominant in the leadership positions (White 2001, 2003:50). Even though women may be seen as tokens they may still have opportunities to be in leadership positions. Men maintain their values and ideas as the dominant ones and ensure the continued success of people as similar as possible to themselves (Bagilhole 2000a:9 as quoted by White 2001, 2003). Higher education is challenged as it has to establish an atmosphere that fosters cultural diversity, especially when it seems that historically Higher Education has a poor record in embracing cultural diversity. This becomes a challenge to leadership as most institutions still struggle to adjust to changes and cultural diversity.

In summary, as Jacobs and Schain (2009:99) maintain, the behaviour of men and women in the workplace is similar. Differences may have existed in the past but these are rapidly disappearing. Perhaps what needs to be examined is why these differences are disappearing. Institutions must create an environment where the human project is exercised on campus as this will eliminate the perception of seeing gender instead of a human being. Institutions must create an environment where gender sensitivity is taken seriously.

3.4.6 Leadership identity as a challenge

A leader's identity revolves around an ability to create identity definition. Leaders internalize their identity as leaders or followers, which becomes relationally recognized through reciprocal role adoption and collectively endorsed within the institution (DeRue & Ashford 2010b:634). Leaders' and followers' identities are not only cognitions that are found in self-concept, but also socially constructed and inherently related (DeRue *et al.* 2009:9). Leaders' identities can be seen as intra-personal and if leadership is a mutual influence process, where there is interaction with individuals, the social interaction among the individuals may influence the leader's identity to shift over time and across situations. Although identities develop over time, the crucial point is when they are internalized and become the enduring features of a person (DeRue *et al.* 2009).

According to DeRue and Ashford (2010b), Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011), Ibarra *et al.* (2010), and Lord and Hall (2005), the way in which people become leaders and how they take up a leader's role are related to their identity. A person's leadership may, therefore, be greatly influenced by how he or she internalizes leadership and how the sense of purpose is seen. This means that people's identity has a profound effect on the way they feel, think and act, and what they strive to achieve in life (DuRue, Ashford & Cotton 2009:2). How people see themselves as people, and as leaders, is not only about the position but also about how they are seen by others (cf. 2.2.2), as supported by Whittaker (2010:75), who argues that "the way we see ourselves and construct our identity is influenced by our interaction with those around us".

As a person's identity impacts on his/her life, identity also has implications for a person's leadership, which involves paving a path that allows individuals to have a vision and the ability to make their own vision a reality. Leaders' identities seem to be tied to their sense of purpose (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011) and leaders are most effective when they pursue purposes aligned to their personal values and are oriented toward advancing the collective good (Lord & Hall 2005:594). A sense of purpose challenges leaders to move outside their comfort zone, and shifts their attention from what is to what is possible, thus giving them a compelling reason to overcome their fears and insecurities and take action in spite of them (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:8). A leader who is able to articulate and identify a mission in life is taking the most important first step in leading others and understanding more effectively how people should be empowered. This is due to one's sense of purpose, which forms the foundation of a leader's ability to inspire and influence an institution's members. To be able to create a sense of purpose, a leader must connect and be connected to others, inspire trust, increase others' sense of urgency, and help them to find greater meaning in their work (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:8).

When women engage in internalizing their identity (DeRue & Ashford 2010a), this will help to elevate their sense of purpose (Quinn 2004 as quoted by Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:6). This is where a leader accumulates experiences that inform his/her sense of the self as a leader (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:6). If a leader does not receive validation of the actions taken, it is discouraging and against developmental opportunities, and could even weaken one's self-identity as a leader (DeRue & Ashford 2010a). No one teaches one to lead, so individuals have to surround themselves with great leaders who will become an inspiration to be around, and because they believe in people. In this regard, Weick (1995) tries to explain the impact of external influence on individuals (cf. 2.2.2.1). However, if an individual is in an integration stage of identity development and a critical incident occurs, the individual who thinks about the situation may either accept it or regress to resistance and try to get away from the group, questioning his/her identity (Ojha 2005: issue 10). This may happen to women as leaders as their experiences may not be the same as that of the rest of the group. However, developmental processes may equip them with the skills to deal with such situations. This also implies that one needs a stream of experiences in a sensible and connective way to make sense of complex

situations that may confront leaders. This retrospective sense-making can direct present behaviour and assist one in interpreting new leadership experiences by building on previous experiences.

Since leadership is not an outward but an inward process, the way in which leadership identity is constructed creates a strong input for the quality of the developing leader. The influence of the past, whether good or bad, affects the voice of a leader, as a leader incorporates the identities of others as part of the self-concept (DeRue *et al.* 2009), but before an individual can incorporate others' identities, the awareness of individual internal identity plays a major role (cf. Chapter 2). A leader may internalize what others do and create a new aspect of the self that relates to leadership, but lack of women leaders challenges women as their identity is not traditionally associated with that of a leader. This implies that women's internalization of a leadership identity needs to be set in motion by means of rational and social processes that will reflect on them as seen by others (DeRue, Ashford & Cotton 2010b). As previously indicated (in 2.3.2.2), women have to draw their strength from others in leadership positions and preferably from other women leaders. It is particularly in this regard that rational empowerment processes in the workplace have to be operational. As most of the institutional structures still favour men, it makes it difficult for women to get on and stay on course in developing their own leadership approach (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:11).

Institutions still tend to support men's careers as society still regard men as better fit for leadership roles, partly because the paths to such roles were designed with men in mind. However, the belief that men are more suited propels more men into leadership roles, which in turn reinforces the perception that they are a better fit, leaving the gendered practice intact (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:12).

In conclusion, to be a good leader one has to surround oneself with existing good leaders who have a sense of agency to change and to respond to pressure for change. Leadership identity plays a crucial role in women leadership positions. Women have to find a sense of purpose in their leadership and assess the process of change that they go through. Institutions must play a role in accepting women as a new leadership team. Whichever form of change, the institution has to move from

what it is to what it will become to accept women. Senge (1990:8) introduces the concept of a mental model, which is an assumption that influences how leaders might see the change and envision the steps to take action. Institutions must empower women in leadership positions as their identities change.

3.4.7 Lack of social networks and role models as challenges

Women have more family commitments than men, the most obvious one being the raising of children, and generally do not want to miss any key milestones of their upbringing (Gunning n.d.). Because of family commitments, women have less time available for extraneous roles and are considered to be poor at managing time. This has created a perception that women cannot manage the parenting role as well as the leadership role. However, this is because there are few established formal women's networks to mentor or help develop women. In cases like these, they need mentors, more especially female ones.

Women in leadership positions regularly complain of feeling socially isolated, particularly in higher-ranking positions. The feeling of social isolation that women experience can negatively affect those seeking to advance professionally. Women must be mentored by other women to be able to obtain the skills needed to succeed (Jacobs & Schain 2009:104). If they are mentored, this could help to boost self-esteem, making them feel more competent and developing a professional identity. Women in leadership positions work in isolation, and there is a perceived lack of female mentors or role models in leadership positions to model their leadership. Having a female mentor is important as it helps women not to feel isolated. Several researchers (Lowe 2003, Wolverson 2002) have argued that having a female mentor is important to women and can make the mentoring relationship more effective. A female mentor is perceived as a role model and guide who can better relate to the experiences of the female mentee. For women in leadership positions, this may mean finding other women to serve as a mentor. It may be difficult for women in leadership positions to find a mentor of a higher rank, especially if the focus is women mentors, because there are few women in leadership positions. There are factors that influence the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. If mentors and mentees share many similarities such as values, background and experiences, the

results become effective. The institution must be able to identify mentors for women who are new in leadership positions as the environment is new to them. If there is a lack of high rank mentors male mentors can be identified.

The lack of formal networks and role models are challenging to women due to the small number of women in leadership positions. The mentor and mentee may expect too much and it may become difficult for them to build a relationship as they have different values, backgrounds, age and experiences. Poor match, lack of staff support and lack of institutional monitoring can also be a challenge. So more time and resources should be set aside and more information disseminated (McKimm, Jolie & Harter 2007). Women are challenged with constructing leadership identities in spite of subtle barriers, such as a lack of networks, both formal and informal. Informal networks shape career trajectories by regulating access to jobs, channelling the flow of information and referrals, creating influences and reputation, and supplying emotional support, feedback, political advice and protection. Being one of only a few female leaders invariably becomes a lonely position, and may lead to contact with spouses of their male counterparts as there are no active or formal networks and no mentorship (Davis 2007:3). For Harris (2011), women are not included in formal networks that male leaders frequent and that are significant in advancing their career. There are insufficient women in top leadership to act as mentors for those aspiring to be where they are. Individual informal networks open doors to leadership opportunities, determining who will see and grant one's leadership claim, and shape what one learns in the process. These systematic differences can affect the ability to construct a credible leader's identity.

As men dominate positions of power, women have a smaller pool of high status and gender contracts on which to draw, and fewer ties to powerful, high status men (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011). Men's and women's approaches to networking differ and they use them differently. Men tend to network among themselves as men and their networks are multi-purpose, whereas women tend to build functionally differentiated networks by obtaining instrumental access from men, and friendship and social support from women (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:13). The differences may also stem from women's reluctance to undertake the instrumental activities required to build a

strong network, fearing that these activities will appear inauthentic and overly instrumental (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:13).

Women's bifurcated approach is partly pragmatic, as men have better resources and it is easier for women to relate on a personal level (Ragins & Kram, 2007 as quoted by Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:13). The bifurcation can detract from workplace centrality (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:13) and interfere with building the kind of deep, trusting relationships with powerful men often necessary for promotion, especially when performance in the next role is hard to predict (Kanter 1977).

A lack of role models for women in leadership positions who have advanced in a male-dominated environment, has worsened the situation. Fewer role models exist for women, and aspiring female leaders have less social support for learning how to credibly claim a leader's identity. People learn new roles by identifying with role models experimenting with provisional identities, and evaluate experiment against internal standards and external feedback (Ibarra 1999 as quoted by Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:10). Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011:10) indicate that the underrepresentation of women in senior level positions can also signal that being female is a liability. To be regarded as a liability discourages women leaders to aspire to positions of leadership as they see how other women are treated. Women face opposition from male counterparts when they try to operate out of their prescribed cultural role. The scarcity of women as leaders makes them seem unfit as role models. These two factors (opposition and the scarcity of role models) discourage young women from aspiring to leadership. Protecting women when experiencing harassment tends not to be addressed in detail. Women lack powerful inspirational role models who can show them and empower them on the leadership journey. Women who are already in leadership positions cannot share the lesson learned as they do not last for long in those positions (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011).

Gender stereotyping contributes to the position of women not being associated with management effectiveness because management is seen as having male characteristics. The World Economic Forum's Corporate Gender Gap Report (2010 as quoted by Zahidi and Ibarra 2010) gives insight into the perceived barriers to leadership and the effects of the economic crisis, stating that the greatest barriers to

women's access to leadership positions were identified as a lack of role models and adequate parental leave or benefits.

3.4.8 Culture and cultural expectation as a challenge

Women in leadership have heightened visibility and some rise to leadership positions in spite of challenges, but structural and cultural impediments continue to shape their developmental and leadership experiences. Women become scarce in leadership positions, but they become more visible and subject to greater scrutiny. Furthermore, women can become risk-averse as they focus on details and are prone to micro-manage, thus losing sight of their larger purpose as leaders (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:14).

3.4.8.1 The cultural attitude towards women

While the empowering potential of women becomes strong, the evidence of challenges, ineffectiveness and limitations of the potential is equally compelling. Although institutions have the ability to empower women, the connection is not straightforward or easy to make. The greatest cultural constraint on women empowerment is the culture of patriarchy that exists. Patriarchal culture is dynamic and thus exercises constraints in different contexts, and has different forms that affect the process of empowering women in different stages. These include the power and the ability to make decisions on issues of leadership in varied forms and at various stages in the empowerment process. These include challenges to women to make decisions outside the household, the building of social networks and the responsibility for household chores. This led to cultural challenges in empowering women, but the question is whether they have a drastic impact on empowering women in making decisions and their self-confidence. As Kabeer (1999:20) notes, "many feminists recognize that poor men are almost as powerless as poor women in access to material resources in the public domain, but remain privileged within the patriarchal structure of the family".

Cultural attitudes towards women in authority compound the problem. The traditional cultural beliefs that men are breadwinners and women in society are not supposed to lead make it difficult to bridge these barriers as women. Women are still seen as

homemakers, despite the education they have, whereas men are seen as breadwinners and heads of the family. Some women manage the competence versus likeability struggle by downplaying feminine qualities in the interest of conveying competence, while others attempt to strike the perfect balance between the two. The social culture within the environment encourages people to focus on how they are coming across to others, so they divert emotional and motivational resources away from the larger purposes at hand.

The issue here, as Davis (2007:51) argues, is more of a personal nature, that women bring different emotional and personal “baggage” to the existing culture, where individuals will express themselves within a team and enhance the leader’s ability to accomplish the mission of the organization. The cultural construction of leadership instigates differences and is transformed as women gain access to leadership positions. There is a common expression that men lead and women follow. Joseph (2008) indicated that in the 21st century women are slowly taking the role of men. In the family institution men have been head of the family for long. In the current scenario men are no longer head of the family; some men are not employed while their wives are the ones who provide for the family (Joseph 2008). One could ask if the scenario still made a man a leader. Do men still lead? If we look at the measure of responsibility, do men still lead in the 21st century? A Biblical notion is that a woman must submit to her husband (Colossians 3:18, Ephesians 5:22), but this is not universally accepted. The role of women has changed, not only from home but even in a working environment, where women are leaders leading men.

3.4.8.2 Culture and leadership

Kiamba (2008) points out that there is a move in South Africa to a gender neutral society in which women are in leadership positions, though men still lead in many institutions. The thinking in the past was that leaders were born with certain leadership traits, while the current thinking is that leadership can be taught and learnt, hence the many leadership programmes. There are traits that are associated with leadership, such as effective communication skills, task completion, responsibility, problem-solving, originality, decision-making, action-taking, vision, self-awareness, confidence, experience and power (De la Rey 2005).

Confining women's identities to the domestic sphere (Kiamba 2008) is one of the barriers that women face in leadership positions. Cultural attitudes became hostile to women's involvement as those who took leadership positions were labelled as "unfit or loose" and were thought to have disregarded the roles of mother and wife. The socialization of women as a girl child in society had an influence on the inabilities of women, as they did not enjoy privileges when disempowered by society. Cultural-organizational biases that inadvertently favour men could impede the identity development of talented ambitious women in, or aspiring to, leadership roles.

The social norms and beliefs about women's capabilities and acceptable roles must be considered. Traditionally, women's careers were as a wife, mother and homemaker, but these have changed over time. Descriptions of female career choices have now changed and are likely related to achieving a balance between work and family. The workplace did not traditionally accept women as employees and the career path of women may be interrupted by frequent time out and taking care of children and the elderly, as well as maternity leave. These became challenging to preparation, advancement and promotion. A woman's career was less planned than a man's and so less likely to react to unforeseen circumstances (Shakeshaft 2007:114). Most of the institutions were already advanced in implementing cultural, structural and autonomy changes, and continued to be confronted with challenges regarding gender equity, leader's identity, leadership roles, new structures and the new strategies of running the institutions.

Cultural social factors are regarded by some as the most challenging barriers to women's advancement in leadership positions (Mirghafouri 2006:101, as quoted by Mugweni, Mufanechiya & Dhlomo 2011). Mabokela (2001:209-211) finds that most women were alone and lonely in top positions in institutions, among male colleagues who were not always supportive or sensitive to gender issues and were difficult to work with. This may in part explain why HEIs are still insensitive to gender issues, particularly in recruitment and hiring decisions. The institutional culture that is permeated by men's ways of doing things, and an environment in which their behaviour is used as a standard, contribute to the challenges faced by women in senior positions. The pattern of communication is male, the dress code, even if not mentioned, is male, and the culture is male, while the women's culture and way of

doing things are regarded as inferior (Mabokela 2001). From a Darwinist perspective, Koen and Britzer (2010) argue that it is vital that leaders in Higher Education manage the resistance of the new change in a positive fashion, because it should not be the stronger of the species that is promoted but rather the one most intelligent and adaptable to change.

Cultural diversity has become a burning issue at South African HEIs, because in the past, university management was a male domain. Universities have to change their operations, old culture, ways of doing things and the structure of the institutions, and implement a sex discrimination and equity policy which will drive their transformation. The country as it is now is compelled to adapt to international standards and best practices to be on a par with the external world. However, this will leave loopholes if the issue of leadership roles remains a concern, with males continuing to dominate the high strategic positions of decision-making.

Despite the historical tradition in Higher Education of male domination, women have now started to benefit by occupying some space in leadership positions (Cotterill, Jackson & Letherby 2007). Though there are more women than men in Higher Education, most of them occupy lower positions. However, it is important not to view this widening of female participation in HE as an achievement because the challenges women face in its leadership positions remain a concern.

3.4.9 Career path and gender work as a challenge

The questions arising are: What differences exist in the career path of women and men in leadership positions? To what extent does the variable sex or position affect the complexity of leadership positions in career paths? The problem is that women's career paths were in the past channelled and leadership was not even considered. When women started to be represented in leadership positions many aspects that go with it were not in place in many institutions. Most women in leadership positions started from administrative careers, which were regarded as their position in the institution.

Kalinosky (2009) indicates that women leaders are more socially oriented and collaborative while their male counterparts are seen as task-oriented and dominating. The pool of potential leaders for HE requires that women leaders should have acquired certain leadership skills. Some stereotypes still identify women with the home and care of small children while men are identified with a greater working environment. The work of men is valued more than that of women, leading to stereotypes of women as inferior and lesser in the public eye. Harris, Ballenger and Jones (2007:14) wrote that most women's career path arose by accident, while for Piterman (2008:20) women's increased participation in the workforce generally and at the professional level specifically is not translating into increased numbers of women at senior and executive levels. The gender pay gap, women's career peak, gender specifications, different career paths and leadership are slower to change or are more often blocked to women.

3.4.9.1 Women's career path perspectives

According to Piterman (2008) and Lopez-Claroz and Zahidi (2005), women's entry into leadership career paths is more difficult in an environment in which male domination still exists. These subtle barriers influence how talent is recognized and rewarded. The recruitment and promotion of women with a lack of support, make it difficult for them to be recognized or rewarded. Women face distinct challenges during their career development as they want to thrive, whereas men want to succeed. Women for most of the time juggle the most conflicting roles in trying to get their way, but eventually have different career motivators, goals and aspirations from men. Women's career paths must be understood according to the changing environment that exists and how leaders of institutions help in empowering them in those positions. Madsen (2007, 2008) argues that each woman has a different informal career path based on opportunities and individual encouragement. The career path becomes a challenging process for women, making it difficult for them to achieve and stay the course of leadership (Kolb & William 2000 as quoted by Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011:21). Society still regards men as more fit for leadership roles, partly because the path was designed with them in mind. It believes that men are better able to fill leadership roles, which in turn reinforces the perception that they are fit to leave gendered practices intact. A challenge to women is to construct

leadership identities in spite of the subtle barriers organizations erect to their advancement. A lack of career paths leaves few women in leadership positions.

One of the challenges to a career path that women have to deal with is leadership style. Women struggle to deal with an effective and appropriate leadership style that balances the communal qualities people would expect from them. People must realise that women are not “men in skirts”, which creates a challenge as they have to strike that authentic balance as a leader (Kalinovsky 2009, Sherman 2000:133).

3.4.9.2 The gender pay gap perspective

The gender pay gap measures the earning differences between women and men in paid employment in the labour market. It is one of many indicators of gender inequality in a country, when examining labour market participation in terms of gender. Despite transformation and equalising policies, the gender pay gap in Higher Education is a worrying issue. The increase of women entering Higher Education does not match the vertical segregation encountered. This indicates that while women are represented in a greater sphere of Higher Education, men still dominate in the higher levels of management and women are concentrated at lower levels (Shmel'ova & Parsons 1995:2). The lower representation of women in leadership positions tends to affect women as they become the lowest paid in leadership positions. There is a suspicion that the differentials in income reflect the extreme degree of occupational segregation in the Higher Education sphere. Women earn less than men and are underrepresented in high income activities. Gate-keeping disadvantaged women in leadership positions as they are not in decision-making positions regarding payment. The gender pay gap is widening in the leadership position of women in HE, in contrast to the situation in the wider labour market.

3.4.9.3 Women's career peak perspective

Some argue (Caplan 1997 as quoted by Cotterill, Jackson & Letherby 2007) that the beginning of a woman's career peak is at the age of 55, and that women start to earn more in HE as they age. This has challenged institutions with gender equity as women enter careers very late in life. The workplace will remain unchanged until the increased presence of women is more significant. This requires a will at top

leadership level to take on a challenge when they confront a traditionally narrow interpretation of diversity (Piterman 2008:25).

Beteta (2006:225) raises the concern that women's ability to use their voices in the workplace as leaders is needed. Women must be able to trigger better responsiveness from top management and followers and enforce their constitutional commitment. The reason women are paid less well in leadership is that most of a woman's access to top positions is mediated by men. Secondly, women are still eliminated as they do not form part of the selection committees and therefore cannot advocate feminist concern, and their link with women's organizations are weak. Thirdly, a gender-specific concern is absent due to the existence of a multiplicity of identities that prevent the expression of their concerns, though there may be openness to gender concern and gender sensitivity.

3.4.9.4 A lack of career coaches in women leadership

As mentioned in Chapter 2, empowerment cannot happen in isolation, hence the need for a career coach. Women have multiple skills and tasks, and studies have established that having a mentor assists women in career advancement (Burke 1984). The challenge is that the lack of a mentor also contributes to the lack of a coach career. For instance, women's career patterns include late career entry, which is caused by more interruptions and fewer advancement opportunities, all of which are factors that impair the forming of a mentorship. Career interruption is caused by the family, and caretaking roles become challenges to women in leadership positions. Research findings (Kamler & Rasheed 2006:7) highlight parenting as a critical variable for women in determining their career objectives. Women are apt to divide their time between work and career as compared to men, who devote more time to their professional lives. Family responsibilities appear to influence women's career choices. Where men appear to separate themselves from parenting commitments in favour of a professional focus, women are likely choose to take part-time jobs to attend to child-rearing responsibilities (Kamler & Rasheed 2006:7).

In conclusion, the development of leadership is much more complicated as it also affects the issue of salaries. Top leadership is supposed to groom leaders for the

future and must also look into the gender pay gap that exists in leadership. Besides leadership positions, top management must realise that they are dealing with human beings with minds, feelings and emotions. Organisations must take care to close the gender pay gap (Shah 2009:394).

3.5 INSTITUTIONS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A FRAMEWORK

Institutions have a crucial role to play in empowering women and they have to care about their employees. Empowerment is a process of enabling individuals to adopt new behaviour that furthers the individual's aspirations and those of the organization (Gershon 2006/2007:2). The role of the institutions in empowering women in leadership positions is to establish a learning and growth culture inherent in an environment. If institutions create an empowering ethos, this will help women in leadership positions to bridge the gaps they encounter, and enable them to feel safe and trusting enough to risk true growth. Institutions must look into aspects such as trust, learning and growth, authentic communication, interpersonal process skills and caring (see Figure 3.2) (Holman, Devane & Cady 2007:526).

- **Trust**

When an institution establishes trust for women in leadership positions, they will feel safe enough to try out new types of behaviour and take risks without fear of being reprimanded by superiors. The institution must have a genuine sense of goodwill as women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in which they need development and support from top leadership.

- **Learning and growth**

The institutions must encourage women to work on their real behaviour and make them aware that they need to change as they are now in a different environment. Institutions must encourage women to challenge themselves and their self-image and support each other or both. When there is growth, women will develop self-awareness and their behaviour and stereotyping will change as they adapt and increase awareness, self-knowledge and understanding.

- **Authentic communication**

Communication must be open, honest and transparent.

- **Interpersonal process skills**

Women in institutions have established protocols and developed skills that they regularly deploy to resolve interpersonal issues and build high functioning relations.

- **Caring**

Caring institutional leadership must demonstrate concern to women in leadership. The issue of gender inequalities, gender pay gap, different leadership positions and cultural aspects must be addressed by the leadership of institutions. Women in leadership positions must feel valued and be inspired to give their best effort on behalf of the institutions.

Once women in leadership positions experience growth, it will let them establish the process and practices over the long term. Institutions must be able to create change, where women must have focus in terms of empowering them. Institutions must focus on solutions into which they want to gain insight, and they must shift focus to motivate women to take action and inspire them with vision. Institutions must play a major role in empowering women who are in leadership positions because of their background in HE. Women's rights were denied due to gender inequalities, but universities need to help in the fight to overcome discrimination and change perceptions about what women can and should do.

The issue of women's rights and women's representation should be reflected in the institution's strategic plan, curricula and practices. They must empower women to be independent thinkers and agents of change. Bachelet (2011) notes that developing women's competencies and ensuring their equal access to all fields of education will widen the talents and perspectives that countries can draw on to meet these challenges, and enable women to compete for new jobs in the growing "green economy" on an equal basis with men.

It is up to an institution to make sure that this happens and make women's voices heard. The institutions should consider how relevance and effectiveness of leadership will be measured and how they can create change. Institutions must also improve the environment for women in the workplace so that they are not marginalized (Bachelet 2011). Figure 3.2 depicts how women can be developed in leadership positions as a way of empowering them by institutions. These practices will help those in leadership positions to adapt to new behaviour that has an impact on their individual identity and aspirations.

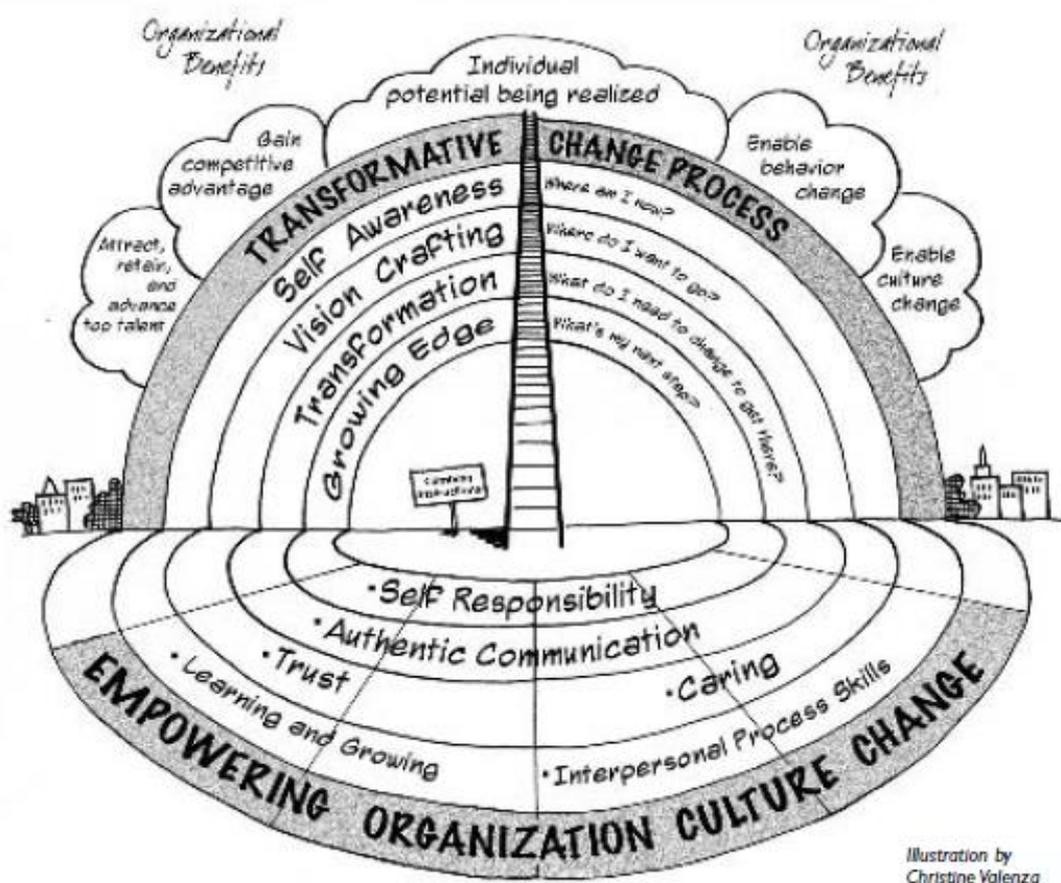


Figure 3.2 Practices of empowerment by Christine Valenza (Holman, Devane & Cady, 2007:525)

In conclusion, Gershon (2006/2007:5) points out that to develop employee potential requires an organizational culture that inspires employees to learn, grow and give their very best. In such a culture innovations which require employees to adopt new behaviours can take root. Employees choose to go the extra mile expending their discretionary energy for the sake of the organization. Employees choose to invest

themselves in the organization rather than be available to the highest bidder. For most organizations developing this untapped employee potential is their key competitive advantage for competing in the marketplace or retaining top talent.

With reference to Chapter 2 (cf. 2.2.2.1), an individual's identity changes as it does not operate in isolation. For individuals to exist, they have the influence of families which plays a major role in their leadership positions. As Stets and Burke (2003:2) write, individuals act within the context of a full set of patterns of actions, interactions and resource transfers among all persons who constitute the structures of that environment, whether society or work environment. When the whole identity is embraced, motivation to achieve their goals emanates from within (Davis 2007:8). As discussed in Chapter 3 (cf. 3.4.1), the self-awareness of women as individuals is associated with the challenges of trying to identify themselves with the new environment and new behaviour, as one could ask, "Where am I now?" Women are challenged by the new environment they find themselves in, which influences their vision in terms of support, whether they will be a role model, institutional support mentor or even coach to career paths.

To empower leadership involves showing the importance of the work, and by providing participation in decision making, conveying confidence that will heighten performance and remove bureaucratic constraints. To empower leadership, one has to delegate authority to employees to enable them to make decisions and implement actions without direct supervision or the intervention of a senior person. Given the nature of creativity by the employer, the delegation helps to establish a work context whereby the employee is encouraged and empowered to explore diverse creative alternatives before settling (Zhang & Bartol 2010:109).

Empowerment in leadership is a process of implementing conditions that enable a sharing of power with an employee by delineating the significance of the employee's job, providing greater decision-making autonomy, expressing confidence in the employee's capabilities and removing hindrance to performance (Ahearne *et al.* 2005, Arnold, Arad, Rhoades & Drasgow 2000, Kirkman & Rosen 1997, 1999 as quoted by Zhang & Bartol 2010:109).

When a leader understands empowerment, he or she must consider an employee's individual identity, for the empowering behaviour of an individual will have an effect where an employee must in turn feel psychologically empowered (Menon 2001:158 as quoted by Zhang & Bartol 2010:110). This is why it is said that empowerment starts with an individual. Being psychologically empowered involves a process of heightening feelings of employee self-efficacy through the conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information.

When a leader is empowered, firstly one tends to enhance the meaningfulness of the work by helping others to understand the importance of his/her contribution to overall organizational effectiveness. Secondly, an empowering leader is able to express confidence in an employee's competence and prospects for high performance. This will create a positive relationship because power is shared and it is visible. Thirdly, an empowering leader provides employees with autonomy and prospects for self-determination by encouraging the individual to decide how to carry out his/her job (Pearce *et al.* 2003, Sims & Manz 1996 as quoted by Zhang & Bartol 2010:110). Lastly, empowering leaders foster an employee's participation in decision making.

When an employee receives support from an employer, it gives a feeling of greater control over the immediate work situation and enhances a sense that his/her own behaviour and identity can make a difference in results, thus promoting a sense of impact. This is an indication that empowerment in leadership positions has an influence on followers' perceptions (Zhang & Bartol 2010). Leaders must inspire followers who are new to leadership positions, but the question is how one links empowerment with inspiration. There are different types of leaders, such as charismatic leaders that inspire followers through pride, respect, confidence and trust. Leaders must be able to communicate with subordinates, but they must have conviction in their "moral righteousness" (Spreitzer, De Janasz, Quinn 1999:515), or a clear sense of their own value system (House 1977:193 as quoted by Spreitzer, De Janasz, Quinn 1999:515). When leaders have moral righteousness, empowered leaders are likely to exude the passion or excitement which inspires followers.

In order to inspire subordinates, leaders must exude a sense of self-confidence that will make them feel that they are capable of making effective change. This will make subordinates more inspired by a leader's vision, if they perceive the leader to be competent in implementing it. To inspire subordinates, a leader must be interested in and willing to exert influence.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The issue of empowerment and power was addressed in this chapter. Different types of power, invisible and visible, were discussed in relation to women in leadership positions in Higher Education. The focus was on women in leadership positions in Higher Education, with empowerment divided into individual and work dimensions. Individual empowerment was discussed in Chapter 2, where self-identity and self-image were discussed under internal and external diversity. Individual empowerment is a developmental process with increasing control of various aspects of their lives. Work empowerment has to do with the way in which one works to nurture the sense of self-esteem and to make sense in a new environment. In a leadership position environment, women encounter challenges that impact on their existing behaviour. The new behaviour that women come across in leadership positions challenges their multi-skilling. The five stages of empowerment in the workplace were discussed, which integrate personal and work empowerment, responsibility and accountability. Issues of diversity and gender become a great concern to women in leadership. The fact that women are faced with more challenges in leadership positions was discussed. These challenges have impacted negatively on the voices of women in leadership. It is not easy for women to climb the ladder due to barriers they come across, nor is it easy for them to raise their voice as they are underrepresented. In order to better the situation of women in leadership positions, institutions have to play a major role in empowering women so that their voices can be heard.

The issue of wholeness in terms of family-work support was discussed. This is because women have to carry more care-giving responsibilities, which is a greater issue to women than to men. It is important to realise that the leadership positions of women take place within this context.

In this chapter the issue of connection was addressed. Women in leadership positions need a close relationship that will influence their behaviour. This is because their individual identity is hampered by institutional structures and culture. The competitive nature of institutions includes policies and culture, and makes development at work difficult. Institutions must create a sense of connection in terms of making women develop trust and feel the caring of the institution. Women need to be connected to others so that they can grow. When women are empowered, they become agents of change, more assertive and able to exert power. A lack of support from family, role models and institutions leaves women feeling isolated and unable to be agents of change.

Different challenges were discussed based on the literature. As women are going through change, institutions must support them in their development. This will lead to women having trust in institutional management, knowing that management cares for them. In turn, the institution must make sure it provides development for women in leadership. Although women are in leadership, the focus of discussion as to what characterizes good leadership has shifted to women as leaders more than leadership itself. The challenges to women in leadership come not because of the leadership role but because of the gender role.

This chapter focussed on the secondary aim of the study, which is to explore the empowerment challenges that female leaders encounter in developing their own identity when taking up leadership positions and why these challenges exist. The chapter also looked into the literature that addresses how women in Higher Education leadership positions address the challenges of empowerment by developing their own identity and what sense can be made of their voices regarding their leadership identity.

In conclusion, leadership was studied from different perspectives, each with its own insights. These perspectives include leadership as power, the personal characteristics of leaders, leadership behaviour, leadership styles, situational leadership models and transformational leadership models. For women to overcome these barriers, to bridge the gap that is created for them in leadership, they must

know what is happening in the Higher Education institution. Women must know their industry and protect their identity by having good work habits, good attitudes and increase their management visibility. Women must set their goals in order to make sense. They must make themselves available for development and training.

Without the empowerment of women, challenges in leadership positions will continue to grow. Serious development and training should be in place and be implemented. Institutional policies and culture must change to accommodate change in having women in leadership positions. This is an era when the pressures on leaders have grown. The participation of women in the workplace is no longer a challenge but women are facing a “glass cliff” in the leadership positions. This has become a crucial issue in which women leaders’ identity must be looked at, to enhance the development in men’s accommodation of women in leadership positions, by providing them with training, sharing and contributing equally. The issue of gender equality must be fully implemented. Women in institutions need to understand the vision of an institution and from that they can formulate a strategy of how to go about doing things. By understanding the vision, they will be able to formulate a structure for implementing the strategy and for meeting the vision that is created. Looking back at stage three, where manager and team discuss the situation at length, the order will be to follow the vision, strategy and structure. Once all these are in place, the development and empowerment of women in leadership positions will be easy. The involvement of women in formulating a strategy for the institution will make leadership easy, because they were part of the formulation of the strategy and not mere outsiders.

CHAPTER 4

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the overall approach to data collection and analysis, namely a qualitative approach. Researchers such as Fryer (1991:3) and Neumann (2006) note that the method is concerned with attempting to accurately describe, decode and interpret the meaning of phenomena occurring in a normal social context. The purpose of this study was to explore the empowerment challenges that female leaders encounter in developing their own identity when taking up leadership positions and why these challenges exist; to make sense of the voices of the participating women leaders in Higher Education (HE) about their journey towards finding their own leadership identity. This will provide direction to potential women leaders in HE in terms of constructing their own paths and becoming agents of their own empowerment towards innovative and unique leadership. This helped to explore the conditions women experience in leadership positions and how their leadership identity is affected by changes.

The method used in this study was qualitative investigation by means of a focus group and personal interviews involving narratives, which were interpreted through sense-making. The target group was women who were already in leadership positions from middle to top management, in administration, support and academic sections of two Higher Education institutions, namely the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) and the University of the Free State (UFS).

4.2 RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

There are two major types of research designs, namely qualitative and quantitative. These designs have fundamental differences which will be discussed briefly in this section. The qualitative research method was chosen for this study.

4.2.1 The qualitative research method

The reason why a qualitative method was chosen over a quantitative method was that it uses words to describe a phenomenon, whereas the quantitative method presents results with statistics (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:40). In addition Cohen *et al.* (2007) indicate that the latter neglects the participants' emotions, beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, identity and identity formation, development of leadership, empowerment, leadership styles, roles and socialization. This helped the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of women's identity and their experiences in leadership positions. It also helped the researcher to gain an understanding of what sense can be made from the voices of women towards their leadership identity, and what they said and understood about the leadership positions in a male-dominated environment. The qualitative research was used for both the focus group interview and the individual interviews.

Qualitative research methods were chosen as they are appropriate for finding the meaning constructed by individuals in interaction with others. For Merriam (2002:3) meaning is "socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world", and qualitative research provides a context to "learn how individuals experience and interact with their social world, and the meaning it has for them". Qualitative research is useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon (Creswell 2008:51). The researcher had face-to-face conversations with the participants in order to understand their perspectives and use the knowledge already constructed, produced and reproduced by people (Denscombe 2003). The qualitative approach is appropriate for feminist research as it is concerned with consciousness-raising as a way of seeing and as a methodological tool (Westmarland 2001).

Qualitative research is "multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:2). Its focus is on the

meaning that is constructed, that is, how the participants of the research make sense of, or interpret, their experiences and the natural settings they are in (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:3, Merriam 2009:13, Schutz 1967, Sherman & Webb 1988).

4.2.2 The quantitative research method

McMillan & Schumacher (1993:40) point out that quantitative research uses numbers to describe the phenomena, which emphasizes a priori categories to collect data in the form of numbers. The goal of quantitative design is to collect data to provide statistical descriptions, relationships and explanations. It is used with experimental, descriptive and correlation design as a way to summarize a larger number of observation and to indicate numerically the amount of errors in collecting data. Quantitative research has two approaches, experimental and non-experimental.

4.3 INSTRUMENTS

A research can be classified according to the techniques used to collect data (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:40). Some of the techniques used are questionnaires, interviews, documents and tests. Choosing a technique depends on the type of a research one is conducting. Like research design, techniques can be classified as either qualitative or quantitative. In this study interviews will be used as a technique to collect data.

4.3.1 Interviews

In this study data was collected using interviews. The technique in this study was classified as a qualitative technique because of its narrative description style. Two interviews were conducted by the researcher, namely focus group interviews and personal/individual interviews. The language used for both interviews was English as this was the language commonly spoken by the participants. In both interviews participants were also were permitted to express themselves in languages with which they felt comfortable.

4.3.1.1 Focus group interviews

The data was collected using focus group interviews and was interpreted from sense-making, and conducted through a constructivist approach. Kitzenger (1995:299) defines “focus group” as a form of group interview that capitalizes on communication and interaction between research participants to generate data and gather information. According to McMillan & Schumacher (1993:432) focus group is a variation of the ethnographic interview. It is a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem, or an assessment of a problem, a new product, programme or ideas by interviewing a purposefully sampled group of people rather than each person individually. The focus group was explicitly used for group interaction as part of the method to collect data, and to get open and honest experiences that women encountered in their journey in leadership positions. This is because focus group is a non-quantitative method of collecting research data.

A focus group is a group dialogue that generates rich information and records the insights of the participants, who are able to share with others their personal experiences and perspectives in a way that can more easily tease out complex topics. It also provides information directly from individuals who are invested in the issue or hold expert knowledge about a topic, and helps to provide information from people who can provide insight into actual conditions and situations. However, it is used in this study to provide a representation of diverse opinions and ideas and is a relatively inexpensive and efficient way to generate large amounts of information. Focus group interviewing as a qualitative data collection method is effective in helping researchers to learn the social norms of a community or sub-group. Focus groups are used to determine what service a particular population wants (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest & Namey 2005:51).

The above type of focus group was useful in exploring participants’ knowledge and experiences and was used to examine not only what they thought but how they thought and why they thought the way they did. Adams and Cox (2008:23) maintains that a focus group interviewing provides a sense of trust and comfort between the participants and the researcher and makes it easier for the participants to talk comfortably about the issues. This enables the researcher to gather information, and

the participants feel the freedom to express their opinions. It was useful in issues relating to gender.

The focus group interviewing involves asking well thought out questions in a focused environment (Krueger 1994:65). A focus group is a special kind of interview situation (Neuman 1997:253), where a researcher gathers together 6-12 people in a room with a moderator to discuss a couple of issues for one to two hours. In this study a sample of four women who already are in leadership positions took part; three were from one institution and one from the other. The discussions were scheduled for 90 minutes. In this study the researcher was also a moderator and she ensured that no one dominated (cf. Appendix E). The researcher had to be flexible, objective, emphatic and persuasive and a good listener. Being objective means being a mediator between different participants, monitoring and preventing single participants from dominating the interview. The researcher encouraged participants who were reserved to participate and give their own views (Flick 2009:195). The participants had something in common, which was important to the topic of investigation, in that they were all women in leadership positions within HE.

It might have happened that participants knew each other as this study was conducted in institutions of HE in the Free State Province in Bloemfontein, where the two institutions are located. This approach required certain skills from the researcher, such as listening, moderating, observing and analysing (Hancock 1998:11). The researcher had to listen and understand what participants were narrating and by so doing observe their emotions when they related their experiences, noticing their facial expressions, emotions, interpretations and changes of voice. Merriam (1998:4) states that in interpretative research, understanding the meaning of experience constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive theory-generating mode of inquiry. This was supported by Spurgin (2006) and Weick (1995), who write that in order to understand and construct meaning one must understand and predict the gaps that one has experienced.

According to Elliot *et al.* (2005:1), when arranging a focus group discussion, the environment should be conducive, participants carefully selected and invited, the time and location agreed upon, and the records of the discussions be kept. The

conducive environment put participants at ease, allowing them to answer questions thoughtfully and in their own words, so that meaning could be added to their answers. By so doing, the participants were at ease and revealed a wealth of detailed information and deep insight. All interviews were conducted during the month of October 2011.

According to Anderson and Kanuka (2003:398), the topics and issues on the focus group agenda need not to be approached in the order in which they are listed. Unlike other methods, such as a survey questionnaire, focus group questions cannot be answered in a single word or phrase. They are not tightly phrased and worded, but loosely framed. Because of this approach the questions can be approached differently and not as they appear in the list of research questions. This led to probing questions to allow the researcher to learn what lay behind their opinions.

Focus group allows dynamic group interactions, it allows the researcher to probe, thus allowing unanticipated issues to be explored. It also has high face validity as the technique is easily understood (Krueger 1997:34-36). The disadvantage of focus group interviewing is that it gives the researcher less control. The interactions that occur during the discussion among participants may result in group members influencing the course of the discussion. Group interaction differs; some might be dull and others exciting and energetic.

