

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**  
**SOUTH AFRICA**

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EMERGING MODELS OF POWER  
AMONGST SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN BUSINESS LEADERS**

Lisa Caroline Kinnear

Student Number: 871870229

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Supervisor: Dr Karen Ortlepp

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Name: Ms L.C. Kinnear	No: 871870229	
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Supervisors Signature:		
Date: 20 February 2014		
Co- Supervisors Name: n/a		
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my children, Nicholas and Julia, whose love, optimism and uniqueness have inspired me to continue to make my small mark on the world in the hope that it becomes a better place for their generation and those that follow.

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand and analyse the emerging models of power amongst South African women business leaders. The focus of this study is on women's construction of power in relation to their leadership roles within an organisation. Traditionally models of power have been constructed within the dominant patriarchal discourse relating to the capacity to exert control over others. Current theories are redefining power and the nature of leadership in relation to the changing needs of society. Due to our patriarchal society women have traditionally been excluded from building theories on power, both within an academic and business context. In this thesis women's autobiographies have been studied to include their growing awareness of power in their past, current leadership role and envisaged future. This has resulted in the identification of emerging models of power amongst these South African women business leaders.

The empirical work is grounded in three key bodies of literature: theories on power; literature on leadership; and studies on transformation. Specific to this study has been the inclusion of feminist theories on power since the aim of the study is to include women's perspectives into the process of theory building. This qualitative study is positioned within a social constructionist paradigm and uses the methodology of discourse analysis to identify emerging models of power. The 10 participants in the study include women executive directors and managers within large scale businesses across a range of industry sectors within South Africa. The findings of this work shows that women continue to grapple with the tensions of constructing their power and leadership identity within a patriarchal environment. As a result they move between models that entrench patriarchy; adapt to patriarchal systems through survival strategies; or tentatively assert an alternative transformative model of power. This emerging model reflects social, psychological and spiritual dimensions of power experienced by the women research participants within their leadership context. The research highlights the fact that despite efforts to create gender equality in organisations, transformation will not occur without fundamentally shifting perceptions of power to include these emerging models which are consistent with current leadership thinking.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete”

Buckminster Fuller (1982)

### **1.1 Introduction**

This study aims to understand and analyse the emerging models of power amongst South African women business leaders. The presence of women in senior leadership roles in business remains limited, both globally and in South Africa (Dormehl 2012; Nkeli 2012; Sandberg 2013; Sealy & Vinnicombe 2012; Sellers 2012). The statistics alone demonstrate that initiatives to increase women’s representation and influence in the business world remain inadequate. The stunted efforts to address this challenge do not simply reflect the need for a more inclusive and equitable society, but a more fundamental review of the underpinning value systems and ideologies that drive these efforts. The review of these systems and ideologies is not simply a women’s issue. The development of new models in understanding fundamental concepts in human relations and leadership is critical for our businesses to sustain themselves into the future and contribute positively to society and the world. Pivotal to our models of human relations and leadership is our notion of power: how we conceive of it, both consciously and subconsciously, and how we use it to effect in our roles and relationships. Due to our patriarchal society women have traditionally been excluded from building the theories on power, both in an academic and business context. While feminist research in the social sciences has made significant progress in including women’s perspectives; within management studies, feminist research is still in its infancy (Mauthner & Edwards 2010). This study aims to make a fresh contribution to management studies on women in leadership by identifying their emerging models of power and the implications this

has for women, leadership and organisational transformation, drawing from a feminist paradigm.

## **1.2 Background to the Problem**

The problem outlined in the introduction which has initiated this research affects women in leadership positions across the globe where free market business is the method of economic activity. While South African business reflects some of the global trends and shares these challenges, the specific local context will also be discussed in relation to the background to the problem.

### **1.2.1 The Global Background to the Research Problem**

Our contemporary world is one where Malala Yousafzai, aged 16, was shot for advocating the right to education for girls and speaking out on the oppression of women in Pakistan and around the world (Bhutto 2013). The same young woman was acknowledged for her courage and advocacy of human rights through her nomination for a 2013 Nobel Peace Prize (Peacock 2013). While there may be significant and complex political, historical and ideological reasons for these contradictions within our global society, it throws into stark relief the fact that women's oppression remains a significant issue in our world, and that the assertion of women's rights and their power in standing up to systems of abuse is evident and yet remains a struggle. Malala Yousafzai has become a global symbol of both women's subjugation and their empowerment. It is easy to isolate these examples to certain parts of the globe where oppressive governments legislate discrimination against women or where extreme cultural patriarchal practices which contravene women's human rights are accepted and promoted. However, in recognising our interconnectedness as a global society these stark examples of women abuse should still concern us in those parts of the globe where women no longer suffer from legislated discrimination and are empowered to actively participate in shaping society. Even in these parts of the world, albeit around less substantive issues, women still grapple at being able to take up that role as equal partners. According to Inter-Parliamentary Union statistics (2012), of the 195 countries in the world where elections are held, only 17 are led by women. In addition, women hold only 20 percent of the seats in democratically elected parliaments globally.

Throughout the world when it comes to the decisions being made about how to govern our environment, women's voices are still not heard equally.

The percentage of women in leadership roles is even lower in the corporate business world across the globe. In the United States, only 4 percent of the Fortune 500 CEO's are women; 14 percent of executive officer positions are held by women and only 17 percent of board seats are held by women (Sellers 2012). Throughout Europe women hold 14 percent of board seats and in the United Kingdom women hold 7 percent of executive directorships and 15 percent of board seats of the FTSE 100 companies (Sealy *et al.* 2012). South Africa mirrors these trends with less than 10 percent of CEO positions of companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and 5.5 percent of chair positions being occupied by women (Dormehl 2012). These statistics and the slow progress globally in increasing the numbers of women in leadership positions in business, provide evidence that in nations where the promise of equality has been made, true equality still does not exist. According to Sandberg (2013: 7), "A truly equal world would be one where women ran half our countries and companies and men ran half the homes."

Sandberg's (2013) recently published book, "Lean In", is an attempt to revive what she believes is a stalled revolution and has successfully re-ignited conversations in the corporate world and popular press about the state of women in business leadership positions. However, the book has been critiqued by many feminist theorists for once again presenting a dominant discourse around power and politics that speaks on behalf of 'other women' as a universal concept from a position of privilege. Its focus on individual action as opposed to collective action has also been highlighted as a shortcoming in getting to grips with the fundamental issues that have created barriers for women in business. On the other hand it has been lauded for its empowering and female-specific career advice which promotes more forceful and purposeful behaviour in women. However it has been received, Sandberg's book is representative of most of the literature on women in business which is based on individual experience and focusses on promoting how to gain access to positions of power. It does nothing to fundamentally challenge, not only the structural, but also the systemic issues which create gender inequality in society.

It could be argued that systemic change and inequalities in society are not concerns for the global capitalist business environment. However, the recent world recession and corporate scandals of the 1990's involving the likes of Enron, Tyco, WorldCom and others are stark reminders of the consequences of power imbalances and corrupt leadership for organisations and society as a whole (Valerio 2009). In our increasingly complex, diverse and interconnected world it has become necessary to re-assess the focus of business to ensure that the organisations being built are sustainable beyond short term profit motives alone. This focus on corporations' responsibility to society and the environment through healthy, ethical and sustainable economic activity is what has become known as the 'triple bottom line' (Savitz & Weber 2006). The term highlights the accountability of institutions for ensuring they move beyond individual motivations of greed to more communal concerns for social, economic and environmental welfare. It is within this global landscape that women leaders find themselves grappling to find a space. Yet, their presence makes little difference if they are disempowered in bringing about any significant changes to the environment they participate in.

Ironically, despite their years of exclusion from the management of businesses, women have long been recognised by corporations as a significant market and have influenced business through their consumer behaviour. In 2006 the Economist coined the word "womenomics" when it declared "forget China, India and the Internet, economic growth is driven by women" (Eisenstein 2010: 414). As active participants in the global economy, women leaders have often been either absent from defining and shaping the direction of that growth or co-opted into its corrupt forms. The rationale for challenging some of the destructive effects of corporate leadership is evident in the state of the global economy. Women, who have been traditionally outside of the mainstream, are often best positioned to notice and challenge these effects. Their equal participation in shaping new forms of leadership is vital in bringing about alternative effects to the exploitation of capitalist greed and oppression of patriarchy. This research tries to understand whether women in leadership positions are able to construct alternatives when operating as leaders within capitalist, patriarchal environments. This is critical in understanding the role women in leadership can and need to play in challenging models which no longer serve humanity and finding ways within their own sphere of influence to build new models. While this is a global challenge, the study has focussed on women

leaders in South African organisations where the transformation agenda has a specific context in light of the political and social transition to democracy 19 years ago.

### **1.2.2 The South African Context for the Research Problem**

South Africa is a country “blessed with infinite possibilities which reflect its geographic position on the ancient continent of Africa’ (Ramphele 2012: 13). It is also a country with a diversity of people that “have the capacity to come back from the brink each time the world threatens to write them off” (Ramphele 2012: 13). Today South Africa boasts one of the most progressive constitutions in the world (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger 2012). It has also come through the global economic crisis of 2008 and beyond in relatively good health, demonstrating the robustness of its financial system, unusual for a middle income country, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2013). Despite this, South Africa remains plagued by the following issues, as identified in the National Planning Commission’s 2011 diagnostic report (RSA 2011):

- Rising corruption
- Weakening of state and civil society
- Poor economic management
- Skills and capital flight
- Politics dominated by short termism, ethnicity, factionism
- Lack of maintenance of infrastructure and standards of service
- The persistence of poverty and inequality

The National Planning Commission’s attempt at focussing government, business and civil society’s efforts on addressing these issues is a recognition that the nation’s success depends on individuals recognising that liberation from these destructive factors depends upon the liberation of others as a community of South Africans.

The status of women in South Africa is a complex subject, given the inequalities that exist in its social structures. The South African population of 49 million is predominantly female (52 percent) and youthful, with one-third aged below fifteen years (Morrell *et al.* 2012). Apartheid left South Africa with an unusual pattern of family structure, resulting in around 40 percent of households being female headed

(Jewkes, Morrell & Christofides 2009). South Africa also has very high levels of violence, with an alarmingly high level of female rape. In addition, the country suffers from the highest number of people living with HIV (Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell & Dunkle 2011). The epidemic has the most significant impact on women, with the majority of people with HIV being African women, and women carry a disproportionate burden of the illness and HIV care. South African society is highly patriarchal, with exaggerated racialized, gender inequalities, and high incidence of violence (Morrell *et al.* 2012). Gender activism has historically focused on women, but in the last decade the inclusion of men has accompanied a governmental legal and policy commitment to gender equality, which is unusual in the African context. South Africa is a country of contradictions which still has a long journey ahead in terms of political and social transformation.

In her book, “Conversations with My Sons and Daughters”, Mamphela Ramphele (2012), a leading South African academic, businesswoman, politician and member of the National Planning Commission, addresses the next generation of South Africans, urging them to find their purpose in transforming South Africa into the nation they dream of. Her call is for young South Africans to shift their identity from subjects to citizens, asserting and defending democracy, instead of perpetuating fear and patronage. She refers back to the generation which liberated South Africa as having done so through “redefining what it was to be black in a world dominated by white power structures” (Ramphele 2012: 15). In her call and her reflection, Ramphele highlights how South Africans need to continue to shed the limiting forces of domination and subjugation to find another way in which to engage with one another in the process of transformation. Although she critiques feminist studies for framing gender relations in terms of power dynamics only, it is precisely these power dynamics that need review and redefinition to enable transformation in gender relations as one of the processes in building a new South African society.

While progress in terms of achieving gender equity targets is evident in the public sector, according to the 2012 Employment Equity Report (Nkeli 2012), women remain under-represented in South African corporate leadership positions along with the rest of the world. The impact of women’s representation on transformation of government is a topic for debate which falls outside of the scope of this study since it is focussed on

business institutions. Commenting on women's representation at leadership levels in business, Konyalala Maphisa, President of the Business Women's Association, South Africa (Dormehl 2012: 11) makes this claim in the annual Women in Leadership Census report:

A radical mind shift; that's what we need if South Africa is to shift gear from the slow, incremental changes in the numbers of women at executive levels to a dramatic increase in the way we perceive, promote and protect women in corporate South Africa. And it needs government, business and civil society to act as one in order to achieve at least 50% representation by 2015. The global economy has changed dramatically yet we continue to operate on old assumptions and practices. It cannot be business as usual. If we are to change the landscape of business in South Africa and truly draw on all of South Africa's human resources, then we need to change the way we think and conduct our business.

Maphisa emphasises the role of business in promoting gender equality and transformation, but she also emphasises the need for new models and practices which cannot be tapped through existing structures and systems. Given our turbulent history, South Africa has and is still grappling with transformation and how to apply it in organisations. Aside from adding complexity to the issue of gender transformation, South Africa's history is also rich with experiences and opportunities for dismantling entrenched systems of oppression, albeit an incomplete process. South African business schools are well aware of their responsibility in developing leaders who are able to do this. Dean of Henley South African Business School, Pedley (in Furlonger 2013), claims that business school programmes should be a means of growing the country which needs the unique attributes of women as an integral part of that growth. He states, "The main aim of business schools should not be to programme our students to have a good career. Our job is to develop people who can build values and systems for the future" (Furlonger 2013: 29). Including women in developmental programmes and in business leadership roles should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means to changing the status quo. The current demands of leadership, both globally and in South Africa, require a shift in both traditional models of leadership and in the underpinning definitions of power.

### **1.3 Focus of the Study**

The focus of this study is on women's construction of power in relation to their leadership roles within an organisation. The contention is that women construct their models of power through their experience and interactions with the dominant patriarchal discourse in society, making it difficult to access and assert alternatives in a traditional environment. Traditionally power has been related to the capacity to exert control. This association of dominance with power reflects social theories and hierarchical structures entrenched in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century power has begun to take on a range of other dimensions, specifically related to intra and interpersonal development. The study explores the evolution of these theories of power within the academic disciplines of philosophy, psychology and organisational theory. It also reviews the feminist perspectives on these theories of power since this is a study of women and theories of power have traditionally been developed from the perspectives arising out of a male dominated society.

As leaders within business, the women participating in this study will have had to engage with traditional forms of power to achieve leadership status within their organisations. However, theories on the leadership required for today's organisations have also shifted the focus from 'power over' others to greater power sharing, collaboration and the development of 'internal' power through personal development. The shift in thinking around power and leadership is critical for the sustainability of organisations in our complex 21<sup>st</sup> century business environment and is therefore the subject of investigation in this study.