Focus group also allows flexibility in the questions. The questions should be organized according to some principles in order to avoid chaos. There should be a meaningful transition from one question to the other. This will allow the question schedules not to be rigid but flexibility should be built in to allow diversions where participants may bring up an idea which might not have been anticipated by the researcher. Such unanticipated questions are referred to by Krueger (1997:88) as “serendipitous” questions. For confidentiality, fictitious names were used on the seating of participants. This also helped the researcher to identify participants in the notes taken. Respect for the participants’ privacy was emphasized (Mack *et al.* 2005:53).

4.3.1.2 Personal interviews

The researcher interviewed women who were or had been in leadership positions at CUT and UFS, to find out their experiences and how they dealt with challenges in the process. The role of the researcher in the interview was that of moderator and facilitator. The researcher's task was to coordinate the group and to ensure that participants knew what was expected of them and also to guide the discussion and keep it on track while at the same time allowing participants the freedom of discussing in full.

Interview questions were structured in a way that made participants conscious of the current situation and allowed them to suggest ways to alter it. Bhopal (2000) points out that a researcher ought to tell interviewees about his or her own experiences so that the encounters become mutually cooperative events. Unlike other researchers, the researcher in this study did not narrate personal experiences to interviewees, because this might lead the interviewer to stimulate the discussion and be sympathetic in answering.

Therefore, semi-structured questions were used as a guideline to control and monitor the interview, and so that the interviewee and interviewer did not take anyone for granted. The researcher used the semi-structured format as a way of helping to control and direct the conversation. These types of question allow for individual responses (cf. Appendix D). They also allowed for diversion from the questions, depending on the responses of the interviewee. Bhopal (2000:74) further cautions researchers whose sample is from the same social structure: "When the researcher and the researched operate from shared realities, there may be the tendency to take too much for granted."

The semi-structured interview is an open situation, having greater flexibility, freedom and informality (Cohen & Manion 1980:270), and for that reason, the researcher decided to conduct the interviews in the participants' offices, based on time schedules and appointments. The environments were conducive and where necessary open-ended questions were asked, allowing for probing to gain a deeper understanding. Open-ended questions also have limitations that can result in

unexpected and unanticipated answers, which made the researcher careful in monitoring the process (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007:275, Mack *et al.* 2005).

As suggested by McCracken (1988), the interviews were based on the interviewees' responses to general leadership issues, such as educational priorities, ethical leadership, personal perceptions, perceptions of others and organizational goals. In addition, they were guided by the researcher to the extent that all the topics of interest were included.

To acquire the necessary information, "the thick description must specify everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings, however, the findings are not part of the thick description, although they must be interpreted in the terms of the factors thickly described" (Lincoln & Guba 1985:125). The purpose of thick description involves quality rather than quantity. Schwandt (2001:255) defines the purpose of thick description as something that is not simply a matter of amassing relevant detail but is rather "to thickly describe social action and interpret it by recording different perspectives of an episode as the circumstances, meaning, intentions and strategies, motivations, and so on that characterized a particular episode". Though there is still debate on what constitutes proper thick description in research, the criteria that separate relevant from irrelevant descriptors are still largely undefined (Lincoln & Guba 1985:316). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) believe a "thick" description of the social world is valuable, and interviewers have a choice of whether to take notes of responses during the interview or to tape-record them. The latter is preferable as the interviewer can concentrate on listening and responding to the interviewee and not be distracted by trying to write down what is being said.

During the personal interview, it was important for the researcher to be aware of the context by using all senses to listen to all the comments and remarks made by the interviewee. The discussion flowed because the interviewer did not have to write down the response to one question before moving on to the next. Transcription can increase the risk of interviewer bias because the interviewer is likely to make notes of the comments which make immediate sense or are perceived as being directly relevant or particularly interesting.

4.4 CONVERSATION

All interviews (focus group interviewing and individual interviews) were both audio-taped and transcribed using digital tape. The tape recording ensured that the whole interview was captured and provided complete data for analysis so that cues that were missed the first time could be recognized when listening to the recording. This is supported by Patton (2002:137), who advises that “no matter what style of interviewing you use and no matter how carefully you word questions, it all comes to naught if you fail to capture the actual words of the person being interviewed”. The researcher recorded what the participants were saying and made cryptic notes of what had been said as a backup to the tape recording. The cryptic notes also helped the researcher to note the tone of the participants’ voice, its inflection, emphasis, interruptions and anything that could happen (Cohen *et al.* 2007:368).

The limitation of this was similar to the trying to write down interview data as it occurs. The risk was that the researcher could miss some points while writing. The researcher could also lose focus of a particular event as it appears interesting and miss things which are equally or more important. Using a digital recorder gave the researcher an opportunity to focus and concentrate. Interviewees might have felt inhibited if the interviewer had suddenly started to scribble, and wondered why what they had just said was of particular interest. The women were informed that the interview was being recorded, so that the researcher could refer to it when writing a report. An ethics protocol was followed with the participants being reminded that the session was to be recorded. If any one of them felt uncomfortable with the recordings she could leave the room without any excuse. The consent for ethical reasons was read to the interviewee. The researcher informed the interviewee that this would be confidential and used for study purposes only. The golden rules (cf. Appendix E) were read to each individual. During interviewing, interviewees were allowed to express their experiences of a particular phenomenon (Farzanfar 2005:17) and the meaning they made of it using their own voice in an individual fashion. The researcher used open-ended conversations, asking questions, listening to and recording the answers and employing probing questions based on interview responses.

The interview questions emanated from the research questions, a sample of which was provided (cf. Appendix C). The formal interview with the participants took 90 minutes or less, with some minor changes in the topic based on the responses. The sequence of the interview was similar in all interviews, which followed the format for the focus group, with probes and follow-up questions based on responses provided by the participants. Participants were also invited to make further comments if they wished. There were some changes that the researcher made when she realized that some questions had been answered in a similar way and manner as the previous question.

A research background of this study was provided for each of the participants prior to conducting the interviews. All interviews were conducted during the month of October 2011 and one in December, due to the availability of the participants at this time. The interview was conducted at different venues or offices at the participants' workplace. The duration of each interview was determined by the participants and their willingness to elaborate on the prepared questions of the interviewer, but was not more than 60 minutes. This is also based on the commitment the participants made to this study. Open-ended questions were used to prompt the discussion, which focused on illuminating the processes that these women went through finding strategies to bridge the gaps in terms of future processes and agency formations. This led the researcher to look at data collection through sense-making.

4.4.1 Interview transcription

The interviews were all audio-taped and subsequently transcribed. Pauses and sub-vocals were edited out of the transcription on the grounds that the data analysis is based on content and eliciting meaning rather than taking a sociolinguistic approach, where the discourse analysis itself becomes significant. Transcription focused on collecting and recording all content-related dialogue.

The researcher chose eight women from CUT and UFS, the reason for choosing these two universities being that each campus has its own unique dynamics. One of the institutions had seen women in leadership positions for long, whereas the other was still only beginning to employ them in these positions. CUT had fewer staff than

UFS. All the women selected thus had information in which the researcher was interested.

Data was analysed immediately after capturing. At the end of each interview notes taken were analysed to come out with the themes. These were written according to the questions asked. The audio tape was played back several times as a way of making sure that the same themes were grouped together. At the end there were two data forms – one for the focus group interview, the other for individual interviews – and the researcher transcribed the audio tape recordings verbatim and filed them with dates. After manual transcription was complete, the handwritten transcript was typed and merged into one document to arrange according to themes and participants' responses. This permitted easy access to similarities and differences of participants' responses in terms of grouping. The typed transcript was printed out in order to allow the researcher to group them; different colours of highlighter were used to mark dominant themes. Some of the responses that did not fall under the themes marked, were considered as part of the responses.

4.4.2 Sampling

The sampling method decided on was purposive sampling.

4.4.2.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose. A researcher may have a specific group in mind, in this case women in leadership positions. Purposive sampling was applied to select women who were already in leadership positions in the two institutions concerned. Purposive sampling begins with a purpose in mind, meaning there is far less emphasis on generalizing from sample to population and greater attention to a sample “purposely” selected for its potential to yield insight from its illuminative and rich information sources (Patton 2002:40).

The sample is thus selected to include the targeted women and exclude those who do not fit the purpose. A purposive sample is designed to enhance an understanding of selected individuals or a group's experience(s) or for developing theories and

concepts. The researcher seeks to accomplish goals by selecting a specific group of people, that is, individuals who are “information rich” and can provide the greatest insight into the research questions (Dever & Frankel 2000:264). It is for the researcher to decide what needs to be known and set out ways to find women who can and are willing to provide information by virtue of their knowledge and experiences.

The overall criteria included:

- i. Those women leaders who indicated a willingness to participate in the interview
- ii. Those available women leaders who were not on one campus
- iii. Those women leaders who had held their present positions for at least one year. In order to consider the effect of the situation on their behaviour, divergent population settings, including rural, suburban and urban areas were used.

In total, the sample of women from the two universities (UFS and CUT), from senior to middle management, were:

- two women from the top management
- two women from middle management (support services, e.g. library)
- two women from the administration management (e.g. registrar, Human Resources)
- two women from the academic side of management (e.g. deans).

The researcher used purposive sampling, which, according to Heneghan and Badenoch (2006:61), offers researchers a degree of control rather than being at the mercy of any selection bias inherent in pre-existing groups. The researcher was able to deliberately seek to include “outliers” conventionally discounted in quantitative approaches.

Miles and Huberman (1994) indicate that a small group of subjects studied in their context make up a purposive sample. Cohen *et al.* (2007:115) write that purposive sampling “is used in order to access those who have in-depth knowledge about a

particular issue". In addition, they indicate that initial choices of participants in the research study can lead to similar or dissimilar subjects who help the researcher further describe the entity.

4.4.2.2 Selecting the participants

The participants were invited to a focus group discussion forum, aimed at breaking the ice of the discussion and explaining to all why this study was being conducted. Even if all participants would not attend the group discussion, the few who did attend managed to break the ice. Since the study was about women busy in their daily activity, separate interviews were conducted in their offices following an appointment. The environment chosen was suitable for all who participated. Women in leadership, and the challenges women are facing in leadership positions which affect their identity and voices, still need more attention. To gather data, the researcher had to purposefully select women who were already in leadership positions. Because all the individuals needed to have stories to tell about their life experiences (Creswell 2007), the participants selected above had to represent the purpose and scope of the study, according to the following criteria:

- they must be women
- they must already be in leadership positions in the two institutions
- they must be willing to meet with the researcher face to face during narrative sessions
- they must be willing to tell their life experiences in leadership positions
- they must honour the appointments made
- they must be residing in Bloemfontein, Welkom and QwaQwa, where the two institutions have campuses.

In the survey the role of the researcher was to ask questions and make sure that everything was done in an orderly fashion.

4.4.2.3 The role of the researcher

As Fink (2002:7) indicates, the role of the researcher is to serve as an instrument for data collection. The researcher's role is to be instrumental in qualitative research to

gather data. Those who read the report must know who the researcher was. The researcher had to describe relevant aspects of self, expectation and even bias. The researcher kept track of personal reactions, insights into self and past in a separate journal. The researcher had to maintain the integrity of women as participants and respect them. There was a situation in which the researcher had to change names in the transcript or erase information that pointed directly to an individual participant.

In focus group discussion, the researcher has to connect the participants' voices as they shared their experiences in their journey of leadership identity with each other. The researcher's role was to seek and make sure the participants said relevant things and that they painted a picture which the researcher could transfer and communicate in a way that would increase awareness and form an understanding of why the voices of women in this journey of leadership are not heard.

The researcher kept the identity of the women confidential, as Fink (2002:37) and Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charles (2006:1) advise. In order to do so it was necessary to erase or sometimes even change the information. The outcome space that was determined by the researcher was seen as representing a relationship between the researcher and the data (Marton & Booth 1997; Sandberg 1996, 1997), and therefore not necessarily the only possible outcome of the data, requiring the researcher to set aside pre-existing assumptions. The potential for interpretative bias by the researcher in this study was minimized by the researcher and supervisor analyzing the data, rather than research participants. The researcher had to describe relevant aspects of self, expectation and even bias. The fact that a researcher is a female, like the interviewees, might have an impact on the discussion and analysis as she might see things and interpret them from a woman's perspective.

In line with the explanation above the researcher wrote a letter to the women who were identified as participants to explain the purpose of the study. Letters of introduction (cf. Appendix A), including an explanation and purpose of the study, were sent to selected women early in October 2011. All participants agreed to form part of the study. The letters were returned by email and by hand to the researcher, expressing the level of interest in being considered for the study. Some women wanted a more detailed explanation about the study before they would be willing to

take part. Two wanted to meet the researcher in person for individual interviews. After receiving the letters from the participants indicating their interest in the study, the researcher contacted them by telephone to arrange an introductory meeting during which the initial interview, observations and site visits were scheduled. An interview schedule timetable was constructed in line with their availability.

In the interview, the researcher's intent was to understand the processes of women in leadership positions, their experiences and the challenges they encountered that led to their voices not being heard. The researcher had to understand the identity formation of women in relation to Erikson (1968) from their childhood to becoming women in leadership positions. The researcher had to understand that the experiences of women in these leadership positions were unique. From this, the researcher had to be careful not to generalize to all women on their journey to leadership positions. The researcher's aim was to understand the participants' points of view and to unfold meaning of their lived world (Kvale 2006:481). The researcher's role was to understand what these women were saying and to relate it in such a way that their experiences were understandable to others.

4.4.2.4 Locating the participants

Participants were drawn from two universities. Participants were firstly located by telephone; once contacted the prospective participant was established. A brief telephone interview was conducted. Afterwards an email was sent with more detail concerning the research. After this a list was drawn up to determine who the prospective participants for the interview were. After the selection the prospective participants were contacted by email/and or telephone. Some of the participants referred the researcher to other colleagues as they could not make it. In the end the study was conducted with eight women, four for the focus group interview and four for personal interviews.

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS/INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The researcher had to explain the nature of the study openly and honestly to the participants in a way that was understandable and accepted by all. The nature and purpose of the research were explained together with the risks and benefits to the

participants and the fact that they were free not to participate if they so wished. Merriam (2001:214) supports this, writing that no matter what kind of interviewing is being conducted, “the interview carries with it both risks and benefits to the informants”. During the interview the participants can tell something that they did not intend to reveal (Merriam 2001), so this will cause the researcher to keep the information confidential.

The consent forms were emailed to the participants (cf. Appendix B) to be completed and returned to the researcher before the discussions. Participants were fully informed about the nature of the research and its aims and objectives, as well as their anticipated role in the study. Informed consent was obtained by means of signed forms. The participants were informed during the session that all discussions would be recorded and they were free to leave if they did not feel comfortable and did not have to answer if they did not wish to. Mack *et al.* (2005:9) define “informed consent” as a mechanism that ensures that people understand what it means to take part in a particular research study, so that they may decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate or not. Informed consent is important tools for ensuring *respect for persons* during research.

The participants’ rights to anonymity were respected. They were also advised on the right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. To ensure that ethical issues were not violated, before each interview, the researcher briefly talked about the purpose of the interview and gave an overview of the research being conducted. The researcher explained to the participants that the research was for a doctoral dissertation. The researcher read the golden rules to them, written on a flip chart for all participants in the focus group discussion to read and take note of (cf. Appendix E). The researcher asked participants to give their consent by reading and signing the consent form. One of the participants did ask if there would be a scribe; the researcher’s answer was that she would transcribe and take notes for the purpose of ensuring confidentiality. The researcher also assured them that this research was for study purposes only.

Throughout the research, the researcher followed through with all the guidelines and regulations stipulated under ethical considerations, such as ensuring that only one

person talked at a time, maintaining confidentiality and recording conversations and ensuring that there was no wrong or right answer. The researcher also sought permission from interviewees to record the interviews and to take notes, as well as to assure them of anonymity and the fact that the tapes and notes would be destroyed as soon as the research was over. At the beginning and throughout the interview, the researcher stressed the importance of confidentiality to the participants and that made them feel at ease and to have confidence.

During the interview the participants also reminded themselves that they could say whatever they wanted because the golden rules were protecting them. The researcher used an interview protocol (cf. Appendix D) to guide them through the interview.

In this study, to safeguard the women during interview, the consent forms (cf. Appendix B) were used, with a discussion of the interview agenda and timeframe, and the use of digital tape to ensure accuracy. A standard ethics protocol was read by the researcher to the women prior to the interview. All agreement and information shared by the women as participants were kept by the researcher. All identities of the women were held in confidence and fictitious names were used.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

Bertram (2004:79) defines data as “the evidence that a researcher collects in order to shed light on the particular question he or she is asking”. The collection of data was generated by focus group discussions and personal interviews. The researcher used semi-structured person-to-person conversations because of the flexibility for different participants and to allow for probing with follow-up questions. Hancock (1998:9) asserts that qualitative approaches to data collection usually involve direct interaction with individuals on a one-to-one basis or in group settings. Given the complex environment of women in leadership positions, the sources for data collection were varied and multidimensional, allowing the researcher to be fully descriptive of the behaviour of each woman in a range of decisions and tasks.

The research design on data collection refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer the research questions. It described the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom and under what conditions the data was obtained (Kerlinger 1986:279, McMillan & Schumacher 1993:31). The first phase of this study involved a detailed review of the literature to identify the theoretical background and factors that either enhanced or constrained the identity of women in leadership. The research methods selected said much about the views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge and the perspective on the nature of reality. The choice of qualitative methods for the research was made primarily to understand the voice of women as participants, and to answer the primary and secondary research questions. A digital recorder was used as an instrument to collect data, together with the researcher's journal. The data was collected from the women in middle to top management leadership positions at the two universities in the Free State.

It was necessary to explore why women's voices were not heard in leadership positions and why the situation was not changing. This type of explanatory research would help to answer the *why* question, in terms of their development processes towards their leadership identity, which has not been significantly researched in the HE arena. Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis allowed the researcher to reach an in-depth understanding of the complex factors that influence the leadership behaviour of women in leadership positions. This research design employed a focus group of selected women in leadership positions at the two universities mentioned.

4.6.1 Procedure

The procedure involved the research approach, methodology and sample selection being reviewed by the universities' Ethics Committees. The researcher invited the participants through emails and telephone calls, briefing them about their participation and indicating that it was voluntary and that they had the opportunity to withdraw from the research process at any time. Strict confidentiality guidelines were maintained with identification of who would access the raw data and transcript material and information relating to data storage. Participants were given a written

consent form prior to the start of the research discussions. They were made aware of the nature of the research and the approach taken. The instrument used was focus group and interviews, and an interview schedule was arranged according to the participants' availability. The eight participants were chosen for their availability and the convenience of their timetables. The first discussion was with eight participants who were available for focus group discussion, while interviews were scheduled for the four participants who could not make it for focus group discussion. Before the discussion in the focus group, a detailed outline of the research study was provided to the participants.

4.6.2 Questions

During the focus group discussion and interviews, the research questions were modified and reworded. They were used as a guide to focus group discussion and the interviews. Through probing, the researcher was able to gain a deeper understanding and clear up any misunderstandings. Participants also had a chance to ask questions and were able to show emotions. It was important for the researcher to modify the questions because the upward movement of women is a sensitive issue and the experiences they had been through might have raised deep emotions. The research question and sub-questions were first examined from the participants' level followed by discussions from the researcher's perspective.

The researcher divided the questions into primary and secondary questions, with problem questions also being used in this research.

4.6.2.1 Primary questions

The primary research questions were as follows:

- What processes did you as women leaders in Higher Education have to go through to develop your own leadership voice and identity?
- How did your experiences contribute to your insights into the empowerment of women leaders in Higher Education so that they could inform aspiring women leaders about their future career paths?

4.6.2.2 Secondary questions

The secondary research questions were as follows:

- What unique identities were formed and how did they impact on your leadership identity formation?
- What are the challenges that you went through in the processes of leadership positions?
- How was your sense as women affected? What affected your voice and your leadership identity?
- How can your voice as women provide direction to potential women leaders?
- In what way can future leaders be empowered in constructing their own paths in leadership?

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

There are different methods to follow in data analysis. In the present study narrative analysis and a sense-making approach were used. Narrative analysis was used to analyze what women said during the interviews. A narrative is more focused on the individual's story as compared to discourse analysis, which looks at the interaction. An analysis of data in a study involves summarizing the mass of data collected and presenting the results in such a way that they communicate the most important features. After each analysis, the researcher had a wider picture, which is important in qualitative research, but the approach was different from the quantitative approach.

A literature investigation was used in framing the interview questions but categories of description were not determined prior to the interview. The interview transcript was the source of the data collection and analysis. Narrative analysis in this study was conducted by listening to women as they individually narrated experiences that had affected their individual identity and how the formation of their identity came about in their leadership positions in HE and what challenges they encountered in leadership positions as women. This is in line with Jonas (2005), who explains that a narrative study is a method of qualitative research in which the researcher listens to the

stories of the research subjects, attempting to understand the relationships between the experiences of the individuals and their social framework.

Women in leadership cannot be seen as individuals only as their identity has changed as they interact with people in leadership. Their identity was identified in relation with others. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000:2) and Dewey (1938) write, "People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context." Researchers such as Labov (1997:1) have found that "the most important data gathered on narrative is not drawn from the observation of speech production or controlled experiments, but from the reactions of audiences to the narrative". The women's reaction indicated the different experiences they had encountered in leadership.

4.7.1 Narrative analysis

The major aim of data collection was to ensure that the outcome space was based on the interview data. There was a strong argument that data analysis should not be the researcher's responsibility only, but rather achieved through collaboration with other researchers to ensure open-mindedness as well as to gain alternative perspectives (Bowden 1994, Trigwell 2000). In this study, data analysis was initially the researcher's responsibility but was also considered by the supervisor for reliability and validity purposes. In this study, transcripts were analyzed based on the work of several researchers (Dervin 2003, Strom 2006, Weick 1995) and narrative analysis. Accordingly, categories of description were not defined prior to the research but rather left to emerge from the data (Marton 1986). Bowden and Walsh (1994) are of the opinion that the data collected must emanate from the literature created. This approach was taken to ground outcomes in the existing research. In this study, a review of the literature was conducted prior to data collection and a meta-theoretical perspective was developed as described in Chapter 3.

The narrative analysis in this study was collected through storytelling by women when they narrated their experiences in leadership positions and the challenges then encountered in them. Participants narrated their experiences in a storytelling form

and used their stories to make sense of the situation that was male-dominated, and it was through narrative that they were able to construct meaning using their experiences. A story had a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of personal and social history and people's life stories. By telling their stories, women reaffirmed themselves, modifying themselves and creating a new identity (Knowles, Nieuwenhuis & Smit 2009:335). The focus of narrative analysis was on personal and social constructions as these occur in specific places. Attention was given to the internal and external determinants of the women (Knowles, Nieuwenhuis & Smit 2009:338).

Narrative analysis focuses on the way in which people make and use stories to interpret the world, and does not treat narratives as stories that transmit a set of facts about the world. It is not primarily interested in whether stories are true or not. Narratives must be viewed as an interpretive device through which people represent themselves and their world to themselves to others. In the narrative researcher's view, there is no absolute truth in the world, but it varies and is socially constructed depending on the interaction between the individual and the world. According to McCabe and Peterson (1991:ix), the term "narrative" is derived from the Latin word "gnarus", which translates as "knowing", and the English word "a narrative" is defined by the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2010) as a "spoken or written account of connected events in order of happening"; a "story" (Soanes & Stevenson 2004) which "consists of story and plot" (Franzosi 1998) or "one method of recapitulating past experiences by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of the events which (it is inferred) actually occurred" (Labov 1972:359-360). An interpretive constructivist perspective was followed using the narrative as a method to understand women's interaction and social behaviour from the participants' perspectives. Narrative analysis helped the researcher to recall memories of the participants regarding their personal experiences.

As data was analysed by hand, the following procedure was followed. Different colour codes were used to mark research questions. A qualitative data worksheet for each research question was designed. Each participant had a colour code. The transcripts were read using colour. The tape was listened to so as to group the discussions according to the relevant research questions. The worksheet for the

focus group contained the following: research questions, participant's response and themes. The themes served as findings of what the participants said on each research question. The same responses were grouped together to avoid repetition. Some were quoted to substantiate the point made. Points that were mentioned by the majority of participants were written in one column.

Data analysis of focus group interview		
Research questions	Participant's response and quotes that illustrate the points	Themes

The discussion was analysed by identifying the themes of meaning that were clustered in different dimensions as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4. These themes were interpreted by using the seven properties of sense-making, where processes were identified from all participants.

Cohen *et al.* (2007) suggest ways that can be used to organize and present the analysis of data, whether in a group, by individual, by issues, by research questions or by instruments. After that, the research question must be looked at. Sense-making was used to interpret the data collected from focus group discussions and personal interviews. Sense-making creates a situational awareness, an understanding in situations of high complexity and uncertainty in order to make decisions. Choo (2002:80) describes how people enact or actively construct the environment that they attend to by bracketing experience and by creating new features in the environment. Sense-making can be viewed as a paradigm, a tool, a process, or a theory of how people reduce uncertainty or ambiguity, and to socially negotiate meaning during decision-making events. Weick (1995:99) states that sense-making is the way meaning is constructed at both individual and group level.

The transcriptions were considered to see what main themes emerged and what needed to be altered in format for the next interview. The researcher kept a reflective journal in which notes were taken to focus on learning and adjustment in data gathering. The researcher transcribed the texts of the interview as a full verbatim script. Though transcribing is time-consuming, it was preferable to attempting to copy down what was said during the interview itself. The researcher was familiar with the

language used and topic discussed, and was thus in the best position to make the transcription.

Hasselgren and Beach (1997) define the data analysis stage as a process of discovery, in which categories of meanings must emerge from the data. According to Erlandson *et al.* (1993:111), data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Information obtained from the interview, observations and documents was analysed and described in detail. The researcher attempted to explore and describe the experience of the research participants by observing and interpreting their reality as experienced by the women. Data was analyzed from a sense-making for both the focus group interview and personal interviews, to pick up the challenges that women experience, such as empowerment, power and what gave them a boost in identity formation in leadership positions. Cohen *et al.* (2007) list five ways to analyze data: by group, individual, issue, research question or instrument. For this research, data was analyzed by research questions and by hand.

Literature studies on how the unique identities formed and how they impacted on women's leadership identity formation were used to construct a foundation for the investigation to follow. Focus group discussions were used to explore the voices of the sample of women in leadership positions from the selected institutions when the participants told their story. Open-ended questions were used to prompt the discussion, which focused on illuminating the processes that these women went through in finding strategies to bridge the gaps in terms of future processes and agency formations.

Women in leadership positions moved through time and space, using whatever sense they had already constructed based on personal as well as vicarious experiences. They had to build a bridge across the gap. This would answer the questions about women development, identity formation and the challenges they came across as to why their voices were not being heard. It was through sense-making that women understood the different types of gap that they experienced in leadership positions.

The researcher linked the theme with the seven properties of sense-making. An interpretation of the findings was conducted in an interpretive-constructivist manner in the search of understanding the meaning, purpose and experiences in the empowerment processes of women using these seven properties of sense-making. The researcher listened to the recorded interviews that provided a chance to become familiar with the interviewee and the content of the interview for a second and third time. There is an inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis in a qualitative study as explained by Erlandson *et al.* (1993). The relationship between the two was observed during interviews and observations.

4.7.2 Data analysis using the seven properties of sense-making

To be able to make sense the researcher is mandated to listen to the participants, about how they moved through time-space. Sense-making stresses the importance of dialogue between different understandings of the situation which the researcher should consider as important. The researcher was mandated to attend to what was called the sense-making triangle, how the participants saw the situation, what gap they saw, what ways they saw as ways to bridge the existing gaps and what outcome and insights they had learned in this journey. Figure 4.1 illustrates this process.

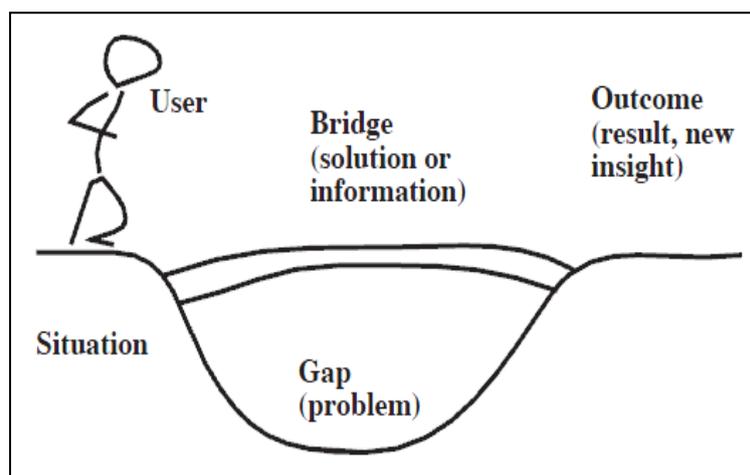


Figure 4:1 Making sense of a gap and crossing it, by Strom (2006)

The researcher used sense-making to analyze the data and to learn about the circle of reality in women in leadership positions. Sense-making has been successfully used to interpret a variety of organizational themes, among such complex themes as

interpersonal conflicts at and the rendezvous of different of cultures in organizations (Osland *et al.* 2000). Sense-making would therefore seem to be a useful framework for interpreting challenges that women as leaders encountered. Sense-making has also been used in interpreting concrete, smaller-scope change situations in organizations, such as the representation of women in leadership.

Sense-making helped the participants to unfold the reality and access their personal reality. It also allowed critical reflection and the analysis of experiences and actions for the interviewee, while for the interviewer, it provided unique perspectives of the assimilation of knowledge and experiences.

In this research, sense-making allowed for definitions of the journey of women in their formation of identity in terms of the gaps or challenges they face. Sense-making helps to acquire insightful information that the researcher can use to help women to learn more about reality and the situation that is dominated by men, and to reflect their individual identity with the group identity and to be able to analyze one's experience and action. Dervin (1983) describes sense-making as an approach to implement communicative research and practice. Sense-making gave each participant a chance to understand the experience she encountered and to understand the same phenomenon as something that made it possible to create a more comprehensive understanding. Sense-making also emphasizes the importance of conversation between different understandings of a situation. In this research the situations of the two universities were different and the experience of each participant unique.

The uniqueness of the individuals may also become lost in the discussion with others as the individual experiences have to be fitted into others (Weick 1995:6). The researcher had to understand and accommodate each individual's situation to be able to come up with the right findings. The researcher chose sense-making as a lens to address the research findings in order to address the gaps between identity and leadership and to try to determine how an individual's experiences at that moment in a leadership can be used in the present situation to overcome or bridge those gaps and how to progress after having done so (Strom 2006:1). An individual is moving through time and space dealing with entities which include institutions,

marginalization, gender inequalities, lack of support, mentorship and powerlessness. Participants have to make sense as a strategy to try to bridge these gaps between self at different points in space and time (Spurgin 2006:102). The participants gave the history of their leadership positions, and from that the researcher picked up the uniqueness of the situations and how this affected their identity formation in leadership positions.

Figure 4.2 summarizes the data collection methods and sense-making lens.

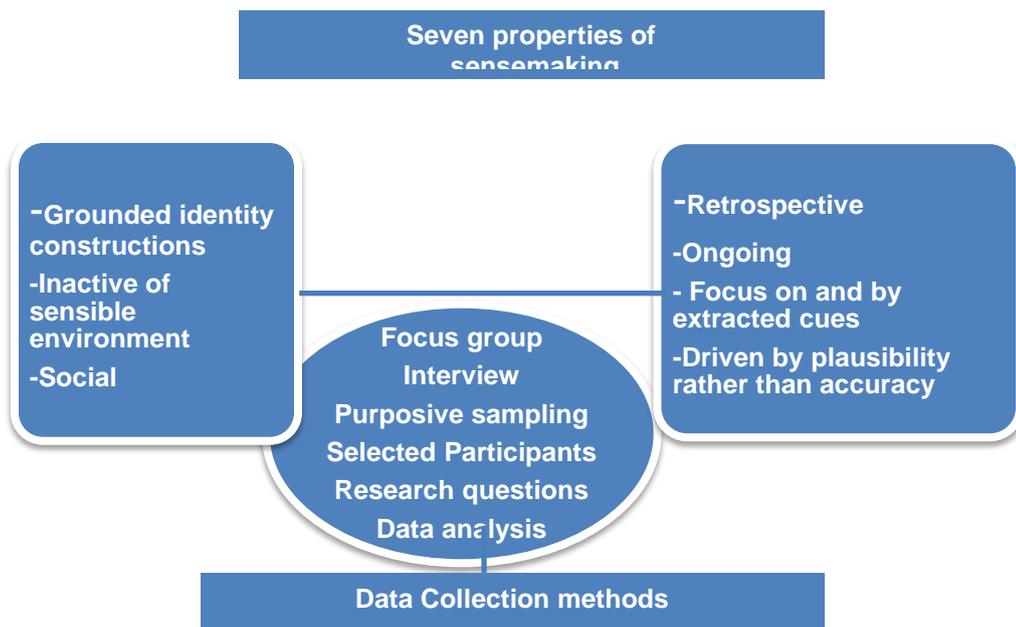


Figure 4.2 Data collection methods and sense-making lens (Weick 1995 and Research Design)

Sense-making made it necessary for the researcher to ask the participants what they could do if they could wave a magic wand, that is, if there were no barriers impeding the bridging of the gaps towards empowerment. Sense-making is primarily a methodology that provides a conceptual framework within which to specify what aspects of a situation ought to be. It attempts to provide a systematic approach to listening to the audience, how they see their situation, past, present and future, and how they move to construct sense and make meaning of the situation (Dervin

2003:76-77). Sense-making rests on the discontinuity premise. It is assumed that given the discontinuities in natural reality and in human observations of reality, the useful research focus is on how humans make sense of discontinuity. The core construct of sense-making is the ideas of the gap, how women define and bridge gaps in their everyday lives. Sense-making is built on open-ended interviewing and report findings primarily on equal terms. The term “sense-making” was used both to designate the approach (called the “sense-making approach”) and the focus of the approach on how people make sense of their world. Sense-making provided a conceptual framework within which to specify what aspects of a situation ought to be attended to (Dervin 2003, Weick 1995).

Choo’s model of sense-making challenges Weick’s sense-making considerations as well as Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) views on social knowledge creation. In Choo’s model sense-making is the first step of the process leading to action in a knowing organization, the next step being knowledge creation followed by decision making based on that knowledge and finally by decided action. He mirrors these concepts with those of information interpretation, information conversion and information processing (Choo 1996: 336-339.) The problem with Choo’s model from Weick’s standpoint would seem to be that Weick is not willing to distinguish sense-making from organizational action. However, it has been shown that in Weick’s vision sense-making is in essence organizational action and vice versa. For the purposes of this study sense-making will create new meaning, and a new culture of institutions and leadership.

It was through sense-making that women tried to construct meaning when they were faced with challenges. For example, in order to bridge the gap to the other side, the women first had to make sense of the situation they were in so as to be able to understand what had caused the barriers. The data was analyzed, screened for accuracy of entry and missing values. Seven properties of sense-making were used to describe identity formation (Weick 1995:17-65): (i) grounded in identity construction, (ii) retrospective, (iii) enactive of sensible environments, (iv) social, (v) ongoing, (v) focused on and by extracted cues, and (vi) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy.

Narrative analysis was used and interpreted in sense-making (Dervin 1992, Spurgin 2006, Strom 2006), by applying Weick's (1995:17) seven properties of sense-making in order to make a substantial contribution to the interruption that occurred when women became leaders and where their individual identity was interrupted to the extent that it resulted in silencing their voices. The seven properties, which are metaphorical figures in sense-making, are grounded in identity construction, retrospective, enactment of the environment, social, ongoing, focus on and by extracted cues and plausibility (Weick 1995:17-65).

Weick (1995:15) states that people make sense of their actions after they have carried them out. Sense-making explains how people generate that which is interpreted. By analyzing data through a sense-making lens, the researcher was able to discuss what participants had explained using the seven properties based on their experiences. In this study, the gendered notion of reality forms a significant context in which people make sense. Through the properties (Weick 1995:17), the explanation will be the invention that preceded interpretation. As female individuals, the participants' identities were interrupted by ambiguity and uncertainty of the new environment in which they found themselves. Their daily routine was disrupted and their individual identity changed due to interactions and constructions. The properties enabled the researcher to understand the sense-making process using the grounded in identity construction (Weick 1995:17). These properties cannot stand alone while one is making sense, as some have greater relevance in explaining certain behaviour in an institutional situation.

4.7.2.1 Grounded in identity construction

In order to make sense women must begin with themselves as sense-makers. The establishment and maintenance of identity is the core preoccupation in sense-making (Weick 1995:18-20). Weick (1995:18) adds that participants' needs as individuals and their identity are interactive, which means their identity is being refined as they are in a process and the experiences they acquired in contact with others have an influence on their leadership positions. Women in leadership positions are in a process, and have interacted with family, religion, friends, parents, the school they attended, where they work and the type of work they do. All these

have influenced their identity construction. When analyzing, the identity construction helped the researcher to understand workplace identity. Construction is more related to gendered scripts, as it is associated with certain jobs that males or females have, and so influences the women in the journey to leadership positions. The researcher analyzed the situation that caused rejection in leadership and the challenges women encounter. Sense-making is more about creating social implications than creating identity.

4.7.2.2 Retrospective

Sense-making is based on our experiences, meaning sense-making is always retrospective in nature (Weick 1995, 24-30), “people act and then make sense of their actions”. They react after the event or action reacted to. The researcher was able to analyze the data, looking at the past experiences of women to be able to interpret the current situation in which they found themselves. Retrospection explains how the women’s experiences of the institutions affected their identity, either positively or negatively. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997:262) adds that the question the researcher must always ask about process is, “How does the interpretation that I am mounting make sense of the various parts of my experience of the subjects or site?” We are conscious of our experiences, not of the duration as such, and our experiences are always in the past. Sense-making is directed to the past, not the future.

4.7.2.3 Enactive of sensible environment

Enactment is a practice of creating reality by interacting with the environment. Weick emphasizes that the environment should not be viewed as singular, fixed and external to the enacting subject, but as a dynamic process including the subject. The subject constructs reality by doing things in the world. Enactment constructs sensible environments because it labels reality with concepts, with meaning, with sense. That meaning is created and discovered by acting in the world (Weick 1995:30-38.)

Weick (1995:30) argues that sense-making is *enactive of sensible environment*. To understand this property one needs to understand first what it means by “sensible environment”. This is an environment where a sense maker cannot be separated

from the environment, which can also be influenced by the sense maker in a sense-making process. This is a process where the sense maker and the environment influence each other as the sense maker becomes engaged in sense-making. The actions that one takes are the ones that change the environment as they create the nature of the environment that one wants. In this instance, the institutional environment represents that kind of environment. The environment also has an influence on the choice of identity while the actions formed during that identity creation will create the environment where action will take place. Women in leadership positions have to create their own reality. This property will analyze the environment that has been created. Weick (1995:30) describes enacted environments as “the activity of ‘making’ that which is sensed”. This property helped the researcher to return to the processes of women in leadership looking at the influences that the environment had on them.

Weick (1995:30) argues that “how people come to construct social realities through enactment” is influenced by the “ongoing nature of sense-making”, for example, what counted as knowledge and acceptable behaviour in the normal flow of things. The enactment cues are used to build sensible stories around them by making them believe, and show the situational and social context in which retrospective understanding occurs, the “need for plausibility in story construction” and the impact of sense-making construction on how the individual balances a sense of self. Sense-making allows women to contextualize the challenges and reveals how to make sense where they have to take action dealing with institutional culture, power, their voices and identity. The property of enactment where a particular reality is constructed is a good example to show that an individual creates her own environment depending on how she interprets it.

4.7.2.4 Social

The creation of meaning is essentially social and done by a group of people. The researcher must understand that sense-making is a *social* property. As a sense maker, one cannot make sense in isolation. The cognitive process of sense-making is influenced by the social dynamics within the environment. People select their identities in relation to the people they make contact with. The identities of others

influence self-identity. The identity that is selected will only exist if the individual perception of social response is positive. This does not mean the interaction should only be in a physical format, the imagined encounters can also influence the sense-making process. Participants exist in an environment with others either physically or not, and the social aspects influence the process of interpreting the situation (Weick 1995). To make sense of the situation, it should develop in a social context. For example, institutional rules or language, which has an influence on women's sense-making activities, should be addressed to accommodate women in their policy structure. Institutions are by their nature a social context. The interactions that take place in a group influence the identity of individuals, which determines their behaviour. How one is perceived by others and by institutions influences one's identity such that individual identity and institutions have a significant impact on one's position of progress within the institutions. This will assist an individual to realize that their presence in institutions is important and understand which actions and behaviours will confirm a positive self-image and their image in the eyes of others. By so doing, an individual will realize that in an institution, one's identity is in three levels, where a person represents an institution as an individual, a representative of the institution and as the institution itself. In most cases, when we talk we say one is the image or the ambassador of an institution. This makes the social influence on sense-making in institutions to be multi-dimensional and more complex.

4.7.2.5 Ongoing

Sense-making is ongoing. While Weick (1995) maintains that it has no beginning or end, and that its flows are constant, he argues that people make sense of what is happening around them and "chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from those moments" to shape and reshape their sense of the situation (Weick 1995:43). Women are in a new situation where sense-making needs to happen. Women used to make sense before they become leaders. In the flow of events that women encounter, they see themselves differently from men because of the prevailing culture of the institutions. This is due to the interruption in the flow of events which elicit an emotional response (Weick 1995:43-49) evoked by memories. The researcher was able to analyze the new ways of structuring, or the introduction

of new organizational values, to “shock” individuals into making sense of them. If the change is moving the organization towards spirituality, employees will evaluate the initiatives and base their understanding on what they know and what they believe they can expect, while looking for cues to make their sense-making plausible.

4.7.2.6 Focused on and by extracted cues

Sense-making is focused on and by extracted cues. This property highlights the fact that the sense-making process involves focusing on certain elements while completely ignoring others, in order to support an interpretation of an event. This property will help to analyze the institutional structure and culture. Sense-making will form a bridge between male and female in leadership. New meaning in leadership should be created. Due to an uncertain environment women can create their own cue, as (Weick 1995:54-55) mentions “any map will do”, meaning any cues that will make sense will be used.

4.7.2.7 Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

According to Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005:415), sense-making is not about the truth and getting the right thing. It is about continual redrafting of an emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive, incorporate more of the observed situation and is more resilient in the face of crisis. This means that we do not rely on accuracy when we make sense of an event. Women as leaders are looking for the concept that they can believe and fit into. Amongst others, women need to cope with the speed in understanding a new situation, new culture, new style and positions, the need for common understanding and the role of human emotions in leadership. It is highly plausible that women as leaders do not make completely rational and accurate decisions. By self-reflection one can easily remember situations of decision, especially those done in groups, in which the plausibility point has been demonstrated. Women will rely on past experiences and structures to dictate what cues to extract to make sense of a situation. The analysis focused on the cues that support this plausibility, which may cause people to distort or eliminate what is perceived as not accurate. Selecting cues, meaning bracketing them, will help to identify what can be done to determine what is right or wrong in the process of leadership positions. This property helps in analyzing, for example, institutions

changing the way things are not providing proper training or explanations for the changes. Employees may resist the change because the new cues may contradict the old ones.

4.8 STRATEGIES TO ENSURE QUALITY DATA

A letter to explain the aims, purpose, methods and anticipated benefits of this research was written to each participant. Through the interview method, the researcher expected participants to be open and comfortable. No pressure of any kind was exerted to encourage an individual to become a subject of the study. The rights of individuals to abstain from participating were respected as individuals were not forced to participate.