### **1.4 Aim of the Study**

The aim of the study is to establish and critique the emerging models of power amongst South African business women leaders. The study intends to understand what the emerging models of power are amongst women leaders by analysing their narrative discourse as recounted in an interview with the researcher. The interviews followed the process used by McAdams (2001) to capture women's construction of early encounters with significant people and events, to provide a framework for their subsequent experiences of power within a leadership context.

In identifying models of power that emerge from the women's narrative discourse, the significant contribution of this research to management studies is to understand whether they are enablers or deterrents in transforming business institutions. In this research study, the transformation of business institutions refers to the dismantling of traditional, patriarchal power systems and the integration of women into leadership structures, as well as the integration of progressive leadership practices and principles into the organisational system. The development of current leadership theories informing these practices and principles are discussed comprehensively in the literature review, as well as their impact on the transformation of business institutions (Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5).

While the role of the feminist researcher is not to judge women's responses to patriarchy as such, the feminist framework for this study underpins the aims of the research which is to provide critique of the models either as enablers of transformation or perpetrators of the status quo. The model and critique is presented as the crux of the research in the concluding chapter (Chapter 10) as it highlights the implications of women's models of power for leadership in South African business organisations.

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

Objectives represent the specific goals of the research in order to achieve the overall aim of the study as described in the previous section. The three research objectives of the study which have resulted in the identification of emerging models of power are:

- Objective 1: To understand how women have experienced and developed their awareness of power
- Objective 2: To understand how women leaders view and use power in their leadership role
- Objective 3: To understand how women leaders challenge or perpetuate the leadership culture of the organisation

These objectives were achieved by conducting interviews with South African women business leaders which focussed on three distinct sections of their lives, namely past autobiographical narration, present narration of leadership experiences and anticipated

future constructions of power. The interview guide was based on an adapted version of McAdam's Life Story Interview (2001) with questions in each section relating to the stated objectives. Through in-depth discourse analysis of these interviews within a social constructionist framework as outlined in detail in the chapter on methodology (Chapter 6), the necessary understanding was generated and an emerging model of power was constructed. The critique of this model and the implications for women in leadership as discussed in the concluding chapter (Chapter 10), makes a contribution to current feminist management research, as well as research into power, leadership, organisational development and transformation within a South African context.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

While it is a growing field of interest in leadership studies, there remains little empirical research into psychological and personal forms of power within an organisational context (Anderson, John & Keltner 2012; Goltz 2011; Rosenblatt 2012). There is a plethora of populist literature on business leadership, organisational dynamics and power, yet empirical research on multiple dimensions of power within the management discipline remains limited. Empirical research on women in business tends to focus on structural issues using quantitative methods relating to the advancement or hindering of their progress into leadership roles. Alternatively, anecdotal studies are not supported with empirical data and academic methods of data analysis (Mauthner & Edwards 2010). While there has been steady growth of research and writing on women in management, feminist approaches to management are poorly researched and theorised (Mauthner *et al.* 2010)

Feminist studies, focussing on power, have typically been located within the social sciences discipline of psychology and sociology. However in her article entitled "Disciplines For and Against Psychology", Burman (2011) argues that multi-disciplinary research as a growing trend in contemporary knowledge creation is particularly suited to and mobilised by feminist researchers who typically use a hybrid of methodologies and are attuned to the political agendas of 'expert' disciplines. With the current emphasis on models of psychological power associated with self-development, personal relationships, intuition and emotional intelligence in contemporary business leadership, Burman (2011) believes that it is helpful to have a

feminist critique of these within the context of advanced capitalism to understand the explicit and implicit oppressive nature of these models. This research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on leadership and power within an organisational context. However the aim is to provide an original contribution through its feminist social constructionist approach to a study located within the management discipline.

Furthermore the United States of America, followed by the United Kingdom, have dominated academic research in all disciplines relating to women, leadership and power (Bose and Minjeong 2013; Sandberg 2013). Mama (2011:13), who served for 10 years as the chair of Gender Studies at the University of Cape Town, highlights the need for feminist research in Africa “to address complexity, nuance, multiplicity and power relations in our societies, in all matters that defy simple quantitative studies.” As a study conducted within the South African context, another significant contribution of this research is to provide analysis within the local context to address a research problem that is both global and local in significance. Another need identified by Mama (2011) is the need for feminist research to be conducted within the researcher’s national context as a means of redressing the divide in our knowledge system between developed and developing countries. In adding new perspectives to an existing and growing body of knowledge, this research study aims at enabling the application of theories to leadership and organisational development practices. The result of this would be to facilitate intentional and meaningful transformation in South African business organisations.

## **1.7 Key Terms**

It is difficult to define terms in this research since key concepts under discussion are multi-faceted and are therefore explored in depth within the discussion on literature pertaining to the study. However, the following key terms have been used throughout the discussion and while they are elaborated on further in the body of this document, a brief description of them is necessary at the outset:

**Business** – institutions that are engaged in commercial activities aimed at producing profits to enable sustainable growth (Allen, 1990).

**Discourse** – a pattern of talk or systems and statements that represent a way of speaking or articulating thoughts (Edwards 2006). Its specific meaning in relation to the method of analysis is discussed in detail in Chapter 6 on the research methodology.

**Feminist Research** – research which is focussed on the ongoing struggle of gender equality, gender relations and notions of domination and subordination, with a focus on the empowerment of women in its aims and methodologies (Burman 2011; Dickerson 2013; Lombardo and Verloo 2009; Moses 2012). This concept is elaborated on further in the literature review on feminist perspectives of power in Chapter 3 and in Chapter 6 on the research methodology.

**Leaders** – individuals who influence and direct the behaviours of others (Valerio 2009). While leadership exists within a variety of contexts, for the purposes of this study ‘leaders’ refer to leaders who assume leadership roles within business institutions.

**Model** – an overall framework or representation of how we look at reality (Silverman 2010)

**Organisational Transformation** – significant change within organisations which creates new ways of thinking and new perspectives on the world which replace prevailing norms (Hatch & Cunliff 2013). Within a South African context it has also become synonymous with the post-apartheid strategy of ensuring racial and gender equity within organisations (Booyesen 2007; Human 2005; Nkeli 2012). This concept will be elaborated on in Chapter 5 of the literature review.

**Patriarchy** – a system which affords men certain privileges and entitlements that are not available to women; men have ‘access’ to ways of being and performing that are not necessarily accessible to women; women respond in defined ways often accommodating or deferring to male interests (Dickerson 2013). This concept is discussed fully in Chapter 3 on feminist perspectives on power.

**Social Constructionism** – a model or paradigm of research which focusses on how phenomena come to be through the close study of interactions in certain contexts

(Silverman 2010). This paradigm is elaborated on in greater detail in relation to the approach undertaken for this research study in Chapter 6 on the research methodology.

## **1.8 Overview**

The following is an overview of the structure of this thesis (represented schematically in Fig. 1).

Chapter 1 – This chapter introduces the aim and purpose of the study and provides the background to the research problem and motivates the significance of the research

Chapter 2 – ‘The Development of Theories on Power’ focusses on tracing the evolution of power theories from a philosophical; psychological and organisational perspective

Chapter 3 – ‘Feminist Discourse on Power’ introduces the feminist perspective on power studies and shows how the feminist framework has influenced this research through an understanding of the feminist response to patriarchy; the evolution of the feminist movement and alternative discourse on power to that of the mainstream

Chapter 4 – ‘Leadership Theories’ focusses on the evolution of organisational leadership theories and the way in which they incorporate notions of power; as well as the way in which women have engaged with contemporary leadership theories

Chapter 5 – ‘Diversity and Transformation in South African Organisations’ considers the gender based context within which South African women leaders are operating and approaches to managing diversity and transformation processes within South African organisations.

Chapter 6 – ‘Research Methodology’ outlines the research method adopted for the study in addressing the research objectives.

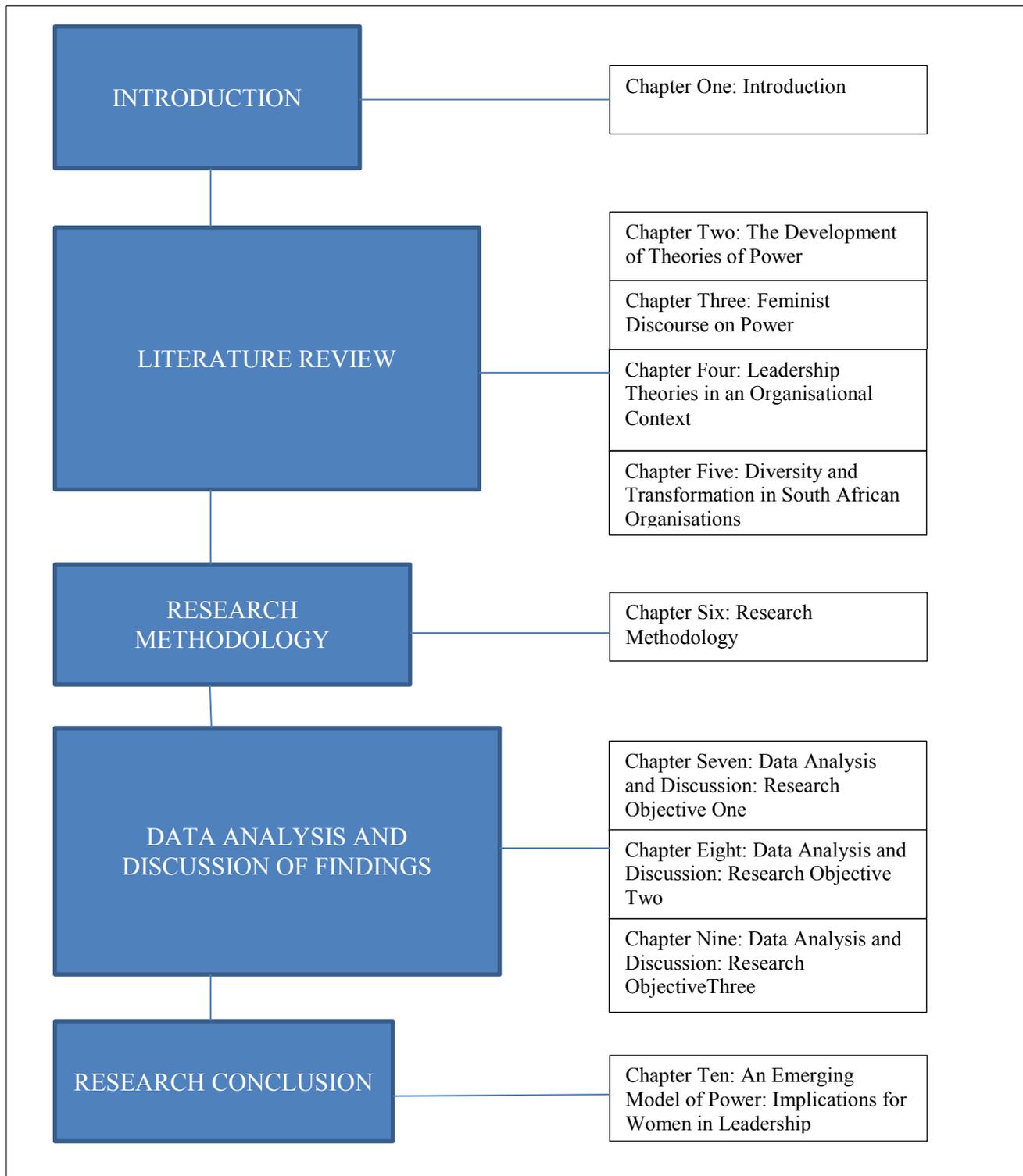
Chapter 7 – ‘Data Analysis and Discussion: Research Objective One’ focusses on discourses related to the participant’s development of their awareness of power (Research Objective 1)

Chapter 8 – ‘Data Analysis and Discussion: Research Objective Two’ focusses on discourses relating to the way in which women leaders discuss their power in relation to their current leadership role (Research Objective 2)

Chapter 9 – ‘Data Analysis and Discussion: Research Objective Three’ focusses on discourses relating to the way women leaders claim to sustain their power in the future (Research Objective 3)

Chapter 10 – ‘An Emerging Model of Power: Implications for Women Leaders’ integrates and consolidates the findings from the research into a model of how women’s discourse on power has emerged through the research process; its implications for women in leadership; organisational transformation; and feminist research in management.

Figure 1 over the page gives a visual schematic overview of these chapters.



**Figure 1. Chapter Overview**

## **1.9 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the need for the studying in addressing the challenges experienced in ensuring that women are meaningfully represented in leadership positions in organisations and are able to use their power effectively in positively influencing organisational development.

The purpose of the study is to understand and analyse the emerging models of power amongst South African business women leaders by establishing:

- how they experienced and developed their awareness of power;
- how they view and use power in their leadership role; and
- how they challenge or perpetuate the leadership culture of an organisation

The following chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 discuss the literature surveyed in relation to the subject of women and leadership and power

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEORIES ON POWER

#### 2.1 Introduction

The literature reviewed in the following four chapters highlight the development of theories in the following subjects:

- Chapter Two: The Development of Theories Of Power
- Chapter Three: Feminist Discourse on Power
- Chapter Four: Leadership Theories in an Organisational Context
- Chapter Five: Diversity and Transformation in South African Organisations

Within these chapters seminal literature and theories, which may be outdated, have been discussed as well as more recent literature which have progressed or challenged these theories. The aim of this approach is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the way in which knowledge has been constructed within these various subject areas.

Traditionally, definitions of power have focussed on the control of highly valued resources (Anderson *et al.* 2012) resulting in social status in a community. However, most theorists today concur that power is a relational term and refers to the act of one agency affecting the attitudes of another (Miller 1987; Ricken 2006; Shriberg & Shriberg 2005). The capacity to influence others is recognised as a psychological state which can operate independently of control over resources or social position (Anderson *et al.* 2012; Bugental & Lewis 1999; Galinsky, Gruenfeld & Magee 2003). But many do not see power purely as a means to control the attitudes and actions of another, but also an inner attribute which develops as the result of socialisation, personal work and psychological development (Assagioli 1993; Jung 1960, 1964; Rogers 1969; Schuitevoerder 2000). Hagberg (1994: xxi) states that “real power is about people becoming more than externally powerful; it is about people becoming internally powerful...from introspection, personal struggles and the gradual evolution of life purpose, and from accepting and valuing yourself.” Most recent studies of social and psychological power include spirituality as a source of power generated by knowing our

deepest selves and values (Ashmos & Duchon 2000; Gibbons 2000; Goltz 2011; Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson 2003).

This chapter sketches the full range of interpretations of power which continue to be positioned through a multitude of lenses depending on the context it is being studied in. Since this is a study of power within the context of organisations, this chapter will track the development of theories of power through the two key schools of thought which have grappled with the concept over time, namely philosophy and psychology, as well as the adaptation and application of these theories within an organisational setting.

The discussion is presented under the following headings:

2.1 Philosophical Theories of Power

2.2 Psychological Theories of Power

2.3 Organisational Power Theories

## **2.2 Philosophical Theories of Power**

Any study of power needs to recognise that it is a contextual, as well as a relational term. The well-known French philosopher and one of the most prominent authors on power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Michel Foucault (in Gordon 1980) influenced the belief that “power is not an institution, a structure, or a certain force with which people are endowed; it is the name given to a complex strategic relation in a given society” (Gordon 1980: 236 ). For this reason it is important to track the historical evolution of thinking on power that leads us to current interpretations of the concept, how it is perceived by men and women and applied in organisations today. While the theories in the literature are critical in informing this understanding, Hook’s (2007: 77) observation that “power is best grasped in exercised, practiced and interacted forms” provides the rationale for research of this nature which analyses women leaders’ models of power in relation to their experiences in practice as leaders within organisations. Equally important is an understanding of the feminist movement and their interpretations of power which will be dealt with in chapter three of this thesis.

The history of western philosophical thought consistently reflects the struggles with the issues of power and how it ought to be divested (Schuitevoerder 2000: 48). For centuries male philosophers have debated the question of who ought to have power and how this power should be used. These philosophical debates in themselves represent the earliest discourse on power in their assertion of ideas with the potential to influence societal thinking. These theories reflect the evolution of focus on the political structures of power as a static phenomenon of either 'having power' or 'not having power' towards a more systemic interpretation which focuses on power relations.

### **2.2.1 Pre 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophical Theories of Power**

In as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, Plato's writings focused on creating possible city states with 'good' leaders who would rule these states and could achieve 'human perfection' and avoid corruption by being trained (Schuitevoerder 2000). Writing in the same century, Aristotle developed Plato's notion further by introducing the concept of a 'regime' of leaders providing governance to citizens (Pangle 2011). He believed that a good and virtuous 'regime' could only be created by those who had achieved excellence, which was limited to adult Greek men and the upper and educated classes. Plato's writing structurally and culturally entrenched the notion of patriarchal power in western tradition.

By the 16<sup>th</sup> century the focus on wisdom and education had changed due to the Renaissance in Europe. In western philosophy, power and the maintenance of power for its own sake was emphasised. Philosophers like Machiavelli (Sonatan 2012) viewed man as inherently selfish and believed that 'he' needed to subjugate himself to a State which should provide the political framework for society to progress. Hobbes (Bejan 2010) writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century continued the focus on man's inability to limit his desires on power. This is what Hobbes attributed to the condition of perpetual warfare, insecurity and violence in society. The solution he posed was a sovereign figure who rules as all powerful to maintain peace against human nature for an ordered society, even if their decisions are unjust (Bejan 2010).

In a collection of his writings, edited by Masters and Kelly (1994), the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Rousseau challenged this philosophy with his focus on man's pursuit of

happiness as opposed to virtue within the context of an emerging commercial society (Jennings 2007). He believed that man's natural state is superior to the civilised state and that it was more valuable to express rather than repress individual expressions of power and will. Rousseau's writings gave rise to the will of the people being more important than the authority of a philosopher, king, church or a monumental figure. This was a move away from western philosophical views on power being the sole domain of an authority figure and emphasised the value of democracy as a form of governance (Masters & Kelly 1994).

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the historian, Karl Marx's theories were gaining prominence in their exploration of the effects of class and class oppression on society (Marx & Engels 1948). Marx reviewed the history of man's acquisition of individual freedom and observed a class structure in society resulting in an unequal system of power and limitations on individual freedom (Mezhuev 2012). In this system, the elite govern the masses because they own and control the means of production, while the masses become alienated, impoverished and oppressed. Those who own the means of production have power and effectively control the lives and destinies of those who do not have ownership. Marx envisioned the revolution of the proletariat, where the state systems involved in the oppression of the masses are seized and a new system is developed where power and ownership would be equally distributed to all (Marx & Engels 1948). Marx's theory was a radical response to the structures of power and focussed on resisting oppression through structural change in society. While historically philosophies of power were mostly concerned with the structural notion of where power resides, more recent philosophies aimed at deconstructing power and understanding it as a more fluid, complex and relational concept.

### **2.2.2 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophical Theories of Power**

The philosophical debates which had characterised previous centuries began to expand out of the political and collective realm in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries into a deeper understanding of individual human motivation. These studies began to incorporate perspectives from the study of sociology and psychology, which will be discussed in more depth in a review of the literature in section 2.3 of this chapter. Philosophers, like Adler (1937) attempted to bridge the individual and collective focus

of power in the development of his theories which contain aspects of social psychology (Adler 1937; Rietveld 2004). Initially he argued that social pressures influence the development of the individual and that human nature is aggressive and power hungry. His later works reviewed this claim, describing humanity as striving for perfection, with individuals who are prepared to subordinate private gains for a more perfect society (Adler 1973). Levinas, a French philosopher in the early 1900's, followed this thinking by describing ethical actions which do not abandon autonomy and individuality, but describes autonomy as based on our responsibility to others (Rietveld 2004). Kunz (1998: 34) described Levinas approach to power as one in which "the self finds its meaning, not centred in itself as an ego establishing individual freedom and power, but as a self, facing the other person who calls the self out of its centre to be ethically responsible. The freedom and power of the self is invested in the self by and for the needs of others".

The focus on the individual's relationship with society is central to philosopher Max Weber's definition of power which, according to Ricken (2006) has been widely accepted and assumed extraordinary significance as a core definition in sociology. Weber's definition of power is quoted by Ricken (2006: 545) as meaning "every chance of pushing through one's own will within a social relationship even against resistance, no matter what the basis of this chance is". The famous German philosopher, Nietzsche developed a controversial theory in the late 1800's in which power was regarded as the ultimate motivation of all behaviour and ultimately refined his views to suggest that what human beings ultimately yearn for is the experience of power (Soll 2012: 124). The interpretation of Nietzsche's theories continues to be debated amongst philosophers today. Some claim his views to suggest power as the will to demonstrate capacity rather than the will to domination and control (Reginster in Soll 2012), while others believe that these are merely attempts to sanitise Nietzsche and downplay his acceptance of objectionable and amoral exercises of power (Soll 2012). Psychological theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which will be discussed in 2.3 of this chapter, also grappled with the notion of the individual's attraction to power, while the philosophical discourse continued to grapple with the power dynamics between the individual and groups in society as a whole.

Foucault's writings in the 1970's and 1980's contributed significantly to the theories of power and transformed perspectives of numerous disciplines in the human sciences (Hook 2007: ix). Foucault regarded punishment bestowed by monarchies as a violent and demonstrative form of power which was limited in its efficacy due its discontinuous nature and risk of insurrection of the masses (Hook 2007). He contrasted two forms of power, namely sovereign power which relies on past precedents and entrenches authority through rituals dating back to its origins, with disciplinary power which is future oriented, using graduated practices to achieve desirable behaviours (Taylor 2012). In terms of the State, this approach recognised that power could be distributed more widely amongst jurists and law makers than the monarchy alone. Foucault related this theory not only to the system of government, but also to the family system where he contentiously highlighted the sovereign power of the father in patriarchal western family structures (Taylor 2012).

In expanding the discourse on power, Foucault raised awareness of the power of discourse itself, in his assertion that the 'author' of ideas is one of the procedures used to control the production of discourse in society (Foucault 1982). He believed that power is "in everything, rather than includes everything, and that one kind of power does not exist" (Foucault 1982: 217). His writings represent a postmodern approach which will be elaborated on further in chapter 5 of this thesis as it provides the theoretical framework for the methodology used in this study of power. Foucault's approach to power challenged the Marxist philosophy in claiming that promoting the rights of 'the people' could still lead to coercive disciplinary mechanisms of power, resulting in continued abuse of power. Foucault (1980: 119) suggests looking at how power operates in a new way, where power might be considered as "a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression". Instead of being coercive and repressive, these networks could forward the freedom for the individual to choose for themselves who they are and what they would like to do. Foucault's power-theoretical approach is considered with ambivalence today (Ricken 2006). On the one hand it is often perceived as a valuable shift of perspective, while on the other it is considered an over-exertion of the concept of power itself (Ricken 2006).

A more complex and systemic view of power was highlighted by the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, Kunz (1998) in his focus on those who were typically regarded as weak in society. He expanded the notion of power other than a form of repression, by stating that, “it is the very power of the powerful that is the source of their weakness, and the very weakness of the weak that is the source of their power” (Kunz 1998: 15). For Kunz the weak are powerful since they draw attention to their suffering through their situation, they historically have gathered into powerful forces and overthrown established powers and they often hold deep wisdom. Similarly tyrants are vulnerable to being overthrown, to limiting themselves through fear of loss of their power. Kunz (1998: 23) states that when we are driven by power our bondage is “first our addiction to the sweet taste of power itself; second to the stuff that power can purchase; third, our habitual blindness to the needs of others; and finally our fear of losing the power to exercise more power. Obsessive fear, compulsive needs and sensory indulgence are the weakness of power.”

The social scientist, Wartenberg (1992), continued this challenge by commenting on a study by Agee and Evans (1939) of African American tenant farmers and their landlord ‘masters’ in Alabama, USA. Wartenberg (1992: xviii) noted that “Power relationships do not involve the simple, unidirectional hierarchy that the language of domination or oppression suggests...a theory of power needs to recognise that those who are oppressed have different means of eluding the control of their masters that can even, in certain contexts, function as the basis for overthrowing them.” Wartenberg recognised the influence the noble attitudes of the oppressed tenant farmers had on their onlookers, establishing a form of power which transcended their ‘masters’. In so doing, he recognised the complexity of power dynamics and the need to view them more broadly than between two major players. The debate on power continues, however, in establishing whether this transcendent form of power is indeed a form of power without the freedom to act (Kramer 2003).

Currently the power debate recognises that ‘power over’ represents a classic definition of power as a social relationship, whereas ‘power to’ represents the capacity of an individual or group of individuals to perform certain actions or bring about a result (Morriss 2002; Pansardi 2012). Allsobrook (2012: 60) attributes the popular concept of ‘freedom without power’ which dominates contemporary debates in western political

philosophy to “a reification of social agency that mystifies human capacities and achievements”. Pansardi (2012) agrees that power and freedom are not mutually exclusive concepts since the freedom to act depends on the way in which ‘power over’ is exercised. Likewise ‘power to’ may not necessarily presuppose that the freedom to act exists at that particular time. This debate has implications for our notions of democracy since equal distribution of power as a realisation of a democratic ideal does not necessarily ensure the growth of individual freedom. Rather it is the equal distribution of freedom among different individuals in society that promotes democratic ideals (Pansardi 2012). This is particularly pertinent in relation to the power discourse within South Africa today given the political transition to democracy in 1994 and the current debate on what constitutes ‘freedom’ in a democratic South Africa. The following section will briefly explore the current philosophical and political debates on power within the South African context, which influences the South African business transformation agenda.

### **2.2.3 Power Discourse within the South African Context**

In its transformation to democracy, the South African social and political context has been both influenced by the western traditions described above, as well as the Marxist and African nationalist philosophies which have formed the thinking of political players in South African politics, such as the African National Congress, Communist Party and the Trade Union movement (Feinstein 2007; Pampallis 1991; Ramphela 2008). Since this is a study of South African leaders, it is important to note that our construction of power, particularly within a capitalist business system, may well stem from the hegemonic discourse inherited, largely from the western studies in the humanities (Van Rensburg 2007). However, interpretations of this by leaders and political theorists commenting on South Africa’s transition to democracy have entered these debates. While an analysis of the political power landscape in South Africa is beyond the scope of this thesis, contemporary views on how power is viewed in South Africa today do need to be considered.

A historical account of the development of the African National Congress (ANC) is another complex topic, but there is general agreement that it began as an elitist party of educated African nationalists whose western education influenced their political

outlook, before growing into a mass movement which adopted a more populist approach with a socialist focus stemming from its relationship with the SACP and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) (Pampallis 1991). Today, the ANC bases its power on a mass party model, which according to Darracq (2008) is characterised by the entry of the mass of people, especially the working class, into the political sphere born out of universal suffrage. However, the ideology of ‘people’s power’ which provided the impetus for radical participatory processes in the struggle against apartheid during the 1980’s has been lost, according to Sinwell (2011) in the transition to democracy. He argues that the mainstreaming of participatory democracy and conception of citizenship practices by the ANC government in South Africa today no longer enables citizens to engage with fundamental processes of power since they are “invited spaces of participation” (Sinwell 2011: 372). The concept of citizenship focuses on individual freedom and responsibility and limits the possibility of changing the status quo through engagement with power based institutions. At a conference held by the South African Sociological Association (SASA) in 2009 to explore citizenship, power and identity in South Africa, and how they are related to societal cohesion and conflict, a number of articles presenting their discussions of citizenship suggested that knowledge production itself in South Africa limits participation (Park 2010). Through language, texts and forums ‘borders’ are constructed which dictate particular ways of writing and determine which subjects are worthy of study (Park 2010). The contributors to the conference suggest that hierarchies of inclusion limit South African’s ability to hear the multitude of voices which should be represented in a democracy (Park 2010).

Despite the ANC’s shift in focus to individual freedom through citizenship, Hamilton (2011) argues that South Africans are not yet free, especially if freedom is defined as the power which combines “my ability to determine what I will do and my power to do it” (Hamilton 2011: 355). In his political analysis of the current state of South Africa, he concludes that South Africans have yet to experience the power associated with freedom, which entails the ability to go against existing norms and power relations and have meaningful control over economic and political representatives (Hamilton 2011). According to Forde (2011) the fact that peace became more important than justice in South Africa’s transition to democracy has resulted in transformation of political power without the necessary social and economic shifts of power, resulting in the uprising of political opportunists, like Julius Malema, who feed off the economically

disenfranchised in order to create a powerful space of their own. Allsobrook (2012) comments that in South Africa today, the impoverished youth are led to believe that they are free already and, therefore responsible for their own misfortune.

The current debates on power within the South African political context and the power battles within the parties themselves, highlight the multitude of voices, both past and present, that influence the power discourse which leaders in South Africa are exposed to today (Hamilton 2011; Park 2010; Ramphela 2012; Sinwell 2011; Van Rensburg 2007). While the western philosophical schools of thought have grappled with the phenomena as an overt concept over centuries and the debates have been extrapolated into the arena of politics and sociology, central to these debates remains the tension between perspectives on the power and freedom of an individual and the complexity of power within groups and social or political systems. However what cannot be disputed is that while South Africa is free from legislated oppression and has a constitution designed to prevent domination, significant power imbalances remain entrenched in South African society and fundamental economic and social change is yet to be achieved (Allsobrook 2012). The notion of personal freedom and the power to act is intrinsically linked to the philosophical debate, but is studied more extensively at an individual level in the field of psychology, which is the next area of focus in this chapter.