The identity of individuals from whom data was gathered was kept strictly confidential. At the end of the study, any information that revealed the identity of an individual was destroyed. Permission was sought from the individual in writing before the final report unless the participant concerned had consented in writing to be included. The research report was referred to the participants to check whether the data had been presented and interpreted correctly and whether their identities were protected satisfactorily. Permission was requested from the university to perform this investigation. To ensure the validity of the research and its claims, the supervisor cross-checked the researcher's interview, the notes, various documents and emails.

4.8.1 Research findings and validation

Once data analysis was completed, two separate summary documents were prepared relating to the findings. The aim was to explore women's experiences in leadership positions and to determine their voices. This information was sent to all of the research participants, who were invited to comment on the findings. This was consistent with a second order research approach, where the voice and conceptions of the research participants were central to the research methodology. As such, the validation of the research findings was considered the most ethical and consistent approach. Written comments on research results were sought from all research participants. This step was crucial to ensure that researcher analysis was consistent

with the participants' conceptions and reflected their voices rather than the considerations of the researcher. The phenomenographic research categories of description developed by the researcher may therefore be prone to subjectivity, and as such, may not always be replicable. The following section highlights these issues and offers measures to enhance the study's reliability and validity.

4.8.1.1 Validity

The validity of each study is the confidence the reader can have in the proposed knowledge claims (Polkinghorne 2007:477). Arkerlind (2012:124) defines validity as the extent to which a study is seen as investigating what it aimed to investigate, or the degree to which the research findings actually reflect the phenomenon being studied.

Since phenomenographic research reflects the data as experienced by the researcher (Marton & Booth 1997:129), it is argued that the research aims should be appropriately reflected in the research methods (Ashworth & Lucas 1998, Francis 1996). The researcher was therefore cautioned to ensure that the sample was appropriate, interview questions non-leading and data analysis undertaken following pre-established guidelines (Ashworth & Lucas 2000). The validity of this research approach was identified in the researcher's ability to justify and defend the outcome space and result findings (Booth 1992). Justification can thus be illustrated in a transparent and open presentation of research method and findings.

Validity is an indication of how sound the research is, based on the design and method used in the study. The validity of the study must truly represent the phenomenon of what the study measures. The study can be validated by internal, external and logical means. Internal validity is affected by the flaws within the study itself which can be caused by a lack of control either from the data collection or design of the study. This can be in the form of time allocated for data collection, sensitivity and maturity (Seliger & Shohamy 1989:95). External validity refers to findings that are generalized. For example, this study is based on women in leadership positions of the two institutions in the Free State, which means the findings cannot be valid for all women in leadership positions worldwide. Findings

can be also be externally invalid because they cannot be extended or applied to contexts outside those in which the research took place (Seliger & Shohamy 1989: 95). These include data collection methodology, the effect of the researcher's environment, population characteristics, the interaction of subject selection and research.

The researcher was also an instrument of data gathering and was sure to become close to the women as participants, in accord with Creswell's (2007) statement: "With the epistemological assumption, conducting a qualitative study means that the researcher cannot keep a distance from the women being interviewed to be able to gather data and in so doing, be value free and objective." Denzin and Lincoln (2010:10) and Creswell (2007:18) claim that "qualitative investigators think they can get closer to the actor's perspective through detailed interviewing and observation". Because of the detailed interviewing observation, new perspectives and knowledge are constructed and developed (Merriam 2001). Validity was compounded as the researcher was the one who gathered data, and who kept each individual's identity strictly confidential. The researcher explained all the processes to the women before the interviews and made sure that, as participants, they were involved in checking whether the data collected and represented had been interpreted correctly, and whether their identities had been protected satisfactorily. To ensure the validity of this research and its claims, the supervisor cross-checked the researcher's interview data, notes, various documents, and emails used or collected.

4.8.1.2 Reliability

Niemann, Niemann, Brazelle, van Staden, Heyns and de Wet (2000:7) compare the difference between reliability in quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research, the researcher indicates that reliability is traditionally associated with accuracy, stability, consistency and repeatability, whereas in qualitative research, reliability eliminates the casual error that can influence the results to a certain extent, a curtailment of the traditional concept of reliability. The core meaning of methodological reliability in both methods is the absence of random errors. The errors identified can distort the object of the study. Smaling (1994:78) views reliability, in the sense of the absence of random sources of errors, as an aspect of

methodological objectivity because the pursuit of objectivity includes avoidance of distortions.

Niemann *et al.* (2000:7) raises a concern that if reliability is restricted to accuracy, stability, consistence and/or repeatability, it cannot be accepted as the unconditional norm as human sciences research studies phenomena that are neither stable nor uniform. Therefore, reliability should be seen as the unconditional norm, no matter how difficult it may be to identify random errors. To try to eliminate random errors in qualitative research, the researcher can apply various procedures to add to the reliability of the study. These procedures are first to distinguish between internal and external reliability.

To enhance reliability, all discussions were recorded and transcribed, with all actions during interviews and discussion noted. The researcher took notes of participants' facial expressions and pauses, noting when they left the room and how they sat when answering questions. Kvale (1996:88) suggests that research reliability generally refers to the reliability of results, which was ensured through the use of appropriate methodological procedures to obtain consistency and quality in data interpretations. Phenomenography, by its nature, makes this reliability problematic, because data analysis involves an inter-subjective approach by which the researcher's interpretation of the data is determined by the background and unique interpretation. This therefore limits the reliability of the results (Booth 1992). Kvale (1996), however, argues that research reliability may be enhanced through the use of several researchers to analyze the data. A research team approach allows for two strategies to be employed to improve reliability. In this study the recorded data ensured that reliability of data analyzed emanated from data collected.

The first approach involved the supervisor and the researcher in this study, who together coded the data derived from interview transcripts. The second approach involved the researcher evaluator developing categories through dialogue and discussion based on the researcher's findings. Sandberg (1997:205) describes this approach as "inter-judge reliability", determined by the extent to which other researchers are able to recognize the conceptions and categories determined by the first. The third approach used as the framework for this study was the researcher

having responsibility for initially analyzing data and developing categories, then, through discussion with the supervisor, confirming and adopting the outcome. Furthermore, in this study, a further reliability check was ensured by the interpretative steps being clearly delineated, thus highlighting the researcher's perspective and considerations at each stage of the research process, where interviewees were considered.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2007:107), validity is the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population and other cases or situations. There may also be a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondents in his or her own image, a tendency for the interviewee to seek answers that support preconceived notions, misperceptions on the part of the interviewer of what respondents are saying, and misunderstanding on the part of the respondent of what is being asked (Cohen *et al.* 2007:150). Kvale (2006:483), for example, is concerned about the "neglect of domination in research interview".

Merriam (2001:214) claims that there are several ethical issues that appear when the interviewer obtains the information he or she needs from the interviewee within a private sitting. In qualitative research and narrative enquiry, issues of anonymity appear. The participants were notified by telephone and emails about the study, with the aims, purpose, methods and anticipated benefits of this research explained. Through the interview method, the researcher expected openness and the comfort of the participants. No pressure of any kind was applied to encourage an individual to become a subject of the study. The rights of individuals to abstain from participating were respected and they were not forced to participate.

Internal reliability

Internal reliability refers to reliability *during* the research project. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:301-308), and Cohen and Crabtree (2008:336), the following measures can contribute to limiting random errors during qualitative research: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, member checks, thick description, access to audit trail and a reflexive journal. To demonstrate how well the processes lead to truthful and

accurate findings, the following verification procedures were used: triangulation and thick description. Data triangulation was used by employing different sources, namely a literature study, interviews and a focus group (Erlandson *et al.* 1993:137). This was to evaluate the naturalistic discussion to assist in the confidence of findings. The thick description helped the researcher to specify everything that the readers might need to know to understand the findings.

External reliability

External reliability refers to the *verification of the findings*, i.e., a thick description of aspects such as the status and role of the research subjects that the researcher has in mind, and exposition. It constructs measures that would limit random errors, but at the same time encourage a deeper understanding of the subjects researched and of the research process (Niemann *et al.*, 2000:9).

4.8.1.3 Trustworthiness

In research, one has to build trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) explain trustworthiness as the way in which the researcher can convince the audience and also themselves that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of. Trustworthiness was established by using techniques that provide trust through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through conformability (Erlandson *et al.* 1993). Guba and Lincoln (2005:210) remark that “reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the human as instruments”. In this study the researcher used a consent form and a letter from two ethical committees to ask the women to take part.

4.9 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The scope of the study was limited (by time, where one of the participants had to leave earlier due to another appointment she had) to eight women in leadership positions at the Central University of Technology, Free State and the University of the Free State. This study is based on women in leadership positions at the two institutions in the Free State, which means the findings cannot be valid for all women

in leadership positions worldwide. The findings of the study can therefore not be generalized to broader populations but can be regarded as investigative and indicative of possible trends. The lack of women in leadership positions limited the number of participants to those who are already in leadership and those who had the time and were prepared to participate in the project. The limited scope of the literature review on the topic also affected the study. The literature review was limited to the process of women empowerment in leadership and the processes of sense-making were not taken into account. Different people interpret events and situations differently, especially when it comes to processes of sense-making. However, the researcher constantly strove to let the objects speak for themselves.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter comprises a description and rationale for the methodology and sample selection process employed. It answered the question of what data the researcher collected to answer the research questions, and what instruments were used to collect that data, from whom and when it was collected, what the researcher did with the data, and how it was to be analyzed (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:31). This chapter presented the research design and approach of the study and provided a step-by-step account of the data analysis methodology.

The study explored the iterative approach to data analysis, the process of coding the data and the process of validating categories of description involving the researcher's supervisor. Data collection and analytical approaches were articulated to enable a transparent account of the research process. The research process was outlined together with the ethical considerations, and the data gathering techniques and data analysis methods used were explained.

The results are presented in the next chapter. These will include data analysis from the women at the two universities as participants in the focus group discussion and the individual interviews transcript as well as the feedback obtained through the research study. The data will be analyzed based on the research questions, with the focus on investigating and making sense of the challenges and voices of women leaders in becoming empowered in taking up their positions in HE.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING SENSE OF THE VOICES OF WOMEN LEADERS IN BECOMING EMPOWERED FOR TAKING UP THEIR POSITIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to make sense of the voices of the participating women leaders in Higher Education (HE) regarding their journeys towards assuming their own leadership identity. It discusses the narratives acquired during the focus group interviews and personal interviews, and each was different as the women were given a chance to express their thinking, views and opinions. With them being in different leadership positions, the researcher is interested in the unique aspects of their stories (Guba & Lincoln 1981). In keeping with assurances (see 4.7), the participants' discussions were confidential, and the researcher used pseudonyms to protect their identity (Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charles 2006:1). Data was collected and organized in terms of the domains that emanated from the literature study in Chapters 2 and 3. Themes were identified from the discussion, analyzed, and interpreted from a sense-making perspective.

In this chapter the women's stories are retold, which constitutes the first step in interpretation (Erikson 1968). The existing literature is juxtaposed with the interviews and reveals the challenges the women were facing. To be able to move towards implementing change in institutional practices the complexity of women's work and life challenges must be addressed. These are also linked to past research from a new perspective, as the complexities have not been articulated in other literature through a sense-making lens. Weick (1995:12) gives an example of a little girl who had the potential to be a poet. When she was told to be sure of her meaning before

she spoke, she asked, “How can I know what I think till I see what I say?” This became a recipe for organizational sense-making, as it is about justification (*my thoughts justify my earlier words*); choice (*I choose which words to focus on and which thoughts will explain them*); retrospective sense-making (*I look back at what I said earlier from a later point in time when the talking has stopped*); discrepancies (*I feel a need to see what I say when something does not make sense*); social construction (*I invoke the thought I have been socialized to label as acceptable*); and, action as the occasion for sense-making (*my act of speaking starts the sense-making process*). This means that talk not only reveals meaning but also provides opportunities for (re)construction and change (Wallas 1926 as quoted by Weick 1995).

Some people do not know what they think until they hear what they say, so it was envisaged that the interpretation of the women’s stories of their experiences would inform others when they step into leadership positions in Higher Education. The storytelling also conveyed the many identities that they were carrying in leadership positions as they came to know what they think and started to make sense of their situations.

The findings were based on the external and internal determinants as discussed in Chapters 2 (cf. 2.2.2.1) and 3, and the women’s family and childhood, community, socialization, self-image, identity formation, experiences and challenges will be analyzed. These will also include the women’s personal lives as part of their journey in leadership positions. All these factors are different from each other, though they have unifying threads, therefore, as they were narrating their stories, no generalization was made about all women. These women shared their common experiences as women in leadership positions.

The researcher’s task is merely to interpret the analysis from the focus group interviews. To make sure the aims of the research will be achieved the women’s stories are retold through interpretation of what was recorded and interpreted through sense-making. Thereafter, this will be repeated for the data collected from the personal interviews, and a summary of the findings will be given in conclusion.

5.2 FOCUS GROUP DATA REPORTING AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis and interpretation is the process of assigning meaning to the information collected, and arriving at a conclusion, implications and findings. It was a challenge to interpret the narrative data but through reading and organizing data from each question separately this could be done. The views and experiences told by the participants were grouped according to themes, and were then interpreted according to the various properties of sense-making, which guided the researcher in drawing the final conclusions and making recommendations (cf. Chapter 6).

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:486) define data analysis as a process of analyzing and interpreting the various forms of information gathered during the research. A spreadsheet with three columns was used, the first being for each research question (cf. 4.6), the second for the participants' responses, and the third for the findings based on interpretations from the chapters that relate to the themes and literature review.

Table 5.1 (below) presents the analysis of the focus group discussion. In analysing the focus group interviews, the researcher first listened to the audio-tapes and made notes of the commonality of certain themes, then transcribed them and looked for hesitation or punctuation, such as "oh", "aha" or "no". The researcher occasionally filled in missing words but verbal blunders were left unchanged as they became meaningful when individuals diverge from their regular speaking style (Erard 2007). They also helped to understand the impact or influence they had on the women.

Related themes were coded. In the interpretation the researcher tried to maintain the confidentiality of the participants and their trust, making sure not to violate their rights or pose any risk or harm to their dignity. This also helped in avoiding social embarrassment and shame, stigmatization and even damage to their status. Information was disclosed in a relationship of trust, with the expectation that this would not be breached or their identity recognized. Though the findings of the study had to be reported, it was necessary to ensure that participants' identifiable information was not disclosed (Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charles 2006:2).

The interpretation of the data emerging from the focus group interviews will be presented on two levels of interpretation, as follows.

5.2.1 Level 1: Interview of the emerging themes representing the participants' experiences

The stories told by the participants were about them in their leadership journey, but cannot be generalized to all women in leadership positions. The interpretation of the participants' responses (cf. Table 5.1) shows that most believed that the underrepresentation of women and the attitudes of men still prevented their voices from being heard. A lack of women's voices in leadership positions existed in different dimensions but in most cases there was a feeling of being discriminated against. One participant said that if she was not heard by her institution she would rather work elsewhere, revealing an assertiveness that women in leadership positions cannot blame only male dominance, but also their own lack of preparedness to stand up for their beliefs.

The participants reflected on their past but also on what was suspected, new and yet to be discovered. When they narrated their processes of leadership development the focus was more on their education, their identity formation, how the institutional culture had empowered them, and how they had to challenge the system to arrive where they were. They saw the processes of empowerment, either by the institution or by their own determination and effort, as a path to leadership that moulded their identities in the social and cultural context of the institutions and personal space.

After some consideration, the researcher decided to insert Table 5.1 in the text rather than as an addendum, as it provides insight into the interaction during the focus group interviews, as well as portraying the similarities and differences in the views of the participants. The emerging themes were indicated in the right-hand column to reflect the constructs of analysis. Some of the themes indicated in the last column were not discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, but emerged during the interview from the participants and need to be mentioned as what the participant's experiences. Such themes are the role of a woman and turning points.

Table 5.1 Data and analysis of focus group discussions

QUESTIONS	PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES	THEMES
<p>1. What processes of leadership development did you go through and how could this contribute to the empowerment of women leaders in the future?</p>	<p>Madineo: I was a student. I acquired qualifications. When I was studying at university while working in Government, the other university wanted to establish a centre. My lecturer recommended me. I was in a pool of those who qualified for that post. I got the post. I think if I did not have a Master's, I could not have got the post. I do not think I got the post because I am a woman. I think is because I developed my own leadership identity and voice, I think. There is formal preparation in oneself, which I picked up in all of us. I do not think being a woman got us here, but developing your own leadership and identity is something else.</p> <p>Thabang and Lerato: In the academic sphere we were asked by deans and DVC Academics to be in certain positions to take a role. We started as student assistants, and then we grew up. When the posts of Programme Heads were advertised, we applied for those positions. This happened by accident, as I was a student at graduate school (Lerato), I was asked to assist. Then when the post of Programme Director came, and I applied. Opportunity arose and I went through selection processes.</p> <p>Katlego: In all the posts that I have been until now, I have applied and went through interviews. I do not know if that was because I am a woman. But I prepared myself for all</p>	<p>Identity formation</p> <p>Education/role model</p> <p>Leadership identity</p> <p>Uniqueness of an individual</p> <p>Path of leadership</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Identity formation</p>

the posts.

2. How are unique identities formed and how does that implicate on leadership identity formation?

Madineo: My unique identity, I consciously decide on. I am so consistent in what I do. I became consistent; I take conscious decisions all the time. For example, the way I write emails differs from the others. One can notice whether these emails are written by me or not. Maybe is a formulation of identity. I decided to do things consciously. People write emails as if they are hoeing the field. Then I will take this type of email to a meeting to be discussed and people will agree with me after they realize the point I am making. Women must not put their gender first. I never reported to a woman. I think I know my identity. I grow up very strong. I normally take people I work with together. For example, I recommended one women for a senior post and mentored her, but because we are in a male workplace, that woman is still under the leadership of a man. I realize sometimes you lead people who know more than you do. I had to find a way to deal with that. That is a skill I was never aware of. I do not think I retain the same identity. I realize my identity has changed. There are things I used to do that I cannot do them anymore as a leader. My world has become very small. People recognize me even at funerals, even in the malls I take people along with me. As a leader I had to protect integrity and quality of academic process. My identity as someone who works with students, which makes one not popular most of the time; one needs to be firm nationwide and at university. I made a rule now that I must start greeting people all the time Sometimes I realize I have to talk to a student. I had to change my identity and snap at that student and at the same time I empower that particular student.

Thabang: My personality did not change. I still submit to my husband, I do not take my leadership position home. At home am not professor, I am myself. Otherwise, work should stay at work, keep everything professional at work. But at school where my

Uniqueness of an individual
Leadership identity
Identity development
Internalized attitudes
Social identity
Workplace dynamics
Changes of identities
Respect
Self-image
Family and childhood
Family work support

children are I can be addressed as professor in the committees I serve in. If I look at my children now they can argue with their husbands whereas with me, my husband still dominates. I will never change that. I do not like conflict. I keep everything professional.

Community

Lerato: A position asks an individual to grow. You see quickly what you are supposed to do. You do not become a different person. You develop skills suitable for the positions. We differ from men, our personalities are unique, we are caring. I think one has to get freedom from her superior, have a trust relationship with supervisors so you do what you want and learn by experience and practice. No one must look over your shoulder. Be responsible.

Identity Development/
Formation

Work - family

Katlego: The leadership position has affected my way of life. I choose who I socialize with. I now behave in a manner that makes me to maintain my identity. **Lerato** asked her, "Do you mean to socialize with students?" **Katlego** replied **no**. All the participants said: **No! No!** with emphasis.

Socialization

3. What are the challenges that you went through in the processes of leadership positions?

Lerato: Maybe I must say this: female leaders create their own wall. Women are sometimes sensitive to be a woman, when you are appointed you must do the job either being a woman or a man. Women must not allow men to create the two environments. It all depends on the environment. The culture in your workplace is where the leader can create environment that becomes bigger. I was fortunate, I work in a nice environment. I am the only women among men. I do not allow men to create a wall for me or for them to create two environments, one for me and one for them. This depends on the work environment, culture in the workplace. Leaders create situations but my experience shows that women create their own trouble.

Leadership style

Attitude of men

Institutional culture

The role of women

Madineo: As a leader one has to protect one's integrity and make yourself available for

academic processes. I have never been happier. I do not like it here but this is what comes with the package. I did not realize this is a challenge until **Thabang** mentioned it now. My leadership positions make me to talk to students a lot. During registration I become a queue manager, this does not mean because I am a senior person I cannot do what junior staff does. I was an operational person before, if need arises I can still do that. I have to lead by example. The other challenges are as a single parent I have to take care of my children. My children must not feel I am a leader while I pursue a career. I do not compare myself to men; I just want to be a good leader. A lot around me has changed. Women are still discriminated against. I think we also feel male intimidation but we survive differently. Sometimes I hear my colleagues, men, for that matter, who will come to me and say, "Did you really say that? Nobody has ever talked to that man like you did." I will ask them, "Did I do it arrogantly?" "No." Then it's a compliment, some men are afraid to take their own men on.

Workplace dynamics

Leadership identity

Family - work

Discrimination

Gender exposed to prejudice

Institutional culture /structure

The role of women

Researcher: Does it mean in the long run these challenges become your acceptance?

Madineo: No, is an environment tolerance. As women we do not want to be intimidated.

Katlego: I think is also a demographic situation call, because men were in leadership positions for long. But fortunately men do not intimidate me.

Social construction

Self-confidence

Madineo: Sometimes I observed men run to me for advice. They will say I have asked so and so, referring to other women, for the tasks, but the advice they got from you they refused to do what I asked them, just because the women managed to stand their point, men feel threatened. If women asked me if I could lay a grievance then I will advise and if male find out that I held another women's hand then I am a bad person but I ignore them.

Respect

Leadership style

Prejudice and

discrimination

Thabang: Being an academic woman, as a leader is a lonely position. I mentioned to one of my friends that being in this position I am very lonely. People who work with me, they do not want to have a cup of tea with me. I sacrifice my identity, and am not a loner. As I move up the ladder I am very lonely. I am a people person. But because of my leadership positions I become a loner. But I still have respect for them [it was clear from her voice that she is really hurt and from her facial expression]. Another thing, is bullying, specifically in our institutions. I was shucked out of the office by Professor X. You cannot challenge it. I cannot trust them because you will be fired, though we cannot generalize. The challenge is you cannot trust men who are bullies. I feel intimidated by such men. Former structure accommodated men. Is our history. In Higher Education there is academic jealousy.

Lack of recognition

Institutional hierarchical structure

Lack of support (social networking)

Discrimination and intimidation

Researcher: Thabang, did your position make people to keep a distance from you?

Thabang: I don't know, is just that I don't have anyone. I cannot drink tea with students just as I cannot associate myself with the rector. Is just *that this is a negative experience. Lerato intervened and said, "Students, no"*.

Internalize attitude

Madineo: I can see you agree as Academics. I, myself, I have never been happier. I don't like it. I did not realize it until your comment now. I make it my point that I talk to students. My world is different from yours.

Unique set of attributes

Katlego: In my situation, my challenges are to break the barrier to let staff to communicate. People do not talk. I also think is a demographic thing, men have been long in leadership positions, they do not want to accept women. Men make decisions. Women are not represented in decision-making positions like myself; I cannot say my

Synthesize the internal and external

voice is not heard, as I do not sit in committees where decisions are made.

Self-concept

Social construction

4. What have you learnt in this leadership position that differs from the position you had before?

Madineo: There were policies that excluded people, that if you work in exam section you cannot study, the reason being, you will see the question papers. In Higher Education being a leader is demanding. Qualifications are needed. Women have challenges of making babies, following their men where they work. As a leader women do not work normal hours as they have to follow their children to a match. As a woman in leadership position in Higher Education you have to command respect. Demand in Higher Education is worse than anywhere else. Lots of women in Higher Education Support positions have no qualifications, which makes it difficult for them to command respect. This is not a kingdom in one eye; one has to command the subject, research as a leader. To be in a leadership position one has to acquire qualifications. This entails going to conferences. Go to conferences. Know what you are lacking. I realized I am not positioned internationally, I must do something. The other thing, women do not support each other. Period.

Lack of social networking

Family, work and emotional challenges

Leadership style

Learning and growth

Accountability of Higher Education

Lack of support

Leadership style

Empowerment

Identity formation

Katlego: I am not a public speaker, but the position goes with it. I had to know what am good at and help me to perform in whatever I do. I make sure that when I write a document, when I sign it, am proud of it.

Thabang: I think if one knows herself, not if I know myself. If I do not have the necessary skills, I will go to conferences. I will work on my weaknesses.

5. What sense can be made from the voices of women towards their leadership identity?

Lerato: Young people, they are impatient, they need things instantly. As a leader to make sense one must get freedom from your supervisors. There should be a trust in a relationship of you and your supervisor. Do things on your own, learn by experience. In leadership positions women must develop their own voice. Know your strengths and

Empowerment

Self-confident

Assertiveness

weaknesses, have people skills as a leader.

Madineo: I am from the same institution. The same professor cannot do that to me. I once locked him for three hours in my office. I do not succumb to male domination. Though they will label you. I rather take those consequences. They will say she is not married. So you choose to keep quite. **Thabang** replied, I am intimidated because you can be booted.

Prejudice
Institutional
hierarchical structure

Thabang: No is not the style, we cannot generalize. In the past men did not abuse or intimidate women.

Attitude of men

Researcher: Is it because of leadership style or because you are a woman?

Madineo: Maybe the researcher wants to check if it is in your leadership style. Hey, am good, am good in this thing, I cannot succumb in a job just to keep the job. I will do it somewhere. If you need professional fight you will get it. The space I occupy is occupied. Period. I cannot be easily pushed.

Turning point

Thabang: I did not know how to handle it.

Occupational
segregation

Lack of social
networks

Katlego: I am not a public speaker but I make sure that when I go to talk I prepare thoroughly. Know what you are good at. I empowered myself. I went through all sorts of conferences about women in leadership positions. Luckily, being in all these positions, I was under the leadership of women who made me autonomous. That made me assertive and able to play a role.

Empowerment

Mentorship
Leadership style

Madineo: When you are in leadership positions you are an ambassador of the university. In Higher Education they have created a space to put women in leadership

Culture and leadership

positions. That sensitivity is there, women enjoy the beautification and men had to tolerate that, when women are given the opportunity we do not use it. For voices of women to be heard, women must stand their ground; need to get the crisp with the subject matter. Women must not shred each other. Gender must not come before the work. What comes out of the leadership position as a woman must match the identity. Give other women a sense of why as a woman you occupy the position and **live** the position. I will give you this example, women run to me for advice. Women will come to me and I will tell them what to do. From the advice they got from me, they become strong. Just because I held another women's hand, I am seen as someone who influence women very bad. Do not put gender before the work. Women must give people a sense why they occupy the leadership positions. When you are in a leadership position, you are an ambassador.

Workplace dynamics

Socialisation

Career path and gender works

6. How do you develop your own voice and identity in leadership positions?

Madineo: If we look at Affirmative Action, where Department of Education said let's have women in senior positions where they said let's pull women in, at least that sensitivity is there but women instead of letting their voices be heard they enjoy the beautification as women. We do not do a good job to let the voices of women be heard. As a woman one must be involved in church activities, work committees and let the men be aware that you are woman, not a man. Let the men know that being a woman you are not underperforming. There are women who will come late in the meeting and excuse themselves because they went to do hair and nails and what they say does not match the clothes, nails and hair they wear. I am a mother of students, even when I deregister students; I have to do that with a motherly touch. I have to find a way of advising. Let people be aware that being women qualify you not to be an underperformer. Is like when someone's child is sick, I must understand that because tomorrow it will be my child. That should be accommodated.

Power, leadership and women

Leadership role

Community

Self-concept

Education

Socialisation

Role model

Leadership style/traits

Family and work experiences

Thabang: Sometimes situations impact the voice of a woman. As women we have to empower ourselves. I have to work on my weaknesses. I do not need to stay in these situations that have bad influence on me. I just feel upset and stressed for a while and continue with my work. I do not want to be a failure. This was when Madineo asked her: *If you find yourself in the same situation, where you were treated less, would you walk out again?* Thabang said, *I will address the matter in a good manner.*

Mentorship/role model
Turning point
Support of top management

Katlego: Women must empower themselves. Some women are afraid to talk to unions. Know Labour Relation Acts. Base arguments on facts, do not come with hearsay. We need to mentor other women. I have not done any.

Empowerment

Madineo: As a leader, motivate young women. The way you carry yourself, how you talk, learning new rules sharing with young women. Women must not put their gender issue in leader for the voice to be heard, women must stand up get a grip with the subject matter. As women we have power but we allow men to rule us. The question we should ask is what is it that we have done to those women who report to us? Men do not care.

Social networking
The role of women
Power
Socialization
Attitude of men

7. Describe the leadership style you found when you took this position, and how did it affect you as a woman?

Madineo: When I am in the boardroom, I do not see myself as a woman. I am there to perform tasks. As a leader, as a woman, I do not succumb to men dominance, I prepare a lot. Men can label you. I rather take consequences than to succumb. As a woman you choose to succumb to male dominance. Women must not feel intimidated by male. Is a pity we serve differently as women in the situation? Women must believe in themselves. This is in your leadership style. If I am good in a thing I do it, and if someone feels I must

Leadership identity
The role of institutional culture
Leadership style

keep quiet I won't be intimidated, I will rather do it somewhere else. I do not push people but I cannot be pushed easily.

Katlego: In this position, I am still challenged. I have not exercised my power to be heard. The current structure does not allow me really to be heard. I am busy with road shows to reach all the levels on campuses. We are talking about our unit in the road show, we try to reposition ourselves. I will not say I do not have a voice because I did not yet position the unit. I would not say I have obstacles, I have not been out there. What affects me is that you will be surprised most people on campus do not know much about this unit.

Role of women in the workplace

Social network/role model

Internalization

8. Have you encountered a situation that has impacted on your leadership identity? How did it affect you?

Thabang: The bullying, intimidation. [She paused.] You know, after we discussed this, I was thinking that if I have to empower myself I must go on this man. I cannot stay in this situation. The situation has bad impact. It can only be improved by development.

Turning point

Attitude of men

Thabang: No, no. I do not want to stay in a depressed mood. I do not want to be a failure. But it leaves me with a feeling of failure, if you are treated in a less value.

Women Support

Leadership style

Researcher: Does it affect you to an extent that you think you don't belong there?

Madineo asked Thabang: If the same happened to you, would you walk out again?

Leadership style

Thabang replied: No, I will go to his office. There is no use to be angry all the time. See if I can start a conversation again. There is a specific reason why we have this situation.

	<p>Madineo: My situation is different. I encountered a few. I realized and learnt that everything is complete when it is documented. I normally write an email to confirm any discussion I had verbally. People can change and get you on what you said if you do not document it.</p>	Path of leadership
	<p>Katlego: I have never experienced that situation. I have never had anything that came back to haunt me. I like to be informal and flexible.</p>	Leadership style
	<p>Thabang: You see, Katlego, Madineo's situation is different; she had to communicate with more audience than you.</p>	Workplace dynamics Cultural factor
	<p>Madineo: You require different things for different people. In my unit everything is rules, laws. I am a custodian of the Senate; I cannot live everything in a casual tone.</p>	The role of institutions Self-identity
	<p>Thabang: It differs.</p>	
<p>Researcher: Does the situation affect your performance?</p>	<p>Madineo: No, it helps me to improve my leadership skills. I lead ladies, I saw gender come into play unnecessary. There is a tone of sexism in men which is something negative, being a woman does not mean you have to be men.</p>	Internalized attitude Attitude of men
<p>9. How can their voices provide direction to potential women</p>	<p>Katlego: As women we need to mentor our young women. I feel bad I do not mentor</p>	Social networking (role model and mentorship)

leaders in a way that future leaders in constructing their own paths to transform their empowerment process?

anyone.

Madineo: I do mentor a lot of women. Though there are a lot of challenges in all different interfaces, whether at church, community and work. Being women does not qualify you to be an underperformer. Oh, am talking a lot, oh, there are rules to protect me

Leadership development
Mentorship
Socialisation

10. Why are women under-represented in key university leadership positions?

Thabang: This is historical. In the past universities were dominated by men. They feel the universities are now sensitive; they have opened up to women. Though there is still lot of prejudice. Is not easy for men to give up their power, the gatekeeping will be there to keep their power. I think it's history, is a thing that comes out of the past, our culture, even in the black culture, men are dominating figures. If I look now my children and their spouses they can talk the way they want with them, me, I could not do that to my husband. I have accepted over the years. But maybe things will change for us at the workplace. *[Other participants laughed at her, they said she is old.]*

Under-representation
Role of women
Attitude of men
Workplace dynamics
Powerlessness

Katlego: In my field, we do not have that domination. We do not have black women to occupy leadership positions. It also comes with the territory of a profession.

Institutional hierarchical structure

Madineo: We were mostly oppressed. In Higher Education in general things are more demanding than any other organization. Before menopause, women have lot of responsibilities; they make babies, follow husbands all over when they make their career. Work becomes more demanding. Women as leaders end up not having any formal working hours. Most women do not have qualification in support section in Higher Education. Higher Education commands respect and is difficult. Is not one-eyed like government. Women in Higher Education are expected to publish as part of their job. That is why women progress late they could not do it earlier. Most women get leadership positions when they are old. Or late in their age. Women cannot command respect in

Identity formation
Work - family Support
Gender discrimination
Career path and peak
Institutional culture

their own environment.

Researcher: What about “pull her down syndrome”?

Madineo: Women do not support one another. Period. You know, I don’t respect women with lipstick and nails. I respect expertise of women. Women pull one another down. Period. When women cry for their men us as women we do not support them, we laugh and at the end that woman cannot stand up for a man. Men protect their position. Is quite a challenge and I feel it every day. [*She sighed very strongly “huuuu”.*]

Lack of support

Empowerment

Thabang: Women are emotional beings, even men are emotional but not like us. Lots of women fight in a workplace.

Women traits

Madineo: Let me tell you, men are emotional beings too, they braai together, drink together. Women do not support each other.

Identity formation

Social construction

Community

11. How does male-dominated university leadership impact on women's professional growth and development?

Thabang: is a challenge. I will not let men take me down. Is it a bad experience when it happens?

Social construction

Madineo: Men do not care, to them is business as usual. We need professional growth and development. Unfortunately when one individual woman was appointed in a leadership position, a top position, she forgot other women. She behaves like men in leadership positions. We need policy to develop women, those policies do not exist in Higher Education. When we are short of women we let other women who are in leadership positions to leave. Is really a crisis. We need divine intervention. We need new governance enforcement of women in leadership. I would not have allowed you to go, is a pity I know when I saw your email that you are no more there.

Institutional hierarchical structure and culture

Leadership development

Emotional

Researcher: Does it mean men have power?

Madineo: We give it to them [she frowns]. We are leaders here; the question should be what is it that we have done to others? I did a lot. I went 7 months to shortlist a woman. The system can come to collapse without this woman but after she was appointed they put a man above her.

Lack of support

Power

Katlego: The problem is even today we do not understand what to be achieved by gender inequality. People in leadership explain this in a very horrible way. Their explanation is wrong and it makes women to feel inferior. Our circle of influence should be up there. Women are assets of Higher Education up there in top management. When policies are made women do not have strong voices of women who will challenge and change that as it impact on women. Soft issues that affect women such as age, gender are forgotten, focus is on racism only. Women up there must make sure that they implement these policies.

Self Concept (lack of confidence)

Gender pay gap

Power

Madineo: If we look at arrogance. Men arrogance is tolerated but women never. Maybe is Africanism that women must succumb. White or black. White women have to leave employment while their husbands are advancing their career.

Gender
Attitude of men
Social construction

Katlego: Someone once told me that when she goes to a meeting she has to put on high heels, she is good, she did a lot on gender issue.

Self-image

Madineo: “Shu”, I sometimes forget I am a woman.

Identity formation

Madineo: Is a societal stereotype. Men pick gender even if is not necessary. We once had a meeting discussion section 3.1 that the students do not qualify. There was nothing about gender there. These men just picked up a gender issue. It was not necessary. Men try by all means to intimidate me, they try to pigeonhole me. I refuse to stay. I mean the documents I deal with there is no way it accommodates gender. The creation of Higher Education and Training. Higher Education now feels the challenge, the country has taken us on now in government platform. The national assembly expects us in Higher Education to give state of readiness-qualification, state of readiness the reason being in the past Higher Education did not account for what was expected from them. We are sitting with tradition and current laws.

Occupational segregation
Career path and gender work
Discrimination
Self-concept
Attitude of men

Even though the participants showed assertiveness in some of the issues that they had to deal with, there were particular challenges that confronted them as they moved through the processes towards getting to a leadership position. Some of the themes that emerged were the following.

5.2.1.1 Identity formation

It was noted that the identity of the participants had developed in different ways since their childhood. Identity formation became a process to them and during its development they had a choice about their identity. This was confirmed by Madineo when she mentioned that she had decided to do things consciously, such as making it her motto to greet people. She said she did not think she retained the same identity as her position required her to change. Lerato acknowledged what was said, saying, *“A position asks from an individual to grow, but that does not make you a different person. By growing, one is developing different skills suitable for the positions but still maintaining the femininity.”*

The participants reflected on their past in terms of what was known, what was suspected, what was new, and what was newly discovered. When they narrated their processes of leadership development the focus was more on their education, what their identity formation was like, and how the institutional culture often empowered them to be where they were at the time. By telling stories of how they became leaders they all indicated that they were chosen not because of their sex but because of competencies, and as such they possessed leadership abilities. Though some said their identity formation had started accidentally, they all agreed that one acquires certain qualifications to become a leader. However, all participants agreed that there is formal preparation that they all need to follow such as managerial, academic and intellectual leadership. Being in leadership positions, all participants said that it had impacted on their leadership identity, and as such the issue of empowerment as an agency “tool” for the development of women was raised and that assertiveness and the exertion of power developed with time.

One participant noted what she felt was important to identity formation: *“I think I have developed my own leadership identity and voice. There is formal preparation in*

oneself, which I picked up in all of us. I do not think being a woman got us here, but developing your own leadership and identity is something else.”

The way their unique identities were formed and how these impacted on their leadership identity formations were also narrated. Most felt strongly that they still maintained their individual identity, and the discussion emphasized the various components of leadership identity, such as internalized attitudes, workplace dynamics, changes in identities and respect. One said, “*I decided how to adapt to*”, while another said, “*... my identity has not changed*”. It was valuable to note that women do realize that to be in leadership positions they do not need to change their unique attributes. This showed that participants knew how to construct meaning from their experiences and that they had realized that their identity could be influenced by the social factors and the new environment in which they found themselves. This was acknowledged by one participant, who said that the identity formation of an individual does change as the position asks her to grow, but that one has to develop particular skills and realize that being in a leadership position does not mean leading like a man. The multiple skills of women were mentioned by Lerato: “*Women have different personalities which are uniquely different to that of men.*” Such as “caring”, “trust”, and “responsible”. Finally, this challenged the participants as they were often not seen as leaders due to the different values and attitudes of most of their male colleagues. Authenticity in leadership was also mentioned as they indicated how they struggled with being able to feel for themselves in their leadership roles and not compromise their values.

In conclusion, it was realized that the social environment played a major role in influencing the identities of the participants, and they knew they had to develop their own unique approach to leadership.

5.2.1.2 The multiple roles of women

A woman’s identity is not disconnected from her multiple roles as care-giver. On the issue of family-work relationship, participants felt that often single parents who need to take care of family and children are not sufficiently acknowledged by their institutions. Women had more care-giving responsibilities, and as mothers they had

to attend to those responsibilities. In addition, because of a perceived incompatibility between the requirements of being a woman and those of leadership they were often required to “soften” their leadership styles to gain the approval of their constituents. Women who do not temper their agency and competence with warmth and friendliness risk being disliked and less influential. Men face few such expectations to be agreeable while exercising power.

The institutional culture does not always support women in this regard, resulting in a situation in which the work-family element is often overlooked. One participant mentioned that institutions lacked flexibility in accommodating women’s roles as wives, mothers and leaders. The participants all agreed that work and family should be respected and that women should support one another in this regard.

As women tend to carry a large care-giving responsibility they should not be deprived of the privilege of being mothers or attending to their families. The participants’ realization that even though they often lacked support they had shared their feelings and come to an enhanced awareness, enabled them to make sense of these conditions, while forming a united front in speaking out about the situation.

5.2.1.3 The lack of women’s voices

The lack of women’s voices in leadership positions had various causes. From the discussions in the focus group the following factors were thought to have contributed to the silencing of women leaders’ voices: discrimination, victimization and a lack of support, lack of educational opportunities, lack of individual confidence, lack of social networking and lack of encouragement. From the participants’ stories, for them not to be part of an institution’s decision-making processes was in a way silencing their voices. This was expressed clearly by Katlego, who indicated that her voice was not heard because she did not form part of the decision-making committee. To overcome the institutional way of silencing them, most were of the opinion that women have to know their strengths and weaknesses and be prepared to do things differently.

It is apparent from the account shared by the participants about their voices not being heard that women in leadership positions were not at the stage where they wanted to be as there were still barriers to their voices being heard. As women are not well represented in top management, men still overpower their voices with their conversation. The notion of discrimination against women in leadership by the culture of the institutions was also a way of ensuring that women's voices are not heard. Silencing women was regarded as sexist by one of the participants, when she said the tone in which men sometimes addressed women was also a way of men silencing women. The participants acknowledged that men sometimes make it a gender issue, even when it is unnecessary.

To show the impact of discrimination on the voices of women, Madineo told a story of how her voice had been silenced when she recommended a woman for a senior post: "... *but because we are in a male-dominated environment, that woman is still subjected to the leadership of men*". This was an indication that even though women sometimes do get senior posts, they are often still under the leadership of men who constitute the larger number of decision-makers and as such silence the voices of women. This was supported by Madineo; she strongly said that if she was not to be listened to by her institution she would rather be involved in leadership elsewhere. In the case of another participant being silenced, Madineo said "... *the same person who did that to her will not do that to me. I won't allow it.*" On a positive side, there were women who did not accept being silenced. Although the above findings indicated that they mostly blamed male dominance for the silencing of their voices, there was also a determination that woman leaders should be prepared to stand up for what they believed in.

The participants were of the opinion that institutions often merely put women into senior positions to comply with the requirements of the Department of Labour or the Department of Higher Education. Despite the progress that had been made through the empowerment of women, women still have to face obstacles that prevent their voices from being heard. This was attested to by one participant: "*To be able to overcome and eliminate the barriers and restrictions which are eroding women's voices, women must also be involved in other community activities, to let men become aware that they are women who know what they are doing.*" This participant

continued that women must realize that if they are in leadership positions they are ambassadors of their universities. She indicated that for women's voices to be heard they "*must stand their ground; women must become masters of their field of study*".

One of the participants saw the lack of their voices in the institutional structure, which also tends to hamper their audibility. Some felt that women must empower themselves to have their voices heard, one indicating that being a leader in Higher Education was rather demanding, and that one needs to be qualified and act in a way that commands respect. She continued to say that she had realized that she was not internationally positioned, but that she was prepared to do something about it and as such ensure that her voice as a woman in academia was heard. This was supported by another participant: "... *women must develop their own voices and focus on their people skills*".

As women leaders were telling their stories, it became clear that many of the decisions in Higher Education were still being taken without significantly acknowledging the contributions that women can make. It is important for women in leadership positions to play an active role in changing the environment for future women and in shaping the future.

5.2.1.4 Institutional hierarchical structure and culture

The voices of women leaders are often restricted by institutional structures and the existing culture. The women leaders were able to tell stories about how they experienced institutional hierarchical structures and cultures. Being in leadership positions, some of the participants as professionals realized that the institutional structure did not necessarily support their multiple roles, particularly Madineo: "*We need professional growth and development as well as an understanding of the complexities of womanhood. We do need policies to develop women, but we also need divine interventions.*" The word "need" is an indication that the empowerment of women by institutions is often lacking. Elements of unhappiness were also introduced, whereby some participants felt their world had shrunk, specifically when dealing with students. For women in leadership to expect "divine intervention" is an

indication that these women need reasonable access to positions of power which they do not have.