### **2.3 Psychological Interpretations of Power**

As philosophical theories of power expanded from a purely structural analysis of where power was vested into a more complex study of the relational quality of power, they began to make an important contribution to the body of knowledge of psychology as a discipline which explores human motivation, behaviour and relations (Kets de Vries 2006). Not only does the study of psychology focus on interpersonal relations but also the intra-personal relations between the various psychological identities of an individual and for this reason it offers an important and unique perspective to studies of power (Cilliers 2012). The various schools of psychological thought each add a significant understanding of power and its impact on human relations and the individual psyche.

In the analysis of these schools of thought, three key streams have influenced interpretations of power. They are:

- Depth Psychology and the Psychoanalytic Tradition
- The Humanistic Perspective and Positive Psychology
- Process Oriented Psychology and Perspectives on Power

### **2.3.1 Depth Psychology and the Psychoanalytic Tradition**

Depth Psychology is the term given to the traditions of psychology that focus on the unconscious as central to an understanding of human behaviour (Gabriel 1999). Sigmund Freud, writing in the early 1900's, is one of the best-known and earliest contributors to this tradition of psychology and was the founder of the practice of psychoanalysis. In spite of the many changes which psychoanalysis has undergone since its beginnings, the unconscious remains at the heart of its argument (Gabriel 1999; Neumann 1969; Wertheimer 2012). "The essential claim of depth psychology is that there is much about being human that remains hidden to the eye, indeed, even to thought at all" (Craig 2007: 317). Freud sought to make the study of the subconscious the object of serious, empirically testable investigations using psychoanalysis. However, he recognised the limitations of this approach due to the intangible nature of his study (Craig 2007). Scientific rigour and objectivity were key considerations amongst behavioural psychologists, who unlike depth psychologists, focussed on responses to external stimuli, rather than the individual's relationship with their inner selves.

Behaviourism is a loose description of the number of approaches extending from the Russian psychologist, Pavlov (1927) who trained dogs to salivate to unrelated stimuli, to therapists who use cognitive therapy, modelling and models of association and reinforcement to understand and assist learning and behavioural change (Hayes 2012). Based on his research and applications in behavioural psychology, Skinner (1948) wrote the novel 'Walden Two' which described an ideal world of freedom and justice in which one authority figure makes the decisions about who is able and less able. Like Plato, writing two thousand years before him, Skinner believed that an authority figure

is necessary, even though they carry immense responsibility. Behavioural psychology developed into an objective, experimental branch of science with its goal being the prediction and control of behaviour (Hayes 2012). The main contribution of these behavioural researchers was the introduction of learning through association or what is known as classical conditioning. The assumption of these theorists is that people need to adapt to the mainstream, dominant culture (Schuitevoerder 2000). This school of psychology was criticised for limiting its principles to those drawn from animal behaviour (Hayes 2012) and thus did little to challenge the notions of power or explore the dynamics in human power relations. However, recent debates within the field of behavioural psychology emphasise the parallels between the behavioural paradigm and the humanistic tradition which will be discussed in section 2.3.2 of this chapter (Adams 2012; Hayes 2012; Wertheimer 2012). Adams argues that the field of psychology has focussed too critically on the divisions amongst various schools of thought rather than the similarities in working towards the betterment of the human condition (Adams 2012: 8).

Despite their similarities however, the fundamental assumptions of the behavioural model are quite different from many of the depth psychologists such as Freud and Jung writing in the early 1900's, who were more interested in the individuation process and the inner psyche of the individual rather than the process of controlling behaviour. The challenge of depth psychologists is not the adaptation of the individual to society, but the loss of connection of individuals to their deeper instinct and inner selves resulting in problematic behaviour in societies and the misdirected use of both personal and social power. Carl Jung describes this in his book, "Two Essays on Analytical Psychology", (Jung 1953: 4) writing shortly after the First World War, when he says, "The great problems of humanity were never yet solved by general laws, but only through regeneration of the attitudes of individuals. If ever there was a time when self-reflection was the absolutely necessary and only right thing, it is now, in our present catastrophic epoch."

Focusing inward and on individuals as a way of addressing and resolving personal and collective problems of power has continued to be an important approach to dealing with the issues of abuse of power. This approach is reflected in the field of psychoanalysis which was established by Freud and further developed by Jung (McGuire 1974). Many

theorists have applied a psychoanalytic approach to organisations and the study of leadership and power motivations. Debate within the field of psychoanalysis and depth psychology generated varied perspectives on the subject by those within the field, including Freud and Jung. Possibly the most significant contributions to our shifting understanding of approaches to power within the field of psychoanalysis and its applications to organisations within this school of tradition were:

- The ego and its extreme manifestation in narcissistic behaviour (Craig 2007; Freud 1933; Gabriel 1999; McGuire 1974);
- The need for human identification with authority figures (Berne 1965; Freud 1933; Kets de Vries 2006);
- Jung's writings on the soul and the transformational power of introspection (Compton 2005; Davis 2011; Hayes 2012; Jung 1953, 1960, 1964).

These approaches to power from within the field of psychoanalysis are discussed in more detail in the following sub-topics.

### **2.3.1.1 Narcissism**

Unlike Jung, Freud rejected the view of the unconscious as a spiritual or mystical entity, but as a collection of ideas and desires which have undergone repression, which cannot be accessed through introspection (Gabriel 1999). These unconscious ideas, according to Freud, cannot be discussed freely because powerful psychic forces keep them repressed. Repression, which was seen by Freud as a form of mental defence against threatening psychic phenomena, lies at the heart of Freudian and depth psychology. Repressed ideas do not disappear without a trace from a person's life, but they seek expression in various subterfuges. Psychoanalysis developed as a powerful process of yielding extraordinary insights into human motivation; but also a potentially dangerous process, which when abused could lead to false and harmful conclusions (Craig 2007; Gabriel 1999).

Psychoanalysis developed as an approach that focuses on how and when different wishes and desires manifest themselves and how they are acted upon or are defended against (Gabriel 1999). It focuses on mental conflict, its origins, which may lie in clashing desires or in the demands made by external reality and its resolutions which

may lead to fresh conflicts, symptoms and inhibitions. Freud (1933) defined an aspect of the human psyche as the 'id', a large area of the psyche inaccessible to consciousness, untainted by culture or civilization, with no sense of time or reason, whose influence on our lives can only be studied indirectly. Another side to the psyche was termed the 'ego' which represented the principle of mental functioning, of reality testing; the seat of consciousness; and the mental agency specifically responsible for the sense of unity and integrity which we each experience as the 'self'. Freud believed that various defence mechanisms protect the ego. The analysis of ego's defence mechanisms forms the central focus of a tradition in depth psychology, also known as ego psychology which has flourished in the western world since the 1930s (Gabriel 1999). In examining the repressed and unconscious impulses of the psyche and its defence of the ego, Freud focused on the pathology of the power hungry individual through the study of narcissism.

The concept of narcissism has been described by Gabriel (1999) as shifting the ego from its position as agent of adaptation to agent of self-gratification. Narcissism in its extreme form is recorded as a mental disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2000, published by the American Psychiatric Association (Kets de Vries 2006). In this form it manifests in delusional behaviour pertaining to grandiosity, need for admiration and interpersonal exploitation. Kets de Vries (2006) describes the development of narcissism and how it is intricately connected with leadership and power. Narcissism develops from children trying to retain the bliss and perfection of early infantile days by grandiose, exhibitionist images of themselves and all powerful, idealised images of their parents (Gabriel 1999). In limited doses, these developments are natural and necessary for self-esteem and self-identity. In moderate doses creativity and self-confidence can't exist without it. Kets de Vries (2006) refers to constructive narcissism which reflects healthy good parenting and reactive narcissism which develops in people who are wounded and often translates into vindictive and vengeful behaviour by people in positions of power.

In a research study on narcissism, Gebauer, Sedikidis, Verplanken and Maio (2012) reveal a model of narcissism which distinguishes between agentic-narcissists, whose self-satisfying motives focus on individual power gains and superior individual achievements and communal narcissists whose motives are the same, but achieved in a

communal setting. Whether the focus is on narcissistic gratification through means of individualistic focus or communal focus on appearing to have the interests of others at heart, both of these forms of narcissism represents a significant vehicle through which power can be exercised (Gebauer *et al.* 2012). Research also suggests that authoritarianism on a massive scale and narcissism in individual leaders provided the psychological underpinning of fascism (Kets de Vries 2006). Narcissism, according to Kets de Vries (2006), leads to the shadow side of leadership that are recognisable in dictators such as Hitler, Stalin, Hussein, Milosevic, Kim Jong II and Mugabe. But he believes while narcissism exists in the workplace, it is far less recognisable due to the limits typically placed on authority.

### **2.3.1.2 Authority Role Models**

Another significant contribution of Freud's (1933) work on the 'ego' was to understand how and why individuals identify with authority figures. Identification was used to describe a psychological process in which the ego seeks to identify an aspect of itself with some other object in keeping with the constraints of social acceptability. These 'rules' of society were seen as being the province of the super-ego and were really rules of conduct demanded by parents and other significant authority figures. According to depth psychologists all relationships are coloured by our previous relationships and we act towards people in the present as if they are people in our past (Kets de Vries 2006). The first social relationships to be observed with the family are instrumental in developing attitudes later in life. How we deal with power and authority in the past determines how we will deal with it in our later relationships.

Eric Berne (1965) developed the notion further that early relationships inform adult behaviour in his popular Transactional Analysis Theory. The theory highlights the significance of the influence of the parental authority figure on an individual's inner world and outward behaviour. Berne's theory focuses on the transactions between individuals and how they generate transitions between ego states. The natural power relation between the adult and child ego state will manifest as a result of an individual's own response to their past experiences of authority and is often used in understanding the concept of role models in adult development relating to early childhood authority figures (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich 2006a). Identification with authority has a

bearing on how power models are constructed within leadership roles which will be dealt with further in section 2.4.1.1 on positional power in organisations. Another contribution of psychoanalysis which is often applied within an organisational context is Jung's notion of transformational power.

### **2.3.1.3 Jung's Transformative Power**

According to Davis (2011) Jung's fascination with and acknowledgement of various ancient eastern spiritual traditions fostered his belief in the self-liberating power of introspection as well as the transformative power of mythic imagery and the reconciliation of opposites. In his exploration of reconciling opposites he also became interested in the notion of the union of male and female aspects stemming from the eastern philosophy of the Yin and the Yang (Jung 1953). While 'female' psychology had been the subject of many of Freud's writing, Jung's integrative approach was a novel contribution to understanding the psychology of men and women (Hayes 2012).

Jung's fascination with human liberation, began a movement in psychology that shifted psychoanalysis from a diagnostic 'illness' model towards a model that tried to understand the human process of transformation and development. Jung's exploration of eastern religions, such as Buddhism, led him to see the psyche as a primary instrument through which individuals can transcend their ego. Spiritual awakening was described in Jungian terms as a process that would lead the individual "from the ego to the self, from the unconscious to consciousness, from the personal to the transpersonal, the holy, the realization that the macrocosm is being mirrored in the microcosm of the human psyche" (Moacanin 2003: 67). According to Hayes (2012) the engagement of Jung with eastern philosophy and religion made a profound and lasting contribution to the dialogue between eastern and western schools of thought, while addressing many of contemporary culture's most pressing issues. Foremost among these in his mind was the need for humanity to return to its' inner roots, to reconnect with the powerful and ever present psychic structures that guide the process of human development. Jung's approach incorporated new perspectives on power into a field which had typically been dominated by western scientific thought. It also contributed to the Humanistic field of psychology which furthered the emphasis on personal power through human wellbeing and growth (Compton 2005).

### **2.3.2 The Humanistic Perspective and Positive Psychology**

The humanistic school of psychology gained prominence in the 1960's as a result of frustration with studies in psychoanalysis and behaviourism (Bühler & Massarik 1968; Wertheimer 2012). This school of thought believed that psychoanalysis was too narrow and needed to include a broader focus on wisdom, growth, joy, peak experiences and authenticity as well as the usual focus on fear, aggression and the changing of habits (Antonovsky 1987; Carr 2004; Compton 2005; Lewis 2011; Seligman 2003; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson 2005; Strümpfer 2005). Humanistic psychology was critical of both the behavioural and psychoanalytic schools of thought as being too deterministic and not supportive of free will (Bandura 2006; Baumeister 2008; Dennett 2003; Wegner 2002). The humanistic school emphasises the human capacity to rise above restrictions and operate at a meta-level of awareness, making it possible to overcome both behavioural conditioning and unconscious forces of psychoanalysis. Health and social sciences had traditionally functioned in a pathogenic paradigm, whereas humanist psychologists believed that normal functioning cannot be understood solely within a problem-oriented framework (Carr 2004; Galanter 2007; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Warner 2006).

Out of the humanistic school emerged a stream of thought, now known as positive psychology or psychofortology, which was grounded in existential thought dealing with the very essence of being human (Carr 2004; Lewis 2011; Seligman 2003; Strümpfer 2005). The term fortology means strong in Latin, and is an antonym for pathology. This paradigm of fortology originates from studies into the ancient world. Walsch (2001: 83) commented that “Researchers of positive psychology have a practical and theoretical goldmine of more than 2000 years of exploration of positive psychology on which to draw.” Apart from the Indian Buddhist and Yoga traditions he was referring to, there are also those from Chinese medicine and from ancient Greece and Rome. While this stream of psychology has roots in traditional psychology, it has gained a great deal of momentum in this decade. Commenting on the problem-oriented framework, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000: 5) believed that “psychologists have scant knowledge of what makes life worth living”. According to positive psychologists what was lacking was the knowledge of what kind of families produce children who flourish, what leads

to well-being in individuals and communities and what work settings lead to the greatest work satisfaction (Antonovsky 1974; Carr 2004; Csikszentmihalyi 2010; Lewis 2011; Seligman 2006). This focus on strength, resilience and positive attributes shifted the pathological focus on power as a defence in the narcissistic and authoritarian personality to an inner strength and positive quality of agency and resilience (Strümpfer 2005).

The following themes are discussed in this section as significant contributions to the development of the humanistic tradition of positive psychology:

- Health and Spiritual Well-Being
- Agency and Self-Actualisation
- Strength and Resilience
- Self-Determination and Locus of Control

### **2.3.2.1 Health and Spiritual Well-Being**

The roots of positive psychology can be found in ancient traditions from cultures within and outside of the western world, as well as weaving a thread through many of the prominent psychological theories (Haidt 2006; Strümpfer 2005). Traditionally and still today, Chinese healers view their role as increasing natural resistance and resilience. Health care and the origins of social science can be related back to the worshipping of the goddess-daughter, god of medicine, Asklepios in Greece (Haidt 2006). Hope and wellness are also components of the Arabic and Indian psychologies of Buddhism and Yoga (Moacanin 2003). There are two complementary characteristics which are of interest to fortology according to James (1987). The one can be described as “a new zest which adds itself like a gift to life and takes the form either of lyrical enchantment or of appeal to earnestness and heroism” (James 1987: 435) and “an assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and, in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affections” (James 1987: 435). Heroism in this context relates to a type of transcendent power which can be associated with spirituality, unrelated to external power or religious dominance and authority.

James' (1987) writings about mysticism was akin to psychologists' Maslow's (1954) 'peak' and Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) 'flow' experience. Even in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, psychiatrist, Assagioli (1993) developed a field of thought known as psychosynthesis, which argued that the predominant pathogenic orientation of psychology ignores health and giftedness. Psychosynthesis explores personality unfoldment and identification, as well as discovery and alignment with a spiritual function. This was much like Jung's (1958, 1960) conclusions, based on his exploration of Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism and yoga, that mental health reflected a balance between elements of personality and an openness to messages from a deeper level of the unconscious, resulting in a growing sense of spirituality (Compton 2001).

Goltz (2011) describes this sense of spiritual well-being within a social and organisational dynamic as a form of spiritual power, which is characterised by being independent of external resources, unable to be depleted as it is spent and stimulates transcendent responses. She defines spiritual power as "a potential for influencing others based on resources generated by the power-holder" (Goltz 2011: 345). The descriptors she uses to recognise spiritual power is an ability to decrease anxiety and promote calmness; a flexibility in responding to situations; non-judgemental acceptance; and compassion and empathy for others. Goltz (2011) asserts that there is little empirical research into spiritual power and that models of social power typically ignore this dimension despite the observation that spiritual practices and power is exercised in social and organisational contexts. While Goltz is correct in identifying this as an under researched area of power with significant gaps in the literature, spiritual power has been incorporated into certain models of social power. The Process Work Model of Power developed by Arnold Mindell (1995) which will be discussed in section 2.3.4 of this chapter, focusses specifically on spiritual power as one of its dimensions.

Goltz's (2011) challenge to organisational theorists to include spiritual power in their models is an important one, however, and confirms the need for research of this nature to look beyond the mainstream definitions in order to recognise other aspects of power. While knowing our deepest selves and values is recognised in some of the literature on workplace spirituality (Ashmos & Duchon 2000; Gibbons 2000; Milliman *et al.* 2003), Goltz extends the need not only to acknowledge models of spiritual power, but to try and

understand how this spirituality arises and can be used within an organisational context. How power is enacted as opposed to simply experienced becomes a key area of consideration and was a motivator for the studies into agency and actualisation that form part of the body of knowledge on Positive Psychology.

### **2.3.2.2 Agency and Self-Actualisation**

In the 1930's German psychologist, Bühler (1971) focused on goal attainment and later incorporated Goldstein's (1995) concept of self-actualisation (Strümpfer 2005) through bringing values to materialization. Her focus was on the human aptitude for creative expansion, resulting in the tendency to advance in and change the world creatively. Bühler explored the concept of intentionality which "implies both a person's focusing on a subject which means or signifies something to him as well as a person directing himself towards this subject" (Bühler 1971: 380). This gave rise to a new focus on the power of agency and the creative capacity of individuals to influence their environment and change their circumstances. Bühler's theories of intentionality did not propose goal attainment at all costs. She described healthy individuals as having interpersonal relations where adaptation of one's own behaviour to that of others takes place since self-restraint is required to belong. Her interpretation of happiness in a healthy individual was "the fulfilment of the most essential wishes to have found sufficient realization in successful creative accomplishments to have helped and not been detrimental to the welfare of others and to have found 'peace of mind' in the resultant order" (Bühler 1959: 579).

Bakan (1966) supports this notion in his essay on psychology and religion where he introduced constructs of agency and communion. Agency is manifested in self-protection, self-assertion, self-expansion and the urge to master; whereas communion manifests as being with others, a lack of separation and non-contractual co-operation. Bakan believed that the positive effects on physical and psychological well-being depend on agency being mitigated by communion. The influence of the need for communion can be seen as self-regulating in relation to agency, preventing self-interests from allowing the violation of others. This is in contrast with the pathological narcissistic tendencies, where the need for relationship stems from an inappropriate desire for attention based on deficiencies from the past (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003).

In contrast to the narcissistic deficit model, Goldstein's theory of self-actualisation in the 1930's as a dimension of positive psychology described the healthy organism as a dynamic entity with built-in energy that it has the potential to be actualized over time (Strümpfer 2005). In the 1950's Maslow (1954) and Rogers (1969) expanded these ideas by exploring growth needs and self-actualisation. Maslow (1954) believed that self-actualisation did not describe a state but an on-going process of development (Compton 2005). He coined the phrase 'low ceiling psychology' in which biological needs for survival are emphasized over the need to experience beauty and order. He considered mystical experiences, transcendent ecstasy or peak experiences as the ultimate forms of self-actualisation. In his model of the hierarchy of human needs, self-actualisation could be regarded as the ultimate form of inner power through peace within. This is similar to the form of spiritual power discussed in the previous section and has also been described by many authors, drawing from eastern terminology, as 'personal mastery' (Dhiman 2011).

Rogers (1961, 1969) assumed that individuals have an innate need to develop their potential but often lose touch with these impulses and deny their experience of self to gain acceptance from others (Compton 2005; Strümpfer 2005; Warner 2009). He described the 'fully functioning person' as someone who "achieves their full potential by being open to experience; living existentially; and trusting in their own 'gut' feelings" (Compton 2005: 159). More recent person-centred and experiential research into self and agency also includes an understanding of existential freedom such that a person might choose to stand against socially approved outcomes as a form of psychological strength, rather than failure (Elliott 2002; Warner 2009). The concept of psychological strength is dealt with in the next section of this chapter, as well as the resilience to withstand challenges that may have a negative impact on the path to self-actualisation and agency.

### **2.3.2.3 Strength and Resilience**

The strength and resilience to deal with difficult circumstances and overcome them provided another area of study in positive psychology and another facet to the notion of internal versus external power (Carr 2004; Lewis 2011; Strümpfer 2005). Antonovsky

(1974: 79) introduced the concept of resistance resources that led to formulation of the core construct of his model known as a sense of coherence. This was made up of comprehensibility - the ability to make sense of situations; manageability – the view that situations are under control of oneself or legitimate others; and meaningfulness – in which we recognise welcome challenges which are worth engaging with and investing oneself in. He believed that individuals mitigate life stress by the quality of cognitive and emotional appraisal of the stimuli that impacts on them. This translates into the sense of being able to manage situations that are within their personal control, as well as being able to trust resources controlled by others and therefore embrace a collectivist culture. This study of mental strength was termed “salutogenesis” by Antonovsky in 1987 (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003: 9) and became recognised as an important tenet in positive psychology (Carr 2004; Lewis 2011; Seligman *et al.* 2005; Strümpfer 2005). A commonly used definition of resilience is the “capacity of individuals to face adverse circumstances without being debilitated; it does not mean they never experience distress” (Zimmerman & Arunkumar 1994: 4).

While having a perceived level of personal control was considered positive in being able to manage situations in Antonovsky’s model, the ability to release control has also been cited as a contributing factor to the inner strength and resilience needed to overcome challenging circumstances. As early as the 1940’s Frankl’s (1964, 1967) writings explored this phenomenon by studying human experience under inhuman circumstances. He observed individuals will to meaning and concept of self-transcendence by studying the people who survived in the Nazi concentration camps. According to Frankl, these people were able to survive because they accepted that some portion of their existence was not under their control. Frankl observed their search for ways of acquitting themselves and the search for meaning in their suffering. He concluded that striving to find overarching meaning and purpose in one’s life was the primary motivational force that enabled them to endure these extreme conditions. This concept has been developed further within the field of positive psychology by a number of theorists who identify purpose and meaning as being positively associated with psychological well-being and agency (Lewis 2011; Seligman 2006; Seligman *et al.* 2005; Steger & Dik 2010).

Aspinwall and Staudinger (2003) debate whether the study of human strength has to do with personality characteristics or the processes involved in exhibiting mental strength and resilience. They conclude that it is the interplay between dispositions and particular situations that are important and that human strengths may “primarily lie in the ability to flexibly apply as many different resources and skills as necessary to solve a problem or work towards a goal” (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003: 13). They also highlight the importance of studying the unconscious nature of human strengths by recognising that while dealing with difficult situations, with increasing levels of skill and knowledge individuals’ reactions and behaviours tend to become more automated and intuitive.

More recent studies into the field of resilience have acknowledged both automaticity of response, as well as variability in response, which is sometimes described as ‘flexibility’ or ‘agility’ (Adams 2012; Neuringer & Jensen 2010). This raises the challenge in researching the experience of power as an internal strength as something which may be automatic and therefore difficult for an individual to recognise as well as something which does not necessarily generate a standard pattern of response (Kolar 2011). It is for this reason that Liebenberg and Ungar (2009) recommend a future focus for resilience research as centred on “discursive negotiation and culturally-specific interpretation” (Kolar 2011). The recognition of complexity associated with understanding the phenomena of strength and resilience in studies into positive psychology can equally be applied to the study of power. The culturally specific context which gives rise to interpretations of the phenomena can possibly be best understood through the discursive text of those contributing to the study and the way in which they navigate these discussions. It is for this reason that this study has adopted discourse analysis as a methodology which will be discussed further in chapter 5 on methodology. Most of the recent research into resilience concludes that it is the interplay between various social contexts and between other individual psychological characteristics that enable the process of overcoming adversity (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003; Kolar 2011). Two important positive psychology characteristics which influence this process and give rise to an internal sense of power are self-acceptance and personal growth.

#### 2.3.2.4 Self-Acceptance and Personal Growth

Aspinwall and Staudinger (2003: 277) explain that this self-acceptance is “not narcissistic self-love or superficial self-esteem, but a deep form of self-regard built on awareness of one’s positive and negative attributes.” Even early psychologists such as Jung (1953, 1960, 1964) recognised that coming to accept one’s failings is an important feature of individuation. While Erikson (in Erikson, Homburger, Irving, Heider & Gardiner 1959) agreed that the ego retains integrity by coming to peace with the victories and disappointments of one’s past life (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003: 277).

The more recent positive psychology theories have developed this understanding of self-acceptance into a personal growth category which has a multitude of dimensions. Strümpfer (2005) observes that there was a peak in the concepts related to self-acceptance and personal growth from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Ironically, in his opinion, these became popularised as a narcissistic, ‘dig-thy-self’ approach (Strümpfer 2005). The personal growth field has expanded more recently with a focus on an “active and intentional desire to grow as a person” (Weigold, Porfeli & Weigold 2013: 1) and relates to the intentional processes of recognising behaviours that an individual would like to change; knowing when one is ready to change; planning for that change; and engaging in change behaviours based on that plan (Weigold *et al.* 2013). This focus on self-acceptance and personal growth incorporates the dimensions of agency and self-actualisation, as discussed in section 2.3.2.2 of this chapter. Strümpfer (2005) notes that most psychologists in the individualistic culture of the West have put much greater emphasis on this element of psychological development than on the side of social connectedness.

However, more recently this has been identified as an area which is underemphasised and under-researched. Reis, Collins and Berscheid (2000) highlight the need for, relationship science through investigation of the relationship context in which most significant human behaviors are evident and develop. Similarly, in Ryff and Singer’s (2000) account for the study of interpersonal flourishing, they assert that this is an area that demands more research and attention. In understanding fortology’s contribution to individual psychology and the many dimensions of internal power that it suggests, studies in interdependence would significantly contribute to theories on the power

relations between individuals. The development of this realm of psychology is likely to intersect with and draw from organisational behaviour theories, which add to our understanding of power dynamics between groups and individuals, as opposed to the internal struggles and motivations related to power located within the individual. The study of positive relations and interdependence has begun to gain momentum, particularly within the application of positive psychology to organisational contexts (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn 2003; Cameron 2009; Lewis 2011). Lewis (2011), however, cautions that applying positive psychology to organisations is a relatively young field of study with the ever-present danger of over-eager interpretations of preliminary results. While these studies into organisational flourishing may reveal new insights into mitigating negative power dynamics within organisations, unless there is a specific focus on personal and interpersonal power within the field of positive psychology, these concepts will remain largely misunderstood. At present they are mostly loosely associated with other characteristics of positive psychology such as health and spiritual well-being; agency and self-actualisation; strength and resilience and self-acceptance and personal-growth as discussed in the previous sections. A model which does focus on both interpersonal and personal power relations and is applied in practice at an individual, organisational and societal level, is the process oriented psychology model of power.

### **2.3.3 Process Oriented Psychology**

In the survey of the recent literature there are few studies which have examined personal power empirically or as a dedicated study, particularly within an organisational context. Current scholars who examine the psychological effects of power have linked it to the characteristics of positive psychology in that it leads to a more positive sense of efficacy; a more assertive approach to the world; a higher self-esteem and improved physical health and longevity (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo & Ickovics 2000; Keltner, Gruenfeld & Anderson 2003; Marmot 2004). With this resurgence of interest in the study of power and the commonly held assumption that the subjective sense of power influences thought, feeling and action directly, Anderson *et al.* (2012) claim that it is critical that it becomes an area of rigorous research. Drawing from the humanistic tradition of psychology, a field of psychology known as Process Oriented Psychology was developed by Arnold Mindell in the 1980's which incorporates an explicit model of

power into both its theory and practice (Mindell 1995; Mindell 2008). Over the years Mindell's work has focussed on and developed in the area of practice through the Process Work Institute and its members, including his wife Amy Mindell, building on the foundations of his academic school of theory.

Process work is distinct from most forms of psychology in that it has a fluid format, emphasising awareness and following the process of individuals or groups, rather than trying to achieve a specific state or desired behaviour (Mindell 2008; Schuitevoerder 2000). In working with groups, process oriented psychology is similar to the practice of Gestalt (Van Tonder 2008) which recognises the spontaneous ways in which people organise themselves and the various roles within groups. Some of these roles may include authority figures, oppressors and the oppressed which are not static, but forever changing, evolving and transforming (Mindell 1995; Mindell 2008). Essential to the work is an understanding of power relations in a group.

It has been established that determining the power a person has depends on a complex interplay of psychological and social factors. Process work follows the manifestation and dissipation of power similar to the way in which Foucault (1982) was more interested in addressing power through its effect, rather than trying to create a different form of power (Schuitevoerder 2000). Due to the broad nature of power, it is both objective and subjective and can be experienced totally differently by those who have it and those who are subjected to it. Anderson *et al.*'s (2012) study of personal power clarifies the claim that a personal sense of power is organised within specific relationships and group contexts. Anderson, Spataro and Flynn (2008) acknowledge that personal attributes that lead to power differ across social contexts. The process work model of power is a useful one in understanding women and their perceptions of power since it recognises the contextual nature of power as a relationship specific construct, it accommodates the subjective experience of those who have not had power traditionally and acknowledges the dynamic shifts of power in relationship. The dimensions of this model, namely social, psychological and spiritual power, have therefore provided a framework for the understanding of personal power in this research study.