The above findings indicate that women are granted the positions and resources, but often lack the support from the environments in which they find themselves. To overcome the challenges in the institutions most participants indicated that women should join hands and give people a sense of why they too occupy these positions, and that it is not a case of women not being competent enough, lacking skills or being less knowledgeable.

5.2.1.5 Communication and socialization

The issues of socialization and lack of opportunities to socialise were concerns expressed by the participants. This resulted in loneliness among women holding leadership positions. Some of the responses touched on the participants' emotions, for example, one felt "lonely" when her self-image was low. The loneliness expressed by the participant was not caused by her being without a friend but rather her definite need for a sound relationship between her institutional role and that of woman and mother. Women leaders expressed feelings of loneliness and a desire for more opportunities to talk to someone on a professional and a personal level. They wished to share their experiences with other women who had a comparable level of influence in leadership.

They supported one another and indicated that it depended on the type of leadership they were in. Another factor that related to the lack of communication was when one of the participants said that she did not have anyone to drink tea with, thus emphasizing the lack of support for women in leadership positions, notably in efforts to establish connectedness between the participants in the institution. The participants felt a need to have a leadership forum in which women, wives and mothers could meet. The issue of self-image manifesting in loneliness can be attributed to different standards set by institutions to leaders, as well as stereotypes and expectations that lead to negative reactions to women. This causes women to feel they cannot develop a clear sense of their strengths and weaknesses.

The challenge of breaking the barriers of communication was mentioned, saying that men still dominated decision-making positions. Even though women hold positions of leadership the cultural, attitudinal and institutional attitudes are slow to change. Women face the most resistance to their leadership when appointed in positions that have previously been largely male-dominated and characterized as masculine; however, the participants agreed that the acceptance of women as leaders in many areas had grown.

On a similar note, one of the participants said her challenge was to get her staff to communicate freely, as she found that “*people do not talk*”. From this statement the finding could be that communication does not start in leadership positions but at lower levels, where staff must engage in communicating so that when they reach leadership positions they are able to connect easily. One participant supported the statement by saying communication barriers often made it difficult to command respect as women did not get sufficient opportunities to speak out or to take the lead in committees.

The lack of opportunities to lead discussions often hampers women’s communication. For example, one participant said she was aware that she was not a public speaker but the situation she found herself in made her prepare thoroughly when having to make presentations. The participants agreed that, as a leader, one has to have “people skills”, know one’s weaknesses and strengths and be able to lead and communicate. One participant said: “*You require different things to different people. I cannot live everything in a casual tone; there is a tone of sexism in men.*” This became a psychological issue, as a problem of perception by men that came to interpreted in an emotional way. One participant mentioned that she felt intimidated and might also lose her job. The cultures of the institution where prejudice still exists become a barrier to communication. The attitudes of men take the form of defensiveness or superiority, as mentioned by one participant who was asked how she could talk to men that way. This was an indication of perception in which the environment encouraged men to be seen as leaders. The environment also became a barrier to communication when the institution’s process of women’s development was slow.

5.2.1.6 Discrimination, stereotyping and underrepresentation

The participants acknowledged that women in leadership positions faced more obstacles than their male counterparts. They felt that although women worked hard and had the necessary skills, the number in leadership positions was few compared to that of males. The participants believed that there was a lack of development and of measures for retaining women in leadership positions. They were of the opinion that institutions should intentionally design strategies that would stimulate the professional growth of women in leadership positions or those with the potential to enter leadership. In this regard, Madineo mentioned a case in which a woman working in one of the support sections was not allowed to study because of the possibility that she would have access to the examination papers. When this was seen as power that men had, Madineo said that instead of concentrating on men's power, "*the question should be what we must do to women who report to us*".

The patriarchal domination caused women to be seen as subordinate, as they were made to think they needed the permission of males to make decisions. The development of women by institutions is lagging, as observed by participants. The social factors such as the responsibility of rearing children also obstructed them. The low status of women is particularly evident in support units, where few black women are in leadership positions. One participant agreed that even the white women were not there yet, as they were following their husbands who were busy building their careers. From the stories, a lack of self-assertion was observed as an obstacle, and participants agreed that women were creating their own troubles as they became sensitive about being women. One said she was hesitant as this could be a conscious decision, and said that women often did not support one another.

The discrimination that women as leaders encounter could be emotional, as affirmed by the participants. The discrimination caused some to feel fear, uncertainty, withdrawal and loss. Rather than simply dismissing the emotions they properly made sense by realizing, as mentioned by one, that the position required an individual to grow from a leadership point of view, and that must not make women different. They must also get freedom from their superiors and have a trusting relationship. This

finding has highlighted that the element of resistance to change plays a significant role in how organizational members make sense of the change.

The word “discrimination” was often used by participants to indicate how the situation affected them. They told stories about their experiences of leadership and admitted that although leadership included hard work it also had a positive side. Cases of intimidation in the institutions also made women feel less valued. One said that even though they often had to experience male intimidation they had to find ways to survive, and this would stop them from succumbing to male dominance. It happens that women are often “forgotten” when invitations are extended to social events, and are excluded from decision-making events. The participants felt that women’s under-representation in leadership positions, as well as some existing stereotyping, contributed to their exclusion. The findings also indicated that participants observed men labelling them. Even in such a situation, participants realized that being a leader was not easy, so they were prepared to take the consequences that came with leadership. They all agreed that all these barriers can be removed by development. These differing experiences appeared linked to sharp contrasts in the women’s perceptions of their acceptance as leaders.

The findings indicate the gaps that prevail in some institutions, whereby leaders in top positions still treat women leaders as unequal. This was supported by what happened when one professor chased away a woman who was also in a leadership position, instead of engaging in communication to solve the problems. The findings indicated that women as leaders need to understand when prejudice occurs so that they can understand the nature of prejudice. In this discussion, prejudice occurred when women as leaders were seen as possessing less leadership ability than men. This one participant was negatively judged, an indication of the negative attitude that prevails towards women in leadership positions. It was from these findings that one could see where fear emerged.

The self-identity and self-image of individuals were affected; their self-confidence was affected by an environment that was not accommodative. Issues of victimization were emphasized by some of the participants in one institution, and the bullying created fear and thus affected them emotionally. One participant confronted the

bullying in a positive way, calling the man who did the bullying to apologize, whereas to one it was a stressful situation. When emotions of people are affected, factors such as stress, selflessness, and self-worthlessness develop. The findings indicated that the fear led to autonomic arousal, whereby the participant's ongoing activities were interrupted by the bullying, which in the end led to the participant not being able to make sense and her frames and cues were affected. Situations such as these are marked by a crisis in identity construction and the resultant loss of sense being made. This was supported by the recent Report of the Independent Assessor into the affair of CUT (2012:19), as evidence of how bullying at one of the universities looked like. The report also broke down the issue of perception and male dominance. A former executive colleague of the vice-chancellor, for example, wrote to him, "I feel bullied, humiliated, shamed, talked down, and emotionally abused." And, "I am not an abused wife, an abused child, a dog or a punching bag to be treated this way – but this is how you make me feel."

This was an indication of discrimination whereby the word "dog" was used in Higher Education institutions to refer to people. It reflects the pain that one feels when not appreciated, and which will lead to the emotional stress that can cause arousal. This action was experienced as stressful and humiliating by women in leadership positions. In this regard it was shown that victimization was from top management in their different categories, albeit men were also victimized. The unwillingness of men to accept women in leadership was the cause of discrimination, intimidation, stereotyping and perceptions. Even if the regulations and policies of the Department of Higher Education forced institutions to change, men would still not be ready to acknowledge women in leadership positions.

Participants were observed to have also felt the stereotyping element from the institutions; as a result their emotions caused them to make decisions. One participant commented that for the men to dominate the institution and use their power was a societal stereotype, whereby men picked gender issues even if it was not necessary. This made men try all means to intimidate and pigeonhole women, demonstrating the dilemma that women in leadership are facing.

Although participants were assertive, they acknowledged that men in institutions still had power. They acknowledged that it was they who sometimes gave men the power though leadership was still in the hands of men. The participants held different opinions about power, one saying that she felt it every day and that it was not easy for men to give it up. The gate-keeping would persist. For example, one participant said men would let women carry boxes while they looked on, and she made a point that men must use those muscles to carry the boxes. They would reply that it was because she was not married that she behaved in a certain way. Madineo wanted to show men that the masculinity men use was superior to femininity and that while men see themselves as having power they must redirect it in the right direction.

Even though there was much uncertainty in the leadership processes, participants made sense by identifying their challenges and were able to express their fear. The human element was identified when women as leaders had feelings and could also be hurt. The participants were unanimous that women should stand their ground, claim their right to be supported and that those discriminatory measures should be scrapped. They agreed that much improvement had taken place but that much still needed to be done to optimize institutional support.

The experiences shared by these women are that women are not having proportionate leadership positions and are treated only as instruments of campaigns for Affirmative Action. The participants made several useful suggestions for improving the status of women in leadership positions. Important portfolios are to be given to women, as power and position strengthen leadership. One participant supported this by saying that when people talk about racism and employment equity they must also talk about age and gender equity in terms of race. She said those “soft” issues were not being addressed. Stressing initiation of women one said that they should “come out of their shells” to take up positions. She said one has to *live* the position.

5.2.1.7 The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions

During the focus group interviews, the participants were concerned about the continuous under-representativeness of women in leadership. One said, “*It is*

historical, in the past universities were dominated by men.” This clearly indicated that the same “history” still exists as women continue to be underrepresented. This would suggest that apart from historical reasons, as leaders they are oppressed. It also surfaced that in Higher Education in general things are more demanding than in other organizations. One participant mentioned the biological factors that affect women and that have played a role in the underrepresentation of women: “...before menopause, women have lot of responsibilities; they make babies, follow husbands all over when they make their career. Work becomes more demanding. Women as leaders end up not having any formal working hours.” This prevented women from commanding respect in their own environment as they had other tasks to attend to. This discussion suggested that the role made it difficult for them as women to be represented in top leadership positions. In short, this indicated that participants could not easily move to top positions.

It was mentioned that women did not hold many senior positions of responsibility in Higher Education and that this tended to give them less power and limit their opportunity to influence decisions or to promote gender equality. Another explanation advanced for the underrepresentation of women is that participants acknowledged that women do not support one another. It was significant that the participants realized that the stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination and intimidations related to their representation were somehow a result of the attitude of the women themselves. The participants mentioned that none of them had planned to be in leadership positions, but it rather happened accidentally. Because they worked very hard and excelled in everything they did, however, others saw their leadership qualities and invited them by encouraging them to take leadership positions. Some participants mentioned their processes of leadership, and one that whatever work she had, she applied. She raised a question that she did not know whether this happened because she was a woman. Even though the literature indicates that women receive little or no encouragement to seek leadership positions, these participants were mostly supported while still assistant lecturers, until they applied for directors’ positions. They also acknowledged that there was a time when formal education was needed, and when one had to apply for a post of head of department or dean. Unlike male employees, females need substantial support since they are in the minority in the institutions. The findings indicated that there was a lack of substantial support

networks among women, being regarded as gender bias and creating the marginalization of women and loneliness as barriers to the top leadership positions.

Leadership positions require women to lead, which in turn necessitates better qualified applicants. The participants expressed their concern that women were constantly under pressure to perform in a masculine environment, while they also had family responsibilities as wives, mothers and sisters, in addition to their community engagements. One participant said, "*If a situation is like this, where there is little institutional support, women must empower themselves and become mentors to young women.*" One participant realized that self-empowerment was not so easy in an environment in which much prejudice still existed, and it was not easy for men to give up the power they had had held for a long time.

The participants also mentioned that society still had an influence on the underrepresentation of women, in the belief that women cannot be leaders. The problem is that institutions are still engaged in the past, rather than in addressing meaningful limitations deterring women's participation in leadership positions. To be able to address the causes of underrepresentation it is necessary to focus on education and policy changes that will make institutions responsive to differing realities of the inequalities. The society also impacts on the representation of women, which some participants viewed as history. Both black and white cultures regard men as head of the family. The responses above are an indication that the social factors did hinder the representation of women in leadership positions. This is not because of poor planning of their careers but because of the circumstances forced on them.

Although it was mentioned that women saw themselves as their own worst enemies insofar as being in leadership positions, participants acknowledged in many ways that women placed limitations on their own abilities, "*Women are emotional beings, even men are emotional but not like us. Lots of women fight in a workplace.*" Such a response was also noted and objected to by one participant who said, "*Men also are emotional beings.*" These are caused by personal barriers such as attitudes, poor self-image, and a lack of self-confidence in one's ability to succeed. This could be due to prevailing prejudicial attitudes towards women who seem ambitious. This is

where participants differed: some felt lonely, some had fear, some showed their assertiveness in a situation where gender discrimination still existed.

Women's representation in leadership positions is much lower than their participation in lower positions. In the opinion of some participants, women are discriminated against in meetings. They all agreed when one mentioned that men club together and braai together, whereas women are generally absent. The findings indicated that the reason women are few was socialization. This state is also the fate of women in leadership positions, because women are tied by the family and participate less in leadership. This concludes that differential gendered outcomes in the real world result from differences in how women in leadership positions are placed. These affected how women's roles and leadership styles could be influenced and better informed if they were well represented.

Finally, it is for the institutions to provide potential avenues of intervention to increase gender fairness that accords with the current situation and move away from historical ways.

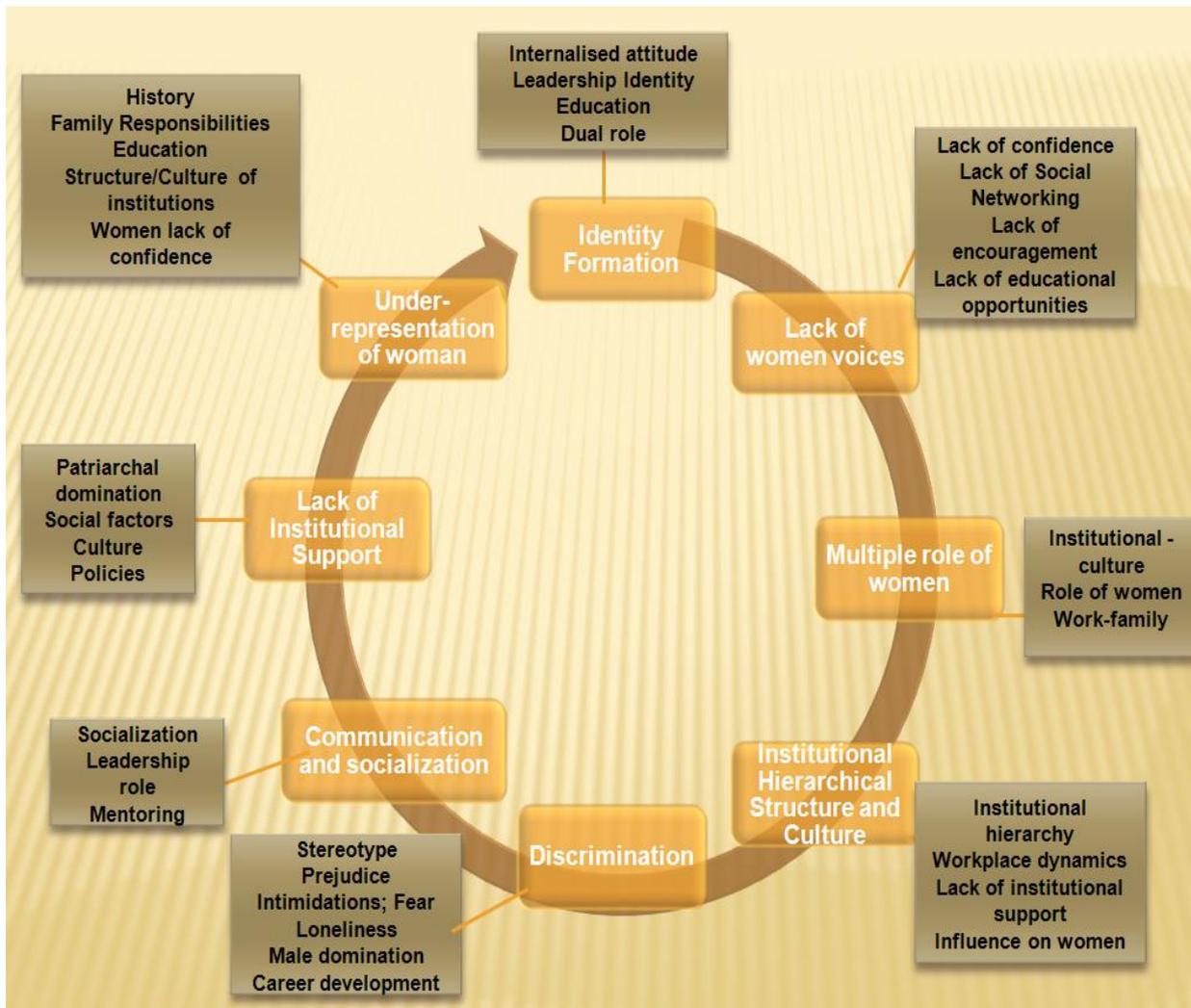


Figure 5.1 Summary of focus group interviews

5.2.2 Level 2: Interpretation of the focus group interviews from a sense-making perspective

The above interpretation was largely organized around the themes listed in Chapters 2 and 3 and the women’s interpretations.

From the stories of the participants, it became clear that women as leaders are leading in a complex environment, the result of different challenges that occur during their leadership processes, which are found in the leadership positions or are caused by the women themselves. The institutions are also under pressure to acknowledge the rights of women, but women also have to contribute and take up their agency to

change the current conditions. The participants realized that they first had to be sure that they at least understood themselves, which confirms that being a woman means having the courage to stand with dignity and present an equal but opposite polarity.

Besides making sense of leadership in relation to the environment, the participants also told stories about leadership on how their individual identities played a role rather than the institutional identities. On an individual level they looked for explanations and answers in terms of how they saw things and how they constructed meaning from their leadership positions. On an institutional level they particularly mentioned lack of empowerment from the institutional side.

The participants were able to make sense of the following:

- That their environments had changed and this was where their leadership processes started. Mostly it was when they were identified by their lecturers and were as such introduced to taking on new responsibilities, but they also realized that it did not particularly mean a change of their individual identity.
- They consciously had to take a decision on who they were and how that linked up with their unique identity. However, they realized that the positions in which they found themselves compelled them to make sense of what they were doing. One mentioned that she had once snapped at a student to open the door, hoping for self-reflection from the side of the student. Their new identities were largely determined by their new environment.
- They had to shift their identity to incorporate new challenges, such as acquiring skills, growing, getting qualifications and seeking empowerment opportunities.
- They felt that they had acquired an understanding of their previous positions and this enabled them to empower others.

Essentially, the participants realized that leadership inspired them to get new identities, which allowed them to respond to the requirements of the positions they held. This was reflected in the stories they told about their changed attitudes, skills and actions.

Sense-making involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended through explicit words that serve as a springboard to action. The women had to understand the changes in a complex environment and during their narrative accounts and contributions they also made sense of their positions. The above data will now be discussed to make sense of what has been said using the seven properties of sense-making.

5.2.2.1 Sense-making perspective using the seven properties

Since the current state of women in leadership is challenged, and is not what it is expected to be, the seven properties outlined by Weick (1995) will be used, exploring sense-making theory. The term “sense-making” is about the reduction of uncertainty and equivocation through a deliberate effort to understand the participants’ stories. Much took place in terms of *identity construction* when the participants were seeking to establish the role of developing a relationship with other members of the institutions in top leadership positions, particularly men. The participants’ existence as leaders did not take place in isolation, but as leaders they were *grounded in their own identity construction*, whereby their identities as individuals were constructed by their interaction with others, and as such the definition of “self shifted”. This made their identity formation an *ongoing, social and communicative* process. Portraying their identity as a process of continual redefinition made sense to the participants and how they had to make sense of their situations, choices and expectations, knowing that the establishment and maintenance of identity is a core preoccupation.

To be able to construct meaning, one learns about identities by projecting them onto the environment and observing the results, as people shape and react to the environment. For instance, this made the participants realize that for them to grow they needed to acquire certain skills and grow in those positions. While this would change, their individual identity would also change. When constructing their identity the participants brought into leadership positions the different attributes that were uncommon in an environment that was male-dominated. Their multiple skills as women with multiple roles and identities were brought in during the process. The caring and empathy that women learnt from their families became one of their strong identities in leadership positions. The participants constructed their leadership

processes and meaning by reflecting on their multiple roles in and lessons learnt from their mentors while still students. By so doing they *constructed their identity* in such a way that it would be suitable and acceptable, by choosing their own identity of aggression and acting in accordance with that chosen identity. They contributed to creating a culture of aggressive competitiveness.

Most of the participants, when explaining their processes, talked *retrospectively*, albeit their pasts were different. They made sense of what had already happened and engaged in communication as a way of constructing their own identity. They acknowledged many things that had happened in the past from which they had learnt, such as how to deal with the fear that emanated from being bullied by men. They learnt that due to the underrepresentation of women in the past, as leaders they had to move on by mentoring other potential leaders and empower themselves in leadership positions. They tried to turn what they knew into what must be.

All these interruptions of gender inequalities, fear, stereotypes intimidations and underrepresentation of women that acted as barriers to their progress in leadership positions made them think and motivated change as a way of making sense. When asked how their unique identities had been formed and what implications that had for leadership identity formation, the *retrospective* action came into the picture. To improve their certainty in a course of action, the participants found trusted individuals with whom to discuss ideas and so make sure they were not missing anything. In some cases, they discussed how they could not do things they used to due to the individualistic changes that had occurred. Their personal identities and institutional identity were formed from the process of interaction associated with sense-making. They had to grasp what they felt comfortable with, for instance, some indicated that one had to know the institutional culture. Women as leaders had to transcend the cultural barriers and rise to positions of leadership.

The participants reflected on what happened to them in leadership positions *retrospectively*, selecting their identity in relation to other people in the environment. The way they viewed the institutions was an issue of the past. They could only narrate what they had learnt in leadership positions that differed from their positions in the past, and it was because of this past that they were able to identify the cause

of given effect. *Retrospection* takes place from the current position and is affected by anything that has been happening. For example, the participants represented their values and the beliefs of the institutions, while to the persons outside the institutions the participants were seen as belonging to institutions, which led them to make an effort to know the policies and to command respect. The participants learnt that qualifications were important, and the cues that they observed led them to shape their identity as individuals. The participants constructed their leadership processes and meaning by reflecting on their multiple roles in and lessons learnt from their mentor while still students.

Most, when explaining this process, talked *retrospectively*, however, this was after obtaining leadership positions, which gave them a chance to see the difference. They made sense of what had already happened and it was through *retrospective* viewing of the situation that they recognized how important leadership positions were and the problems they encountered in them. Women as leaders are faced with unexpected and expected interruptions in leadership positions and the current state of the institutions is perceived differently from expected. However, when one is in a leadership position, the barriers that are unexpected become a challenge.

To be enactive of a sensible environment, i.e., to be able to make sense of it, one needs to take existing cues. As the participants found themselves in changing environments they had a choice what to focus on and to make sense of it. When they started to engage in communication they began to understand what they thought, to organize their experiences and control and predict events. For example, when one participant realized that men could label her, she had a choice either to succumb or to move on. Whatever was chosen made her create and make sense, as it was her responsibility to create and find what was expected, such as maintaining her self-image and not leading like a man.

In leadership, everything that happens has a social context, whether as an individual or with other people. Even when participants were alone they had to follow institutional cultural norms. For example, they stressed the points of being ambassadors and knowing policies, which indicates that on their leadership journey they had been instilled with norms from an early age.

The *social* aspect, “Who I am”, played a vital role in leadership of the participants. Identity will only be selected and maintained if the individual perception of the institutions changes through intervention by top management. Sense-making is not a process of individual analysis but a *social construction* with others. They had to engage in communication to become adaptive to the new environment, agreeing that their environment became a *social* space and that they needed conversations with others to move toward a shared idea of what had meaning. The participant selects an identity in relation to other people in the environment. This did not necessarily mean physical intervention but occurred through changes of policy, procedure and mentoring. The way they viewed the institutions was an issue of the past.

Sense-making is *social* when people coordinate their action and try to gather meaning from different views of often ambiguous events. To be able to change their identity and meaning the participants had to change the social context by engaging in conversation among themselves and other leaders. By talking among them the emergent *social* context influenced their directions. During discussion some realized that they could change the way they were doing things (cf. 5.2.1 question 1). It is through *social interaction* that an individual identity is constructed, an indication that they were able to create and select identities that were new and that enabled them to cope successfully with the male-dominated environment they occupied. As they constructed their identity and socialized with others, as one participant indicated, they realized that as a leader one does not retain the same identity. One said she had realized that her identity had changed (cf. 5.2.1. question 2.), being projected onto the environment as the new world of leadership was introduced.

Communication and the involvement of others in shaping and interpreting the situation are crucial. The identities of the participants were important to them; for them to make sense their own *identities* had to be considered. Most of the time the “I” was mentioned. Because of the prevailing situation, some felt they could not succumb to male dominance. Though they often found themselves in positions of discrimination and domination, they still felt that they wanted to help others, for instance supporting one another in terms of family matters or whatever the need may be. They also realized that institutions did certain things as part of compliance rather than to truly bring about change. One even mentioned that if she had known that she

wanted to leave she would not have allowed it to happen. These types of reaction demonstrated women's assertiveness and how their confidence increased.

During discussions, some of the participants realized that the way they used to do things had changed. One indicated how leadership had affected her way of life, where she had to maintain a certain dignity and choose with whom to mix. This was an indication of how socialization may change one's life and make sense when a new *identity is constructed*. This is an indication that through *grounded identity construction* the participants were able to create and select identities that are new and that enable them to cope successfully with a male-dominated environment. A participant's identity is projected into the environment as the new world of leadership is introduced.

Individual identity was influenced by the new environment of leadership and the *social* aspects. The participants had to reflect on what had happened in their processes of attaining leadership positions, to when the *social factor* played a role. Some were identified by their lecturers for positions in leadership, and thus their identity changed. Traditionally, leadership is not about interpreting but actually about making sense by creating a different meaning, reformulating it and giving sense to followers. When interruption occurs in the ongoing flow of events, cues are generated and women as leaders need to make sense of the cues associated with the interruptions. Leadership is a shared concept and cannot take place in isolation. Leadership as a form of *social* process cannot be distinguished from other influences in relationships between people, which makes the processes of attaining leadership a challenging one. The participants engage in communication as a way of constructing their identity. As a *social process*, they coordinate their action as they try to gather meaning from different views of ambiguous events. To be able to change their identity and meaning they had to change the social context by engaging in conversation among themselves and other leaders, thus the emergent *social* context influences the direction.

What the participants have learnt in these leadership positions that differs from the position they had, is based on the *social aspect* of sense-making. Institutions lack a

platform for the social networking of women in leadership positions and since there is discrimination it is for the institutions to be accountable to their staff members.

As sense-making is central it is recognized as a social process which is *ongoing*. The participants were aware that they had lost their individual identity and knew that a leader had to encourage conversation and show respect. When asked why they were in leadership positions, most said it was accidental, but during the process they realised that they needed formal education to become leaders. This was when they realized that leadership was an *ongoing process* and that one could not rely on one leadership style. This was an indication that as leaders they separated the episodes of events merely for convenience, and that sense-making does not start or end at a particular point.

As the participants realized that their leadership positions were part of an *ongoing* process, they also realized that they needed to empower themselves. However, despite the interruption and action taking place they realized that they also had to complete the session through the logical processes of empowerment. The current position that the participants found themselves in as sense-makers affected how they remembered their past, which they looked at more often. They looked into how they had become leaders and how education had helped them. They listened and took conscious decisions in what they were doing, with one saying that when she wrote emails, she became too professional because these were official documents that “*had a way of coming back to haunt you*”. The notion of “*How can I know what I think until I see what I say*”, became relevant to all the participants as they tried to make sure that whatever they did made sense, and also they agreed with each other based on the type of leadership they were in. One participant said she was never happier than when she knew the work and if circumstance called for her to do it she would. This means that whatever she did, she made sure it made sense. Among themselves they listened to each other, and helped them to talk their way. There were *ongoing* reactions and repercussions resulting from the change. The institutional change was an *ongoing* process. A comment made by one participant was that to be able to make sense women must not raise the gender issue but rather get a grip of the subject matter.

In explaining what *focus and extracted by cues* was, the participants returned to what they had noticed in their journey of leadership and tried to make sense of it. Due to these interruptions they *extracted cues* that would help them to move on. Weick (2001:461) points out that “when identity is threatened or diffused, as when one loses a job without warning, one’s grasp of what is happening begins to loosen”. It is in this sense that the participants found themselves in an environment in which they had to extract cues that would benefit them. They used self-appreciation of their identity to make sense of their new environment and noticed only what was surrounding them, including cues that had had an impact on their journeys.

They also noticed how powerfully extracted cues could impact on their lives. One participant explained that after she realized how she had been chased out of the office, she would return to make conversation, feeling she could not be angry all the time and needed to rectify that mistake. This indicated the source of power of dealing with the situation. For the participants to develop their own voice and identity in leadership positions, they need to be educated, know the policies, procedures of institutions and take part in institutional activities. They reflected on the current situation in which women are not represented in decision-making positions, indicating that their positions did not give them a platform from which to make their voices heard. They realized that to have one’s voice be heard they must be involved in communities, and empower other women. They realized they were not operating in isolation. The link between self-identity and institutional identity plays a role in their leadership, as people act as agents of the institution and as institutions themselves. The participants as individuals in sense-making represent the values and beliefs of the institution and the community at large, which makes them take cues from the institutions. They felt they had to empower themselves, an indication that they would act in accordance to strengthen their action.

Institutions must be able to help and shape women in leadership positions and *focus on extracted cues* so that the cues selected are used to build the institutions. The participants must enact, create and define what is in or out of the institutional structure through their actions, and so create a conducive environment to justify their actions. Some of the arousal that occurred during the process of leadership positions made them realize that these had an impact on the success and sustainability of

their positions. One participant realized that it was better to address the matter in a positive manner, as by so doing it would let her voice be heard and provide a coherent link between the existing cues that were negative and the new one. For them to make sense of such an environment they had to select what they can focus on in order to assign meaning. To be able to identify this behaviour in an environment and interpret a complex environment they must make sense of subtle cues and focus on them. This lets them interpret their experience in such a way that it reflects how men in leadership positions feel. The participants had to extract cues to understand the behaviour of men and perceptions of how they operate, because it is part of the history. Though they were aware of male attitudes they realized that as women they sometimes gave men power.

One participant said, “*women must not feel intimidated*”, an indication that women are able to draw a frame of reference with a boundary of what to do and listen to. This is after the action has occurred. Sense-making is triggered when people experience interruption in their leadership style or work where the interruptions in most cases have negative results on their ability to perform as leaders.

In explaining *plausibility*, in order to make sense it was necessary for the participants to orientate themselves in the new leadership environment. If one were to wait for complete accuracy and full information this could have caused them to lose focus on their leadership positions. What they needed in this regard was support from the institutions, motivation and mentoring, that is, a “mental model” from which they could make sense. However, they realised that it was also up to them to grow and know people’s skills. They had to find a reasonable and plausible fit between their selves and the environment to explain and attach meaning that would have outcomes to suit both the individuals and the institutions. This was confirmed by the participants when they said they quickly saw what they were supposed to do. They do not become different people, but the *plausibility* to filter some of the *cues* makes them construct meaning.

The first *plausible* account was that the experiences they had should not be the least possible story. They had to assist others to make meaning, and not expect the institutions to be accurate in terms of how they viewed the leadership positions of

women. This was not due to accuracy, as in most cases were participants' swift *plausibility*. Rather than slow accuracy, in explicable times they needed "an" explanation, not "the" explanation.

When asked to describe the challenges they went through towards leadership there was no doubt that the social and ongoing processes occurred in the *ongoing* interaction with their environments. Themes such as leadership style, the attitudes of men, the role of women, workplace dynamics, gender, prejudice, family and work were emphasized. The environment in which the participants worked was a challenge in itself, and as it was new to them, it became a sensible one. As the participants were part of an environment which they could influence, and vice versa, they had to become sense-makers in it. The institutional culture is a representation of such an environment, and influences the choice of identities that the participants assume. As they shaped and were shaped by the environment, they realized that as leaders they had to bracket and notice some of the happenings and label them to make sense. Though the participants perceived the existing environment of institutional culture to be different and aggressive, it was up to them to place stimuli in order to make sense.

Most of the challenges had been triggered by environmental *cues* that in the end can trigger sense-making. These are properties of an ongoing flow that increases the probability that people, regardless of where "they sit in organizations or who they are, will take note of what is happening and pursue it" (see Weick 1995:86). Because of this, the participants start to make some omissions, and then move to greater tolerance of error, queuing, filtering, abstracting, using multiple channels, escaping, and end with chunking (Weick 1995:87). The loneliness mentioned by participants shows how emotions were triggered by this complex environment in which they had to look back at their identity to try to show what type of a person they were, e.g. a "people person" or a "loner". Similarly, complexity of circumstances affects what the participants notice. As complexity increases so the reliance on habitual routine cues increases, which can be counterproductive. One must also bear in mind that if the situation changes, the participants will also reflect on the same occurrence, thus making the situation an *ongoing* process.

To be able to know what sense can be made from the voices of women towards their leadership identity, the leadership style of women needs to be respected. The lack of voices of women in leadership positions is still a concern. Themes that were discussed are empowerment, self-confidence, prejudice and discrimination, the institutional and hierarchical structure, and the voices of women. However, sense is made from the outcome of future events that can also make sense based on the events that occurred. The participants have to articulate the future outcome as if it is a thing of the past. Sometimes there are interruptions and a difference between reality and expectation, as mentioned by one participant who believed that young people were impatient, wanting things instantly, thus causing discomfort. This disruption of high level plans by the young ones causes interruptions. Young people need mentoring.

Sense-making enables leaders to have a better grasp of what is going on in the institutions, the leadership style that the participants found when they took this position and how it affected them as women. Sense-making calls for courage because the participants need to understand and know what is going on in their leadership. The participants, when they took up leadership, encountered barriers when the environment changed rapidly. To overcome these, the assertiveness of women and power of leadership was highlighted. From a sense-making perspective, leadership positions are part of an *ongoing* process, where one is in the middle of events. Changes in leadership are noticed and experienced during the process and leaders select stimuli that cause an outcome. It is apparent that the participants were aware of what was happening through their management of diverse meanings and ability to operate a reflexive approach in order to facilitate a team decision about labels. The environment in which the woman found themselves created a space in which they could be labelled by men.

Due to the challenges in leadership, participants encountered a situation that had impacted on their leadership identity. Sense-making is by nature an emotional and feelings-based process, as was found in the participants' responses. The outcome of the interruption women experienced was filled with emotions, such as loneliness, intimidation and a depressed mood. The participants who were experiencing emotional setbacks were unable to act and performance was affected. This leads to

autonomic arousal, which is caused by ongoing interruption. As a woman's arousal increases, she has to decide either to "fight" or to "flee". As viewed *retrospectively*, arousal develops slowly but occurs faster after the interruption has occurred. The participants extracted cues that focused on them in the existing environment. They had to make sense and move forward, and needed new cues. Thabang said. "*I have to go to this man; I cannot stay in this situation.*" She needed the help of the institution.

Women as leaders need to operate in a complex environment and in making sense of the interruption introduced by change they will experience emotion and arousal will increase. In times like this institutions can reduce the indeterminacy and respond to the changed environment in which staff must focus and extract relevant cues to make sense. Interruption is not always positive, but it is because of uncertainty that autonomic arousal occurs. Some participants initiated action, facing the challenge. In retrospect, arousal develops slowly but occurs faster after the interruption has occurred. The way the participants interpret the situation in which they find themselves has some *plausibility*, affected by the stories told by the participants to make sense of situations so that they are collectively seen as believable, credible and possible.

To be able to measure the interruptions in institutions one has to look at how the voices of the participants can provide direction to potential women leaders in a way that future leaders constructing their own paths may transform their empowerment. In an age of uncertainty and change, leaders must try to make sense by letting their voices be heard. This is like map-making in which the participants as sense-makers must make sure they guide the potential leaders by letting them understand the situation, being in charge of the environment, and exploring their actions. Sense-making is not only about a process of imagery but also about what is processed. This means in leadership what is said is important and what those words mean. When words are joined together they convey something about ongoing experiences of leadership, therefore sense-making will open channels of communication. Then there is communication. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions must not be regarded as a barrier that cannot be crossed. Much of what the participants said is historical. The story provides a frame of reference of the

changing environment that in the past leadership was a male position. Sense-making takes place *in real time*, in a situation in which males still dominate the university leadership. It is, perhaps, unpleasant to recognize, but reflection confirms that individuals cannot avoid acting and making sense in such an environment. Sense-making takes place in such an environment. The finding of trusted individuals highlights the social property of sense-making. The existing structure, which the participants developed, is shown in a larger sense of what takes place. The dual role of leadership was to help to extract cues that shape leadership position and to provide a crucial cue when the participants realized the importance of mentoring young potential leaders.

Based on their experiences, their stories were used to construct meaning of their positions. The participants told stories of what they had experienced during their empowerment journey, how they *enacted in their environment by extracting cues* from the ongoing events and presenting a *plausible, social* reality of order and rationality accountable to themselves and others. Telling their stories was about how their identity formation developed and as their identities became stronger, they did not have to be like a man to be a leader.

From the participants' stories it seemed as if there was still much that did not make sense, implying that they were continuously trying to make sense of their situations by creating solutions to the challenges encountered. This was mentioned in the conversation they had among themselves – how they helped each other to overcome the challenges and how those occasions often became a turning point when some realized that being a leader makes the world smaller, that one is often lonely and that the challenges are great.

The participants realized that to make sense they had to look back from where they had come and reflect on the past. This is an indication that whatever is happening presently has been influenced by what happened in the past. The participants understood that the attitude of men was something that came from the past, based on the power that they had in leadership. Anything that affects remembering will affect the sense that is made of these memories.

The participants had learnt in their leadership positions that being leaders is a social *aspect* of sense-making. Institutions lack a platform for the social networking of women in leadership positions and discrimination prevails. It is for the institutions to be accountable to their staff members. Participants paid more attention to *cues* that were challenge to them, such as institutional culture, lack of support and the attitude of men. These acted as a seed of new meaning, defined by the participants by looking at what the DoE was doing for institutions to develop and empower them. They saw this as the creation of new meaning that made sense to them and looked for cues that conformed to their analysis, but distracted them from “the bigger picture” of the power they had. For example, one focused on breaking the barriers of people who do not talk instead of on how to empower each other as women in leadership positions.

The participants’ emotions were also affected when their voices were not heard. To have their voices be heard they had to *extract cues*, bracket them and notice which one made sense to them. It was an emotional experience for all of them, as they realized that to make their voices heard they had to make sense of the change in institutions. They had to deal with their own emotions individually. One participant described a situation in which she was chased out of the office by a professor. Firstly, she was not sure what to do but during the discussion she mentioned that she had to empower herself to deal with the situation. They realized there was much apprehension and uncertainty of what to expect. In order to make sense they had to give themselves a space to accept change, “...*let men know that being a woman qualifies one not to be an underperformer*”. This finding shows that there is a need to address the emotive aspect in leadership positions, and a need to properly handle the emotional experiences. The implementation of the change had caused some to feel fear (Thabang) and uncertainty (Madineo). Rather than simply dismissing the emotions they dealt with them properly. The findings suggest that the leader’s character is critical at a time of change, and it has a direct impact on how receptive the members are of the change and the leader who has brought it about.

From past events, the participants made sense by acknowledging that their individual identity was changing. They also made sense to assess possible outcomes so that they would be prepared for change. Leadership was an *ongoing*

process. In response to how the participants managed the leadership processes the participants mentioned the actions they took in the process. From a sense-making point of view the outcome of analysis bore a much closer resonance to the properties of sense-making. Much took place in terms of *identity construction*, whereby the participants were seeking to establish the role of developing a relationship with other members of the institutions in leadership positions, particularly men. Most of the participants experienced that the leadership positions helped them grow, develop skills and realize that their personalities were unique. Some also felt that certain positions required certain skills, and they tried to bring in new and different energies to the existing leadership. The participants brought into leadership positions the different attributes that were uncommon in an environment that was male-dominated. Their multiple skills as women with multiple roles of identities were brought in during the process. The caring and empathy that women learnt from their families became one of their strong identities in leadership positions that helped them to make sense.

It is unsettling when people face the inexplicable as they tend to treat any explanation as better than none. The participants realized that the situation of not having their voices heard must not discourage them, and realized that there were ways they could overcome this, such as improving their skills, going to conferences and lead like a woman rather than as a man. Institutions and women as leaders are costly in the process of self-formation. The formation of women in leadership made them achieve stability through *enactment* of interaction with the institutions. Some went through development in which they had to adhere to certain rules and policies, which became a process in which women as leaders had to achieve continuity and coordination. They have to acquire certain rules to be able to coordinate.

When asked how their unique identities were formed and how that influenced leadership identity formation, the *retrospective* action came into the picture. To improve their certainty in a course of action, the participants interacted with trusted individuals to discuss ideas and make sure they were not missing anything. In some cases they discussed why they could not do things they used to do due to the individualistic changes that happened. Their personal identities and institutional identity were formed from the process of interaction associated with sense-making.

The participants had to grasp what they feel comfortable with, for instance some indicated that one has to know the institutional culture. Women as leaders had to transcend the cultural barriers and rise to positions of leadership. Sense-making is not a process of individual analysis, but a *social construction* with others. Participants had to engage in communication to become adaptive to the new environment. Due to the workplace dynamics their unique identities were affected.

Their focus was on making sense of their voices and empowerment. Some expressed positively that they were empowered by their lecturers before becoming leaders, one saying she did it herself. During this processes of leadership, there was much uncertainty from some of the participants based on what to expect from institutions' management/leadership and what was expected from them. Change in institutions of having women in leadership positions created uncertainty and resistance, which was affirmed by the participants from one of the institutions, when they raised their fear, withdrawal, discrimination and stereotyping by men. From their past events the participants reflected that men protected each other and indicated how they made sense even though men used power to victimize them. They also acknowledged that they gave power to men by keeping quiet. Women have power but allow men to rule, a finding that highlights the significance of focusing on the positive during a time of sense-making. This also suggests that while a leader is accurate in the sense of giving to the members, the members may not accurately capture and make sense of what had been conveyed.

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions must not be seen as a barrier that cannot be crossed. Much of what the participants said was historical. The story provides a frame of reference for the changing environment, as in the past leadership was a male job.

To summarize the above, the role of the participants as leaders was to apply sense-making in a complex environment in which they found themselves. If they cannot make sense as leaders they might lose control of the situation. It is therefore crucial for the participants to seek and address the problems and identify the context in which the issue is framed, and recognize the necessary skills which will enable them to resolve the problems. It is through sense-making that the participants had a grasp

of what was happening around them and their environments so that they could have a clear understanding.

It is highly plausible that human beings do not make completely rational and accurate decisions. By self-reflection one can easily remember situations of decision, especially those done in groups, in which the plausibility point was demonstrated. People need, especially in social situations, to believe that they are right, not so much to demonstrate the accuracy of their rationale.

5.3 DATA REPORTING AND INTERPRETATION OF PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Four women were interviewed from different divisions of the UFS and the CUT (cf. Addendum B). The face-to-face interviews provided an opportunity to observe and hear the feelings and experiences of the interviewee. Each interviewing session was different as the researcher listened to their accounts to the questions, allowing them to participate freely and only interrupting to clarify some questions. Data was analyzed using the research questions.