### **2.3.3.1 Process Oriented Psychology Power Model**

In order to understand power more deeply, Arnold Mindell (1995) developed a model to explore the privileges or 'rank' that lay claim to power. This model has become a seminal theory in the application of process oriented psychology to group facilitation (Mindell 2008). It provides the framework for process oriented facilitators to transform group interactions into democratic dialogue which promotes awareness and openness to people at any level of interaction (Mindell 2008). The theoretical and practical application of process work is not intended to eliminate rank since these are societal norms which form the basis of spontaneous and institutionalised social organisation. However the training of process oriented facilitators is aimed at developing an awareness of rank and using it consciously for the benefit of others (Newton 2013; Mindell 2008)

The privileges Mindell highlighted in this model are held in relation to one another and carry rank that he defined as "the sum of a person's privilege" (Mindell 1995: 28). He viewed this rank as "conscious or unconscious, social or personal ability, arising from culture, community support, personal or psychological or spiritual power" (Mindell 1995: 42). Depending on your position relative to others you might have higher or lower rank on an attribute. Rank is not always earned but may be a product of inheritance and the value bestowed on a privilege by our culture or community. If rank is prevalent in one area, individuals tend to rely on that and not develop it into other areas (Schuitevoerder 2000). In exploring the intellectual map of group processes, Fiske (2012) claims that holding rank makes people alert to and effective in achieving their own goals and prone to objectifying and stereotyping others. Individuals internalise rank as they develop relationships with those around them, from childhood throughout their life, and these become the the rules of social engagement (Collett 2007). The various forms of rank and their interplay create a complex matrix. In order to understand rank more deeply, Mindell (1995) differentiated rank into three categories, namely social, psychological and spiritual.

### **a) Social Rank**

This form of rank is the ranking bestowed by the culture and society we live in. It embraces the value system as well as the biases and prejudices of the mainstream society and bestows more privileges to some and less to others (Mindell 1995). In western societies these privileges include aspects such as race, gender, education, income, class and age (Mindell 2008; Schuitevoerder 2000). According to Fiske (2012), social status affects respect and includes envy and admiration upward, but also contempt and pity downward (Fiske 2012). The envy up can be vengeful or aspirant, just as contempt and pity are, respectively, negative or positive forms of scorn directed downward. The way in which personal power is subjectively perceived by both the holder of rank, as well as those in relationship with them is a complex area of study and poorly understood (Anderson *et al.* 2012). What is evident from Mindell's model and more recent studies on personal power is that the way in which power is conceptualised is both context specific, relationally dependent and evokes strong emotions (Fiske 2012).

### **b) Psychological Rank**

Psychological rank occurs when you have developed internal resources and abilities so that you have greater personal comfort and ease in addressing challenging situations. This is a similar concept to those expressed in the field of positive psychology, such as resilience and self-actualisation (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003; Strümpfer 2005). The development of these resources might arise from personal psychological work where a greater familiarity with self occurs or with difficult life challenges (Mindell 2008). Psychological rank might also arise out of learning skills to deal with having lower social rank and managing the world in this condition (Schuitevoerder 2000) Since the gendered social structure guides men's and women's experiences (Fiske 2012), this is the reason why women may have a tendency to develop this form of power more naturally than men, given their social 'rank' in relation to men in patriarchal societies.

A potential abuse of psychological rank is manipulation (Schuitevoerder 2001). Manipulation is defined as "deliberately influencing or controlling the behaviour of others to one's own advantage by using charm, persuasion, seduction, deceit, guilt induction, provocation or coercion" (Mandal & Kocur 2013). This relies on significantly sophisticated psychological skills but with detrimental effect and is often

negatively associated with a female stereotype (Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009; Wilson 2004). The manipulative application of psychological rank assumes an asymmetrical power struggle, where competition exists resulting from dependence and potential exploitation of each party (Fiske 2012). The corollary to the competitive power struggle which manifests through psychological rank, is the more symmetrical co-operative model where power is perceived as mutual and psychological skills are directed towards collaboration (Fiske 2012). This recognises the interdependent nature of healthy psychological functioning and is an area which is gaining attention in research but remains largely under-researched, as discussed in the section on positive psychology (Lewis 2011).

### **c) Spiritual Rank**

Goltz' (2011) claim that models of social power have typically excluded spirituality as a source of power fails to recognise the contribution of Mindell's (1995) power model to individual and organisational social-psychological processes. What Goltz (2011) accurately claims is that by failing to acknowledge spiritual power, models of power miss an important dynamic in organisations. Mindell's (1995: 62) definition of spiritual rank is that it "comes from a relationship to something divine or transcendent". It can occur naturally, through personal or spiritual training, or may arise as a result of having lesser social and psychological rank. It does not necessarily arise from religious practice or training, but rather from a connection to a divine or transcendental state which creates a detachment and experience of freedom outside of the events of ordinary life (Schuitevoerder 2000). Spiritual rank is also described in some of the literature as identifying with a greater purpose or significance over and above the mundane issues of every-day life (Anderson & Shafer 2005; Nicholson 2012). Anderson & Shafer (2005) describe this as the alignment of behaviour with the soul and deeper value systems. This is similar to Goltz's (2011) description of spiritual power discussed in the previous section (2.3.2.1) of this chapter. The instrumental use of spiritual power to control others is at complete odds with the proposed concept of spiritual power and represents an abuse of power (Goltz 2011; Gross 2010; Mindell 1995; Schuitevoerder 2000). In fact Goltz claims that spiritual power holders will exhibit a decreased use of intentional power as their spiritual power increases (Goltz 2011).

In using this model of power, process work is interested not only in individual work but also in the development of groups, cultures and societies. In this way it is a theory as well as a practice that traverses both western and eastern cultures as well as the fields of individual and group psychology and transformation of society. In their practice of working with international groups, such as the United Nations, process oriented psychologists have tried to deal with issues of global conflict in the world based on an awareness of power dimensions and applying a process approach to diversity (Mindell 1995; Mindell 2008; Schuitevoerder 2000). This is another reason why the process model of power lends itself to current studies of women's issues in its philosophical underpinnings of deep democracy (Mindell 2008; Newton 2013). The model recognises the assumptions and perceptions that are held by the majority as a way of constructing a consensual reality, as well as an emerging reality which is less accessible and often indicated in the more subtle communication processes of individuals and groups (Mindell 2008). It is intended to be a transformative model, nurturing both external and inner relationship with the multitude of identities which make up individuals, thereby cultivating a form of deep democracy within one's own psyche (Newton 2013). The concept of multiple identities will be discussed further in the Chapter 3 on the feminist discourse of power. Process oriented psychology and process work is an established and growing field of practice which enables facilitators to work with power dynamics within an organisational context and is therefore also an appropriate and applied model for this research study. The study of power within an organisational context is the next focus area of this chapter.

#### **2.4 Power in an Organisational Context**

As with the subject of power both from a philosophical and psychological tradition, the body of theory for studying organisations is vast and has expanded with changes in perspectives relating to assumptions of historical eras. These assumptions have to do with the way human nature is viewed and affects the vantage point from which power is studied. Contributors in the field of organisational theory (Goulding 2000; Hatch & Cunliffe 2013; Hatch & Schultz 1997;; Morgan 1997; Takala 1999; Van Tonder 2008) have noted that in parallel with developments within the field of individual psychology, organisational theories have developed along the following lines:

- In the early 1900's theorists assumed that humans were primarily concerned with power and wealth which led them to develop ideas that focused on economic incentives in organisation of human endeavours (Durkheim 1893 in Hatch & Cunliffe 2013; Marx & Engels 1948; Taylor 1911; Weber 1968)
- During the period of modernism, which gained momentum in the 1960's and 1970's, humans were believed to be primarily rational animals and the theories of that period often reflected scientific equations for predicting human behaviour. Organisations were viewed as rational, predictable and controllable (French & Raven 1959; Lawrence & Lorsch 1967; Mintzberg 1979).
- Shifts began to occur from general modernist approaches to systems theory which drew from engineering principles and the design of machinery, towards an open systems theory, inspired by nature and living organisms (Katz & Kahn 1978; Von Bertalanffy 1950 in Hatch & Cunliffe 2013). This has been developed by theorists, such as into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, who have advanced the view of humans as interdependent parts of a complex open system and therefore highly influenced by their environment (Nadler 1998; Senge 1994; Stacey 2003; Van Tonder 2008).
- The symbolic-interpretive perspective had earlier origins, but gained ground in organisational theory in the 1980's. This approach assumes that humans use and create symbols to make meaning in societies, cultures and organisations. The focus on organisational culture and how it is created and sustained became a significant focus of these theorists (Berger and Luckman 1966; Schein 1985; Smircich 1983)
- Postmodernist theories are based on the assumption that human experience is fragmented which leads to a diversity of interpretations and theories within this framework (Hatch & Schultz 1997). These theorists draw from a wide range of disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and language studies in generating theories. Postmodernism values intuition as part of the process of knowledge building alongside cognitive processes (Van Tonder 2008).

The differences in these assumptions help to explain how organisation theorists have shifted from a nearly total reliance on economics and engineering of the modern era to the postmodern interest in human biology, sociology, cultural anthropology, cybernetics

and psychology amongst others (Van Tonder 2008). Takala (1999: 360) describes the shift from modernism to postmodernism as “a new paradigm of thought” recognising the deep seated and fundamental changes of global proportions that has affected every aspect of contemporary life. This shift to a new economic order where flexible skills and knowledge is valued over manual labour has brought with it a questioning of rationality and an ushering in of the need to understand and develop skills in the regulation of emotions (Burman 2011; Morini 2007). The role of psychology has become even more prominent within organisations in a postmodern context, as has the trend towards multi-disciplinary approaches to organisational issues (Burman 2011). Many postmodern organisational theorists recognise that theory is value laden and needs to be deconstructed to reveal the way in which dominant knowledge is created and protects the status quo (Hatch *et al.* 2013). However many postmodernists believe deconstruction is part of the process of liberation towards reconstructing organisations that are free from hegemonic ways of thinking. These theorists are often interested in incorporating the marginalised voices to recreate values and assumptions (Burman 2011; Hatch *et al.* 2013). The postmodern approach to academic research will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6 on research methodology since it provides the overall framework for this research. In this section the organisational theories which have emerged out of the postmodern era are explored as significant in the study of business leadership.

One of the characteristics of the postmodern context is the rapid and continuous nature of change as a response to the fluidity of the information age as opposed to the consistency of the industrial age of the modern era (Hatch *et al.* 2013; Lewis 2011; Nordstrom & Ridderstrale 2000; Valerio 2009; Van Tonder 2008; Wheatley 1994). As organisational theorists continue to understand the postmodern setting in which organisations operate, the impact of issues such as globalisation, rapidly changing technology and environmental questions of sustainability will influence and challenge theories so that they will remain under continuous review (Lewis 2011). The multi-disciplinary approach of organisational development practitioners in understanding and facilitating change in organisations has become increasingly prevalent in business today, drawing on a field of practice which has its foundations in the discipline of psychology (Van Tonder 2008). While this study is designed to make a critical

contribution to studies on gender, leadership and power, the research also makes a contribution to the practice of organisational development.

Organisational development (OD) grew in the 1960s as a practice which facilitated planned change around people and organisational needs. The practice drew from theories in the field of sociology, psychology, education, economics and management. In practice it focussed on how to manage or resolve real organisational problems and enhance how individuals intervene in human systems through group processes (French & Bell 1999; French, Bell & Zawacki 2005; Lewin 1936). The idea that seemingly disconnected disciplines, including those that focused on human behaviour could have something in common reflected the radical movement from the defined disciplines of modernism to the more integrated approach of postmodernism. While there is a large body of literature on organisational theory, change and development, empirical research into practices in this field remain underdeveloped. Van Tonder (2008) argues that the reason for this is that much of the published literature is based on practitioners' anecdotal experiences, lacks any form of measurement, and is often criticised for superficial treatment of complex phenomenon. Indeed organisational transformation efforts are often deemed to fail due to an underemphasis of the 'art' of change, which involves communicating with and mobilising people, in favour of the 'science' of change which involves the analytical and measurable approach of driving results (Schroeder 2013). The final point raises the debate which exists between quantitative and qualitative research which will be dealt with in the methodology chapter of this thesis and highlights the tension between the positivist paradigm of management studies and the interpretive paradigm of feminist studies (Silverman 2010). The feminist perspective on power is dealt with in a separate chapter (Chapter 3) as a significant perspective in the post-modern approach to this research.

The organisational perspectives on power that are discussed in the following section reflect a summary of key theories that have been documented in the body of literature on organisational theory. They span the modernist, symbolic and postmodern perspectives on organisations.

2.4.1 The Behavioural Paradigm Applied to Organisations and Power

2.4.2 A Systems Theory Approach to Organisations and Power

2.4.3 Organisational Culture and Power

2.4.4 The Psychodynamic Approach to Organisations and Power

### **2.4.1 Organisations and Power: The Behavioural Paradigm**

The behavioural perspective on organisations draws from the behavioural school of psychology as discussed earlier in section 2.3 of this chapter and reflects a modernist paradigm where science is used to understand how to predict and control human behaviour. In an organisational context, the behavioural perspective assumes that leadership is central to performance and organisational outcomes (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn 2005; Van Tonder 2008) It relates the concept of cause and effect to the study of human motivation and is concerned with outcomes rather than the process in organisations (Kets de Vries 2011; Wheatley 2004). From an organisational behavioural perspective, power is defined as “the ability to get someone to do something you want done or the ability to make things happen in the way that you want them to” (Schermerhorn *et al.* 2005: 266) The popular management theorist, Mintzberg (1979: 4) takes a behavioural approach when he defines power as “the capacity to affect organisational outcomes”. The behavioural paradigm, therefore, focuses on the power of control over the behaviour of others, stemming from both the authority of position within an organisation and the ability to influence through more personal forms of power. With the focus on quantitative and measurement in research, management studies into human behaviour in organisations are typically informed by this paradigm (Van Tonder 2008; Wheatley 2004).

In the context of an organisation, legitimate claim to power is exercised through the authority bestowed on an individual as part of the organisational structures. Organisational behavioural theorists (Forsyth 2010; French & Raven 1959; Hinkin &

Schriesheim 1989; Schermerhorn *et al.* 2005; Weber in Gerth & Mills, 2009) claim that for an organisational system to operate effectively it is essential to have clarity in matters of authority, leadership and organisational structure. Authority in an organisational context refers to the right to make ultimate decisions that are binding on others. Formal authority is a quality that is derived from a leader's role in the system and is exercised on others' behalf (Morgan 1997; Shriberg *et al.* 2005). Different organisations may have varying levels of authority, where it comes from and who claims ownership of the organisation. This is in contrast to a systemic view of self-organisation where leadership will emerge within a system regardless of formally imposed structures (Wheatley 1994).

Authority and power are often used interchangeably in an organisational context and lead to confusion. Organisational theorists believe that unlike authority, power is an attribute of persons rather than roles, and it can arise from both internal and external sources (Kets de Vries 2006). Externally, power in an organisational context comes from what the individual controls, such as resources, privileges, promotions, and from the sanctions one can impose on others (Morgan 1997; Robbins 1993). It also derives from one's social and political connections (Robbins 1993). Internally it comes from individuals' knowledge and presence, strength of personality; how powerful they feel within their role and how they therefore present themselves to others (Shriberg, Shriberg & Kumari 2005). Rosenbach and Taylor (2006: 120) try to clarify by describing power within organisations as taking three forms, namely "power over" which represents the traditional view of domination; "power to" which enhances other people's power; and "power from" being able to resist the power of others unwanted demands.

What the behaviourists, such as Mintzberg (1979) fail to highlight is the fact that authority has characteristics which, according to psycho-dynamic theorists like Schein (1985) and Kets de Vries (2011), may be unconscious and therefore not available to be worked with. These characteristics include the internal psychological process which affects the nature and extent to which those in charge assume authority. According to Morgan (1997) formalised authority only becomes effective when it is legitimised by those from below. Awareness of levels of authority and its limitations is regarded as critical in early management theory (French & Raven 1959; Weber in Gerth *et al.*

2009). However, acting on authority would largely depend on the nature of leaders' relationships with authority figures which would mainly stem from past and childhood experiences of authority (Gabriel 1999; Kets de Vries 2006). Inner world figures can be critical in the process of self-doubt and the inability to assume power in relations. Equally they can become sources of omnipotence, making for an inflated picture of the self which can translate into authoritative attitudes and behaviour reflecting an abusive approach to power, such as those discussed in relation to narcissism previously this chapter (section 2.3.1.1) and in corporate bullying later in the chapter (section 2.4.5)

While authority is more specifically related to the rights held by individual to make decisions that affect others, power is broader in its source and application, even within institutions. Many of the early and traditional models of power within organisations reflect the source of power as stemming from knowledge and expertise, financial resources, position and title and relationships (French & Raven 1962; Yukl 1999). These classical models describe the following forms of power and their effects on others (Shriberg *et al.* 2005: 118):

- Resource power which is held through control or access to resources and rewards is a short-lived form of power as long as those resources are within the individual's control
- Positional power is held through title and status in the organisation and in itself will generate compliance from followers, but not necessarily commitment
- Coercive power is held through threats and manipulative behaviour and usually results in inspiring resistance
- Expert power is held through knowledge and expertise and can be abused in organisation if it is not shared amongst colleagues and team members
- Relational power is held through networks of relationships and the people that you know and is built on trust and the length of history of the relationship. An example of this in many of our patriarchal institutions would be what is regarded as the 'old boy's network'
- Referent power is based on relationship and the way in which power is gained through attracting others to their style and charisma. For example a teacher who dresses in an interesting way, may inspire students to do the same.

When coupled with authority, these forms of power are usually overt in the organisation and connect with the formal structures of the organisation. They are similar in nature and the way they accord rank to the elements of social power identified in Mindell's (1995) model of power as discussed in section 2.3.3 of this chapter. However, in his model, social rank relates to power within society as a whole, rather than being organisation specific. These societal elements of power may also exist at a covert level within the organisation and reflect informal power dynamics which are not linked to the formal structures of authority. In its dynamic representation of power, Mindell's (1995) model adopts a systemic approach to the phenomenon as it focuses on the relationship between power and society as a whole.

#### **2.4.2 Organisations and Power: A Systems Theory Approach**

Systems thinking is a philosophy that has guided organisational theory and the practice of organisational development over the past forty years. A postmodern systems theory views organisations as open systems which are in active exchange with their environments (French & Bell 1999; French, Bell & Zawacki 2005; Katz *et al.* 1978; Nadler 1998; Stacey 2003; Van Tonder 2008). The open systems approach to organisations reflects the interconnected nature of the parts of the system and how they relate to the whole. In an open system the boundaries between its parts and the environment are believed to be permeable. According to the theory, disruptions in one part of the system will affect other parts of the system and incongruence between parts of the system can lead to poor functioning of the entire system (French & Bell 1999; Nadler 1998; Senge 1994). Systems theory is typically used in organisational development and change initiatives and does not necessarily focus explicitly on power (French, Bell & Zawacki 2005). However, systems models such as the one proposed by Nadler (1998) recognise the power structures of both the formal organisational arrangements, such as the hierarchies, as well as the informal arrangements, such as the unacknowledged power relations.

Gestalt therapy, initiated by German psychologists Wertheimer, Kohler and Koffka (King 2009) in the 1920's had a specific focus on power within a systems thinking framework. Its main contribution to systems theory was the notion that individuals, when seeing an image of disconnected parts try to create something whole. In applying

this theory to groups, group therapists were interested in looking at power relations in the roles in the group system as a whole, rather than in the individuals themselves. Social scientist Kurt Lewin (1936) took this further in his work with management. He studied group behaviour, including racial prejudice and religion and authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire leadership styles for practical understanding of dynamics of oppression and freedom. Psychologists in the 1960's, such as Eric Trist (Trist, Higgin, Murray & Pollock 1963) and Wilfred Bion (in Van Tonder 2008) of the Tavistock clinic, developed a similar interest in group dynamics in its work with families, communities and organisations. The development of these practices emerged into the field which was eventually named Organisational Development in the 1960's which had in common a focus on facilitating change through the transformation of dynamics within and between groups (Beckhard & Schein 1992; Grievies 2000). The application of process oriented psychology to working with groups and their transformation through what Mindell (1995) termed Process Work is an example of a contemporary organisational development practice.

Another characteristic of systems thinking is the dynamic nature of the system itself and its' ability to learn and adapt from the feedback it receives (Morgan 1997; Senge 1994; Stacey 2003; Van Tonder 2008). This idea was developed by Senge (1994) in his conceptualisation of the learning organisation. Senge (1994: 89) proposed that "all systems follow certain common learning organisations principles, the nature of which are being discovered and articulated." This approach recognises that relations within a system, such as those relating to power, are both in a state of constant flux and continuously being reconstructed. Chaos and complexity theory continued this line of thinking when it entered the realm of systems thinking in the 1970's (Van Tonder 2008). These theories drew from the natural sciences and the science of chaos that was offered as an alternative to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Newtonian view of the world (Kauffman 1993; Kelly 1994; Langton 1992; Wheatley 1994). The image of organisations as self-organising, adaptive systems which 'react' rather than 'obey' altered the commonly held perspective of power in organisations as something static and ordered to something more fluid and unpredictable. Another significant contribution of chaos theory to systems thinking was the notion that an organisational system is organic and that mutual adaptation can occur between the individual and the organisation (Wheatley 2005). In introducing diverse elements into the organisational system, Wheatley

explains that unpredictable adaptation will occur within the system itself. This is an important assumption when exploring whether women leaders are influencing the experience of power within an organisation and will be dealt with further in the chapter on diversity (Chapter 5).

As chaos and complexity theory gained prominence in the field of systems thinking, social scientists and researchers began to integrate these concepts into the theories relating to organisations and organisational change within organisations (Beeson & Davis 2000; Marion & Bacon 2000; Van Tonder 2008). Arising from these theories, the emergent nature of change has been applied to complex organisational systems by many theorists (Cilliers 2010; Stacey 2003). Emergence describes the appearance of system level patterns, properties or phenomena that result from collective interaction of components of the system (Van Tonder 2008). McMillan (2004: 32) describes emergence as “a phenomenon of the process of evolving, of adapting and transforming spontaneously and intuitively to changing circumstances and finding new ways of being”. Within an organisational context emergence includes how the dominant logic of an organisation, such as the ideology, values and identity of the organisation arises without necessarily being able to analyse specific parts of the system (Strümpfer 2007; Van Tonder 2008). The concept of emergence is a helpful way of understanding how dominant discourses develop and evolve in organisations and society. In understanding women leader’s power discourse in the South African business context, this study is interested in the ‘emerging models of power’ which recognises the evolutionary nature of the process of constructing power as well as the collective process resulting from individuals’ interaction with the organisational system and broader society. This collective process has been studied by several organisational theorists within the framework of understanding the emergent culture of an organisation (Kets de Vries 2006; Van Tonder 2008) which is discussed in the following section.

### **2.4.3 Organisational Culture and Power**

Organisational culture can be defined as what holds the organisation together and encourages employees not only to perform well but also to feel committed to the organisation (Wilderom, Berg & Peter 2004). The mutual relationship between the individual and the system was the focus of the symbolic-interpretive approach to

organisational theory which was a significant focus of studies conducted by social psychologist, Schein (1985). Schein's (1985) theory became an influential model of organisational culture where he identified three levels of culture: on the surface there are artefacts, underneath artefacts lie values and behavioural norms, and at the deepest level lie core beliefs and assumptions. These assumptions and beliefs represent the unquestioned truths that penetrate every aspect of cultural life and colours all forms of experiences. More recently Fey and Denison (2003) confirmed that organisational culture is a multifaceted phenomenon, scoping from deeper layers like beliefs and assumptions to visible layers like structures and practices. McAdams and Pals (2006b: 11) describe culture as "the rich mix of meanings, practices and discourses about human life that prevail in a given group or society." According to Van Fleet and Griffin (2006: 702), "the organisation's culture develops over time and becomes a powerful force for shaping the behaviour of those in the organisation".

While organisational culture evolves from a myriad of sources, leaders are considered the most powerful determinant of organisational culture (Van Fleet & Griffin 2006). They set the tone of the organisation, define its values and norms and maintain a persona of what the organisation is like. What leaders pay attention to sends powerful messages throughout the organisation and has a major influence on individuals (Lok & Crawford 2000). However, while an organisational culture is shaped by its leaders, organisational theorists believe that it can also shape the behaviours of the leaders themselves (Brown & Thornborrow 1996; Elmore 2001; Kets de Vries 2006). In this study the culture of the organisation will have significant influence on the experience and way in which power is exercised by the leadership. Hofstede's (1993) work on national cultures recognised dimensions of culture that have often been applied to organisations, including power distance which refers to how power is distributed in an organisation. Another dimension he identified was the masculine and feminine, where masculine refers to the value placed on assertiveness and formal power, whereas feminine refers to the value placed on personal relations and concerns for others (DuBrin 1997; Hofstede 1993). Women who operate in 'masculine' or patriarchal cultures might consciously or unconsciously assimilate and perpetuate behaviours associated with this type of culture. Where women are actively engaged in trying to transform this type of culture, they may find significant obstacles, including the lack of critical mass of women leaders and the time it takes to change attitudes and behaviours

that are rooted not only in organisational norms, but societal norms as well. The unconscious processes of groups in organisations and the emerging culture and power dynamics arising within a system has been the focus of psychodynamic studies within organisations over the past seventy years.

#### **2.4.4 Organisations and Power: The Psychodynamic Approach**

The unconscious processes in group dynamics builds on the psychoanalytic tradition by applying it to the study of group phenomena in the workplace (Cilliers 2012; Gabriel 1999; Kets de Vries 2006). The contribution of this approach is in its emphasis on the complex emotional forces that shape group life, the unconscious wishes and desires that influence group processes and the delicate networks of relationships which individuals in the system form with one another (Kets de Vries 2006). These unconscious processes go beyond the formal structures and arrangements of authority in an institution and manifest in the form of defences, power relationships, collusion, envy and transference of emotion onto others (Cilliers 2012). There is debate as to whether a psychodynamic perspective is relevant in industry and organisations (Cilliers & Koortzen 2005). Behaviourist thinking argues that psychoanalysis does not belong in the workplace because it studies individual behaviour and focuses on abnormal behaviour and deals with the immeasurable issues such as the unconscious (Goldstein 2013). Whereas those applying a psychodynamic approach argue that it is necessary to understand the extraordinary and sometimes seemingly irrational behaviour in an organisation, as well as the deep meaning and motives behind this behaviour (Cilliers 2012).

Psychodynamic theorists such as Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) believe that a behavioural approach creates the impression that organisational behaviour is conscious, mechanistic, predictable and easy to understand. The three key premises on which a psychodynamic approach to organisations is based are: that there is hidden or unconscious patterns of behaviour underlying what individuals in organisations do; that human behaviour, however irrational, is usually a defence mechanism against complex and hidden emotions; and that individual behaviour plays out based on past life experiences from early childhood (Armstrong 2002; Gould, Stapley & Stein 2004; Kets de Vries 2006).

In the previous section on a systems approach to organisations, power is recognised as an unconscious process at an individual and group level, which will impact on conscious processes, such as formal authority, structures and goals of an organisation. A psychodynamic approach to organisations often incorporates the systemic paradigm, but typically focuses more closely on individual behaviour in groups, where individual's motivations need to be understood and analysed (Cilliers & Koortzen 2005; Gabriel 1999). French psychologist Gustave Le Bon (1960) was one of the earliest researchers to study groups (Gabriel 1999). At the heart of his theory lie two ideas: first, that the individual's mental processes are radically altered when they find themselves as a member of a crowd, sharing the emotional experiences of others; and secondly, that within crowds, emotional and unconscious forces predominate against the forces of reason. This has significance for the role of leadership in a group and the unconscious, emotional responses it may generate amongst followers.

Bion (1961), one of the most prominent contributors to the field of group dynamics developed Le Bon's theories further by studying the processes in small groups in the army during World War II and later at the Tavistock clinic (Gabriel 1999). He identified three basic assumptions to be studied in the individual (micro system), the group or division (meso-system) and the organisation (macro system). These assumptions were the concepts of dependency in groups which manifest in the group's need for an authority figure; the fight/flight dynamic in which individuals respond to the anxiety of organisational life; and pairing in which groups or individuals connect to other powerful groups or individuals to alleviate anxiety and isolation. These assumptions have been accepted as the cornerstones of the study of organisational dynamics (Cilliers 2010, 2012; Gabriel 1999).

The Tavistock method developed by Bion in the 1940's shifted how groups were viewed and instead of focusing on roles that individuals assume in work groups, he focused on the dynamics of leadership and authority relations in groups. Bion (1961) concluded that projective identification, a psychological process first introduced by developmental psychologist Klein (1946), is the essence of group experience and functions at the level of unconscious beliefs about the leader and other group identification (Gould *et al.* 2004). Projective identification in a group context describes the follower's propensity for evoking reactions in a leader that approximate to his or her

own internal experience. The emergent leader of a group, according to Bion (1961), is a creation of the group as a whole and corresponds directly with primitive fantasies that are projected onto the leader by group members. These may be idealisation of the leader and personal identification to the extent of merging with them or demonization of the leader and a wish to annihilate them (Gould *et al.* 2004). A major focus of the psychodynamic approach in the years that followed Bion's studies became the interaction of leaders and their followers and the power dynamics between them (Blasé & Blasé 2000; Cilliers 2010, 2012).