To identify sense-making concepts, the main research questions guiding this study will be used to reflect on the interviewee's contributions (cf. Appendix C). The interviews were recorded and transcribed with notes. The data was analyzed using two frameworks, firstly to describe the learning styles using literature to identify themes and secondly to identify the sense-making in relation to using Weick's seven properties of sense-making. The two were frameworks chosen to help in understanding the reasoning behind the process.

On the second level of analysis, Weick's (1995:17-62) seven properties are useful in explaining how different interpretations of the same experiences were made sense of and enacted. The themes were linked to the seven properties, taking into account other factors such as inequalities of power and the failure of sense-making to consider issues of gender and discrimination in creating a new culture in institutions of accommodating women in leadership positions. As mentioned in Chapter 4.6, these properties cannot stand alone while one is making sense; some have greater

relevance in explaining certain behaviour in an institutional situation. In this chapter, sense-making will assist women in leadership to try to make sense by interpreting what is going on in their situation, but they are about to discover their own identity and construct meaning, and to discover their own invention. Using the seven properties, women will also discover their own social construction from a feminist perspective to form a significant context in which they make sense. Sense-making helps an individual discover his or her own identity in a new social environment that has impacted their individual identity.

Weick's approach made a distinction between interpretation and invention of reality. Weick (1995:15) asserts that "people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they have already imposed what they believed". This indicates that sense-making is not about interpreting what is going on but discovering self-invention, which can be discovered using the seven properties of sense-making.

The transcript (Addendum A) will be interpreted using the following two levels:

- Level 1: Interview of the emerging themes representing the interviewees' experiences
- Level 2: Interpretation from a sense-making.

The comments made by the interviewees were grouped according to themes which emerged from their views and experiences. These central themes were then interpreted according to the various properties of sense-making, which guided the researcher to draw final conclusions and make recommendations (cf. Chapter 6).

5.3.1 Level 1: interview of the emerging themes representing the interviewee's experiences

After categorizing the data the researcher named the themes and connected data as in the discussion in Chapters 2 and 3. The structure reflects common patterns emanating from the data to construct a meaningful summary of the experience. The themes were not examined according to the age of the interviewees nor related to individuals. The interview was then coded, including unanticipated issues which the

researcher did not stop the interviewees raising as they had meaning and made sense for the study, for example, the state of Higher Education and Assessment of institution. The important themes that recurred repeatedly was those of mentoring, the attitude of men and how one must negotiate boundaries between personal and professional relationships. Some of the themes that emerged were not discussed in the literature, having emanated from the interviewees' responses that the researcher saw as useful, and which were incorporated into the research questions (cf. Appendix C). Some of the themes were emergent, some reporting.

Emergent themes are the same themes as the ones used in literature (Bazeley 2009:9). The researcher used the categories that emerged from the data. The list of categories might change as an iterative change and be adjusted to identify the categories. Interpretation brings it all together. Reporting themes are typically presented using a brief summary and having quotes from the interviewees as evidence for them. It is a challenge to rely on evidence as the quotes can be from the interviewees. In this study one or two quotes are used to illustrate the themes. There is a problem also in being purely descriptive; presenting each theme in sequence, just as there might be if the only report given from a survey was of simple frequencies or means. Themes only attain full significance when linked to form a coordinated picture or an explanatory model (Bazeley 2009:9). To be able to understand the analysis the researcher had to describe, compare and relate the formula used in the study to analyze the recorded information (Bazeley, 2009:9). This simple three-step formula was used when starting to work through and record results of an analysis.

- Describe

The study outlines and provides details about the sources of data (cf. Chapter 4), such as the type of interviewees and the interrelationships mentioned. This was to give a necessary background and to provide a basis for comparative analysis. After this the themes as a category were used. Each theme is described.

- Comparison

The differences in the characteristics and boundaries for the themes are compared, checking if they occurred more frequently for different questions. Comparison is based on how the themes were expressed by different interviewees.

- Relate

The themes that are related were grouped together. The researcher checked where the theme originated and what actions were involved, and checked if the variation was the result of a particular form that had been expressed. These were repeated with all the themes.

5.3.1.1 Formation of self-concept

The general feeling of the participants was that women's self-image was affected. Most of the interviewees differently experienced fear, belittlement, loneliness, intimidation, culture shock and a sense of powerlessness. The term "self" has two distinct meanings, namely as an object and as a process. As an object it has to do with people's attitudes about themselves, their picture of the way they look and act, the impact they make on others, their traits and abilities, their foibles and weaknesses. The second set of meanings relates to the psychological processes, which are the executive functions, the processes by which the individual manages and copes, thinks, remembers, perceives and plans. When relating this to what the interviewees said they used to confront their fear, it appeared that they understood their selves and their image. The findings suggested that the leadership development that women go through also determines their personal self-image, which was affected by cultural traditions, customs, stereotypes, prejudice and biases of society. Interviewees' identities were compromised and they had to stand up for themselves. To be able to make sense they had to reflect on what happened retrospectively, as they were confronted by the same situation in leadership positions.

Fear in this theme relates to powerlessness, and because the interviewees had no power they felt there was no growth in leadership. There was no leadership "pack" of women and people felt "terrorized" in meetings. This was observed in the language

used in meetings. When the interviewees reflected on their experiences they indicated that they wanted to grow up being good leaders, but the situation they found themselves in did not give them opportunities to be good leaders. For example, in order to feel “terrorized” and see oneself as a “sinking Titanic” the self-worth of the interviewees must have been affected. The uncertainty of the environment led one of the interviewees to say she was from a poor family but that this did not stop her reaching her goal. In line with one of the leadership qualities she worked hard to get a bursary.

The findings show that women were apparently sidelined and excluded. They experienced self-doubt and unworthiness due to fear in the leadership positions. Some were frightened of expressing their opinions because they knew they would be dismissed. Despite changes in equality, education can be informal or formal and may not have an impact on an individual’s self-image through leadership development.

The social context relates to how the interviewees interacted with others. It was through interacting that the interviewees realized how they were being treated. If somebody puts one down one would react differently. One of the interviewees mentioned that women must be assertive and command authority in a clever way. In most cases, when one treats another badly one will change attitude and act differently around that person. However, the interviewees believed that being clever was a way of showing that the formation of self-concept goes deeper than interacting with others.

By highlighting the importance of relationships in a changing environment and power, sense-making offers a method of analysis that privileges the role of an individual within organizational change. The findings suggest that there are fears in some women from other universities. It is only through informal networks that they can shape their career trajectories. In addition, there is a need for emotional support but none of the interviewees realized it as they had difficulty in developing an authoritative voice, as they were often not on decision-making committees. Despite the changes in institutions, empirical evidence suggests that change programmes are unable to achieve the objectives of the institutions, and even when they further

their studies, they are still seen as women. In comparison to men, evidence indicates that women as leaders have to work hard to prove themselves.

The socialization and social factor affected women in leadership. Evidence indicates that when women quit working to further their studies they were reminded about money (cf. question 2, **P3**), while society still expect them to behave in a certain way. Each gender has role expectations, while women are expected to do household chores. Women reflected on appraisals whereas men attached greater importance to social comparison than did women.

One cannot rule out the issue of discrimination even from family (cf. question 3, **P2**). The findings suggest that men are still regarded as the ones who are supposed to be leaders and decision-makers. Women are seen as a target group, which shows that most women who are strong in leadership have been raised by men, and some mentored by men. Even if women are belittled they sometimes qualify and internalize it. The interviewees found themselves in different situations but pursued different lines and different tasks, which indicates the multiple tasks that women in leadership perform. This is an indication of the different selves the interviewees presented, bringing about the idea of multiple selves and knowing how to keep all of these selves straight. The self-esteem of the interviewees has made them connect to different performances and maintain individual identity.

There are powerful invisible barriers to women's advancement that arise from cultural beliefs about gender as well as workplace structure, practices and pattern. Things are continually changing, and even if women were not in leadership positions, change would still occur.

The findings suggest a lack of self-confidence in other women in leadership positions, though the situations they mentioned differ. If one makes a comparison one will realize that women's confidence was affected by the attitudes of men, because of a lack of support and intimidation. Men were seen by some interviewees as the cause of fear, which then affected their self-identity, self-image and self-confidence. One of the interviewees, for example, said, *When I got this post, I had fear; I think I had been in a comfort zone, my previous job was like my family.* This is

an indication that it takes considerable self-awareness to perceive who one is, how one changes and what others think of one. This fear was caused by the way communication was conducted and how women were treated. From that, **P3** developed fear of going into leadership positions again. Some women felt that men are encouraged to aspire to progress in their careers and see themselves as leaders, whereas women who become ambitious are seen as feminist and negative. At times they try to find order in this sequence of events that occur around them. Women have to interpret the situation to be able to make sense.

5.3.1.2 Prejudice and discrimination

Prejudice and discrimination is part of reaction. A lack of support became a common theme in most categories as findings reveal that the glass ceiling in leadership positions still exists, albeit not as thick as before. The interviewees relate the prejudice in the workplace in different forms such as “remuneration”, “employment and opportunity gaps”. Because women were underrepresented in leadership positions their gender pay gap was not well negotiated. Even though institutions adopted widespread policies prohibiting sex discrimination, and opened many doors to women, they had failed to close the gender gap at more senior levels, suggesting that impediments to women’s advancement were more complex and elusive than deliberate forms of sex discrimination.

Although the findings indicated that women continue with their schooling until university and bridge the gaps of non-traditional roles by having leadership qualities, the gender socialization had impacted on them in their journey of leadership experiences. Women leaders had to carry out their gender role even at university. Most the interviewees were marginalized. This is by no means the fate only of racially marked groups. Marginalization is the most dangerous form of oppression; which is an act that according to Freire (1970:57) is “oppressive only when it prevents people from being more fully human”. Marginalization is unjust, especially in HEIs, as it blocks the opportunities to exercise the capacities in a socially defined and recognized way. Participants realized that marginalization does not cease to be oppressive when one becomes a leader. Evidence of this was observed by the way women were oppressed in leadership positions and in their marginal status. Women

in HEIs, even though they are in leadership positions, respect their freedom and dignity, even when facing injustices of marginality in the form of uselessness, boredom and lack of self-respect. Women are deprived of the right to development.

The interviewees mentioned how they were discriminated against in terms of development. They were refused opportunity for growth. The description shows that women's voices would not be heard as the glass ceiling still existed (cf. Question 16, **P3**). This is an indication that discrimination still exists, as evidenced by wage differences, being passed over for promotion and the glaring gender gap in top management and executive positions. Promotion for women is slow, with the preference being given to men regardless of whether a woman is better qualified than her male counterpart. Discrimination not only exists in terms of wages, but also in terms of women's representation in leadership positions. However, the general impression is that that stereotyping has a cultural background against which women were not supposed to lead. This indicates the great underrepresentation of women in senior positions in education, which has led to inequalities and discrimination against females.

For instance, it is revealed that women are denied opportunities to make a contribution towards institutional growth. When one interviewee talked in a meeting she afterwards received an anonymous letter in which it was asserted that she was fighting for women's rights and she must be careful. This is evidence of the threats that women as leaders encounter when they try to lead and raise their voices. Women are marginalized in decision-making positions and that prevents them from being heard. Because women hold far fewer leadership positions in HEIs they mostly make little impact on decision-making or policy formulation, which calls for actions to break "the culture of silence". It appears from these results that when women wanted to develop themselves through studies they were cautioned to wait. The question was what happens when a woman becomes older.

Women were also denied the opportunity to develop in relation to institutional responsibilities. Whatever was said by a woman did not carry much weight. Women often have no chance to express their views, as their gender limits their level of participation. Women are still marginalized in terms of wages. Some of the

participants revealed that they were still the lowest paid in leadership positions, as **P3** indicated.

There are assumptions that justify the discrimination of women concerning positions of leadership, and they are that women are still regarded as having different career paths than men, for example women are unsuited to the demands of positions of leadership. **P3** indicated that when a post in one of the departments was advertised and a woman was appointed, there was much speculation that she did not know the job even before she started. Women are regarded as less able than men and different from them in terms of competencies. A lack of confidence in women prevails. For example **P3** said, *“Honestly, I think my self-confidence is dying. There is no recognition. But I had to work hard for the sake of myself.”*

Intimidation was also felt. For **P3** men do not see women as people who have the potential to grow, but as fit to be leaders for statistical purposes. The findings suggest that women are still denied the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to the environment in which they serve. One interviewee was intimidated by the environment in which she worked, saying there was a professor in the department who was playing the racist. The comment that the professor made was peculiar. **P3** continued: *“There was a lot of it at the university, but I could not keep quiet. I wish women can stand up as women, this thing of belonging, you are seen as an outcast ... there were things that were happening that made me cry. But I will go to my office and open the window and cry. I did not want to cry in front of the students.”* This is a reflection of loneliness and a lack of support. For her to go and cry where no one sees her, shows that she was alone with no support. With the style of leadership that still exists in Higher Education, it shows that women as leaders do find that there is a time when loneliness exists, and a leader must be willing to stand alone while still having the passion, ambition and mission, and setting measurable goals and working towards accomplishing them. There will be a time when one has to work alone and one will definitely be lonely.

The experience of cultural imperialism in society still dominates, even in a workplace, and causes invisible stereotyping. Even though women have been appointed to leadership positions they are often made to realize and feel the oppression of their

presence. This makes them feel invisible as they are not recognized, and this impacts on their voice as they are few in leadership. Even though other universities have improved on issues of training and development (cf. Question 16, **P1**), as **P1** indicated, there are areas that are still dominated by men, such as science, medicine and engineering. All the interviewees still experienced marginalization, sexism and prejudice, but as one gets older, as **P1** mentioned, as a woman one is not concerned greatly by what others think of one. One knows what one wants; one knows one's strengths and weaknesses. Even though the environment still plays a role in marginalization, the strength of others can be a key to effective leadership.

Marginalization was also experienced through loneliness, a refusal to attend conferences or development, anonymous letters of helping women, being labelled as women who led other women, a refusal to take office, not being part of a decision-making team, prejudice, stereotyping, a lack of recognition, a lack of role models, and a lack of support. It appears from this evidence that HEIs are aware of marginalization, which is why they are closing the gap by having gender committees in universities. However, the gap is not yet closed.

5.3.1.3 Internalized attitudes

The findings show that the unique identities of the interviewees have been distinguished by different roles. To be a leader, a mother, a daughter and community member, is defined by the norms structure of institutions, organizations and society. Identities that exist for the interviewees are the ones they internalized from the institutions as leaders and they constructed meanings around the internalization. Sometimes the self-definitions of the interviewees coincided with social roles, for example (cf. 5.2.1. questions 6, 10, **P4**.)

This shows that identity organizes meaning and roles organize the functions. Literature indicates that the focus on identity is more on individual identity than collective identity, which does not bode well for unique identities being identified in the interviewees as leaders. Though individuals can be part of collective identity this indicates that all identities can be constructed. It suggests therefore that through education and work a woman's identity changes. Every woman has developed a

unique identity in leadership positions, based on the challenges and how each situation impacted on others. The community view of the leadership of women made women develop a unique identity. **P1** observed, *“From community aspects findings indicates that women were viewed with mixed feelings as leaders. Some accepted that, some not.”* For example, **P1** mentioned that when she was a student she was already a leader. Some members of the community did not accept that. At university she became part of the decision-making committees. As time went by things changed. There was more acceptability in the community and Higher Education to see women in leadership positions. It was a quiet mix but unintentional.

It is perceived by participants that **P1** assessed the situation and knew what to do next. Women developed their own identity by developing a skill of reading hard before going to a meeting (cf. question 3, **P1**). People are looking for leaders who are willing to give all they have, and they will follow for a while. However, when conditions become difficult, when pleasure and comfort compete with responsibility and long hours, followers will drop away. This was confirmed by **P3** when she said things that were part of her work were swayed away from her to others. There was no reason for this being taken away from her, but she felt the change. **P4** also indicated that this is not about politics or employment equity as that cannot guarantee success (cf. question 13, **P4**).

Participants indicated that some of the interviewees were in the process of learning, and as their leadership skills developed their leadership style emerged. They began to take control of the situation due to their basic education. Even though they experienced exploitation in the processes of leadership, they learnt to control it and had learnt from exploitation. This was because the environment and the social factors still regard women as people who cannot lead.

Most of the interviewees realized that the comments that men made were discouraging. **P2** was told she was too young to study for a doctorate, and instead of being encouraged she was discouraged by men. **P4** mentioned that one of the women was called “Poppie” by a man, which was demeaning.

The participants indicated that even though both men and women can be effective in leadership but have different styles, this was not seen that way. It is perceived that women in leadership positions know their abilities and competencies. They are aware of the male-dominated environment as they are facing more barriers to becoming leaders. Because of women's unique identities in leadership positions they are seen as having agentic attributes, seen by others as a barrier to lead and study further. Even if the institutional behaviour can be consistent in that men and women who are in leadership roles behave in similar ways, gender roles ordinarily will continue to exert some influence, showing that females and males in leadership positions will behave differently.

As the interviewees internalize the situation they work in, they know what is required of them. Each woman has skills that differ from the others'. She has to surround herself with people to fill her own gaps. In leadership positions one only gets things done through other people.

5.3.1.4 Family and childhood influences

The participants indicated that most acquired their leadership skills from childhood, some starting from families in which the father played a major role. When they reflected on where they came from they realized that a leadership position is an ongoing process influenced by environmental and social factors. The interviewees came from different families and their upbringings differ. All were raised in a society that perceived leadership positions as being for men. The findings indicate that when these interviewees came into leadership positions the country's culture had changed, which also had an influence on institutional culture. The institutions had to have women in leadership positions.

The role that their parents played in their upbringing was in a way a school of leadership to them. **P1** mentioned that when she grew up she looked up to her father, while her mother was a traditional person: *"My father wanted me to be independent from an early age. So I grew up envying my father."* This shows that women in the past were not seen as leaders. **P1** as a child did not want to be like her mother, so she took a stand to show that women can also occupy leadership positions. She internalized the situation and advanced from a very young age, **P1's**

father instilled a sense of leadership and independence in her that made her feel responsible and wanting to do her best. She became a head girl and took a leadership position in Higher Education. Evidence shows that **P1** had the leadership quality of *striving for excellence*. She was independent, and when she went to school she was a class leader. She envied her father, as her mother was a traditional woman who would wait for him to give directives. As the interviewees, women (as children) saw examples around them of how women were inferior to men. As children they admired their fathers, and their occupations and activities.

P2, because of her family background went to good schools, but times were hard, and her experiences made her disciplined. **P3** and **P4** were leaders at school, with **P4** mentioning, *“I was acknowledged as a natural leader and elected as chairperson of the debating society and Christian society... at the university residence I served in different leadership roles and student associations. Although being young and the youngest, I think I am the wise old child.”*

This finding confirms that events and experiences the interviewees as children went through played an essential and enduring part in their mature lives. It is evident from the participants that women in the past were not seen as leaders, which is why the girls envied their fathers, who they saw as being strong. Women (as children, for a girl child) did not know that they were not supposed to work, and were not yet aware of the changes in their identities. Societal factors led the women (as children) to associate themselves with the social identity that was prevailing then. From this, one can argue that the leadership for these interviewees started at an early age. The findings suggest that women learnt their leadership style of assertiveness, being a provider, caring, being disciplined, and being strong, through observation of how their mothers were treated. Literature indicated that the lifestyle and the manner in which people were raised determine the extent to which their sense of identity is affected by the community values in which they grew up. Though there were traditional notions that a girl child must not go to school, all the interviewees as women managed to do so. All the interviewees as women went to school and as children had self-confidence and self-esteem in situations other than the home. Therefore, they played a leadership role as well, and developed a strong desire for leadership responsibilities as children. The interviewees were all involved in the

processes of or journey to leadership positions. From childhood, when they had been mentored by their families, this had influenced their leadership.

People identify a woman with what she does, and it is the tasks that she does that make her understand herself. For example, **P1** mentioned that when she did her work she did it well and made sure that the people next to her contributed to her doing it. Literature (cf. 2.2.2.1, d) explained that cooperation between different actors in early childhood education influences organizational culture. Also, because of the socially constructed reality the interpretation becomes a foundation for reality in leadership.

The childhood of interviewees did influence their behaviour towards their leadership positions, showing that to make sense one has to learn from others and interact with them. By interaction, an individual identity will change, which is why those in leadership positions will not have only one leadership style to follow, as the environment is changing and a person does not operate in isolation. **P3** also indicated that one cannot have one leadership style in an information age, as societies evolve. Through the process of leadership, women have to understand their identity change so that they can make sense of a new environment of leadership and understand the new identity. The findings suggest that the interviewees must define the space and time situation in which they find themselves, because in that situation the reaction will differ. As situations and people change, so does individual identity. The interviewees must be able to construct meaning from what is happening to their identity. For the interviewees to make sense they have to reflect on the experiences. For example, all were narrating the challenges they came across, how these impacted on them, and how they changed their individual identities. They all went through this process so that as a leader in Higher Education they could use that to make sense of their leadership positions. One needs to understand oneself as an individual relative to others, and find consistency and clarity as to how one defines oneself in a social context. If there is no consistency a woman will strive to regain coherence in how she defines herself through sense-making processes. Experiences help in making sense of the present.

All the interviewees mentioned that their leadership skills developed while they were still at school, and while some were teaching. **P2** said that although there were careers that channelled them, such as nursing and teaching, she made a choice of not taking any of them. However, because they worked very hard and excelled in much that they did, others saw their leadership qualities and encouraged them to take leadership positions. **P1** was spotted by the leader in the university. Although **P3** was spotted out by a good mentor she was a visionary. This shows that, from childhood, girls whose self-confidence was instilled in them did well. They had a voice through working hard. The profound influence of families in the lives of their daughters was noticed by the girls. For instance, **P2** mentioned her educational background and that her mother and grandfather were educated. That instilled in her a sense of learning. For women to be able to construct their identity they should be able to make sense of and cope with environmental change.

5.3.1.5 Workplace experiences: Work and family

The findings show that family played an important part in making the interviewees leaders, and suggest that those who grew up having the support of families took up leadership positions. Some started to be leaders in high schools, as prefects, class leaders or head girls, for instance.

Before the interviewees became leaders, they all worked after graduating from universities, whether in universities, colleges and/or outside the HEI. None stopped working, and even though some changed careers because of the environmental conditions they continued to work. **P2** said she did quit working at the university because she felt the culture shock. This made them realize that to get a good position one needs to be in a working environment. In order to climb the leadership ladder women need to be in a working environment. This somehow impacted on women as they had to take break for maternity. The interviewees had to balance their personal life and work, take care of children and perform at work, and to strike a balance. The caring element of women, now used as one of their attributes in leadership, emerges when they wish to balance the roles. Families have instilled values and morals into their lives, which women take to the workplace. Women as

leaders influence others by what they say and do because of the basic family support they received from the home.

The findings suggest that the interviewees did not underestimate their influence as leaders, but did realize they had power to influence. Women as leaders can influence people to accomplish a purpose because they learnt how to through their family's support. The findings show that though family is important it also has an effect on one's career. As women take care of their families they take breaks from their career.

P3 mentioned how she compromised her career to be able to have time with her children. She said that since she was a mother she would not be good working in the laboratory, so she moved out of the sciences field and studied management and leadership. Some of the interviewees had children while they were young, which made them responsible and changed their identity as they had to lead and nurture their children. This made them mature very quickly.

Some said their children were grown up, which gave them time to concentrate on their jobs. Some had been challenged as teenagers, leading them to make sense of and establish the worth of working. The interviewees had to manage feminine identities, career, and time, professional difference, rational and masculine norms. Women express and construct meanings of their choices, particularly when faced with a sick child, but being a woman does not make one less of a leader.

There were also challenges to the interviewees in raising children, with attendant physiological, emotional and relational changes to individual identity. One such challenge was the role of the "perfect mother", with women having to reframe the "good working mother" role. For instance, **P2** indicated that when she looked at her daughter (*she smiled*), if she did not want to do a thing she would not do it. She said her daughter reminded her of herself and she would not expect someone to do anything she would not do. This is an indication that caring and nurturing of their families must be maintained. What people value, how they inter-subjectively make meaning of their activities, and how they shift and maintain certain identities are shaped by what is and not what is said.

The findings show that both groups (focus group and interviews) found flexible working opportunities as important in women's leadership positions. The need for flexible hours, according to the interviewees, would encourage women to take leadership positions. One group (interviews) mentioned that affordable childcare at the universities would assist women in progressing in their careers. When family and work balance one will be able to construct an identity and productivity will increase. The evidence from the interviewees shows how the past influenced their present, suggesting that woman in leadership positions must make sense based on their experiences.

5.3.1.6 Education and work

In terms of work, much has been transformed in comparison to previous centuries, with women now in leadership positions and acquiring skills and education. Many opportunities for development exist for women. The findings propose that education is the most powerful and dynamic instrument for the socio-economic, political, scientific and technological development of nations. There is a saying that "if you educate a woman you educate the nation and if you educate a man you educate only an individual". It is on this premise that the empowerment of female youth for leadership in Higher Education is important. There were different views in terms of education and work. The environment in which one grew has impacted on the interviewees' education and work, all having been to school and studied for degrees at universities. All had faced different challenges, which made them strong in their leadership careers, as **P2** reflected: *"When I arrive at the university I was challenged by the way things are done. I could not cope with the culture of the university."*

At work, the interviewees mentioned different experiences. The social factors also played a major role, and some got jobs through promotion, whereas some got them by applying. In a working environment, the interviewees encountered different challenges. **P2** indicated that when she started working she was not given an office but worked with other women in a male-dominated faculty. **P1** felt she could not sit in the kitchen which was given to her as an office, so she went to the dean to complain. The dean asked her to share her office, at which point she raised her voice, saying that she could not tolerate that kind of situation. **P3** indicated that she was very

young when she started working, as a lecturer, and stopped to pursue her career. She wanted to be a medical doctor but as she did not do so, she told herself she would be a doctor in other ways. When she quitted lecturing and became a student again she was asked how she could leave work and what she was doing about a pension. She nevertheless pursued her ambition.

From the interviews it was evident that the interaction with other people changes one's identity. Most participants started working with a junior degree, but when they wanted their voices to be heard they realized this would happen only if they could command authority, if they knew how universities function. As mentioned by **P3**, to be able to command authority one needs to learn, have a broader perspective of things and understand the academic world. By becoming an academic one may gain respect, as confirmed by one interviewee who said that universities listen to a person with a doctoral degree and who is acquiring an education.

The interviewee's first sense of equality of opportunities which developed under childhood influences was affected by what they faced in leadership positions. In the childhood stage a child wants to learn new skills, and compare him/herself with others. Children at this age *want to* and *need to* experience success, and they want to be good. But all that was learnt in their childhood was challenged by what the interviewees experienced in their career. This indicates that women wanted to experience success, like their male counterparts, and they did that through studying, that is, education. However, the glass ceiling became a challenge, as an invisible barrier that was difficult for them to break through in reaching top positions.

The findings suggest that in order to cope with unusual changes in their personal lives and careers women had to be educated and understand the leadership identity. Individual growth is an important aspect of identity formation as it occurs within a social and cultural context. Women in leadership positions indicated that they had to cope in this profession by reading policies and motivational books, and by making sure that they knew what it entailed to be a leader. Evidence shows that the interviewees experienced barriers differently, some during their journey in leadership positions and others in a working environment. Their experiences with the glass ceiling occurred in different environments and under different circumstances.

The findings suggest that women in authority are seen as being aggressive, as what is assertive and self-competent, appears in men's eyes to be arrogant. **P1** was regarded as radical when she fought for an oppressed woman. Being a successful woman in a male-dominated environment is regarded as a violation of gender norms and warrants sanctions.

The findings suggest that women need to be qualified in the profession they are in, for example a librarian must be a qualified librarian. Most women stressed the importance of acquiring relevant skills. **P3** mentioned that to be a leader the prerequisite was to know most of the institutional policies but to read a lot, and have a broader perspective of things. Higher Education is facing an unprecedented period of accelerating change that is driven by shifts in public attitudes. To be able to respond to the complex educational, social, political and economic concerns of society, Higher Education must develop a cadre of academic leaders who can engage the institution and its faculty and staff in change and transformation processes. It must develop opportunities so that it meets the competences and challenges of a changing environment. The findings propose that, as leaders, women must be dedicated, and so be recognized. They must be sure that what they are doing is right so that they can keep going.

5.3.1.7 Institutional culture

The findings show that males still dominate the top leadership positions, and even though the percentages of women in universities and comprehensive universities have increased, there is still a wide gap. The findings show that male domination in top position is perceived as a culture of the institutions. **P4** said, *“Although I sometimes get angry when women do silly things in meetings. Women will say ‘I cannot do that’, I am a woman. Then I will call that woman aside and say, ‘You should not have said that, men do not like that’. Because this gives men a chance to say we cannot appoint women because she will fall pregnant, she will say she needs time to take care of the babies. Yes, they must accommodate us but we should not use it as an excuse. One needs to be strategic. Do not allow men to use your femininity as an excuse.”*

The findings showed that the institutional structure is unpredictable in terms of the changes that take place, such as transformation and gender inequality. The institutional routines that can alter the structures and functions of the institutions are still a challenge to women in leadership positions. The source of uncertainty in leadership positions of women was unusual in the universities. The interviewees gave different responses, some feeling that men and women were being managed differently and that the behaviour of men and women differs.

5.3.1.8 Empowerment

The most effective way to learn was to listen to other leaders when they talk about their activities and analyze them. By so doing one will be able to learn what is happening, which means that one has to have a role model. This will help women in leadership to know about the new culture in leadership positions.

The findings suggest that the interviewees believed that a role model was important to young women who want to be in leadership positions. They also advised young women in leadership positions to have a role model, a woman mentor. One must also read, work hard and be good at what one is doing. Women must be involved in committees and volunteer, even if it entailed extra effort. The findings suggest that most women experience that there are no women who mentor young women. **P1** said she made it a point to mentor young women, taking them to events and appointing some to senior positions to expose them. Their experiences differed but there were similarities as they all worked in a male-dominated environment.

P1 indicated that her father was her role model. The findings suggest that women learnt to lead by observing people who had led before them. **P2** learnt from her mother and grandfather, which indicates that mentoring begins in families. At school, **P1** learnt from nuns about discipline and organizational skills. She told me that her father had wanted her to participate in leadership at an early age, but he gave her a space in which to be independent. When she arrived at school the principal, who was a woman, was **P1**'s mentor, and she learnt much from her. The study also shows that women learnt from men how to lead, but they did so the women's way, that is, they took the good out of that and used it. Role models should be people whom the women trust. **P3** supported others by saying, "*We people who made it to*

the top, we must know that is not about us, but the one thing is to make a difference, we owe it to young women, empowering other women.”

5.3.1.9 Power (invisible and visible)

When coming to power the women were ambivalent about what it meant. For example, **P1** said: *“We got power, we must just use it. Our power is not only being in academics. We have power of doing our job well, power of knowing our field. Women have power to manipulate, we have charm, and we got a lot, we can make decision.”*

Different strategies can be used to overcome male dominance, for instance, **P1** gave an example of why Eve gave Adam an apple. This was to show the type of power those women have. **P1** gave examples of showing women power, where power should be used to develop individual identity in leadership. Women must be authentic in their leadership and not lead like men.

P1 emphasized the importance of power in leadership, saying that women must internalise power and not try to emulate male power. Women and men are quite different, and if they exercise power in a way they do not feel comfortable with, they will not make progress. Many leaders have fallen because of a woman’s power. Women have visible power as they can know the disciplines and policies and also have invisible power to apply them.

P1 and **P4** stated that women do have power, but it depends on how they use it. Men had power from South African law but women allowed it. **P4** indicated that the downside is that when women become powerful, men feel threatened. **P1** said, *“Power must be women power, that’s where our power lies: develop our own identity, not the kind of power that we want to be like men, we won’t get anywhere. Have power as women, that is how we are created. On the academic side, internalize that power, not try to have male power, women and men are different.”* **P1** continued to say that men do not realise that women have power. They can be moved around by it. *“Why did you think Eve got it right to let Adam to eat the apple, just because she had power?”*

These claims were supported by **P2**, when she confirmed that as women they have power only if they allow themselves to use it. Women have the power to uphold. As women they must not think that someone must do things for them. Women must have a way of overcoming the obstacles in front of them. Even as the women as interviewees mentioned they had power, they also acknowledged that they attained positions differently from men. Qualities such as equity and excellence must also form part of the power they wield. Even if transformation is there they need to excel in what they do.

P4 saw power from a different angle: *“I rather say influence than power. Women must approach things in a powerful way. Being in a powerful position, being part of senior management you need to take powerful decisions. Women have power to make a difference. I think one has power when one can make a difference, set a pace, trend, and change things for the better. I’d rather say it is influence than power. One has to do more for women on campus. In terms of my career, I think am lucky, what I can do now is in a powerful way being influenced by the powerful position am in. I was once told by my colleague that you don’t know what power you have.”*

A lack of power can lead to powerlessness. Women were leaders in a male-dominated environment. Some of the interviewees reported having experienced “terrorizing and unrecognized” support from top leaders. The interviewees indicated that as leaders they were not in committees that were engaged in decision-making processes at the universities. The findings suggest that even though women were in leadership positions they were not decision-makers, but rather were sidelined and excluded. This led to self-doubt and fear of negative criticism. The interviewees became scared of expressing their views. The findings show that there is an oppression of power from the top. **P1** said, *“Sometimes is not easy for men to give up their power as they had it for long. There will be a lot of gate-keeping but it is better, there is improvement.”*

In terms of powerlessness, evidence given by some the interviewees indicated that women were attacked in meetings and felt belittled by men in leadership positions higher than theirs. There was no support from top leaders for women in leadership positions. Women operated in an environment in which they felt everybody was waiting for them to make mistakes. **P3** added that she had fear and when she got the

post. She was uncomfortable as people were saying how “dumb” she was to miss her first salary. When asked what type of fear she had, she replied that it was fear of change as she was comfortable where she had been, but it was as if she had to “*move out of her comfort zone*”, and that in itself brought fear. Fear of returning to start leadership affected her confidence. She indicated that sometimes personal problems could also contribute to fear. She reflected on when she thought she had grown but when the position came she did not see any growth. There were no clear trajectories that she had to move from here to there.

The findings suggest that from some of the interviewees the other university was undergoing institutional assessment, some indicating that they did not have confidence, and there was no feeling that indicated that they were growing. As **P3** said, “*No one recognizes the good work we are doing.*” She said she equated this institution with “*a sunk Titanic, this is my perception or even of others. I felt it work on my confidence.*”

The findings show that in terms of gender inequality women are still powerless, for instance through gender bias of duties and requirements resulting from parenthood. Women are more likely to be in part-time work or take a career break when there are children to take care of. Those women who join the labour force working full-time after a break or working only part-time are confronted with lower wages than their male colleagues. As women become powerless because of the nature of the institutional culture, the findings show that they are still taking care of their families. In future this could create a global problem as women in leadership positions are facing explicit and implicit barriers and a gender pay gap. Literature shows that this forces them to strike a balance between home and work, which, according to research, indicates that the wealthy career women will have fewer children.

To sum up, if women were to realize what an influence they may have, they would be filled with pride. If men recognized how influential women are, they would be more respectful. The findings indicate that individuals show the social property of sense-making, which is a social construction with others. In situations where women are few in leadership positions, with little contextual information, uncertainty is high

and yet leaders are expected to perform and to take action. The social nature of thinking will then be more prominent and adaptive.

5.3.2 Challenges women encounter in leadership positions

When asked about their individual career path, over half of the interviewees and participants reported that they had experienced mixed journeys, with some minor obstacles or difficulties. The findings show that all women in leadership positions in this study were experiencing challenges differently. Most of the interviewees had experienced this from their past leadership position and even at the time, whereas some indicated that the challenges had changed. They were experiencing the following: underrepresentation in decision-making positions, family commitments, challenge of self, culture shock, lack of organizational support, lack of mentoring and career path, poor support and recognition, lack of confidence, childcare, discrimination, male attitudes, and culture of the institution, gender pay gap and flexible working hours for women in leadership positions.

(a) The institutional hierarchical structure

Institutions are still operating in an uncertain environment, with many policies and procedures to be revised to accommodate the issue of gender, although there will be some rationality in terms of action to be taken. The groups were asked if they had encountered a situation that had impacted on their leadership identity and if so how it had affected them. The responses were mixed, with some mentioning that the presence of women in leadership positions was not well recognized. This let interviewees to actually construct self by understanding their identity, by framing their experiences as meaning-making phenomena. For institutional structure to change there should be a continuous drafting of an emerging story so that it becomes comprehensive. Institutions do not need to perceive their challenges and environment accurately in order to act. *P1* said the structure of Higher Education had many gatekeepers on selection panels, particularly in mathematics, science, engineering and medical fields. She felt that women as leaders should create an environment conducive to women.

The findings indicated that in academic institutions at least two categories were most likely to be used, namely *strategic* and *political*. The former related to the goals of the institution, the latter to managing competing interests and preferences. When dealing with the two points leaders may have a different sense due to their experiences. How leaders look back and attribute meaning helps to make sense. When women entered the leadership positions the country was undergoing the legislation promoting gender equality. Affirmative action was contributing to resistance from some men in leadership positions. In order to make sense of their experiences and make sure that they contribute to the empowerment of women as leaders in Higher Education, women have to look back to avoid making the same mistake.

(b) The attitudes of men

P1 indicated that when she entered the university to work she was initially discouraged by male dominance, but she decided to make a positive change (cf. question 5, **P1**). The findings suggest that there is strong male domination in Higher Education based on what the interviewees mentioned. Women are still under-represented in HE (cf. question 15, **P1**). The findings indicate that women have accepted that change will take time.

Both interviewees and focus group participants mentioned that male representation in Higher Education was historical, but some (**P1**, **P3** and **P4**) believed that women can be “their own worst enemy”. Women sometimes do not want to take the initiative but wait for opportunities to come to them. Women sometimes lack confidence in themselves, for example, **P3** said, “*When I got the new post I had fear, fear of moving out of my comfort zone.*” Also, when women are strong they are seen by men as ambitious and negative. This shows that there are mixed responses from the interviewees, based on the situation in which they find themselves. **P4** saw the attitude of men changing as there were those who acknowledged the good work she was doing. This suggests that the attitude of men may embody traditional social roles, and highlights the status differences and power inequalities that exist between men and women.

(c) Gender and stereotyping as challenge

The findings show that gender roles have different implications for the behaviour of female and male leaders. This was not because the female and male roles differ in content but because of the uniqueness of the identity of the two and the difference in qualities that both female and male have. Women and men differ and the interviewees were aware of the situation in which they were working. *P1* indicated that “*one has to be a woman*”, whereas one of the focus group interviewees said she did not “*want to compare myself with a man*”. This indicated that women and men differ and their personalities are unique, and is evidence that women in leadership positions have internalized what is happening and are now raising their voices to deal with the situation. There was evidence that women lead lives differently from men, that they are more participatory and more democratic, and allow sharing of power and information. They are more sensitive and nurturing than men. In leadership positions the gender difference should not be seen as a measuring stick, for leadership style makes one dominant over the other. The evidence suggested that this is not the case, as discrimination and male domination persist, and because men still view leadership as leading while women see it as facilitating. Men still lead from in front and attempt to have all the answers, while stressing accomplishment of tasks and achievement of goals.

The findings indicate that it is important to differentiate between institutional change and feminism. Focus should be on how this institutional change affects women in leadership positions and how this feminist strategy affects the plight of women in the workplace, where people try to make sense of their environment. This takes place at individual and institutional level. The findings indicate that institutions are facing gender pressure towards gendering sense-making, because of the need for swift socialization, control over dispersed resources, and legitimacy in the eyes of the stakeholder, accountability and measurable outcomes. In the past, most institutions appointed people to top management according to the requirements set by men, as it was and still is – to a great extent – dominated by men. Regardless of this, people were trying to make sense based on what was available.

Women, even in leadership positions, are exploited, and the findings show that there are women who faced exploitation, and who did not receive the same reward or recognition as men. **P2** recounted that when she was a lecturer she had to help another woman who was supposed to get her degree, but because she was a woman she did not graduate, whereas her piece of work was used by a professor without acknowledging her. This professor benefited from a woman's work, which enhanced his status and the environment around him. He received recognition, whereas the woman was victimized and marginalized by the society, and even the church.

Evidence shows that women undergo specific forms of gender exploitation in which their energies and power are expended often unnoticed and unacknowledged. Women experience exploitation in terms of what they do. **P3** indicated that when a post of DVC academic was advertised, instead of her colleagues seeing her as a suitable candidate, they saw her as a good panel member for selection. Her potential remained unnoticed for development but as a potential candidate she went unrecognized. **P3** also revealed: *"I am the lowest paid person in my rank; my colleague in the same position earns more than me."* This revealed a form of gender exploitation in which women's energies and power are expended often without being noticed. The findings indicate that a wage differential between the sexes persists around the world, because of the extension of the gendered division of labour between males' traditional production and females' traditional home-making and social roles. There is evidence that although discrimination against women in the labour market has declined, it persists. The findings suggest that that proactive policies and positive measures to enhance pay equity are needed. In order to determine which policies are needed the reasons for the gender pay gap need to be explored. **P3** felt that direct discrimination was occurring because she and other deans who had the same level of educational attainment and work experience were treated differently, receiving different pay levels for the same work or different job requirements for the same pay level.

Women have done what they could do, such as empowering themselves and others, but they still have not been accepted. Cultural factors have affected their unique identity formation. In one university women were denied the opportunity to develop

by the rector, whereas in another the rector encouraged development. If top management encouraged the development, it would help to alter the appearance of the institutions and serve to acculturate new employees in a different way. New policies will be formulated in a way that accommodates women, not in the same way as men but as equals. The institutions will be able to have flexible schedules that accommodate women as leaders and as mothers. Although there are many women who provide leadership within the institutions, the gender issue within them is still an issue for debate. Institutions will increase the number of women in pivotal positions and be able to internalize their identity through sense-making, embracing change visibly and recruiting many women. Acceptance of women in a male environment requires a change in hierarchy and the patriarchal attitudes. **P1** said, *“There was a situation where curtains wanted to be hanged, the window was long, and women were expected to hang those curtains. I intervened and said men must do that, not women.”* This was also experienced by one participant in the focus group: *“Men have muscles, they must carry boxes.”* The findings suggest that these two interviewees were willing to stand alone.

The findings show that women as leaders face challenges that affect them emotionally. The challenge to the researcher was that evidence that the interviewees discussed was more directed to the crisis that emanated from the lack of support from top leaderships of the university than to women. Women in leadership positions from other universities lacked top management support, and felt they were being terrorized. **P3** said, *“We don’t have support. I don’t have self-confidence, we are terrorized, we are a sinking Titanic.”* Their emotions were affected. One of the focus group participants said, *“I cannot succumb to male domination. If I cannot do it here, I will go and do it somewhere else.”* The findings suggest that if one’s emotions are affected, one will choose either “flee or fight”. In this study they took the option of flight as they kept quiet and their voices were not heard as leaders.

The findings show that they lost their frameworks and cues as women as they became exposed to new ones. Their identity as women was affected and they lost a sense of being. Women’s emotions were interrupted by being leaders in a male-dominated environment. In the face of an emotional outburst, people often ask in disbelief, “What did I do?” That is the wrong question. A better question is, “What did

you expect?” Expectations hold people hostage to their relationships in the sense that each expectancy can be violated, and generates a discrepancy, an emotion, and a valence interpretation. If little is expected, there is little chance for discrepancy and little chance for emotion. However, when an outside event produces negative emotion for an individual in a close relationship, the individual’s partner may be less likely to remain tranquil and supportive than a superficial partner.

The findings indicate that the issue of gender differences persists. When respondents were asked if the glass ceiling still existed, and how leaders enacted leadership experiences to reflect on their leadership practices, all groups said there was a difference in the way men and women were treated as leaders. They indicated that the way men and women experience leadership differs, with women being caring and transformational. **P3** mentioned, *“I was working with gentlemen, and we complemented each other very well. Our thinking was different, our leadership style was different, and I complimented him when I saw his weakness. We worked well.”* **P4** said, *“As a woman I have different abilities, that softer touch, I bring different dimensions to leadership with my own attributes.”*

The issue of gender difference is still a concern, with one interviewee saying she reprimanded women in the meeting who would say they could not do something for some reason (cf. question 16, **P4**), which showed that men still do not see women as being leaders. This evidence is used to explore the gender differences in the importance of reflected appraisals, self-perceived competences and social comparison. In the past, women were only seen as people who belonged in the kitchen. Gender differences in this study are seen in different ways, with women developing abilities to exploit different sources of self-esteem and embrace different criteria for self-evaluation, and take opportunities to experience self-enhancement. Often women have no chance to express their views, as their gender limits their level of participation. In terms of wages, findings show that women are still the lowest paid in leadership positions, and as **P3** indicated, she was the lowest paid person. This relates to the culture of excluding women from leadership positions in the field of education, as had prevailed for many years. The findings suggest that their gender limits their level of participation. They were judged by their gender not by their

leadership capability. Most women in leadership positions do not receive support from their male or female counterparts.

(d) Accountability of Higher Education to the career paths of women in leadership positions

The questions produced mixed feelings from the respondents, with some indicating that for themselves they could do anything they wanted. **P1** said she did not have a problem, as her dean allowed her to do anything and go anywhere, as did top management, *“but I know there are other faculties that still experience the barriers of development”*. Others felt their institution did not allow them to develop. This was supported by the participant who said: *“Within a week, the top management gave me forms of a college. You become engaged all the way. I introduce students to work in the main building, they are students who hear what is happening on campus and in the main building, they become empowered.”* **P3** said their institutions did not select them for development and training overseas, as the top management of the university refused: *“There was an institutional assessment going on, one of the things I said to them is I do not have confidence, I feel am not growing. In this institution you do not get recognition. If we are in a meeting we fight, battling, we do not give support. That is my perception, we are a sinking Titanic or a suck Titanic already.”* The findings show that for some of the interviewees there was no support or professional development.

As leaders, women do not work normal hours as they have to follow their children to a sports match. As a woman in a leadership position in Higher Education one has to command respect. This was supported by the participant who said the *“demands in Higher Education are higher than elsewhere. One needs to know what one is lacking.”* She said she had realized that she was not positioned internationally and she had to do something about that.

(e) Social networking, role models and mentorship

P3 said: *“I was mentored by a man. He was a visionary. He unveiled the opportunities. He pushed me to participate in committees within the institution.”* **P1** said, *“One needs to have a woman mentor. When I was teaching, the principal, who*

was a woman, was my mentor.” The interviewees were convinced that a person must have a role model or a mentor. The findings suggest that women do not create time to network and time to socialize is limited. Women tend to network differently whereas men’s network is homophilous. The findings suggest that this causes a challenge when women rise in leadership positions, as the structural and cultural impediments continue to shape their developmental and leadership experience. For example, when women grow there is no female role model. Most have been mentored by men, as were **P1**, **P2** and **P3**. To make sure that young leaders in leadership are empowered the women must use their experience and mentor them.

The findings from the focus group participants and the interviewees indicate that social networking and role models were seen as potentially useful. One group mentioned that young women must be empowered, involved in the decision-making structure and taken to seminars. According to **P3**: *“Mentoring. That is the only thing. We people who made it to the top, we must know that is not about us, but the one thing is to make a difference. That is mentoring. Okay, I am a humble, down-to-earth person. But the position I am in right now is not about me. Is not about me being ambitious to become DVC. Women who made it to the top, owe it to young, upcoming people.”*

(f) The voice of women

The findings show that women’s sense of competency was built up when they were children. The girls who were developed had a strong voice and a keen sense of competency as little girls (Stephens 2003:51). The findings suggest that most of the interviewees believed that women must work hard, command authority, read the policies, and familiarize themselves with what is happening around them. They must prepare when they go to meetings. Both focus group participants and interviewees agreed that to have one’s voice be heard one has to do voluntary work, command authority and know one’s own strengths. One of the interviewees (**P3**) said, *“These are prerequisites for leadership positions, and have people skills, otherwise you will suffer yourself. Which is something I feel most of the people do not want to take initiative, they do not want to be selfless and make themselves available. They want most of the opportunities to come to them.”*

The type of education one receives determines to a large extent whether a person's self-image will be positive or negative. This means that through education one acquires self-image and a sense of identity change.

The findings indicate that if a person has been developed well her sense of identity and self-image become positive. Most women are negative due to the way the situations are in the university. Institutions must be aware of the crucial role of women's voices in maintaining or transforming a patriarchal world.

The findings suggest that one needs to have a sense of purpose. To develop a voice as a leader as a women one has to "move out of the comfort zone", to have a compelling reason to face down fear and insecurities and take action. Women must connect with and be connected to others for a larger purpose. That will inspire them and increase the sense of purpose, while helping others to find greater meaning in life. The findings show that if a person in leadership is afraid the others will also be driven by fear and insecurity. **P1** said women must become agents of change, as they create a sense of urgency. For change, women have difficulty in developing an authoritative voice. Women were in leadership due to affirmative action. Women are viewed not as what they are but what they do. They are given a position that will lead them to failure. Women are intimidated quickly.

(g) Leadership style

Participants in this study view their leadership style as being participative, collaborative, empathetic, caring, empowering and team building. They are also willing to share power and encourage one another. Ramsay (2000) supports this statement by saying women in leadership are more democratic, consultative, cooperative and participative than males. **P3** said she had a unique style that was noticed by the principal when she started teaching, and they appointed her to be a deputy principal without her applying. From her childhood her mother had recognized that she was a caring person and loving to disadvantaged children. **P3** knew that as a leader one must be trustworthy, ethical, good and honest, and set high personal standards, because the world is looking for such attributes. This was why she was

chosen without submitting an application. In order to realize this, participants could acknowledge their weaknesses and strong points. They know that, as leaders, communication and striving for excellence were important. What stands out in these results is the consistency that women were aware that leadership was not an individual thing. One must be able to connect and build trusting relationships.

The interviewees were clear about their situation and how and what to do about it. As leaders they created their own environment in which others were empowered. Through reflection on practices they could learn in leadership. To be able to make sense the interviewees must move beyond stereotypes, involve others in making sense and learn from small experiments to communicate critical elements. Leaders must have the ability to listen and understand what others are saying. **P3** said, *“It was more of a confirmation of the leadership styles I adopted. It equipped me, acquired lots of skills to do my work better. This was because of my leadership style, and I was different from others.”*

P4 indicated that she did not have to manage people with fear: *“As a woman I have different abilities, that softer touch, I bring different dimensions to leadership with my own attributes.”*

One could say that participants did not see their leadership style in a negative way; they associated their style with what was traditionally perceived as male attributes, such as assertiveness and authoritativeness. They did not have fear. They see their leadership style as being empowering, mentoring, team building, commanding authority, respect, a softer touch and bringing in different dimensions (see question 10).

(h) Turning point

The interviewees described the oppression of men as a turning point in their leadership positions. Today, these women are successful in their leadership positions. It was not a simple journey, but they managed. The interviewees tell how they managed in leadership positions, by reading hard, knowing the policy, leading like women, mentoring others, doing social networking, and making a show of how

they used their power. These themes led to their strengths being noticed by the men with whom they worked. That was the only way they could be perceived as leaders and let their voices be heard. The interviewees said that they had learnt to set boundaries. **P4** said, *“Men can take you for granted when they resign all their work, they will give it to you by saying they know you will do a good job.”* This was a warning to women not to let men exploit them in the name of hard work. Women must set boundaries around their work.

A positive aspect emerging from the interviewees was that they voluntarily helped each other to overcome their fear. What they used to internalize from men who oppressed women in the workplace made them change from being oppressed to being assertive. According to the data there is a gap that needs to be bridged to address the issue of mentoring, having the voice be heard, and recognition in terms of being part of the committees that make decisions.

From listening to these women it became clear what they had been through. This brought out the researcher’s personal experience of being in leadership positions, the journey she had been through. It reminded her of the situation in which her identities changed and she became assertive, as she realized that if she did not do it for herself then nobody would. This also marked a turning point for most of the women participants, but the findings suggest that there are still gaps in leadership positions that they need to bridge. The questions remain: How does all this make sense? How can all these barriers be overcome?

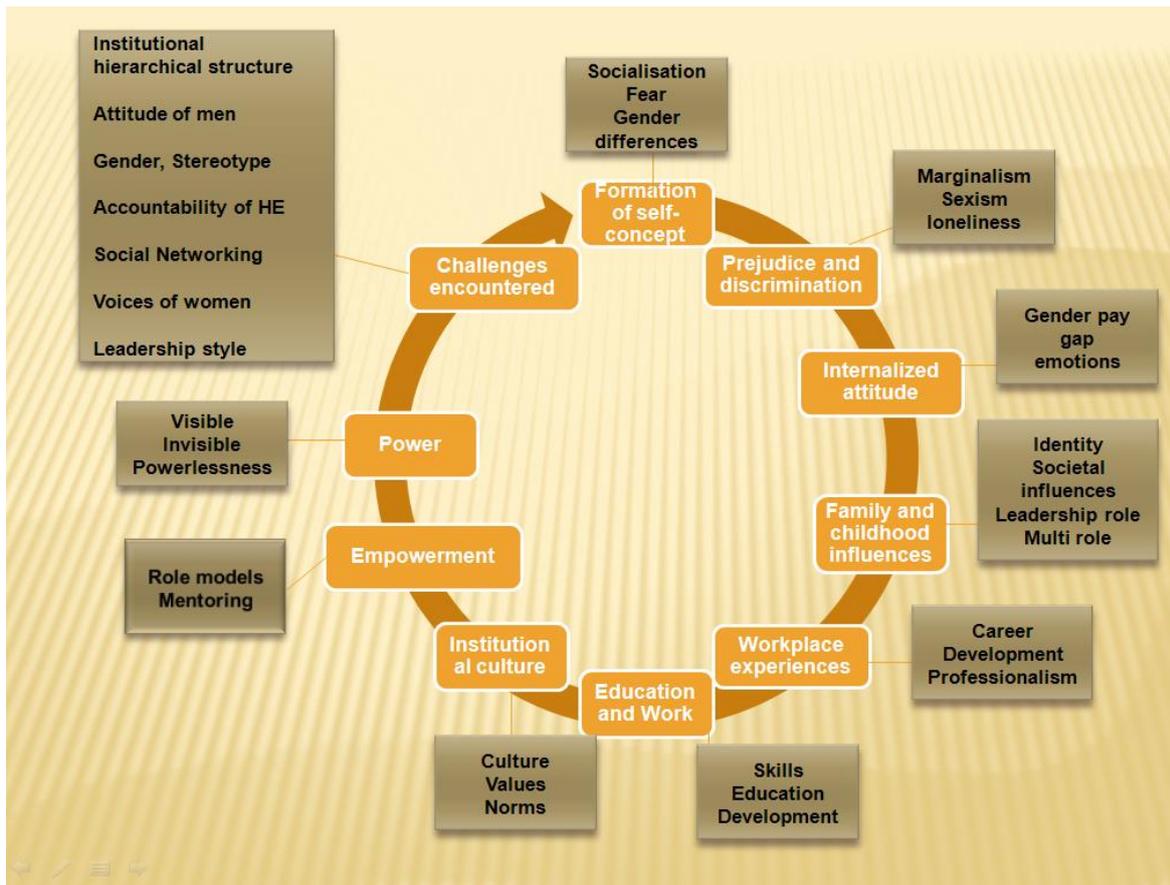


Figure 5.2 Summary of interview participants' discussion

5.3.3 Level 2: Interpretation from a sense-making perspective

To identify sense-making concepts from the interviewees the seven properties outlined by Weick (1995) were utilized. The term “sense-making” is about the reduction of uncertainty and equivocation through a deliberate effort to understand the interviewees’ stories, and questions asked at an individual level, while one is searching for a meaning that enables action to provide insight. It is defined as placing stimuli into a mental framework and is used to direct interpretation. If sense-making is regarded as a prerequisite for action and it is accepted that complexity takes place at personal level, the attempts to drive action in institutions are attempts to facilitate sense-making at the individual level. This has helped to interpret the findings from a sense-making perspective, analyzing data using the seven properties: (i) grounded in identity construction; (ii) retrospective; (iii) enactive of sensible environment; (iv) social; (v) ongoing; (vi) focusing on and by extracted cues; and (vii) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (Weick 1995:17-62). The seven

properties have become cornerstones of sense-making, providing the analytic tool needed to understand the process in this study.

A second analysis using the seven properties as a framework was useful in explaining how different interpretations of the same experiences were made. The researcher also consider the themes and link them to Weick's seven properties, taking into account other factors such as inequalities of power and the failure of sense-making to consider issues of gender and discrimination in creating a new culture in institutions of accommodating women in leadership positions. As mentioned (cf. 4.6), these properties cannot stand alone while one is making sense, and some have greater relevance in explaining certain behaviour in an institutional situation. Sometimes, one of the properties had a greater influence on sense-making than the others. For example, the property of enactment refers to the process whereby interviewees bring a particular meaning into action. Enactment is about imposing that sense of action. An interviewee enacts meaning by intervention, when they talk to others in institutions. Their action will become visible in the process whereby the same enactment of meaning can also have an influence on plausibility of other action and simultaneously the construction of identify takes place. When one interacts with others their influences will also affect their identity constructions.

On this level, sense-making will assist women in leadership to try to make sense not only by interpreting what is going on in their situation and discovering their own identity, but also by constructing meaning and discovering their own invention. However, in using the seven properties, women will also discover their own social construction from a feminist perspective to form a significant context in which they make sense. Sense-making helps an individual discover his or her own identity in a new social environment that has impacted individual identity.

Weick's (1995:15) approach makes a distinction between interpretation and invention of reality: "people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they have already imposed what they believed". This indicates that sense-making is not about interpreting what is going on but discovering self-invention.

The seven properties are used to find out what women as leaders experience during the leadership process. These properties were used to investigate and bring a deeper understanding of what the leaders went through. The participants encountered that the social factors were the most dominant (cf. 5.3.2 (e)). In addition there were the gender factors, which include culture, language, respect, attitude, and pattern of behaviour, dress code, pattern of belief, values, and power. These factors are what interviewees encountered as challenges when they made comparisons with their past.

Identity construction is a key property of sense-making that provides a foundation to the sense-making process and in its influence on the other properties. This makes it central to the concept of institutional change. For any institutional change to take place, identities of individuals need to be redefined, either from individual or institutional level, to provide a way of conceptualizing as an individual or as an institution, and so maintain the institutional culture. It emanated from the past, in which experiences took place. Such history includes beliefs, ongoing interactions and the retrospective process of sense-making that individuals are used to. For the women to *construct their identity* they had to refer more to their experiences when they looked into their multiple selves. Women as leaders looked retrospectively at their leadership processes. Changes that occurred in institutions made them look back to the place from which they came. To make sense, the interviewees had to construct meanings and manage the existing environment in which they found themselves. Their identities were challenged by having children while still young, being in leadership positions and being in institutions that were previously male-dominated.

The women's identity *in construction* was affected when their sense of identity was interrupted, and when self-concept was interfered with. They had to think of others and their selves in their environments. From a sense-making, women had to *enact* to maintain their identities. All this occurs after action has taken place. Most of interviewees' *identity* was influenced by the environment, interruptions and interpretations. They had to interact with others in the situation and reflect on the *identity* that was created. Individual positions and *identities* within institutions were seen in terms of how they perceived the impact of a new environment.

A person can only make sense of what has already happened, not what is happening in the instant environment, as one makes sense *retrospectively*. The interviewees made sense of the processes they went through by reflecting on what had happened before they became leaders, and how their family experiences supported them. To be able to make sense they had to reflect on what happened *retrospectively* in their journey of leadership. They were confronted by the same situation that they experienced when growing up as girl children and later in leadership positions. Before becoming leaders, they indicated what they had been through.

One interviewee mentioned that she had to stop teaching sciences as she thought she was not good. This was supported by **P2**, who said she was told that she must not do a doctoral degree as she was still young. When she became a leader she was confronted with the same situation and made to feel inferior in comparison to men, first by her boyfriend, then by colleagues. The issue of gender was observed by interviewees by reflecting on what happened in the past.

Explaining the *social* process, women are able to accommodate others in their leadership positions. Women as leaders talked about mentoring others, being engaged in community activities and knowing the institutions' policies. The findings are that after the interviewees went through processes of identity change, they realized that the past had carried them to where they were and, therefore, they had to create meaning out of them. Creation of meaning is an intentional process, relying on what has already happened. One cannot attach meaning to the experiences that are singled out but the meaning is directed to the experiences. The possible meaning is synthesized because of many changes that take place. When looking at the women's past there are many meanings that made them, as sense-makers, have problems. These were in the form of confusion rather than ignorance. For example, one indicated the confusion she experienced when she started working at an institution, as a form of culture shock made more difficult by the language barrier between her and her colleagues. When confronted with such a situation women need support, but instead they were given more information than was necessary at the time. Interviewees had to think of others and project onto their environments. They perceived the impact of information overload and played a role as they had to

interface constantly with new information, diverse cultures and ideas, and challenges that required both critical and creative thinking.

Women needed values and priorities that would make sense, as confirmed by one interviewee when she said. *“Even in this position people assumed I would know my job, know how everything worked, which was not true because if you are a researcher or HOD, it differs from being a dean, DVC or a vice-chancellor. There is a huge inefficiency not only for women but in how people are prepared for senior positions and particularly for women.”* This indicated that in order to make sense they did not need more information but values and priorities that would help them to make sense. Once this feeling is reached, the *retrospective* process will stop because women often refer to their past when they lack clarity about preferences to help them to make sense.

Women have *sensed the environment* they are working in. As leaders they know the environment in which they work and reflect on what they do. Women had to make sense by constructing reality in that environment. As leaders, they created the environment as that environment created them, which means they had influenced the environment by making their voices heard and vice versa. As leaders they had to make sense even when the situation was ambiguous. Some of the interviewees experienced the ambiguous situation when they received anonymous letters, whereas one was also told that she was good enough to form part of the panel for the interview but not to be a candidate. The findings indicated that to make sense in an institution depends on the institutional structure. It became evident that there were many differences in the two institutions in terms of their management styles. In one of the universities uncertainty prevailed, with interviews and focus groups helping women to express their emotions based on the situation that affected them and the entire university. Different meanings and actions emerged, based on the university’s situation. Sense-making was thus an important lens through which to see how identity construction and extracted cues played a role for women in that particular university. Sense-making will help women as leaders adapt to the changing environment and institutional structures, and show them how to deal with them. The institutional environment is changing, women in leadership positions need recognition and they seek cues from their environment to interpret and structure

information in conversation with others in their social system. They construct plausible stories and explain what is happening and why sense-making will allow the institutional management and women in leadership positions to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity.

Sense-making is the process of *social* construction that occurs when discrepant cues interrupt individuals' ongoing activity, and involves the retrospective development of plausible meanings that rationalize what people are doing. The *social* context relates to how interviewees interact with others. Sense-making is also *social* in a sense that one's actions depend on who one socializes with and who will help in making sense. It was through interacting that the interviewees realized how they were being treated. If somebody pulls one down, one will react differently. One of the interviewees felt that women should be assertive and command authority in a clever way. In most cases, when one treats another badly one will change attitude and act differently around that person. However, interviewees believed that being clever was a way of showing that the formation of self-concept went deeper than interacting with others. The *social* interaction in institutions was challenged.

There were certain aspects of management that institutions did not amend when women became leaders, whereas women as leaders found themselves in a situation in which different beliefs, values, norms and policies existed. Aspects such as women's roles, policies and procedures that discriminate against women still exist. They had to make interpretations so that the activities become defined and they could reach a common understanding. This created a *sensible environment* in which women as leaders had to make sense, even when the situation was discriminating against them. One interviewee indicated that discrimination and racial issues were rife: *"There were things that were happening that made me cry. But I will go to my office and open the window and cry. I did not want to cry in front of the students."*

When interviewees enact, they also make sense of them and the use of language in the conversation impacts on the construction of the event. For example, when men call women names in meetings it affects their identity construction and influences their leadership positions. As a result, women as leaders in institutions may not make sense of their leadership positions. Lack of support by institutions impacted on

the leadership positions of women in a negative way, for example one interviewee mentioned that she failed for the first time in her life. She cried and was devastated, later looking for a job in a newspaper in a certain industry. She was frustrated, because there was a child, and a broken relationship but she did not receive support from the institution. By bracketing the cues she was trying to make sense. Others felt there was a terrible situation in institutions, with one indicating that in her university bonuses were given to certain top management but not all staff. Her argument was that since there were no strikes, students were passing and the research output was good, all staff should be paid bonuses.

As a social process, interviewees made sense by taking part in meetings and making sure that their voices were heard. This was seen when one interviewee indicated that she once reminded men in a meeting that they should also acknowledge her presence. As a social process women as leaders were able to create situational awareness and to improve interaction among themselves and their colleagues. In institutions, findings suggest that there were many continuous and *social* processes which through sense-making help in tackling choices and construction of meaning. Through interruptions, the interviewees had to redefine their cues that were meaningful within the context.

Explaining sense-making as an *ongoing process*, it means it spreads over time and it never starts as the duration never stops. It is an ongoing process as institutions are continually changing. Women are at the centre of many events and have multiple roles. The leadership styles change and create tension, which might affect their leadership positions. Interviewees realized that leadership is an *ongoing* process by which they attempted to freeze specific moments of life to capture their meaning. Interviewees preferred to make sense of their reality so that they felt comfortable and in control.

Leadership is an ongoing process which started from childhood. As a continuous process, sense-making helps women to find out what works, how and why while performing certain tasks. Interviewees found themselves in an *ongoing* process in which they were exposed to new skills, new styles of leadership, new environments, and new interactions with others. These exposures came in the form of interruptions

which also affected their emotions. Some of the interruptions took place in their schooling age. The interviewees (as children) were undergoing a continual redefinition of their “self,” and were engaging with others to construct a meaning so that they could make sense of their leadership positions in future. The sense-making is also influenced by the institution’s identity, which influenced leaders’ self-image. A woman makes sense of whatever happens around her by asking what implications these events have. What the situation means is defined by “who I become while dealing with it or what and who I present”. This is a process of change of identity. As leaders, women had to make sense of the interruptions in which they found themselves. The findings suggest that the interviewees’ identities were interrupted by the changes they underwent. In order to make sense interviewees had to understand that their identity was changing as a form of an ongoing process. Making sense begins with an individual’s identity, when one learns who one is by acting and reflecting upon the actions of others. For instance, if **P1** watched her father’s actions and this influenced her identity to be a leader, this shows that identity is the core preoccupation in sense-making, defined as a process of action and interaction.

As leadership position is an *ongoing* process, interviewees had to evaluate the situations of the institutions by interpreting what was happening. This was done through interaction, and gave an opportunity to interviewees to repair their individual identities that had been changed by social factors. To that end, the leadership of women held multiple identities and they realised that their multiple roles were important in leadership positions. This created sensible social activities and environment to them. For example, one interviewee mentioned that she realised that she wanted to grow and told her manager that if she did not get a challenge in her job she would start applying for a new one.

The staff’s autonomic activity was triggered by interruption, which ended up reducing the cues that were underway at the time of interruption. It reduces cues that can be used in sense-making, and focuses attention on the interruption. There are some factors that determined the stress to employees, such as people’s subjective perception. The interviewees must make sense by understanding the perspectives of others and withholding judgment while listening to them, which will encourage others to voice their opinions. To make sense as leaders, one must think of others’

reactions to a leader's ideas and how that can be explained to them. To make sense leaders must connect and have the ability to build collaborative relationships with others and create a coalition for change. Institutions must realize that dwelling on the past can be wasteful if not well addressed.

Leadership as process is ongoing; it never starts because it never ends, therefore, some things in leadership will be of the past when one starts to make sense. Evidence shows that the way the interviewees reacted to the interruption of men in their leadership would lead them to make sense: "Interruption is a signal that important changes have occurred in the environment" (Weick 1995:46). The past, present and future are inseparable in many ways. The past is used to explain the present. Emotion plays an important role when identities change. Disruptive events and the disruption cues cause emotion arousal. What the interviewees experience in leadership positions will help them to make sense of the situation and reconstruct meaning.

Leaders must *focus on extracted cues*. To make sense one needs to understand the frames and cues. Frames deal with the past moment and cues with the present moments of experience. If a person can differentiate between the two moments, meaning will be created. This shows that the content of sense-making is found in the frame and categories that summarize experience. What is important about cues is that they help leaders understand what people are noticing.

Cues can also indicate the institutional improvement areas. Institutions had paid attention to what the society required from them, what the DoE wanted them to do, what change required them to do. Institutions extracted cues when they made sure that women were appointed to leadership positions. As mentioned by interviewees, it was through affirmative action that they got the post but policies were not in place so that things could make sense. Interviewees started to notice the *extracted cues* by institutions as negative, but they continued to focus on cues that had positive results in order to make sense. Women as leaders needed information to move on. For example, this made them establish a women's monument in one institution.

Therefore, to be able to make sense of the ongoing processes one needs to be sensitive to the way people do things out of continuous flows and extracted cues

from the moments. Leaders must bracket the ongoing flow of experience. Women as leaders are faced with two levels, institutional and individual. On the former leaders need to engage in sense-making to understand why their teams are not functioning, why their women as leaders are leaving, and why their operations are falling short on safety and reliability. This was indicated by interviewees when one said, “*we are a ‘sinking Titanic’.*” On the latter level, interviewees had to understand why they were not living up to their expectations as leaders, and why there was a gap between them and male leaders.

The interviewees saw *focus on and extracted by cues* when they tried to make sense of what they noticed. Their sense-making was focused on what they noticed happening in their leadership process. This was based on the little information they got and the challenges they encountered in the situation. Some of the cues noticed had a great impact on reality and the world. As mentioned by one interviewee, she was never given a chance to go overseas like her colleagues. In order to make sense she had to make sure that she controlled the cues. However, all the interviewees realized that it was better to be educated in order to face the changing cues in institutions. Education provides terms of references to women in leadership positions. It broadens the network of meaning.

To make sense as leaders, interviewees have to be driven by plausibility rather than accuracy, meaning women as leaders need to follow the institutional structure and policies. They can interpret the situation and make sense in a way that will make them lead. Cues in the frame make sense, not the cues alone. There should be a connection between the cues and the frames, the past being the frame and cues the present moment of experiences. To be able to make sense women must be sensitive to the ways in which people chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from them. The ongoing flows are subject to interruption that sense-making is infused with feeling. Interruption is a signal that important changes have occurred in the environment. The event of emotion is the interruption of an expectation.

To be able to deal with this, sense-making can be used to measure those emotions of women that might lead to withdrawal, stress, fear, and loss of self-esteem and self-confidence. This was observed when one interviewee mentioned that “*my*

confidence is dying and there is no recognition". Her statement confirmed that her flows of events were interrupted, which induced an emotional response that influenced her sense-making. Whenever the normal flow of events is interrupted, which is the individual identity of the interviewees, this is an occasion for sense-making to occur so that identity constructions can begin. When a person does not make sense, it shows that arousal is high. When emotions are aroused in the autonomic nervous system it shows that performance is affected. Arousal is triggered by interpretations that occur in an ongoing activity, and this has a physiological significance which prepares people to fight-or-flight reaction. Because of the uncertainty of the changes, arousal develops slowly, like a time bomb, and when it explodes, performance drops. Arousal develops slowly, giving time for the appropriate action to occur. This means arousal does not happen abruptly, but rather there is a time where institutions can solve and deal with interruptions. It leads people to search for answers to the interruption.

In conclusion, interviewees made sure that in order to make sense they should let their voices be heard. This was done by educating themselves, leading like women, encouraging and mentoring others. To make sense, interviewees had to hold on to important values, beliefs, and aspirations. They had to let go of the things that held them back in leadership, and focus on means, attitude, habits and behaviour. They had to move on and create a new level or environment of performance sense. To make sense, interviewees realized they needed to change their behaviour as individual and the way society viewed them. They needed to take a lead in meetings, conferences, churches and community. They should not lead like men. In so doing women know when to take and what to say. As leaders they had to use their expertise and credibility to exert a strong influence on institutions and extend their institutional expertise to others.

From the process of leadership positions women had to *extract cues* from the context of what was happening in their leadership, identities, behaviour and institutions. By *extracting cues* interviewees decided on what was relevant, what to accept and what to improve. This was confirmed by all, when they realized that to be able to manage in leadership one needs to be educated. One interviewee said, *"If you are educated, having a doctorate in institutions, people tend to listen to you."*

This is an indication that *extracting cues* makes sense as it provides one with points of reference for linking ideas to broader networks of meaning, and one develops a larger sense of what is taking place. As women as leaders have shifting identities, this indicates that accuracy is not as important. Interviewees had to make sense by making decisions about things based on probability and intuition.

By way of making sense, they became active agents in the construction of environments. This was evidenced by their making sure that they mentored young women, exposing them to the leadership environments. They were also invited to work in the main building of the institutions to see how leadership there worked. This was to expose them to the real leadership environment. From a sense-making, in order to cope with exploitation and to make sense out of that situation women have to focus on extracted cues. There are things that are noticed which help people to make sense. Women have noticed that they are exploited but the question is, what must they do? Women must use cues to rescue them from exploitation, be sensitive to the situation and extract cues. As leaders, they realized that since they noticed the changes they bracketed them and indicated that they needed to make their voices heard by taking peers credibly, mentoring others, being involved in community engagement, and reading. In most cases it is not what one sees that makes sense but what one believes in. To make sense women must filter the cues they have. This will assist them in having emotional intelligence, self-awareness and the ability to deal with cognitive complexity.

Normally people *extract cues* that are simple and familiar and that will keep them moving. This means to make sense women have a choice. Based on sense that has already been made, how people notice extract cues is simple; the cues they extracted and kept acting on were acts of faith amid indeterminacy that set in motion sense-making. It then tends to confirm the faith through its effects on actions that make material that had previously been merely envisioned. Individuals rely on *extracted cues*. Interviewees found themselves in an environment in which there was great uncertainty in terms of their being leaders. Men were still resisting women leaders, which had led women to select certain specific cues upon which they would make sense of their existence and identity. The cues that they selected were linked to a series of challenges that they encountered as leaders. The selected cues would

help them to tie together their frames. Finally, the cues that they have extracted from the environment, if they are consistent with the decision-making process, will enable them to make sense of the change process. If there is inconsistency in the cues, the change process may not be supported.

In order to make sense, interviewees mostly had to see the future through reflection on their past. Although sense comes from imagining the outcome of a decision and then assigning meaning to it, the interviewees' past professional experiences were drawn upon to make sense of a change in practice and determine action. They started to think about who they were in their context to be able to shape what they *enacted* and how they interpreted the environment they operated in. They reflected on their past, which affected what they noticed.

The interviewees started to notice that there was a lack of support from intuitional leadership, and that their individual *identity* did not construct meaning as before. All these became interruptions to women in leadership positions. It was an interruption of identities, leadership, social links, community and institutions. To overcome this and to be able to make sense, women as leaders realized they needed to interact, build narrative accounts, understand what they thought, organize their experiences and use them to make sense. To be able to interact women realized that leadership is a *social* context, where things ideas, experiences and knowledge are crucial.

Social process can be imagined or physically present. The actions one does internally can be contingent on others. For example, monologue changes as the audience changes. To be able to make sense one needs to talk and engage in conversation, as it is the way a great deal of social contact is mediated. Stable connections establish stable entities to which people can orientate themselves.

How individuals examine reflectively their own actions in order to discover what they have done and the meaning of those actions (Weick 1995) is through retrospection in sense-making. Possible meaning may need to be synthesized because many different projects are underway at the time reflection takes place.

Interviewees attend to particular *cues* in their environment. Therefore, other cues which did not penetrate the subjective filter escape and interpretations about the event are inherently biased. Interviewees focus more on culture to make sense. They indicated that culture shaped their understanding when they chose to deal with the issue of gender and discrimination. Focus was more on social links than on academic ones. This indicated that the institutions' interviewees were not worried about academic performance but about how they should perform if the environment was conducive.

However, in order to make sense women realized that leadership positions were an *ongoing process* in which women as leaders had to react and shape the environment in which they worked. It was found that as interviewees projected themselves in these new environments they needed to observe and realize that their identities were changing. They had to make sense of the *ongoing* situation in which the process made them identify some of the behaviour of others that had influenced their leadership positions.

This indicates the *ongoing, retrospective* process of *plausible* change that rationalizes the process of women in leadership. They make plausible sense of ongoing events in their social environment while at the same time trying to find order in this sequence of events that occur around them. Women have to interpret the situation to be able to make sense of it.

People concerned with identity in the context of others engage in ongoing events from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively, all the while enacting more or less order into those ongoing events. The sense-maker is himself or herself an ongoing puzzle undergoing continual redefinition, coincident with presenting some self to others and trying to decide which self is appropriate. *"Depending who I am, my definition of what is 'out there' will also change."* The idea that sense-making is self-referential suggests that self, rather than environment, may be the text in need of interpretation. *"How can I know who I am until I see what they do? This is implied in sense-making grounded in identity. I make sense of whatever happens around me by asking what implications these events have for who I will be."*

What the situation means is defined by who I become while dealing with it or what and who I represent.”

Women’s sense of identity and self-image are developed through a process. From a sense-making perspective, they have to act to maintain their identities. When women became leaders the institutions’ actions and processes were interrupted by appointing women to leadership positions. This created uncertainty from what was known as a simple and complicated environment to a complex and chaotic one. In this situation, if women as leaders were to make sense of leadership they would have to lead like women. As leaders women acknowledge that the institutions must realize that they do understand that they need to lead professionally. This was mentioned by one interviewee when she said, *“As a woman, know your environment, be an authentic leader. Do not lead the male way. Be authentic in a sense that if there are things that are expected from you do it. If the culture in Higher Education for example is to wear formal clothing, then dress formal. Be sensitive, be a woman who knows what you are doing and do it well.”*

The findings indicated that the processes of women in leadership positions are sensitive. The longer the processes take, the higher the arousal and the stronger the emotions. In institutions, interruption also slows the accomplishment as people experience anger and loneliness. If the interruption has accelerated accomplishment then they are likely to experience pleasure. If people find that the interruption can be circumvented they experience relief. If they find that the interruption has thwarted a higher level plan then the anger is likely to turn into rage.

All these emotions affect sense-making because interviewees had to reflect on their past experiences. Women as leaders had to draw from the past experiences and previous exposure to change the process of leadership in institutions. Women as leaders must rely on social interaction and the environment that they create and enact because of these interactions. People remember events that have the same emotional tone as what they currently feel. Anger at being interrupted should encourage recall of earlier events when feelings of anger were dominant. These earlier moments of anger should stand out when people look back over their past experience to discover similar events and what those might suggest about the

meaning of present ones. Past events are reconstructed in the present as explanations, not because they look the same but because they feel the same.

Under *plausibility*, women had to develop their leadership skills. In most cases what women see is the product, not the process. These products influence the environment. It is not easy to see if things are accurate. Plausibility essentially refers to a sense that one particular meaning or explanation is more meaningful than another. As a sense-maker, a woman cannot make a particular explanation plausible. However, as there are no better alternatives women as leaders use their existing identities and perception to make sense. Interviewees had to shape who they were in leadership positions and had to explore the factors and events that shaped and that influenced them to make sense of issues to give them plausibility. For them as leaders they had to address the element of power, which was not well addressed by Weick in sense-making. Men still have power, which most of the interviewees acknowledged. Women as leaders must explore the institutional power through an analytical approach. They must explore the power structure. As leaders, women must realize they have a role to play, that of making sense, and change the process. Women as leaders operate in an environment where broader power is given to men. This was shown when one interviewee gave an example that although *“there was prejudice and male domination in university then; I used my time to study”*. She made sense out of the prevailing accuracy that there was prejudice and discrimination, by using plausibility.

Even though accuracy is positive, it is not necessary. In order to make sense women do not need to play by the rules of institutions because sense-making is about plausibility, pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, creation, invention, and instrumentality. Accuracy is secondary in any analysis of sense-making for a variety of reasons. The following reasons are the ones that made women as leaders plausible.

The interviewees *enact the environment* of institutions, to explain how leaders cope with entities that already exist. It was observed by women as leaders that it was not easy for them to make sense as there were different forms of a sensible environment. Interviewees realised that women are not fully represented in top

leadership positions, that men produced part of the environment that they currently operated in, and that they did not accommodate women. Interviewees indicated that the environment must be about change, change of culture, attitude, and language so that they will be able make sense of it. One interviewee indicated that when she got to the university, she experienced culture shock, and was not used to an environment in which language was a barrier. This sensible *environment* was developed through retrospection but it ended upon being continuous or ongoing to all interviewees. One interviewee indicated that to be a good leader one needs to be an authentic leader, although this creates an unfortunate mindset where there is resistance to change. One indicated that when a woman was appointed as top leader men resisted her appointment by treating her badly. To understand prejudice and discrimination from a sense-making perspective one must be aware that to make sense inspires a cause of action which folds back to the action taken through reaction. Sense-making assists the institution in answering existential questions and the interviewees' responses reflect different types of the glass ceiling, including prejudice, diversity and discrimination. For development and empowerment the plausible meanings were used to bracket off cues from the environment, and the interpretation of those cues based on salient frames. Sense-making is thus about connecting cues and frames to create an account of what is going on.

Enacted sense-making examines how it has influenced not only crisis management but sense-making research more broadly. Organizational change alongside sense-making and crises involve devising a plausible understanding of the gap and challenges, and will enable leaders to have a better grasp of what is going on in their environment. Leaders must relate to others, helping them to place stimuli into some kind of framework that enables them to comprehend, understand, explain, attribute, extrapolate and predict. It is through sense-making that women can turn the ongoing situation of exploitation and marginalization into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard to action. To make sense, interviewees had to come up with plausible understandings and meanings; testing them with others and via action; then refining or abandoning them in favour of new ones that better explain a shifting reality. By so doing they were able to act when the world seemed to have shifted. This provided them with something to hold on to and keep fear at a distance.

The social and retrospective properties indicate that men reflect much on what happen whereas women cannot lead. Based on the past they focused on self-knowledge and self-esteem. Sense-making is an ongoing process, meaning they are always in the middle of something. This indicates the ongoing retrospective process of plausible rationalization in the process of women in leadership, and rationalizes what they are doing when trying to make sense of ongoing events in their social environment.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The qualitative research method was used to collect data using interviews and a focus group discussion. Data was analyzed using a sense-making lens, to address the challenges and voices of women leaders in becoming empowered for taking up their positions in HE. The findings show that although women are in leadership positions their challenges in two different universities are very different, based more on university structure, culture and top leadership management. Women in other universities have challenges that they can deal with through sense-making but the other groups are facing oppression from top management, which even leads to fear, low self-esteem and the silencing of their voices.

The research focused on the values of these two universities to see what could be the cause. The findings were that the leadership styles of these two universities were different. There is a wide difference in leadership style and attributes. Even though the universities are trying to break the potential stereotype by accommodating women in leadership positions, some women still feel the oppression and intimidation.

There is increasing receptivity to the message that women's voices will be louder and enrich the communal conversation. To leverage our influence as individuals into a collective endeavour that results in powerful change is a challenge. Every intervention counts, therefore women need to be strategic and persistent in finding ways to make their voices heard.

Table 5.2 gives a summary of Chapter 5.

TABLE 5.2 THEMES AND SENSE-MAKING: SEVEN PROPERTIES

Categories and sub-categories	Sense-making: seven properties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of self-concept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ self as an object • Attitude about themselves, action, and impact on others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Psychological process • Manage, cope, think, perceive and plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-image affected, led to self-doubt by a form of intimidation, fear, belittled, powerlessness, cannot develop an authority voice, interaction not well developed, unworthy, scared to express their opinions, no growth in leadership, no recognition, shape career trajectory • Self-esteem and confidence affected because of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ attitude of men ○ lack of support, lots of intimidation, bias, stereotype and prejudice, poor communication, gender differences, cultural and tradition • Self-confidence • Assertiveness, command authority and be smart, voice needs to be heard, work hard and education. 	<p>Identity construction: is for consistency and clarity and how women as leaders define themselves and others (social context)</p> <p>Retrospective: and reflective after what the women in leadership went through. This is reflecting upon and making sense of it.</p> <p>Social: Interaction with others Women take action and learn for further action.</p> <p>Ongoing: be sensitive to the way people do things out of continuous flow. Bracket the ongoing flow of experience</p> <p>Focus on extracted cues</p> <p>Understand frames and cues and how institutions operate</p> <p>Social: How women want to be perceived by others</p> <p>Because of self-definition women as leader identity become an ongoing, social and communication process. How women make sense of their situation and defining their identities depend on their self-confidence.</p> <p>Enactment: women as leaders enact social world to cope by labelling and organizing themselves. Women leaders engage themselves in bracketing, labelling to be able to interpret and create meaning.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prejudice and discrimination 	<p>Ongoing</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Different types of glass ceiling effects • Lack of support, wage gaps, employment and opportunity gap, sex discrimination, marginalization-oppression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ socialization no development ○ refuse opportunity for growth ○ decision-making positions ○ prevent them to be heard ○ domination of male ○ cultural imperialism ○ how social culture dominates ○ invisible due to society ○ acknowledgement sensitivity of DoE ○ have women in leadership positions ○ uncertainty 	<p>Ongoing and plausible understanding of the gap and meaning, place stimuli into some kind of framework</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internalized attitudes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ unique identities, different role (leader, mother, daughter), norms, structure of institution, identity: internalized from institution leader =, construct meaning, identity organized meaning, roles organized function • Identity constructed through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ education, work, develop unique identity ○ skills of reading, agentic attributes ○ gender role ○ women differ from men, men lead differently 	<p>Ongoing: Women shape and react to the new environment they are facing. They observe the consequences and learn their identity.</p> <p>Identity construction: women think who they are in the context of shaping their leadership positions and what they enact and how to interpret it.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and childhood influences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ different upbringing, poor family, educated family, good schools, experienced hard times, raised during apartheid era, acquired leadership skills at an early age, envy their father. • Discipline, recognition and mentoring sense of leadership, traditional role, girl child not to go to school, all have strong desire for leadership, childhood influenced their leadership, identity changed, leadership happened accidentally 	<p>Identity construction: rely on the past to make sense of the present as an attempt to regain order and considering their individual identity. Ongoing process exposes to new skills, new environment, new leadership style, new interaction. interruption.</p> <p>Social: Women share ideas through interaction to construct meaning.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace experiences: Work and family • Family played a role in influencing leadership • Schools influenced leadership positions of women • Leadership has to balance work and family • Family instilled values, morals and norms to leadership 	<p>Retrospective: women reflect and provide opportunities for making sense. The retrospection affects what women notice. The interruption that takes place, women enact the environment they face in a dialogue. As they speak it helps them to understand what they think, organize and experiences and control.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Women are in leadership positions, need to acquire skills, education, be able to make decisions, empower other female youth for leadership positions ○ Situation: impact on women's career • The environment women work in impacts on them <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ social factors • Job promotion as recommendation, work dynamics, there were no offices, experience invisible barriers, follow men to build their career, understand leadership identity, unusual changes in their personal lives and career <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ identity formation - social and cultural context ○ read policies, motivational books ○ experience barriers differently during their journey in leadership as children, as mothers ○ new different working environment and different colleagues ○ when they exercise authority seen as aggressive, arrogant, violating of gender norms 	<p>Extracted cues: cues help women to make decisions on what is relevant and what explanation is acceptable. Education provides terms of reference to women in leadership positions. It broadens the network of meaning.</p> <p>Retrospective: women as leaders make the present to be clearer than the past. The situation impacts on leadership positions of women. To be able to create a conducive environment women tell stories to make sense of the situation they find themselves in. Their future expectations are influenced by how they interpret, express the present situation and construct meaning.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Male dominating culture, culture of institution needs to change, unpredictable structure, need recognition, deal with uncertainty and ambiguity 	<p>Enactment: experiences are codetermined by environmental influences and individual actions that are part of the individuals to create their own experiences.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Listen to leaders, role model, know culture of the institution, be involved in community project 	<p>Social: communication is important. Sense-making does not take place in isolation; it involves others to shape the interpretation and make others aware of the environment in leadership positions.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power (invisible and visible) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ women have power, use women power to strategize to overcome male dominance, be authentic leader, internalize power, visible power ○ lack of power leads to powerlessness ○ terrorized, not forming part of decision-making process ○ sidelined and attacked in meetings ○ belittled and watched to make mistakes, gender inequalities, nature of institutional culture 	<p>Ongoing: power is an ongoing. There is interruption in leadership caused by uncertainty. Women react with positive and negative feelings due to lack of power and also due to the visible power they have. Women's identity is affected, the past experience affects their emotions about how to solve the complex environment. Power in leadership is an ongoing process.</p>
CHALLENGES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional hierarchical structure 	<p>Plausibility: well established values and norms learning leadership of institutions to act early on cues instead of waiting for facts to be intensive</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude of men <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Historical, women are their own worst enemy, wait for opportunity to happen, lack confidence, men see women being ambitious, men bring gender issue unnecessarily, intimidation and exploitation, women do not succumb to male dominance 	<p>Extracted cues: story telling of women indicated the attitude of men. These are frames that women described about men that cause them to connect.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender and stereotyping as a challenge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ institutional change, feminism, how women affected in leadership positions, how feminist strategy affect the plight of women in workplace, institutional face-gender pressure ▪ Socialization, gender exploitation, victimization, discrimination and marginalization, wage gap and gender pay gap, promotion, under-representation of women, cultural shock, lack of support • emotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ autonomic arousal affects confidence and self-esteem, inequalities, sexism, interruption 	<p>Extracted cues: Emotions play a major role. The discrepancies become disruptive. Disruption cues, emotions drawn from the past to make sense of present experiences.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability of Higher Education to women in leadership positions : Career path <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ deals with barriers for women, empowering women, perception of staff, negative attitude of men, normal hours affect women as mothers, command respect. 	<p>Social: Top management must socialize into a culture of respecting and listening to their employees. There was a concern about top management not listening to employees in other university. Cues are used to expand and change the existing environment</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social networking, role models and mentorship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ encourage mentoring, create time to network, socialize, structural and cultural impediment 	<p>The social process: identity construction and enactment and other aspects of sense-making occur in social context relations with others. The interruption informs their meaning, making process salient cues open up for a new way of seeing and perceiving things.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The voices of women can be heard when women have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A sense of competence, command authority, read policies • Familiarize themselves with institutions, be prepared for anything, create institutional climate that is more conducive to them as leaders, change their behaviour as individual and collectively, be aware that men are aggressive, talk and contribute in a meeting, read the reports before the meeting, speak up in a meeting, do not lead like men, lead as a woman, be pushy but not loud, know when to speak and what to say, extend their leadership to community, make sure there are enough women in leadership positions to make the voice heard, give credit when due, do not pull other women down, weigh in issue: be twice as good as male counterparts Assertiveness be – clear, direct, calm, truthful and thoughtful discourse – not aggressiveness or arrogance 	<p>Enactment: action of women supported their activities, what makes a difference. The voices of women are an ongoing process. This reflects the past, present and future. They are inseparable.</p> <p>Social and ongoing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership style Unique attributes, trustworthy, ethical, good, honest, set high personal standard, acknowledge weakness and strength, leaders, communication, strive for excellence, connect: have ability to build collaborative relationship, empower others, move beyond stereotypes, ability to listen and understand. • Turning point oppression by men, reading hard, know policy, be a women, lead like a woman, mentoring others, awareness of men’s attitude, exploitation, social factors, set boundaries, experiences, oppression, discrimination, lack of internal support, career path, self-confidence affected 	<p>Retrospective: this is a richness of stories that illustrate a leadership in line with women in top positions at the workplace, how they should manage, how women leaders are believed to be, either by nature and socialization, kind, helpful and sympathetic, leading them to use more collaborative, nurturing leadership strategies that emphasize communication.</p>

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING THE JOURNEY OF WOMEN TOWARDS LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Leadership in Higher Education has been discussed from many different perspectives, but in most discussions and research conducted, women in leadership positions are still said to experience different kinds of challenges. Over a period of 15 years the South African government has put in place policies on gender equality, affirmative action and sexism with the aim of affording women access to leadership positions in HEIs. However, the insufficient emergence of the voices of women in leadership positions and the challenges of the empowerment of women in HE, challenges of power and empowerment still form part of the current debates.

The Beijing Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) tried to address the issue of women's economic empowerment but little has been put into practice, leaving this goal as an issue still being debated. At the time when the South African education system needs people of high ability and high motivation, the contributions of women are still not optimised and the advance of women to leadership positions is still relatively slow. Although appointments and promotion of women in HEIs do occur, their voices are still not heard. Few women hold positions at higher levels of power and decision-making and because of their underrepresentation the field remains predominantly male.

Policymakers have not adequately altered the institutional structures to incorporate the female leadership disposition, so the hierarchy is continually reinforced and the structures that keep women at lower levels preserved. There is some progress as women become better represented in Higher Education but the gaps require that

alternative voices, experiences, backgrounds and histories of women need to become known and acknowledged. Moreover, societal constructions of perceived gender differences biased the treatment of women in the educational setting. It has become imperative for the voices of the marginalized to be heard. It is through studies like this that the influence of the prevailing institutional biased culture on the individual's sense of self and the challenges to empowerment become a necessity. However, changing the status quo, altering attitudes and shaping the behaviour of individuals present obstacles which may at times be insurmountable.

From the study, entitled "Empowerment: making sense of the voices of women about their journey towards their leadership identity in Higher Education" it has become evident that there is an urgent need for research on this topic, confirmed by the participants' input on issues such as stereotyping, institutional culture and the substantial cost of leadership on women's personal lives. However, as a prerequisite for a study on this topic it was first necessary to shed light on the multiple identities of women and the development of their leadership identities, as well as establish a theoretical grounding of the concept *empowerment* as a requirement for leadership and how women voiced their views and experiences of it.

In this concluding part findings of the exploration on women's voices about their empowerment journeys towards Higher Education leadership will be synthesised and interpreted to make recommendations for Higher Education in South Africa.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRESS OF THE STUDY

The women leaders in this study told their stories about their experiences in leadership and the processes they had to go through. Two institutions of Higher Education, located in Bloemfontein, were used as objects for a pilot study, namely the University of the Free State (UFS) and the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT). The focus was on the journey of women who had already been in leadership positions at these two universities. They realised that it was important for them to develop the skills needed and to find common ground to make sense of their experiences.

The study began with a meta-theoretical perspective on the formation of unique identities and how these impact on the female leadership identity (Chapter 2). Drawing from varied experiences and using a literature review, an analysis was made of the conceptualization, external determinants and internalization of identity, and its role in the workplace. In much of the literature it is argued that women have multiple identities and that these are often not sufficiently respected by their institutions. Chapter 2 also revealed that leadership identity formation is greatly influenced by leadership positions, institutional culture, institutional changes and work environment.

Chapter 3 dealt with the concept of empowerment and the consequent challenges women in leadership encounter. An extensive review of the literature assisted in building a theory and an understanding of this topic. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks were based on the findings presented in the literature review of Chapter 2 and were linked to them through reflection on how challenges of power and empowerment were related to identity formation. Evidence from various sections of the chapter (cf. 3.3; 3.4.7 & 3.4.8.1) indicated that women still tend to lack power, even if they find themselves in leadership positions, because the decision-making authorities are male-dominated.

The first stage in developing the conceptual framework on empowerment was the identification of the term “power” in existing research, the previously used research approaches and the process of empowerment. The challenges that women encountered in leadership positions and their expectations of leadership were also reviewed. With Chapters 2 and 3 as foundations it was possible to conduct the empirical investigation.

Chapter 4 discussed the research design for the empirical investigation. A focus group discussion and an interview guide were employed as qualitative interaction methods to explore the participants’ knowledge and experiences. A focus group discussion and personal interviews were used to examine how they experienced and viewed their journeys to leadership. They also narrated numerous experiences which contributed to the data being collected. It was necessary to listen to the voices of these women and to interpret their contributions by using sense-making as a lens.

The choice was for qualitative research as it was the most suitable approach to explore the issues around women in leadership positions. This method allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of women's identity and their experiences in leadership positions.

All the discussions were tape-recorded and notes taken using a research journal. The researcher was the only one taking notes to maintain the ethical code of the research. All questions for the interviews were based on the theoretical foundations provided in Chapters 2 and 3 and formulated in a way to make the interview process comfortable and allow the participants to participate spontaneously.

Women told the stories about their experiences in leadership positions, and the processes they went through. Participants from two institutions of Higher Education, located in Bloemfontein, were used as objects of the study, namely the University of the Free State (UFS) and the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT). The focus was on women who had already been holding leadership positions at these two institutions, either academic or administrative, to explore their journeys towards leadership. From the women's side they realised that it was important for them to develop the skills they needed and to find common ground by making sense of their leadership experiences and challenges.

Chapter 5, therefore, first provided an interpretation of what participants in the focus group said, thereafter their contributions were interpreted from a sense-making perspective and the data from the personal interviews interpreted. These were reflections and discussions of women's journeys towards their leadership identity in Higher Education.

The findings were based on the external and internal determinants as discussed in the earlier chapters, such as women's childhood and societal experiences, their self-image and identity formation, as well as their experiences and the challenges of their journeys towards leadership positions. All these determinants bared unifying threads which formed the properties used to make sense of their contributions.

Without empowerment, the challenges that women in leadership positions have to face will continue to become more serious. It was evident that serious development and training need to be in place and implemented.

6.3 REALISING THE SECONDARY AIMS OF THE STUDY

As stated in Chapter 1 the primary aim of the study was stated as being to make sense of how women in Higher Education leadership moved through the processes of becoming empowered to develop their own leadership identity. The study had to reflect on how women leaders at two HEIs

gained mastery over their own careers and how the obstacles and experiences contributed to their growth and success (cf. 3.4.9) in view of contributing to the development of women in HE and their taking up leadership positions. The researcher had to make sense out of the voices of women leaders in the targeted institutions about their journeys towards developing their leadership identity, where they can contribute to the empowerment of other women to become agents of change by means of their idiosyncratic approaches to leadership. In addressing the primary aim the following secondary aims directed this research as indicated below:

- To explore identity formation and the development of the female leadership identity
- To explore the empowerment challenges that female leaders encounter in developing their own identity when taking up leadership positions and why these challenges exist
- To make sense out of the voices of the participating women leaders in HE regarding their journeys towards assuming their own leadership identity
- To provide direction to potential women leaders in HE in terms of constructing their own paths and becoming agents of their own empowerment towards innovative and unique leadership.

6.3.1 SECONDARY AIM 1: To explore identity formation and the development of the female leadership identity

Identity formation starts with the uniqueness of an individual and as people interact with others in the social environment the individual identity changes. As people are influenced by the actions arising from their different interactions they start to associate themselves with a particular social identity. This will consequently become related to the identity of the work environment if a person finds him/herself in such an environment.

The identity development process is also influenced by external and internal determinants such as childhood, family, community and experiences through socialization. A person's identity is further determined by the extent to which he or she internalizes the roles and expectations assigned. Women will thus have multiple roles to play, an individual as well as a workplace identity. A "workplace identity" seems to be an important factor in achieving success in work, which means that one has to understand what it means to develop a successful one. Such an identity may include aspects such as performance habits, integrity, reliability, commitment, the institution's core business and vision and mission. Here the institution can play an important role in supporting women and acknowledging their abilities and their presence in leadership. The institutional culture should encourage women to become involved and establish a sense of ownership. It should counteract the negative effects of possible discrimination and it is here that senior management must be committed to developing women for leadership positions. The institution, therefore, has to acknowledge women's multiple roles, helping them to balance family and work responsibilities. However, women have to use their agency to create new systems which will accept new behaviour and leadership patterns and with personal insight and self-renewal become motivated to change the social systems outside the scope of individuality. People often feel a shift in their identity when they make a work transition, irrespective of gender, but the question arises whether this shift occur immediately after one is in the new role.

6.3.2 SECONDARY AIM 2: To explore the empowerment challenges that female leaders encounter in developing their own identity when taking up leadership positions and why these challenges exist

In order to be exercised positively, power must be shared with others, which means that power is not necessarily repressive or oppressive, but that it can bring about positive change. In the context of women in Higher Education leadership positions, “empowerment” can play a vital role as it equips women with the necessary power to take up leadership positions and to lead effectively.

To empower people does not mean the loss of power, but rather increased power to the leader as the other will be able to positively contribute to the success of the institution. To empower women for leadership, therefore, does not mean disempowering men.

The Foucaultian principle of not detaching power from knowledge implies the generation of new knowledge, so the process of empowerment will have the potential to bring the power of knowledge to the individual, bringing about change and creating opportunities of involvement in decision-making, which in itself is powerful. For women in Higher Education leadership, the processes by which they become empowered involve integrating them into the echelons of decision-making and developing their capacity to transform themselves as well as their institutions.

Through empowerment, women can acquire the power to enhance their agency in tackling gender inequalities and asserting themselves in various aspects of their lives – thus enabling them to become agents of change as they gain the ability to learn and master the skills of leadership and decision-making.

Most institutions need to change to become environments of common ground with shared values and communities of practice in which both women and men can become leaders. Women leaders, therefore, have to be able to define and understand the situations in which they operate to effectively deal with the challenges that come with their positions, such as that their paths to leadership are slower or more often blocked, their lack of reward, exclusion from informal networks of intellectual

leadership, gender stereotyping and discrimination, traditional hierarchical structures, negative male attitudes, lack of support networks and unrealistic social and cultural expectations. Chapter 3 concluded with actions that can be taken by HEIs to optimize the empowerment of women and to eliminate the conditions that bar women from reaching top positions.

6.3.3 SECONDARY AIM 3: To make sense out of the voices of the participating women leaders in HE regarding their journeys towards assuming their own leadership identity

As women entered leadership in the male dominated Higher Education environment, they realized that their empowerment had been very important. One participant said, “*A good leader who leaves a legacy is someone who empowers others for tomorrow.*” The participants narrated their experiences, views and feelings during the interviews (focus group and personal). Not only did these opportunities give the researcher the chance to make sense of the emerging data, they also assisted the participants in gaining an understanding of the processes they had been through. The participants acknowledged their responsibility in terms of the empowerment of women to take up leadership positions in future.

Women as leaders have different identities that HEIs have to consider and make sure that they accommodate these multiple identities. They are women, mothers, and wives, working women, sisters and/or daughters, all identities that have influenced their leadership. To be able to provide direction women must know themselves, that is, who they are. The qualitative data also revealed that women in leadership positions are often still treated with negative emotions and as minors. It was also indicated that environments can hamper the formation of a professional identity.

The findings suggested a connotation between voice and identity, between how one thinks and feels about one’s voice and about oneself and one’s capability to lead. Women in every age group have fought for the right to be heard, and to participate in the leadership of their societies, aiming to have a voice, both metaphorically and literally.

As researcher I also observed that though the participants were all women, the issue of race also affected their voices. Participants viewed colour differently, one indicating that there was a lack of black women in leadership positions. Some used the issue of colour to defend other women of different race groups as it was mentioned that one participant was marginalized because of being white. Incidents like these often prevent women to stand together and support one another.

The participants also realized that they needed to change and lead like women. However, their leading would not safeguard them from the loneliness that goes with positions of leadership and the numerous challenges.

By applying the sense-making lens, it became evident that the participants were confronted by aspects such as prejudice and discrimination, an unfriendly institutional culture, lack of sufficient empowerment programmes and lack of power. If these challenges are interpreted against women leaders' childhood experiences, family responsibilities, internalised feelings of inferiority, often poor self-image and negative workplace experiences, their journey towards leadership would seem to be a daunting one. The summary of the findings is portrayed in Table 6.1 below. The above secondary aims brought this study to the final and ultimate secondary aim.

	<p>Identity development</p> <p>Respect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect integrity and quality of academic process (cf. 5.2.1 question 2) • treat others with respect (cf. 2.2.2.1 (e)) • strive to be perfect, know oneself (cf. 5.3.2). • look for employees who inspire and aspire (cf. 5.5.1.1) • have the ability to develop into fully professional person • earn respect by conducting oneself in a respectful way, conduct research and speak out on important issues • protect integrity and quality of academic process (cf. 5.2.1 question 2) • treat others with respect (cf. 2.2.2.1 (e))
2. Retrospective	<p>Diversity</p> <p>Marginalization</p> <p>Leadership positions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get a sense of purpose to work with men • work on her mixed feelings as a leader (cf. 5.5.1.3) • develop a unique identity in leadership positions, based on the challenges • be part of the decision-making committees • turn negativity into positivity, e.g. although there was prejudice and male domination in university then • get involved on committees, in professional organizations, read a lot and start publishing (cf. 5.4 questions 5) • become outspoken • deal with the perception that one is reserved as one is afraid to be called names • be confident and aggressive • deal with the gate-keeping (cf. Addendum A 5.4 questions 4) • be able to reflect on self-concept • invest in career path and show commitment and develop oneself (cf. 5.1 and 5.2.1.1) • identify oneself with an institution as part of the collective group
3. Enact the environment	Changing environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not allow men to create two environments for her (cf. 5.1 question 3) or for her to create two environments - one for her and one for them (cf. 5.1 question 3) • ensure that she is an authentic leader and not lead the male way

	<p>Empowerment, leadership and women (cf. 3.3.3)</p> <p>Mentoring</p> <p>Gender equality</p>	<p>(cf. 5.4 question 6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect her integrity and make herself available for academic processes (cf. 5.1 question 3) • acquire qualifications • know what she is lacking in leadership positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve herself in committees and volunteer, even if it entails extra (cf. 5.6.1.8) • become authentic in leadership and not lead like men. Internalise power not to have male power (cf. 5.6.1.8) • use their power by making sure she encourages women to study, even though there are barriers • be positive to criticism (cf. Addendum A .4 question 7) • understand who they are (cf. Addendum A 5.4 question 7) • empower others by thinking of the impediments that become barriers in their leadership positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a mentor to young upcoming people (cf. Addendum A: question 3) • leave a legacy (cf. Addendum A question 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take control of the situation due to basic education • have responsibilities to be a woman. She has to know her strengths (cf. 5.5.1.3) • be able to take time off to enjoy success • enjoy leadership by forming women’s forum at university
4. Social	Social factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make sure that she implements these policies (cf. Addendum A question 11) • interact between work and life, and out of work is complex. • demand working hours that accommodate women (cf.5.3.2) • have flexible time to start and finish work • avoid being associated with failure in the workplace • have a sense of competence and positive impact and opportunity to empower others (cf. 5.3.2) • know the complexity of the workplace in terms of barriers that women come across (cf. 2.3.6)

	<p>Support</p> <p>Work-family (cf. 2.5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must support each other (cf. 5.1: question 4) • must be able to influence top management in the development of women (cf. 5.1 5.4. question 11) if they feel there is no recognition • need support to maximize their leadership qualities so that they can effectively complement men's leadership • also identify with outside roles or true self, such as being a parent or having religious affiliations and community activities • be able to manage true self-identification as identity is fragmented and constructed through a number of interactions within and outside the workplace
5. Ongoing	<p>Establishment of balance</p> <p>Family identities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn leadership style of assertiveness, being a provider, caring, being disciplined, and being strong, through observation (cf. 5.6.1.4) • know that single parents who need to take care of family and children are not sufficiently acknowledged by their institutions (cf. 5.2.1.2) • know that leadership is an ongoing process • know that one cannot have one leadership style in an information age as societies evolve (cf. 5.6.1.4) • understand her identity change so she can make sense of a new environment of leadership and understand the new identity • construct meaning from what is happening to her identity (cf. 5.6.1.4) • understand that time did not favour women in the past and it needs to change • take an opportunity of being in a leadership position • create flexible time to be included in key role projects and opportunities due to a work structure and a culture that does not accommodate women's needs • influence the culture of the institution to change (cf. 5.4 questions 4) • know that the potential of women in leadership is not the same as men's

	<p>Perception</p>	<p>women in leadership positions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do things on her own, learn by experience • know her strengths and weaknesses, have people skills as a leader • be ready to take consequences and not be easily pushed • be prepared and work hard • empower herself and stand her ground; get crisp with the subject matter • not shred each other • give people a sense of why they occupy the leadership positions (cf. 5.1 question 5; Addendum A question 6) • let men be aware that as a woman one will lead like a woman not like a man • become actively engaged in committees such as in church activities and work committees and let men be aware that she is a woman not a man (cf. Addendum A question 6) • be aware that being a woman qualifies one not to be an underperformer • get the freedom of doing things (cf. 5.2.1 question 5) • what comes out of the leadership position as a woman must match the identity (cf. Addendum A question 6) • expect to encounter resistance from male counterparts (cf. 5.4 question 6) • take on opportunities as they arise • adapt to the culture and expectations of the workplace • be emotionally strong, because leadership positions come with a cost • be prepared to work hard at reconciling family and work responsibilities • give people space and listen to younger colleagues (cf. Addendum A question 12) • look at the types of leave that institutions have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with persistent perceptions that women lack legal and political equality (cf. 2.3.6) • be able to deal with divorce issues (cf. Addendum A 5.4 question 6)
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with the lack of opportunities that still exists • become excellent in leadership (cf. 2.6.2)
7. Plausibility over accuracy	<p>Under-representation of women</p> <p>Workplace dynamics (cf. 2.3.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know that the reason women were not seen and heard was that they were still too few in high level positions around the world • become professional in the way she argues, be rational but air her views (cf. 5.4 question 4) • acquire skills for the job • become a role model and accept gender sensitivity • break the barriers to add the voice of women to the workplace and give impetus by the entry of women into the public arena • cope in this profession by reading policies and motivational books (cf. 5.6.1.6) • become qualified in the profession (cf. 5.3.1.1.6) • make sure that what she is doing is right so that she can keep going (cf. 5.6.1.6) • know the policies regarding leaves and looking if those policies embraced leadership positions • know that soft issues affecting women, such as age and gender are forgotten, as the focus is on racism (cf. 5.1. question 11)

The above table reflects the trends that emerged as the researcher tried to make sense of the voices of the participants, which were also placed into the context of the findings from the literature, where appropriate.

6.3.4 SECONDARY AIM 4: To provide direction to potential women leaders in terms of constructing their own paths towards innovative and unique leadership in Higher Education

In ultimately achieving the last secondary aim, it was necessary to synthesize all the data emerging from this study and to place it in the context of the development of future women leaders. However, in fully realising the fourth secondary aim they provided direction to potential women leaders in terms of constructing their own paths towards innovative and unique leadership in Higher Education, hence a framework including the recommendations on the empowerment of women to become the future leaders in Higher Education institutions was constructed (cf. 6.4).

6.4 RECOMMENDED FRAMEWORK FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF FUTURE WOMEN LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In tying together all the strands of this study, women's views, experiences and needs, as well as their responsibilities towards future women leaders and the institution's responsibilities, the following illustrates the various issues at stake.

From the data of the qualitative investigations, the following issues emerged. In order to deal with these issues both current women leaders and the institution have a role to play. The framework as laid out in Table 6.2 below represents issues as well as the contributions of the role players, and serves as this study's recommendations.

Table 6.2 Recommendations on how current leaders and the institutions can contribute to the empowerment of women to become leaders

Challenges women leaders have to face	In empowering women to become the future leaders, the current leaders have to share their experiences with other women, by guiding other women and making them aware that they:	In assisting women to become the future leaders, the institution has a major role to play, by:
1. Leadership identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not have to be like men to be effective leaders • need to develop their own unique identity in order to be authentic • are unique • possess skills which have been developed since childhood 	arranging developmental opportunities for women to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ do self-reflection ○ discover who they really are ○ develop their self-worth ○ think deeply about the impediments that stand in the way of women earning positions ○ remove the impediment in academic leadership
2. Leadership behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have to master their subject matter • need to acquire management skills • have to understand the culture of the institution • have to become academic leaders to be respected as scholars • have to keep up to date with the institution's policies • must be able to act assertively when required • must be able to lead others in a way that they gain authority • have to maintain one's identity • use all opportunities to be empowered • have to share what they have accomplished to aspire others to be leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ constantly search for equity and excellence ○ expose women to leadership development • creating opportunities for women to study • establishing environments that value different approaches to leadership

3. Internalised inferiority

- should work on surpassing the feeling that they are not accepted and are seen as women who cannot lead
- have to find ways of counteracting male dominance, such as using sound arguments, working hard and being good at what they are doing
- need to use their agency to change the culture of the institution to become gender sensitive

- creating a diverse work environment in which women can feel safe to be themselves
- listening to the needs of women
- rewarding women in order to build their self-esteem

4. Lack of women's voices in decision-making

- need to make their voices heard by:
 - developing them
 - attending conferences on women in leadership, studies and development
 - not pulling down other women
 - developing their people skills so that they can stand their ground in decision-making structures in a professional manner
 - not sacrificing their authentic identities
 - defending other women
 - mentoring other young women in taking on the required roles
 - being prepared to take on the challenges of change
 - acknowledge that there is a lot of competition in the institution, but that they should not shy away from it
 - acting with confidence

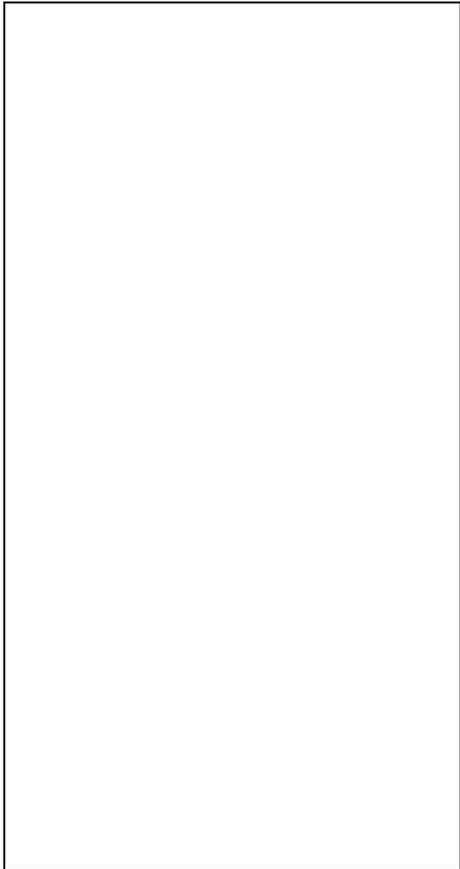
- ensuring that:
- they accommodate the multiple identities of women and that those identities can bring a richness to the decisions made
 - women are represented in decision-making positions and in top leadership positions of the institutions
 - the number of women in leadership positions in academia and support service is increased
 - the voices of women are validated
 - formal mentoring systems for women are instituted
 - women are included in change initiatives
 - they have access to professional development

5. Communication

- should use their natural ability to communicate effectively
- must share knowledge and understanding with other women
- need to assist others in making meaning of their experiences and be open to learn from that
- should participate in discussions

- including women in channels of communication at various levels
- creating opportunities for women to learn from one another

	and in meetings	
6. Family responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to work out ways of balancing work and family life • must ensure full participation as leaders without sacrificing their nurturing side • should establish strong support systems upon whom they can rely • must use their agency to let the institution institute supportive structures, such as flexi-time and crèches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing support structures for women, such as crèches and stress alleviation events • acknowledging that women can do the same amount and level of work than men, but in different ways and environments, such as being at the office for limited hours and then doing the rest from home
7. Prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to be extremely well qualified and competent to prove certain prejudices wrong • must not block other women's progress • should speak out in cases of discrimination • need to remain authentic in their leadership • should acknowledge differences, but stimulate the idea that a division can only be enriched by differences • need to build networks with other strong women to challenge existing prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing women a platform to lead and thus showing that prejudices and stereotyping are myths • monitoring the appointment and promotion of women • looking into stereotypes that block women's progress and institute sensitisation events • recognizing and rewarding individual contributions by women • improving recruitment and retention mechanisms of women staff • ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, and so eliminate the gender gap
8. Institutions' hierarchical structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to subtly challenge structures that exclude women • have to make themselves available to be elected for positions of authority • must organise for women to support one another to position women in the hierarchies of the institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accommodating women's different views in university structures • respecting the leadership of women • investigating the promotions and job opportunities in the workplace that are not always awarded on merit • using opportunities to influence the entire institution to respect the leadership of women • allowing women to remain true



- to themselves
- taking a strategic approach to networking and relationship building
 - addressing the gender gap
 - demonstrating their commitment to workplace diversity
 - ensuring that women in leadership positions get supported and that equity policies of the institutions are implemented at all levels and in all structures
 - providing flexible working hours
 - having good supervision, mentoring and coaching
 - finding role models and assisting young leaders by raising awareness in future leaders of what is happening in leadership positions in Higher Education

9. Institutional culture

- must, as soon as possible, get an understanding of the institutional culture
- should adapt to the culture to penetrate the "in-groups"
- need to use women's networks to change the culture where it may be discriminating or prejudiced
- should acknowledge and pursue the presence of women in leadership positions, as leadership plays a large role in establishing or changing the culture
- need to create communities of practice to foster a collaborative culture
- must seize opportunities to enhance a sociability that will be accessible to women
- should respect the core values of the institution

- revisiting the institutional culture and taking steps to accommodate the needs of women
- eradicating discriminatory and prejudiced practices in the institution
- creating opportunities for women to socialise and work together

10. Work environment

- are prepared to address social and cultural barriers of institutions so that an inviting work environment is established
- are often required to prove themselves more extensively than men in order to advance
- must develop positive role models for young women
- collectively with other women, work towards creating a work environment in which women will be able to excel and reach their potential

- intentionally and strategically increase the visibility of women at all levels of an institution
- taking a more strategic approach to networking and relationship-building
- establishing a workplace environment that is welcoming to women
- by supporting women who fear leadership positions

11. Social networking

- become role models for other women
- need to develop their own scholarship build partnerships with other scholars
- have foster their own "in-groups" where they can freely socialise and get rid of their stress
- need to create environments where they can support and encourage one another
- use their social networks to become increasingly visible in the institution
- need to build strong relationships with people at all levels of the institution
- act as sounding boards for women in leadership to counteract spells of loneliness

- encouraging women's involvement
- creating a sense of ownership and belonging, from which the institution will benefit
- creating opportunities and events with which women can identify and get involved, such as women commemorative places or events

12. Institutional support

- collectively work to accomplish the goals of the institution
- demonstrate their commitment to the institution and to enhance workplace diversity
- use their agency to ensure that women in leadership positions receive support
- optimally explore and use support and developmental opportunities

- ensuring that structural barriers for the advancement of women are removed and equity policies serve as support mechanisms for women
- drawing from the widest possible pool of women in recruiting and building networks
- taking a more strategic approach to supporting women
- conducting intensive needs assessments to determine the areas in which women need

		empowerment and then to design programmes around those needs
13. Under-representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • should contribute to eliminating the underrepresentation of women by either taking up leadership positions themselves or by headhunting for suitable women candidates • act as role models for other women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intentionally implementing and monitoring equity policies to eliminate the under-representation of women at all levels
14. Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop their own unique identity • understand what leadership entails so that they can influence the other women • understand the complexities of power and not to get trapped in misusing power • mentor the young leaders with potential • must not sacrifice their "softer" approach, based on supposedly inherent female characteristics • also have to demonstrate their competitiveness and assertiveness when necessary • must reward women who have made valuable contributions to the institution • develop evaluation and monitoring tools that will enable potential leaders to track their professional development • acquire the skills and competencies that are required from good managers and leaders by studying and by following professional development courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing rewards to women who engage in mentoring • developing a model to provide support for the careers of women with potential • developing evaluation and monitoring tools that will enable to track the professional development of women • being committed and accountable for the development of women for leadership positions • engaging women as leaders in decision-making discussions • increasing women's participation in key decision-making positions • strategically having empowerment programmes for women in place

The accountability and support of institutional top management have to be extended to taking on an active role in terms of empowering women for leadership positions. To be able to improve the leadership positions of women in HEIs, they must eliminate the gender gap, have skills-building and leadership programmes, train girls

and women for leadership positions and have gender awareness programmes included in all training endeavours. Concerns such as gate-keeping in the sciences allow men to continue to dominate large parts of the institution. Instead, HEI's should consciously attract women to the areas in which they are underrepresented and to leadership positions in particular. Actions of empowerment are clearly not only the responsibility of the institutions, but women themselves also have a responsibility to direct and support their female colleagues (cf. Table 6.2). In so doing, HEIs and women leaders can work together to establish equitable and transformed communities of scholars and leaders in the Higher Education domain in South Africa.

6.5 LIMITATIONS

There are a number of limitations to the study. Its focus was only on two universities and the focus group discussion was supposed to have included eight women in leadership positions. Letters were sent out in time for women to acknowledge and confirm availability for the discussion, however, at the last minute some did not turn up, nor did they apologise. The researcher therefore had to use the snowball technique to find other women in leadership positions to build the team of participants. However, the personal interviews were conducted as envisaged.

It is suggested that a similar investigation is extended to other universities to contribute to the body of knowledge on this topic. However, it is believed that as this data is placed in the public domain by means of publications and conference papers, the network of women leaders will benefit from it.

6.6 CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to make sense of the voices of women leaders in two Higher Education institutions in terms of their search for their own leadership identity. Harnessing the principle of equality, women in Higher Education became focused on regaining their deprived voices. It has become the premise of these women leaders "to be heard" and also to develop their unique identity as leaders against the backdrop of their multiple identities. This investigation provided a deeper

understanding of the complexities and inner conflict that challenge the empowerment of women leaders in Higher Education. In coming to this understanding a sense-making lens was used to delve into the multi-dimensional nature of the issues at stake.

As identity bears both a social and a personal dimension, women often find themselves caught between the two and the related responsibilities. Additionally they are also confronted by hampering factors such as stereotypical views, discriminatory practices, male dominance and a hostile workplace when they attain to positions of leadership.

Gained from the vantage point of in-depth data gathering methods, both focus group and personal interviews, as well as the conceptualisation of identity formation, empowerment, the related relationships of power in terms of leadership and the domains of sense-making, the ultimate findings of the study can benefit both theoretical and practical concerns. It is envisaged that the outcomes of this study will interest both academic scholars and Higher Education professionals, as it contributes to the body of knowledge on the experiences of women leader in this sector. The emergent understanding about women's challenges in leadership forms a solid base for publications, as well as for development initiatives of women leaders in the Higher Education arena in South Africa.

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ADDENDUM A

PARTICIPANTS IN PERSONAL INTERVIEW PRESENTATION

Q1: What processes of leadership development did you go through and how could this contribute to the empowerment of women leaders in the future?

Women as agents of change, in leadership positions, go through a series of reflections and actions while taking the next step in their leadership journey. Women need to open their minds to new possibilities, provide new approaches to addressing pertinent issues and major challenges in their leadership settings that impact on their lives and their identity. Women's reflection is based on their past, their family background, schools, their past career before becoming leaders. The participants were asked to indicate the formal and informal progress they went through from their childhood to the positions they are in now.

P1: My leadership skills developed while I was still attending school. I took leadership positions on a number of aspects. I was a member in lots of committees. The way that you grow up as a woman, plays an important role. I was the eldest at home. When I grow up I was all the time with my father, my mother was a very traditional person. My father wanted me to be independent from an early age. I grew up envying my father. So my father made me independent. My father instilled the leadership and independence in me and that made me feel responsible. At school I ended up being head girl, in the end being in a leadership position in Higher Education. Make women aware that the day they have children they must stimulate them when they are very young. In Higher Education it was not easy, there were lots of prejudice. For example, at the university the chairperson of a committee, who happened to be a man, retired. I was selected to become the new chairperson. The comment I got was, Does the committee know that they selected a woman? It was pure prejudice. In a meeting of deans only men will be invited. It happened that I was there in a meeting. When the meeting started the chair said, "Good morning, gentlemen." I raised my hand and said, "Excuse me, there are women in this

meeting too.” I came strong in that meeting in a sense that I had a mission. I had to prove myself. I used my voice and objective. Within no time I got an anonymous letter where it was mentioned that I am fighting for women’s rights, I must be careful.

P2: You mean my processes for this position? Okay. I wanted to do B.Com, but as you know students normally apply late, so when I arrived at the university, there was no space in B.Com., the only space was in B.Admin. That is why I ended up doing the subject that made me popular. When we grew up, the careers that were there were nursing and teaching. I did not want to be a teacher or a nurse. I didn’t want to be any of them, but if there is a teacher in you, it will show in time. I was brought up to believe that there is a leader in me. I come from a family of academics. I am the fourth generation. My mother had a Master’s degree, my grandfather was the Minister of Education then. I have a daughter who is X years old now. Let me tell you this, I remember at school I was a perfect. I used to go and fetch learners who did not come to school from their home. I would be the one leading the team. That time I was not aware that the leadership in me was showing. I did not plan to be a leader, it happened by accident. I had this strong personality, when you have a voice people become scared of you, they allow you to take authority. I was in authority; kids at school would listen to me and adhere to what I say. In high school I was a head girl. I attended a Roman Catholic High School, led by nuns and Germans. The school taught me discipline and organizational skills and to learn to manage. When I came to the university, things were already in place. The high school prepared me with multi-skills. If there is any other level of institution that can get credit for my being it is high school. At the university I was able to stand up for myself because of the education, development I got from high school. If I cannot handle what is happening at the university what will I do in the real world? When I look back, I grew up having this leadership in me.

P3: Processes, do you mean where I come from? Do you mean how did I land here as an individual? Well; you know who I am. I am **P3**, now that is the leadership position I am currently holding. This is a leadership position which is not my first. I started as a teacher, I was teaching biology and chemistry. At school, maybe to be a little bit radical, I started at a school, high school for me to be a teacher is being a leader, a manager. That is where I saw that I can lead. I led a pack of students.

Hardly two years, and I was promoted to the post of Deputy Principal. I was just picked up from other teachers. I was very young. In that post they wanted a woman. There were a lot of women there, elderly women. But I was promoted. I still remember very well the question I asked myself, why me? I believe there were some leadership attributes that they saw in me that made me different from other people. That was a move to Deputy Principal. I must say I did very well, normally people will never say they did well but I did. I was teaching biology and that made them choose me as it was a failed subject before I came. Since I came it was doing very well. I was an experienced teacher. In my new position, I enjoyed the work, I was working with gentlemen, and we complemented each other very well. Our thinking was different, our leadership style was different, and I complemented him when I saw his weakness. We worked well. I also worked well with Heads of Departments showing them that we are heading this institution together.

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- had people who believed in them and their ability to lead since they were young
- were placed in leadership positions since school days
- were aware that they possessed leadership attributes
- were confronted with prejudices
- realized that they had a voice and that they needed to use it.

Q1.2: What happened in your high school, your childhood experiences?

P3: I was a prefect, I never became a head girl. We used to have what we call class monitors. At least I experienced that one. What I heard from my mother was that I was a loving, caring person to the deprived, disadvantaged children. I remember most of the time I will be looking and taking care of those that are not privileged. While I was a Deputy Principal, I decided to go and study to come out of the Sciences. The reason for me to leave, to think of it now, it was a stupid reason, I thought being a mother, I thought I would not cope in a laboratory. Then I went to study Leadership and Management. The month I started with my study, I was pregnant with my second child, he is X years old now. I did my Honours and

Master's in two years and got cum laude. The policy required one to do each degree in two years. I did both in two years as these were things related to what I did at school while teaching.

P4: In my case I had to draw on a number of cases studies. Unfortunately, I never had any opportunities to go on a leadership development course. I fall between the cracks of being a white female oppressed by male dominancy in my previous years and not being a black person. Is like I miss out on something. One of my colleagues had opportunities to go abroad for leadership courses many times. I never had that. What I know about management is my own intuition as a woman has well developed. I have learnt by reading, I have learnt about working very hard in academe, having credibility of my peers, working hard and being promoted. In this position people thought I will just succeed. Even in this position people assume I would know my job, know how everything works, which was not true because if you are a researcher or HOD, it differs from being a dean, DVCs or a Vice Chancellor, is a huge inefficiency not only for women but in how people are prepared for senior positions and particularly for women. Sometimes I think people are set up for failure without the support. I was never introduced for this position or job it was just taken for granted that I know. Is scary.

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- had agentic attributes from early age
- felt insecurity even before being a leader due to the cultural context or prejudice of that women cannot be a leader or make it in science subjects
- were committed to what they did, as some managed to do two degrees in two years
- were discriminating among each other
- felt the environmental change affected them
- were to work hard without development
- were set up for failure due to gender issues

Q1.2 If you look at your childhood process, what happened?

P4: Is funny, I am the youngest of five daughters, my mother used to say I am the baby (*her smile is amazing*). Usually the elders become achievers, if you look in the

countries the Nobel prize winners or NASA people, or people who became presidents, who are leaders, are the people who are the eldest in their family. With me, it was different. At school I was in leadership positions. In primary school I was a head girl, at senior secondary, I was a deputy head girl, I was acknowledged as a natural leader and elected as chairperson of debating society and Christian society. I am more of a natural leader and receive recognition for that. At university residence I served in different leadership roles and student associations. Although being young and the youngest, I think I am the wise old child (*she smiled*).

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- were placed in leadership positions since school days
- had the character or personality of other women add value to them as leaders
- saw themselves as natural leaders

Q.2: How did you develop your own voice and identity in leadership positions?

Participants had to indicate whether there were specific factors that could make their voices develop in leadership positions and how they developed their own leadership identity. The focus was on women involvement in other projects and indicating the assertiveness of women. The participants described the interaction and connection of women between institutional socialization and their sense-making and perception of self-efficacy and the role of identity and leadership development.

P1: Women must use their voice but not loudly and do not be sarcastic. Mixing with other people is part of development. Women must use their voices to object when addressed by men as men. I am a woman and still I can be a leader. One must work hard. Be involved in committees. Do voluntary work, show the women skills you have as a leader. Be involved in community projects. Know the policies, procedures and be agents of change. Be a role model for others and be a mentor. The way that you act as a leader, do not be too radical. As a leader, people are looking at you. As a leader influence other women to be strong too by including them in the processes of decision making and in structures that will help them. One must also mentor young women, be a role model to them. Be a woman; be feminine in your action. I made my voice to be heard. I was involved in the community that founded the Gender

Committee. Today we have an Equity office because of the existence of the Gender committee. I like challenges because they improve one's self-image. As a woman know your environment, be an authentic leader. Do not lead the male way. Be authentic in a sense that if there are things that are expected from you, do it, if the culture in Higher Education for example is to wear formal clothing, then dress formal. Be sensitive, be a woman who knows what you are doing and do it well.

P2: I understand myself. I am an extrovert. I learn from others. I believe that one has to read a lot. I told myself, nobody can stop me. I travelled through SADEC region with the other university. I was responsible for a big group of students. When I got my Ph.D., I felt nothing could touch me. I got this inner fulfilment when I look where I come from. I started to contribute to society. I am involved in lots of committees. I give motivational talks to high schools. But when I do motivational talks in the Free State, I do not charge. If there is a charge, I contribute that to charity. I engage myself in communities even outside the Free State. *(She even gave me pamphlets and showed me the picture in her office of "JOY", an organization to empower young women and SAASSAP: South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professional)*. I took young women to Khanyi Dhlomo "Destiny", one of the famous women workshops which came to Bloemfontein, to let them have a feel of the real world and to empower them. To make your voice heard, I took an initiative. I also asked top management to have students working in their offices so that they can be exposed to what is happening in the workplace. As a leader and a woman make sure you market yourself, get out of the box. I remember, I once went to the top management and I tell you now, one must not stay away from interview for a long time. I felt I needed a challenge above what I was doing; I was not getting excitement in what I was doing. Within a week, I got an opportunity to go to one college overseas. This is a college that empowers and develops women, women from disadvantaged community to become Vice-chancellors. The university took 40 students, who are professors, doctors from different universities. As women we must make sure you mentor young women, young people need to believe in themselves. I went for two months in one of the universities overseas. I was working with the rectors, there they call them presidents, my office was close to the president's office, this exposed you to what they do on a daily basis. Keep a good relation. That kind of empowerment makes you to take other young women to empower. You become

engaged all the way. I introduce students to work in the main building, they are students who hear what is happening on campus and in the main building, they become empowered.

P3: It brought the “AHA” moment. It was more of a confirmation of leadership styles I adopted. It equipped me, I acquired lots of skills to do my work better. I came back being a better person. Then I decided to do my Ph.D. I wanted to be a medical doctor but for some reasons, that never happened, but I told myself that in one way or the other I was going to be a doctor. That is why I resigned. I am a risk taker. When I left at assembly, I remember telling them, I am leaving. I told them I had an opportunity, I did not want it to let it go. Lots of people said, why do you resign, what about your pension fund? I was too young to think of pension funds. I had an internship which was giving me some money which to me was okay. The internship was in Research Management. I volunteered to teach. I taught Diploma. I feel most of the people do not want to take initiative, they do not want to be selfless and make themselves available. They want most of the opportunities to come to them. For one to grow in an academic environment one has to take initiative. In one of the centres that I worked in, I was in an appropriate place for development, but not all people use that as opportunity. I saw the opportunity, I took it and ran with it. I was expected to write a paper for publication. I did that and it was my first paper. I wrote it and it was accepted without any correction or changes. This shows that working very hard pays. It motivated me.

P4: I just have to do it. If I can reflect on my current position, I just realised to be in this specific position if I don't have a voice I will be a puppet on the string, you need to have a voice otherwise people will not take me seriously. Sometimes in the meeting with strong white Afrikaner males they will make a joke, over tea they will even make a funny joke. I have to remind them, “Excuse me, I am a lady do not do that.” I had to break through, the only way let my voice be heard is to prepare well for meetings, deliver according to recipes, have input on agenda of the meetings and do my homework and research. In Afrikaner tradition they will appoint a woman knowing that she will feel intimidated. Last week, just to give you an example, we had a meeting. I turned the conversation telling the members that we were discussing the wrong thing, can we go back to the topic. You know, they respected that and all of

them accepted. So I had to make my voice heard in all situations. Identity for me is all that I am. I don't have to manage like a man; there is so much I can do if I lead like a female. I don't have to manage people with fear. As a woman I have different abilities, that softer touch, I bring different dimensions to leadership with my own attributes.

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- are aware that being a leader one has to work hard
- are aware that as a women one need to be authentic
- are aware that certain values have to evolve
- realize the importance of interaction and connection
- need to be a role model and mentor young people
- know that is it through collaboration that their voices can be heard
- realize that they must embrace leadership roles
- know that understanding one's voice is another way of understanding oneself
- have self-awareness, which leads to personal leadership as they do not to need to manage like a man
- are aware that women's voices are being undervalued or dismissed in many cultures and sectors
- feel that their voices, their ideas, their expressions are barred

Q.3 How can your voice as women provide direction to potential women leaders?

Participants were asked how they can assist young women who want to be leaders in future. The question focuses on mentoring relationships, women's career success and the lack of role models. An attempt will be made to identify the voices of women, how they learn specific skills and mentor young women.

P1: Women must use their voice but not loudly and do not be sarcastic. Mixing with other people is part of development. Women must use their voices to object when addressed by men as men. I am a woman and still I can be a leader. One must work hard. Be involved in committees. Do voluntary work, show the women skills you have

as a leader. Be involved in community projects. Know the policies, procedures and be agent of change. Be a role model for others and be a mentor. The ways that you act as a leader do not need to be too radical. Young women are looking at you as a leader. One needs to be strong. Include young women in the processes of decision making and in structures that will help them. One must also mentor young women, be a role model to them. Be a woman; be feminine in your action.

P2: The journey you take to reach your position is an emotional journey. One has to help other people. I believed in myself. I believed that what you start you must finish. For me to make sense of my leadership position, I read a lot. I read books on leadership, motivational books. I did not have a role model. The books that I read challenged me for who I am. I read a lot on emotional intelligence. When I went back to university when I was doing my Ph.D., my boyfriend said, hey you must finish so that you can come back here and be a housewife and we will earn a salary from your doctorate. I felt belittled, that was a mockery. As women we are seen as made for being in the kitchen. What kept pulling me up is because I believed in myself. That is why I say my personality scares me. I started to doubt myself, I felt belittled. When I look at my daughter now (*she smiles*) she is "X" years old. If she does not want to do a thing she will not do it. She reminds me of myself, that I will not expect someone do to a thing that I will not do myself. Women as young leaders must read a lot.

P3: Mentoring. One has to participate in community projects. Engage in research projects. Connect with the right people. I was mentored by a man. He was a visionary. He mentored many people, men and women. He unveiled the opportunities. He pushed me to participate in committees within the institutions. I participated in external committees. I did not wait for things to come to me, I went to them. Most of the time we create our own barriers. We often say people create blockage for us but is us who do not take initiatives. In HE, when one is in leadership positions, always have a clear understanding of how HE functions. For example, know the National Policy of Education. You cannot know all the institutional policies but read a lot. Also command authority, if you know how a university functions you can command. Have a broader perspective of things. Understand the academic world. Only way to get respected is by becoming an academic, read. Universities listen to people who have doctoral degrees, who are acquiring education.

P4: Mentoring. That is the only thing. We people who made it to the top, we must know that is not about us, but the one thing is to make a difference. That is mentoring. Okay, I am a humble down to earth person. But the position I am in right now, is not about me being ambitious to reach the top in leadership. Women who made it to the top owe it to young, upcoming people. But there is also, it seems, I come from in my career where women who make it to the top, we owe it to young women, empowering other women. Sometimes women just become (**B word**) and withhold whatever they have learnt. If you have your own kingdom you will have no legacy. They have this thing of it is my kingdom, forget it, if you keep your kingdom you will not have a legacy. A good leader who has a legacy is someone who when she dies or goes tomorrow, that her work was a good work and she did empower others. The women will say I made it myself to where I am, you also can do it yourself, that is bad. It seems black people are doing that often, I do not know why. One needs to empower people around oneself by creating space, trust other women, bring them in. Mentoring does not mean programmes that cost million of rands. Mentoring is not only about money, by having meetings, advising someone, that quality of interaction is mentoring, and sincerity to see a person grow is what mentoring is. I have been mentoring someone whose social skills were not good. I got feedback from people that the changes people see in that person are amazing. I worked on that person's social skills and made a person aware to be able to move one's personality must change. Now that person is the best. I am also the founder of the Women's Memorial Garden, its purpose is to honour women who contributed a lot to this campus, from SRC presidents, DVC, deans and any leaderships positions that were occupied by women and never been acknowledged. Is a new thing but we are getting there.

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- are aware that to have their voices heard they must act like women, not be sarcastic
- have to make sure that they do not create their own barriers
- are aware that they maintain their femininity as a women to let the voices be heard
- must be able to command authority

- feel they must speak openly by exposing themselves as their voices did not carry weight in leadership positions before
- know that they must use their voices as an expression of a psychological state, a physiological operation and the means by which a person asserts their rights within the social order in order to be able to deal with emotions as there is a lack of emotional support
- feel they must learn about themselves and their capabilities
- feel they must share their voices in public and gain strength, be motivational speakers
- know their identity as women will let them have and know their voices
- are aware how they communicate their values, what they stand for, how they are in the leadership position
- are aware of the core of their identity, as a central point of becoming an authentic leader
- must know their individual sense of self, sense of purpose, commitment, confidence and personal congruence
- are aware that when women find their voices, they find their identities
- must discover their power
- must express what they have to give
- are aware that mentoring is important
- know they need to empower others
- must leave a legacy
- know that engaging in the community as a leader is important are aware that they need to develop their social networks

Q4: What are the challenges that you went through in the processes of leadership positions?

The participants were asked to indicate different barriers that they came across in the process of gaining leadership positions. This was to identify the role of women in leadership positions, understanding the leadership role. And the kind of things they went through in this leadership process.

P1: Let's look at the Higher Education sectors. There is a lot of gate keeping, the selection panels are still dominated by males. There is a lot of gate keeping, for instance in the disciplines of sciences, maths, engineering and the medical fields, women are still few there. Women have to do it for themselves. Personally my challenges are how to balance my life. In general all women are facing that. The system does not allow that. For example, in the past we wanted a crèche to be built on campus, it is now erected after 30 years. The university system is better than other organizations in terms of working hours. Systems do not cater for the needs of women. Another challenge is women have to use their voices. There is a lot of stereotyping and prejudice. I got an anonymous letter when I defended woman's rights. Women lack support. Women must know how to balance their lives.

P2: The culture of the university. I was rejecting the system, I could not cope well. When I was a child I was brought up in a community where whites speak one of the African languages and vice versa. I played with white kids. I came from a background where black and white were equal. I grew up in a place where black and white live together lived in a mixed world. At school nobody was allowed to speak their home language, they wanted us to learn English and Afrikaans. During break we will be "killing" ourselves speaking Afrikaans. Coming to the university, it made me feel I am black (*her facial expression is tense with anger*). Afrikaner culture hit me in the face. For me it was a culture shock. I felt lost but I being me, I refused to adhere to what was happening. When students at the residences did not want me there I was lost, I was not welcomed at the residence. I felt like leaving. I ended up failing one course. It was the first time I had failed in my life. I cried. I remember walking or running on campus crying. That affected my self-worth and I did not have women to talk to. I became pregnant. I left and work in the hotel industry. I did not have a role model who could have guided me. I needed support but it was not there. I met negative people. Maybe it was good that had negative people in my life, I do not think I could have been where I am if they were not there in my life. I came back and finish my junior degree. Remember, I studied Political Science; I was also in the election committees. I became a lecturer in that subject. The situation there was not good. I argued everything based on the constitution of the country. It was reported that I did not obey the rules. The professor said to me I must just go along. I said no, I was practising the constitution of the country. I was refusing to do the things I did

not want to do. People did not believe I can do it in life, I needed people who can say you can do it, but I had none. But I told myself if there is any human being who can do it, then I will.

P3: When I was teaching at high school, after I had my first child, I quitted teaching science. I thought as a woman I will not be good enough in the laboratory, so I quitted, by that time I was pregnant with my second child, who is now X years old. In the institution where I am now, there is a lot of undermining others. What people propose is not good enough. Good leadership must acknowledge others and that is missing. There is no pat on the shoulder if you did well. You will never hear anyone saying this is good. Let me give you this scenario, one of the people in top management was sent off. It was rough. All who reported to this person were not given a chance to answer for themselves in meetings. In the meetings even if subordinates were there, when questions were asked, all questions would be directed to this person as if the subordinates were not there to answer for themselves. Instead of asking them for clarification, everything would be pointed to the person in top management. This was just to highlight the person's shortcomings or to embarrass. People concentrate on your shortcomings to get rid of you instead of building you.

P4: I think one thing. The conversations were male-dominated, I had to put my hand high, it was about the effect that some men think they got all answers that was a challenge to me. The other things are that women had to work hard to convince others. My portfolio is research and learning. The VC said: "I know you can do well in this portfolio," yes, it is a good compliment, but if you are good, people misuse you. I had to protect myself from older men who wanted to retire when overburdening me with their work. When people retire, they will give me their work and say they know that I will do it well. Some women think they had to become real feminist activists to be seen that they are good and be promoted. With me I just work hard. By the time I become professor, I didn't apply. I worked hard, had articles published. Women make mistakes, they focus much on being a woman, it is discriminatory. Some of the comments that men make as senior management, I cannot keep quiet. I had to address them irrespective of who they are.

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- are aware of being abused
- are aware of prejudice and stereotypes
- are aware of lack of support
- are aware of the attitude of men
- are aware that the glass ceiling still exists

Q5: How did these challenges affect your individual identity as a leader?

The participants were asked to indicate how they managed to deal with the challenges mentioned above. How the social structures affected their identity, self-concept.

P1. Although there was prejudice and male domination in university then, I used my time to study, be involved in committees, be involved in the professional organization, read a lot and start publishing. This helped me to prove that I am worthwhile to be there to show my leadership. That I do not need to be a man to be a leader. To young leaders, they must have patience and look at things differently. I used men's ideas to enhance my own identity. What I have learnt from men as a leader (by the way I studied Management in Leadership), I learn and do it my way. I would change it to be more subtle, keep my women's identity and get the same results. I also learnt from men and women.

P2: When I arrived at the university, I stayed at the residence, but they did not want me there, they sensed my personality. I am a stubborn person but I respect other people's rights. If I don't like something I do not expect other people to do it. When I think back when I was X years old, my child now is X years old, I don't expect her to do things that I won't do. I think I should have left after my junior degree because I didn't like their lifestyle here. *What didn't you like?* I didn't like the cultures, could not fit into it. I had a male friend whom I told I was leaving, he said to me please stand in the SRC election. I said, are you mad, how can I do that when students do not like me? I ended up doing that. But I joined as an individual. I did not want to be told what to do. I do not like a group thing, I fight my own battle always. My first challenges were the institution culture. Secondly, my relationship failed. I put

everything in a relationship I was trying to give a man to be the boss. When I was X years, I told my boyfriend I wanted to have a child at the age of 21, and it did happen like that. I had a baby at an early age. But I realise life prepares you. Thirdly, I failed for the first time in my life. I cried. I was devastated. I saw in the newspaper that they needed someone to work in a certain industry. I was frustrated, there was a child, and a broken relationship but what kept me going was I believed in myself. Sometimes my personality scares me.

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- are aware that institutional culture is still not changing
- feel that one must lead like a woman

Q5.2: How do you feel about being a woman in a male-dominated field?

P2: It was not easy. But do you mean in this office?

Q5.3: In your leadership profession.

P2: It was not easy but I am a person who believes in me. I do not believe in a group. I am a person if I feel something, I say it. What you start you must finish. I work with a man; let me say he is so supportive. I remember telling my boss I am not the person you think I am and I am not the person you think you can work with. My boss said to me, please do not take hasty decisions.

P3: Feeling that whatever people propose is not good enough. Good leadership must pat people on the shoulder. In any report there is nowhere that people are acknowledged, this happens to men and women. Mostly it happens to women. When we had a person in our previous top management, all things, portfolio from here to there was nothing good, there was a lot of terrorising. This was because she was a woman, not because of the process but to look more like 'we are getting rid of you', capitalising on the shortfall. She had a huge portfolio. In my opinion the office was huge for her, they said they appointed a manager to assist in that office but I do not know. Us women too, we did not support her when we saw she was being terrorized, from my side because I am assertive and fair. I can handle some of the challenge. One needs to be truthful, work hard to be respected, maintain your professionalism

to be important. As a leader am doing my best. I create a conducive environment that people can thrive.

P4: With a position like this one you cannot be quiet. If people reporting to me and university members are not doing well, I took a decision. I will not allow this. I have a good sense of humour. That helps a lot, if they call you using diminutive words, use it with a sense of humour. Do not be rattled. That works quite well. What you do for students and academics, do it differently, the way you dress and speak, not to become emotional in any meetings. Be professional in the way you argue, be rational. But air your view.

According to the above it seems as if the participants feel –

- a lack of leadership style and support
- women do not support each other
- one must not be rattled

Q6: In reflecting on your leadership experiences, what advice would you give to women entering positions of leadership?

This question focuses on finding out if participants understand their leadership style, what is expected from them in a male-dominated environment. How they cope with a new culture. From their discussion an attempt will be made to find out if women are authentic leaders, looking into their leadership style, if they understand what is expected from them. The question is to find out if women can take charge of their self-image and project power, especially in communication styles. Also to find out if women increase their personal communication power immediately using language from the centre of meaning, to see if they have confidence with words that are assertive and direct with a confident tone. To find out if women in leadership positions understand the importance of role models, how to use their unique attributes to motivate young leaders.

P1: As a woman comes to know her environment, she must ensure that she is an authentic leader and not to lead the male way. Be authentic in a sense that if there are things that are expected from you, do them. If the culture in the Higher Education

institution, for example, is to wear formal clothing, then dress formal. Be sensitive, be a woman who knows what she is doing and do it well.

P2: We must be role models.

P3: I started to be a leader at an early age. When I was a teacher at high school, I led a group of students. I was picked for the post of Deputy Principal. They wanted a woman and I was available. This was because of my leadership style, I was different from others. When I got this position other staff members were not happy, as there were older women at the school. But I also asked myself this question: Why me rather than so and so, who has been in the field longer than me? The thing is when I do a thing I do it well. I have unique attributes. They saw my unique attributes as leader. Also, when I see an opportunity, I don't let it go.

P4: Sometimes we are stupid. I started my career, loving what I was doing. My career just happened. I wanted to be a good mom. I grew up being very poor, but that motivated me to work hard. My parents were not in the National Party, but maybe that motivated me to work hard. I had a teaching bursary, so I just had to work hard. I did not apply for it, it just happened.

Leadership looks more gloomy or attractive than it really is. The down part is that when women become powerful, men are threatened. It often happens that women who are married when they become leaders, are prone for divorce. Once, when I and one of the top management had post-graduation seminar, we also experienced that this was also the case with most black women. A lot of black women told me that they got divorced after obtaining their doctorate. I usually tell my postgraduate students that they must be emotionally prepared if they want to get to the top of their careers. It doesn't come without a price, it can even cost you your marriage.

According to the above, it seems that the participants believe that women entering leadership positions should be aware of the fact that –

- one should lead in a way that one remains true to oneself in terms of being a woman

- one can expect to encounter resistance from male counterparts
- one has to take on opportunities as they arise
- it requires hard work
- it requires adaptations to the culture and expectations of the workplace
- one has to be emotionally strong, because leadership positions come with a cost
- one must be prepared to work hard at reconciling family and work responsibilities
- one has to be an authentic leader.

Q7. How did your experiences contribute to your insights into the empowerment of women leaders in Higher Education so that they could inform aspiring women leaders about their future career paths?

The participants were asked to reflect and indicate how their own experiences had empowered them and how that can empower aspiring women leaders. Also to establish whether participants understand the concept of power in leadership positions and the attitude of men and if they can internalise their identity and their role as women.

P2: I read a lot out of my field. I read motivational books. I realise we don't have women as role models. I needed the kind of energy that we do not get if there is no women role model. I used books to get that. Books help me to deal with myself. I realise there are women who have jealousy towards other women. I do not want to be the kind of woman who drags others down. In life there are people who do not believe you can do it. My plan was to do a junior degree and go to work as I had no money to go on. There are lots of women who feel a junior degree is the end. I started to read beyond honours level. I needed people who will say, you can do it, but I didn't find them, most said you can't do it. Maybe I needed people who say so. I told myself if there was any human being on this earth who had done what I wanted to do then I will also do it. I thought I understood English, I didn't, and then I would cry but with all these frustrations eventually you go with it. My studies were not about the content, it was about the journey, it is an emotional journey. That is why we say if someone who is in education does funny things, we say education did not do its job.

P3: This is a terrible situation. Bonuses are given to certain top management, not all staff. My argument is that there are no strikes, students are passing, the research output is great. Among people who are in leadership positions, I am the only who does not sit in that committee. There is a programme that develops leaders, even staff that are not even in leadership positions go to that committee, not me. I think it was mentioned to top management that I complained why I did not form part. The answer I got was only people who were affected formed part of that committee. People are scared that if you get exposed you will be better than them. Even the lady who was chased away, she was supposed to be supported by the same management that chased her. I feel inadequate. One of the ladies at one of the conferences I attended said to me I must take sabbatical leave and go three months abroad to be groomed for leadership. This was at the conference, whereas here where I work, they say you cannot go and be developed abroad. This institution does not see what others see. I am the lowest paid person of all the people who are on the same level of leadership. When I discovered this, I reported it to two people who were acting who were afraid to take the matter up to investigate. When I appointed a new person who reports to me, who is also a woman, her salary is almost more than mine. It frustrates me. Sometimes you just say 'whatever'. What I know is that I am a born leader, if you did not have this thing you will not succeed.

P4: Start a career. I love what I do; you know, my career just happened. I come from a family that was not educated. Because of that I wanted to become a woman, a mother and raise my children, I did not come from an educated background but my background motivated me. I did not get a bursary to study. Look at the more gloomy moment: women are empowered, men feel threatened, there is a lot of divorce among women who are educated or in leadership because men feel threatened.

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- are aware of the gender gap existence
- identify that there is still a gap between men's and women's career path
- are aware that attitude of men still exists
- are aware of a lack of social networking

Q8: Have you ever encountered a situation that has impacted on your leadership identity? How did it affect you?

P2: When I got my Ph.D. it was like another freedom. When people treated me shabbily I would smile, I had that inner fulfilment. Ph.D. comes with that kind of confidence, it does not matter how low the job is. What it does. is it fulfils you. I am looking at people who come from African countries with a Ph.D., when they are in South Africa they won't mind doing a low job, even to sweep the street. There was a time I used to think I would be a political analyst, I worked in several election committees analysing. As time went on I realised this was not worth my time. I asked myself, am I doing what I am supposed to do? What happens between elections was my concern. How do we help? Society's looked at my skills, talent. How can I contribute to society?

P3: Some of the challenges I experienced I do not know what caused them. Like the one at one of the centres, it was a real challenge. This started when we both applied for the professorship and I got the position and hers was declined. I started to see the deliberate lack of support. Things of my territory were swayed in a way to other people.

According to the above it seems as if participants –

- took the negative situation and turned it into positive one, as it fulfilled them
- feel they must contribute to society as part of community engagement
- experience a lack of support

Q8.1 What do you think was the cause?

P3: I do not know whether it was jealousy, I did not know but I could see things changed. I took a step to solve the problem. I did not want to rule out the idea of colour. Even if the issue is obvious they cannot deal with it if you are from the other side. There was also a possibility to move to leadership positions but it was time I applied for this professorship position. Then, I applied for this post I am in right now. The person who was in this post, she is now in a top position at another university, people say I will also be in a top position. Then I applied for this post. I was

Associate Professor before I came here. I was also a director, and then this offer came. Maybe I waited for the right moment. But fears are with everybody. I delayed to take this post, I do not know why, what was the reason. I did not start immediately. I was not comfortable. I waited till I felt comfortable.

Q8.2: What kind of fear?

P3: I don't know, maybe change. Maybe I overstayed at my previous job, it was more of a family. Moving out to a true leadership position could be the cause. Fear of going back to leadership, it worked on my confidence. Sometimes there are other personal problems that can weaken who you really are. I have now been X years in this position but I do not feel any growth. I cannot point to my growth. Maybe in this kind of position, there is little growth as compared to other positions I held before. There are no clear trajectories in this position as compared to others. There was an Institutional Assessment to check the capacity and challenges of the institution. What I told them is that I do not have confidence. I do not see myself growing. Is a feeling that everybody has, or let me say, it is my perception that everybody has this feeling. I say everybody because I see it in meetings; we go to meetings to fight, battle, we do not give support. When we sit and debate issues, we argue; like people say we are sinking. It really works on me. That is my perception, we are a sinking Titanic or a sunk Titanic already. I once, for the first time in my life looked myself at the mirror and said I wished I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth. Is like I do not matter. Is a feeling like you do nothing?

According to the above it seems as if participants –

- realise the issue of colour among themselves still exist
- experience that fear is working on their self-confidence
- experience intimidation
- realize their self-image, self-confidence is affected
- lack of leadership development
- experience the culture of the institutions

Q9: Do you think any of the experiences you went through would have changed if you had power? Do women have power?

P1: We got power, we must just use it. Our power is not only being in academics. We have power of doing our job well, power of knowing our field. Women have power to manipulate, we have charm, and we got a lot, we can make decisions. Men do not realise we have power. Men can be moved around by our power. Why did you think Eve got it right to let Adam to eat the apple? She had power.

P2: Yes, I think I had power all the time. When I was studying for my Ph.D., I was told by some of my colleagues that I must take a break. I said I am not going to do that because they never took a break when they were studying, why me. I was the youngest, that is why they said I must take a break. But it was a cultural thing. To me we are equal. I was vocal even in the meeting where they expected us to be quiet. I will not be quiet. I became a thorn and I got frustrated. They thought I wasn't worth it. There was a gender committee that was formed on campus, that committee has its own agenda. The committee came into existence when people had their own agenda. The committee pushed the agenda of certain colour or women. Looking at the statistics of the university, white women are in the majority. I wish women can stand up as a women category. This thing of belonging. You are seen as an outcast if you stand up for black women.

P3: I think, no, I know, we have power if we allow ourselves. We have the power to uphold. As women we must not think someone must do things for us. We cannot all the time keep saying people set obstacles for us. We have power; the thing is we do get the position differently from men. Yes, we talk of equity but we should talk of equity and excellence. Though we have to meet transformation we need to excel in what we do.

P4: I'd rather say influence than power. Women must approach things in a powerful way. Being in a powerful positions, being part of senior management, you need to take powerful decisions. Women have power to make a difference. I think one has power when one can make a difference, set a pace, trend, and change things for the better. I'd rather say it is influence than power. One has to do more for women on

campus. In terms of my career, I think am lucky, what I can do now is in a powerful way being influenced by the powerful position am in. I was once told by my colleague that you don't know what power you have.

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- know they have power
- know they can influence the environment
- realise the issue of colour still exists
- must know themselves and make themselves heard in society
- are connected with and use mind and body to unleash their unique, individual power as women

Q10. Describe the leadership style you found when you took this position and how it affected you as a woman.

To find out if participants realise that their leadership style can influence the environment and that the environment can influence their leadership style. To find out if women realise the accountability of Higher Education and the role HE has to play.

P2: This is a new position for me. I was acting in a position before this one. I went to the top man and said, hey, I think I must start to apply, if you stay out of interviews for a long time you lose contact with the world. I wanted to leave. I can't stay away from interviews for too long. Within in a week my boss came back to me with a document and said to me, read this document and see me in ten minutes. By the way, I was working in that office, reading documents, so I thought these were one of those documents. But because I was given a timeline I had to read them quickly. When I read them, I said what? Then I went to the office and said, I did not mean you will react so quickly, I did not want to internalise it, I did not believe it was happening to me. I thought it was a big mistake. I got this positive leader who wanted to see me develop.

P3: I cannot say a person in HE can make it to a top position just like that. Some do. One has to know what is happening at the university, know what is happening in

other structures of the university first. Start from a low position to up there. If you compare people who are in top positions who do not have a feel of being in a classroom environment, they hardly understand how certain things are done. One needs to be an academic. Command authority and respect. If you have a doctorate (like the one you are busy with), and being a professor, people will respect you; they know you understand what is happening in HE. You cannot know all the policies of the university, but try. I take university as a Higher Education institution, know the challenges the university goes through, know the shortfalls. People who have never done this, they do not have sympathy and empathy. If you went through this route you will understand the appeal, the battle. That is what I experience here; it is not easy as you look at it. For me the bigger picture exists. For example, one of the staff members who acted in a very senior top management post had a background of only one field at the university. That person is lost as the person never had experience in other fields; there is a lack of a broader understanding of things. To have a broader understanding helps you to feel confident in where you are sitting.

P4: My male colleagues respect me. I got huge respect. There are positive accolade. Identity for me is all that I am. I don't have to manage like a man; there is so much I can do if I lead like a female. I don't have to manage people with fear. As a woman I have different abilities, that softer touch, I bring different dimensions to leadership with my own attributes.

According to the above it seems as if the participants –

- are aware that leadership styles differ
- realise that there are still men who show no respect
- are aware of their multi-skills
- feel a lack of broader understanding
- feel a lack of emotional support
- are aware that their self-esteem was affected
- are aware of different dimensions to leadership
-

Q11: What have you learnt in this leadership position that differs from the position you had before?

P2: As a leader you must read, know the constitution of the country. Be smart, you know, we normally say if a person behaves in a funny way, then education did not do its job. This is because if you are educated you know how to address and handle things.

P3: Honestly, I think my self-confidence is dying. There is no recognition. But I had to work hard for the sake of myself.

P4: The way I was treated was good, even with my promotion, my line manager said to me, you know that you have reached more than we expected, please apply. It was different.

Participants had different opinions, some felt –

- to be a leader – regardless of gender – you must first know one and then achieve self-mastery
- leadership is a journey that starts from within
- others spoke of developing focus, preparation and persistence in order to stick with the learning process and get
- describing the self was a difficult task for all of the women...but it was almost impossible for the silent ones
- they must be smart, read and be consistent

Q12: How is your sense as a woman being affected? What affected your voice and your leadership identity?

The question was to find out if women in leadership positions understand how to construct meaning in their identity. How social identity has influenced individual identity. To see if the participants understand socialization and community dimensions.

P2: At the university, I took the initiative. I believed in myself. I am an extrovert, I connect with people easily. That made people connect with me easily. When I

started working at the university, the environment was not accommodating women, Yes, there were white women but even they were treated differently. I remember there was a time I had to defend a woman who was supposed to graduate. She was a white woman but because she was a woman she could not graduate but her piece of work was used by another male professor. I refused that. The woman was marginalized by society even at church and the community because of that. My identity changed when I had a child at an early age. I had a relationship that broke up. The racial issue at the university helped me to be strong, my identity changed; I had power to say no. My personality changed, I became stubborn but still have respect in me. I will greet people when I meet them and that earn me respect. My identity was affected, that challenged me.

P4: I am a transformational leader, not a charismatic leader. I lead by example. I look after people in my environment. Sometimes when I see them in the office very late, I will go to them and say, please, go home. I invite people to my office. I believe in participatory action. I love to give people space and to hear from younger colleagues who report to me. I give them space to think and come up with ideas. In that way I create an environment that is conducive to them and show that I trust them. In the end they take initiative. I create an environment where people take ownership. The other thing I do, I acknowledge people that also help me to get better feedback. For instance, after one of the graduation ceremonies this year, I wrote letters to all those supervisors and students to say well done, thank you. You know people were so happy, some came to my office to say thank you. Some said it was the first time that the university had ever acknowledged what they did. Even the white male Afrikaner came to me and said thank you. I believe in Stephen Covey's ideas of Seven Habits of Highly effective people.

The answers above indicate that participants –

- experience racial discrimination
- become assertive
- were marginalized
- realise that society is patriarchal and upholds male-defined values as it does not accommodate women

- became aware of the uniqueness of their identity
- realize there are a lot of things that men do not do well and women can assist to make things better
- create an environment that is conducive
- know identity is not a private matter
- realize their inner self and finds its home in the world by participating in the identity of a collectivity
- struggle to hold on to what they know about relationships and feelings
- know that self-discipline involved in practising
- know who they are: transformational, charismatic leader

Q13: From your point of view, does the glass ceiling still exist?

P1: The glass ceiling is still there but is not thick as it was previously. In top management of the 23 South African universities, only four have women as vice-chancellor. Glass ceiling is still there in particular fields, there is a perception like who is going to be the best, but it is better now.

P2: Oh yes, a lot. To me it was a racial and discrimination issues. In Political Science, I was lecturing there. There was this professor in our department, he was playing racist. His comment was out of this world. When I heard about that and what he said, as a junior staff, I went to his office. I wanted him to confirm what he just said. I confronted him and that made them to respect me although it strained the relationships even worse. I reported to him, by the way all the time when I reported, I was reporting to the same professor. Issue of language, people will speak Afrikaans in a meeting. Then I will ask them what the policy says. I had to study the policies of the institutions to know what is happening. When I was lecturing I was given a kitchen as my office, I cried. I went to the same professor, who was the dean, and reported this; he offered me the office next to his. I had to travel a distance to go to classes because I refused to take a kitchen as my office. One day I told myself, let me take this kitchen and turn it into my office. I then realised women as staff were seen as maids and I stood up to end that, that everyone must make his/her own tea. I stopped that, I said from now on this kitchen is my office. No one brought a maid to work. I was discriminated against. There was a lot of it at the university, but I could

not keep quiet. I wish women could stand up as women, this thing of belonging, you are seen as an outcast. There was a time when curtains were to be hanged. They said women must do that and it was these high windows. I refused, I stood up for those women and said men must hang them. There were things that happened that made me cry. But I will go to my office and open the window and cry. I did not want to cry in front of the students.

P3: The glass ceiling, oh! I felt it when my mentor left. I was mentored by a man. I hit the glass ceiling. Things changed. I found myself working with a team of women now. We worked together but after some time I thought the “Queen B” syndrome emerged. In one of the years, we submitted applications for professorship. Mine was accepted, and then things turned around, obstacles being placed deliberately. I could see I had no support. Things that were part of my work were swayed away from me to others. I did not know why that happened but I could see those things really changed. I do not want to rule out the idea of colour that also played a role. Then I got a new job, things got worse. There are times when I had this fear. I felt powerless. There was no growth, but fear is with everybody. I did not feel the pack, the leadership pack at forefronts. I did not sit in those committees but I could feel the pack that people are not united, is like we are not working towards the same goal. People terrorize each other. Imagine being in a meeting feeling terrorized.

P4: I think it is much better, things have changed, we sit in selection committee. And in that committee when we are to appoint a woman, we are looking for that “wow woman”. This is not about politics or employment equity as that cannot guarantee success. Men start to realise the limitations especially in an environment where you need a different intelligence quality with emotional intelligence. We break the glass ceiling of stereotyping by appointing a woman as a dean on one of the campuses. Though we still have challenges, where some men still call women “Poppie”.

Participants realize that –

- one learns how to carry out other duties
- oppression is experienced from men as their counterparts
- they do not allow men to use their femininity as an excuse

- they were not engaged in career planning
- they attained leadership positions through very hard work
- their leadership style is different from that of men
- the gender policy is not being effectively implemented in universities as participant did not have proper office.

Q14: In what way can future leaders be empowered in constructing their own paths in leadership?

The question is to find out if participants understand the importance of a career path in a leadership positions. What is expected from them as leaders?

P2: Women must read.

P3: People have to show that they are leaders by volunteering to do extra services, supervise others. But one cannot force other people to be empowered, it must come from within. I opted to supervise only black women. The reason for focusing on black students was that I was given black students all along. I later realised that sometimes they do struggle. I also took some students as assistants in my unit and they are paid by NRF. What am doing is what my mentor did for me.

What participants experienced was –

- stereotyped view which was a constraint for women gaining leadership positions
- they were oppressed and disadvantaged in areas such as the attainment of qualifications
- they were not in positions of authority and decision making

Q15: Why are women underrepresented in key university leadership positions?

To find out if participants realize that the workplace is a complex environment, how to deal with uncertainties in leadership. To find out if participants understand the workplace dynamics. How society perceives the practices of selecting leadership in institutions and if the issue of the gender gap is understood.

P1: I think it is historical, a lot of history. We must remember a few years ago this was a male-dominated area. We were few women when I started working here. Is very much a historical thing, they are sensitive to open up for women, a lot still going on? Sometimes it is not easy for men to give up their power as they had it for long. There will be a lot of gate keeping but it is better, there is improvement.

P3: Society has groomed men in a way that men are leaders. Where we come from, our history, men are groomed differently from girls and boys. We can blame society for the way they are groomed. Now girls are becoming strong. We are going to have a situation where men will be intimidated by women.

P4: I blame it on other women, they are not sensitive. What I should be asking is: Where are the women? Why do we have male deans in the majority? We need to educate people to become more sensitive towards empowering women and even women to empower themselves. Like I mentioned, we have one dean who is a woman at one of our campuses. The rector of this institution is trying hard to achieve that. From now each and every appointment and selection is looked at very critically. I also form part of the selection committee, which was in the past only men.

The answers of participants provided the following –

- that the gendered nature of universities against women holds them back
- men do not subscribe to female leadership; society at large takes the blame
- there are cultural stereotypes
- they are aware that it is not easy for men to give up power they had for long
- they must understand the dynamics of the workplace
- there is a lack of women in the selection committees
- women are socialized, hence they find it difficult to take up challenging leadership posts
- women do not apply due to lack of interest and fear of being intimidated by male counterparts who may also be interested in the key posts
- there is a need to educate people about women in leadership positions
- women are bound by family ties; they normally do not want to move far away from their families

Q16. How does male-dominated university leadership impact on women's leadership?

P1: I must admit, I do not have that problem anymore. Maybe other faculties and universities. I do not experience it, I can go anywhere, my dean will allow me, top management will allow me, and I do not experience it. Initially I was discouraged by the male domination. I decided to change it to make it positive, what I did to myself was, although you think it is prejudice, there is a place for men, I will get my position. I studied; I move out of my comfort zone, I became involved in organization committees that are linked to my profession. I read a lot. I started publishing to prove myself worthwhile to be here. I think my identity does not need to change to be like a man to become a leader. A lot of young people want to be leaders but there is a lot that they must learn from us. As leaders we must teach them to be patient. Women as leaders create identities that fit their image of leaders but they are supported by top leaders. [Participants described that the expectation of advancing, rising in positions was stressful due to a lack of support and not being recognized. Though some participants never had a problem as their institution recognized them, they expressed how they valued their institutions. Most participants extracted cues from their societal expectation.]

P3: At my university all women who are in top positions were nominated by a woman in top management to go overseas for development courses at the American Council on Higher Education (ACHE). This was refused by the rector of the university, she was told to look locally to develop staff, not abroad. This woman in top management, she wanted to attend a conference abroad, they refused for her to go. At my former university where I worked I never experienced any of these things that I see happening here. At this university, I remember there was a time when there was going to be a meeting and I was told that I must make sure that when we had meetings I was around, not overseas.

P4: It is changing. Last week I was in the IECS meeting, the debate, discussion in that meeting also is changing, there is awareness. Though I sometimes get angry when women do silly things in meetings. Women will say I cannot do that I am a woman. Then I will call that woman aside and say you should not have said that,

men do not like that. Because this gives men a chance to say we cannot appoint a woman because she will fall pregnant, she will say she needs time to take care of the babies. Yes, they must accommodate us but we should not use it as an excuse.

From the answers above the participants –

- have been discriminated against from a cultural and policy point of view which has resulted in the system developing very few women to top leadership positions, where women say they will not do certain things
- realized that cultural bias affects women as they feel that men should lead
- one needs to be strategic
- leadership helps one to grow professionally
- realized that in universities top leaders are males who still feel that men are more capable leaders than women
- are discouraged by other women
- are aware that they themselves are also to blame because given a choice and even when they are in the majority they do not vote or support each other
- experienced cultural and social factors as the barriers to their advancement
- were aware that they are viewed by what they are and not what they do
- were timid, easily frustrated, as they develop fear and feel the intimidation
- women have low self-esteem, they need men to encourage them to accept leadership positions

Findings from the analysis above show that women lack support, which led to fear. There are a lot of differences at these two universities. One university's participants indicate lots of exploitation that leads to fear, lack of self-confidence. The other university shows a lot of social networking and respect for human elements, that is through the participants when they talk of university leadership.

APPENDIX A

My name is Khomotso Moetanalo Hilda Marumo. I am the researcher on a dissertation study entitled: Empowerment: making sense of the voices of women about their journey towards their leadership identity in Higher Education, which I am conducting as a doctoral student in the Department of Education at the University of Free State under the supervision of Prof S.R. Niemann.

I may be contacted at 072 322 9061/051 446 2917 or by electronic [mail](mailto:marumokmh@ufs.ac.za) marumokmh@ufs.ac.za should you have any questions.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research project. Your participation is much appreciated. Before we start the interview, I would like to reassure you as a participant that this is specifically for study purposes and there are several rights to follow.

- First, your participation in this study interview is entirely voluntary.
- You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.
- You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time.
- This interview will be kept strictly confidential.
- Excerpts of this interview may be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics be included in this report.

I would be grateful if you would sign this form to show that you have read its contents.

Signed: _____

Print: _____

Date: _____

Please send me a copy of the finished document (Circle only one):

YES

NO

Address for those requesting a document copy:

APPENDIX B

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Study Leader: Prof S. R. Niemann
Address: Faculty of Education
University of the Free State
T: +27(0)51 37777
niemannr@ufs.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project: Empowerment: making sense of the voices of women about their journey towards their leadership identity in Higher Education.

This study is about: "To explore the empowerment challenges that female leaders encounter in developing their own identity in taking up leadership positions."

We would like you to participate with us in this research because: as a woman in leadership position of the university your opinion and contribution will assist in making sense out of the voices of women leaders in Higher Education.

The reason we are doing this study is to make sense out of the voices of women leaders in Higher Education about their journey towards developing their leadership identity and to empower other women to become agents of change in constructing their own paths towards idiosyncratic approaches to leadership.

The possible risks to you in taking part in this study are to narrate your past experiences and share your emotional experiences as a leader and which might be regarded as classified information, and we have taken the following steps to protect you from these risks that information remains confidential and will only be used for this study purposes.

I am sure you will benefit from this study as it will provide direction to potential women leaders in terms of constructing their own paths in empowerment towards innovative and unique leadership in Higher Education.

While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do choose to take part, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further repercussions.

If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study supervisor (indicated above).

Should any difficult personal issues arise during the course of this research, I will endeavour to see that a qualified expert is contacted and able to assist you.

Yours sincerely



Khomotso M.H. Marumo

Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference.

Study: *(Enter full title of research project here)*

Researcher: *(enter researcher's name here)*

Name and surname: _____

Age: _____

(Enter inclusion criteria type here): _____

Contact number: _____

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he/she has indicated in the above letter.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Date of focus group: **4 October 2011**

Location of focus group: **UFS Library Committee room**

Name of the researcher: **KMH Marumo**

Question 1

What are the fundamental processes that women leaders in Higher Education go through to develop their own leadership voice and identity, and how could this contribute to the empowerment of women leaders in future?

Question 2

How are unique identities formed and how does that implicate on leadership identity formation?

Question 3

What are the challenges that female leaders encounter in becoming empowered to take up leadership positions?

Question 4

What sense can be made from the voices of women towards their leadership identity?

Question 5

How can their voices provide direction to potential women leaders in a way that future leaders in constructing their own paths to transform their empowerment process?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What processes of leadership development did you go through and how could this contribute to the empowerment of women leaders in the future?
2. How do you develop your own voice and identity in leadership positions?
3. How can your voice as women provide direction to potential women leaders?
4. What are the challenges that you went through in the processes of leadership positions?
5. How did these challenges affect your individual identity as being a leader?
6. How do you feel being a woman in a male-dominated field?
7. What are things that can attract women to leadership positions?
8. How did your experiences contribute to your insights into the empowerment of women leaders Higher Education so that it could inform aspiring women leaders about their future career paths?
9. Have you ever encountered a situation that has impacted on your leadership identity? How did it affect you?
10. Do you think any of the experiences you went through would have changed if you had power? Do women have power?
11. Describe the leadership style you found when you took this position. How did it affect you as a woman?
12. What have you learnt in this leadership position that differs from the position you had before?
13. How is your sense as a women being affected? What affected your voice and your leadership identity?
14. From your viewpoint, does the glass ceiling still exist?
15. In what way can future leaders be empowered in constructing their own paths in leadership?
16. Why are women under-represented in key university leadership positions?
17. How does male-dominated university leadership impact on women's professional growth and development?

APPENDIX E

GOLDEN RULES

- Time allocated is 1 hour.
- You are all welcome.
- Only one person talks at a time.
- What is shared in the room stays in the room: Confidentiality is assured.
- Everyone's ideas and opinions are important.
- There are no right and wrong answers to the questions, just ideas, experiences and opinions are valuable.
- All sides of issues are important: both positive and negative.
- Conversation will be tape-recorded and notes taken.
- You are free to withdraw at any time if you so wish.⁹

⁹ Adapted from USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation "Conduction Focus Group Interviews." Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Tips 1996:10)

STATEMENT OF LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER

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I hereby declare that I text-edited the thesis, *Empowerment: making sense of the voices of women about their journey towards their leadership identity in Higher Education* by Khomotso Moetanalo Hilda Marumo.