According to Gabriel (1999) the emotional needs of a group may drive them to seek strong identification with the leader to the point of idealisation of the leader. The emotional role of the leader becomes the transferred and projective target of the group's feelings ranging from dependency, fear, love to envy and rage (Stapley 2006). The psychodynamic perspective can help leaders appreciate how powerful feelings are unleashed in others and in themselves. Leaders play an essential role in the unconscious life of groups and become enmeshed in the group's emotional processes (Gabriel 1999). The powerful emotional dependency of a group on a leader is played out through the followers' fantasies of the leader which may include the way in which they care for them, their infallibility or their availability as a leader (Kets de Vries 2006).

The leader stands at the boundary between rational and non-rational decision making, in psychodynamic terms, between realities and fantasies (Gabriel 1999; Stapley 2006). They rely on their followers to engage in their dreams and visions to achieve organisational outcomes. Followers have a critical role in helping the leaders translate this vision into reality, but they can also become complicit in protecting leaders from this reality so that the faith in the vision is never threatened (Gabriel 1999). This is dangerous when leaders become trapped in delusions of grandeur and omnipotence and so absorbed with fantasy they lose touch with reality (Kets de Vries 2006; Blasé & Blasé 2000).

Emotional engagement with an organisation, according to Carroll (1998) depends not only on identification with the leader, but the belief that consenting to the fantasy will result in a satisfying and non-threatening order. Voronov and Vince (2012) emphasise the link between emotions and domination experienced within the 'field' of the

organisation. The 'field' of the organisation is defined by Gestalt therapists as "a web of relationships and exists in a context of even larger webs of relationships" (Yontef 1993). The organisational 'field' contributes to both reproducing and transforming the organisational order. In a psychodynamic study, exploring South African diversity dynamics, Pretorius, Cilliers and May (2012: 7) affirmed that "South African diversity dynamics is not a rational phenomenon and cannot be treated as one." In their study, they highlighted high levels of anxiety amongst participants from both genders and diverse races, which manifested unconsciously, around authority and the taking up of leadership roles. The emotional experiences associated with women leaders' construction of power in the interviews will have a bearing on the extent to which they engage in the transformation or perpetuation of existing organisational norms around the construct. The perpetuation of organisational norms where they are destructive, dysfunctional or even abusive, is the focus of more recent studies by organisational psychologists due to the common occurrence of corporate bullying and organisational corruption (Cilliers 2012).

#### **2.4.5 Power Abuse in Organisations**

Cilliers (2012) notes that corporate bullying has been reported on extensively in popular media and management journals and is growing as a field of academic research. Typically bullies in organisations are described as individuals or groups within elevated hierarchical positions who aggressively exercise and misuse power for personal gratification (Agervold 2007; Marais & Herman 1997). Cilliers' (2012) study on corporate bullying focuses on the dynamic between the bully and the victim in contrast to most of the research in the field which focuses on the personality traits of the bully. The findings reveal that organisational bullying is not only an individual psychological phenomenon, but a complex systemic phenomenon involving the interpersonal relationship between the victim and the bully (Cilliers 2012). Cilliers' (2012) study recommends that organisational psychologists understand bullying as a phenomenon at a macro level manifesting in unconscious roles of oppressor and victim. Samnani (2012) supports this recommendation in his study of the role of culture on workplace bullying. He concludes that cultures characterised by a high power-distance are more likely to condone acts of bullying. In the current study of women and power it is important to consider how abusive power manifests in organisations as an unconscious

and systemic process, particularly within systems which support dominant power structures, such as patriarchy.

Similarly, organisational corruption has been linked to social dominance theory which highlights the dynamic and systemic nature of the maintenance of organisational corruption (Rosenblatt 2012). Waite and Allen (2003: 294) note that “corruption may work in tandem with other forms of repression, such as racism, sexism and classism”. The findings of Rosenblatt’s (2012) study highlight that socially dominant groups are usually less aware of organisational corruption by feeling entitled to use power at the expense of others to maintain their dominant position. Members of subordinate groups may be less aware of corruption due to their motivation to support more powerful groups to sustain their self-worth and to preserve social order. The link between awareness and abuse of power refocuses the power debate on the interplay between social and structural dimensions of power, evident within hierarchies and social privileges, and power defined as an internal psychological and spiritual journey of raised self-awareness which should mitigate any form of abuse of power (Anderson *et al.* 2012; Ledwith 2009; Schuitevoerder 2000). It is this debate and the associated discourse around power which has been the focus of this chapter on the development of theories of power.

#### **2.4.6 Power Discourse in Organisations**

In tracing the development of theories on power from a philosophical, psychological and organisational perspective, the concept of Foucault’s (1982) ‘discourse’ is apparent in the way in which groups of theorists express a specific viewpoint based on the values they share. These ideas inform schools of thought which are then acted on in the field of practice. Since this is a postmodern study which uses discourse analysis as the research methodology, it is appropriate to draw attention to the explicit way in which language can construct power within an organisation. The specific process of discourse analysis will be discussed in more detail as part of the methodology chapter (Chapter 6).

DuBrin (1997) refers to a number of strategies that those in power use in their language to influence or gain control of others. These include the use of false statements and direct manipulation; threatening language; extensive criticism of others; demeaning

themselves to control others; using the name of others in authority to achieve their ends; using silence as a passive controlling measure; ingratiating talk; and using manipulative humour such as joking and kidding to achieve their desired outcome (Shriberg *et al.* 2005: 122). While this unconscious or conscious use of language may be used interpersonally in constructing power relations, they may also be used systemically by leaders resulting in types of language use becoming a cultural 'norm' (Schein 1985). Beelitz and Merkl-Davies (2012) claim that leaders of corporations construct corporate narratives to consolidate the interests of the corporation, rather than increasing its' accountability and transparency. In their study on 'CEO' speak Beelitz and Merkl-Davis (2012) reveal that CEOs not only shape the perceptions of stakeholders and society, but also create ideology which impacts on the way the world is run. In this way discourse is used by organisations to sustain relations of domination (Amernic & Craig 2006; Beelitz & Merkl-Davies 2012; Milne, Tregidga & Walton 2009).

Dominant articulations within organisations and of the business world in society not only have the effect of silencing and suppressing other voices (Laasonen, Fougère & Kourula 2012), they also have the effect of shaping identity (Hatch *et al.* 2013). An implication of discourse theory is that when people engage in a discourse their identity adapts to the community's use of language (Hatch *et al.* 2013). Shrivastava's (1995) observation that the language of modernist organisational theory is rooted in capitalist concerns about competition, markets and wealth, that is has reduced the natural environment to 'resources' available for organisational exploitation remains a challenge today (Eisenstein 2010). Feminist theorist Ashcraft (2001) also highlighted the tensions between traditional bureaucratic discourse and honest communication where emotion is able to be expressed. This is supported by current authors, such as Thory (2013) who comment on the gendered response to emotional regulation rather than free expression in masculine dominated business discourse. The effect of dominant discourse on women and feminist studies such as these which relate to them are explored further in chapter 3 on the feminist discourse around power.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Ricken (2006) cautions that a simple conceptual understanding of power is not possible since it cannot be explained independently of human interpretation and their preconceived assumptions. In order to recognise emerging models of power within a business context it is important to understand the way in which the prevalent discourse on power has developed which has been the focus of this chapter. Typically, business in South Africa and its institutions in general, have a colonial and patriarchal heritage (Darracq 2008; Hassim 2005). This heritage draws on the tradition of western thought around power, rooted in the study of philosophy and psychology and translated into an organisational context. The discussion of these traditions highlights the shift from a modernist to a postmodern perspective on power which understands the fragmented and diverse schools of thought relating to the phenomenon. It exposes the interplay between both the contextual dimension of power discourse experienced in society, as well as the deep psychological processes of power which range from abusive coercion through power to personal empowerment through positive processes such as self-actualisation and spiritual growth. The dynamic nature of power within and between individuals, groups and systems is evident in the body of academic literature on this vast topic.

The perspectives which have developed through this academic discourse become the lens through which power is studied, observed and experienced. These studies have traditionally emerged out of a system of patriarchy which is recognised as a power based system in itself (Dickerson 2013). It is therefore critical to understand the feminist perspective and how it has challenged and influenced traditional schools of thought on power and relates to the emerging models of power amongst the women being interviewed in this study. In its feminist approach within an organisational context, this study is unique in that it aims not only to deconstruct notions of power as they exist within the dominant philosophical and psychological discourse as described in this chapter, but also to reconstruct emerging models of power that women adopt. There are no known published empirical management studies in South Africa to date that have given business women leaders the opportunity to participate in the reconstruction of power in this way and which have incorporated feminist critiques of the prevailing discourse on power within an organisational context.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FEMINIST DISCOURSE ON POWER

#### 3.1 Introduction

A critical examination of power is essential in any study of women's changing leadership roles, for it is precisely in debates about the way in which women exercise power, especially over men, that gender is linked to leadership in society's patriarchal institutions. Feminist theorists highlight the insidious and hegemonic nature of collective thought in relation to power which has denied women the opportunity to define the concept on their own terms through their own experience (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule 1997; Jamieson 1995; Kenway 2001; Ledwith 2009). Jamieson (1995) asserts that feminist theories of power need to incorporate concepts defining the relative power position of women and the characteristics defining the value attached to women as a social category; as well as incorporating mechanisms for change. Burman (2001) claims that gender is a position assumed within the discourses available performed through a set of relationships. Feminist theories should be anchored in women's unique experiences within a social context and enable reflection on the "complicities and complex alliances between dominant and subordinate groups" (Burman 2001: 350). In grappling with questions about power and gender, feminists and scholars should apply their studies to specific settings and analyse them with specific research methods (Belenky *et al.* 1997; Gavey 2011; Kenway 2001; Mauthner & Edwards 2010). This chapter introduces an alternative discourse on power to the mainstream discourse and elaborates on the feminist framework which has influenced this research on women's power relations within an organisational context through the following headings:

- 3.2 Patriarchy
- 3.3 Archetypes and Stereotypes
- 3.4 The Evolution of Feminism
- 3.5 Feminist Perspectives on Power

### **3.2 Patriarchy and Power**

Feminists continue to create critical consciousness around the female world and to reshape academic disciplines to include women's voices while continuing to press for the right of women to participate equally in a male dominated world (Jamieson 1995; Ledwith 2009; Lee 2010). As South Africa moves towards developing spaces and institutions which are free from racial and gender discrimination, there is a need to understand the way in which those who were previously denied access to positions of power are able to participate, challenge and influence the mainstream models of thought and behaviour if they are to realise their potential and actively engage with organisational transformation. As the dominant social structure in our capitalist business institutions, patriarchy has constructed a reality which has been accepted and integrated as the prevailing 'common sense' view of the world (Kenway 2001). As a cultural discourse, patriarchy, according to Dickerson (2013: 102) is "the grand narrative that influences us all, often invisibly and creates conditions for people to respond outside what might be their preferences for performing relationships." This makes it difficult to confront patriarchy in any direct sense and highlights the way in which women and men give consent to patriarchy's dominance without necessarily being aware of it.

Patriarchy intersects multiple sites within a culture (Dickerson 2013) and is supported by a number of other dominant cultural discourses, such as capitalism. Fisher and Ponniah (2003) believe that corporate capitalism is the most powerful system of the west which dominates the world and invades cultures with structures of oppression. Globalisation is "not simply economic domination of the world but also the imposition of monolithic thought that consolidates vertical forms of difference and prohibits the public from imagining diversity in egalitarian, horizontal terms" (Fisher & Ponniah, 2003: 10). In her article on "The Elusive Nature of Power", Ledwith (2009) highlights the complexity and interrelatedness of multiple oppression and concludes that the challenge to traditional knowledge systems is emerging from feminist theorists who are seeking alternative meanings in an uncertain world. She points to eco-feminism as an example of an alternative worldview which reflects women's "concerns for preserving harmonious life on earth over time and space" (Ledwith 2009: 692). The emphasis in this discourse is on harmony, co-operation and interconnectedness, providing an

alternative to the competitive hierarchical structures of capitalism and patriarchy (Eisenstein 2010; Ledwith 2009; Mama 2011).

While recognising the need to interrogate dominant discourses and associated practices and create the spaces for alternatives, several feminist authors caution dichotomous thinking in relation to patriarchy, as well as ‘speaking for’ women as a generalised category (Ledwith 2009; Lee 2010). Just as it has been argued in the previous chapter that power is a social construct which is the reason for understanding its construction from multiple perspectives, so too are sex and gender socially constructed (Mahalik, Good & Englar-Carlson 2003). Feminist authors point out that patriarchy can be abusive towards men as well as women and typically denies them the opportunity for reaching out in dialogue with other men as part of the practice of being masculine (hooks 2004; Lee 2010). Dickerson (2013) is careful to point out that feminist studies which critique patriarchy are not a criticism of either men or women, but rather about bringing to the fore a more preferred way of being outside of patriarchal effects on both genders.

However, feminist theory should not downplay the insidious nature of patriarchal oppression (Kenway 2001; Ledwith 2009). It is the hegemonic effect of a patriarchal culture in which masculinity and femininity become a way of thinking that makes privilege and oppression seem acceptable and commonplace to the extent that it is either hardly noticeable, worthy of analysis, let alone challenge (Johnson 2005). Harvey (2010) comments that it is the small, every day actions, in the case of nonviolent oppression, that create systemic patterns of exclusion and subordination which have a cumulative impact on the psychological well-being of the victim of oppression, as well as their life-path and opportunities for fulfilment. For the non-oppressed, the perceived triviality of these individual acts limits the victim’s ability to address it and the perpetrator’s ability to take claims about the oppression seriously (Lee 2010). Understanding that through this process women consent to patriarchal domination, Ledwith (2009: 687) positions feminist consciousness as the “beginning of questioning the nature of that consent in relation to patriarchy”.

Particularly significant to this study therefore is the effect of the patriarchal discourse in preventing women from easily engaging with power as a construct (Freeman, Bourque & Shelton 2001; Henry 1994; Lee 2010; Miller 1982). According to Lee (2010) women and men are socialized into gender-specific language patterns which are taught in youth and remain into adulthood. Gender is not just reflected in language but the concept of gender is itself constituted by the language used to refer to it. Under patriarchy, gender is defined with masculine and feminine imagery portraying male and female as two opposite sorts of human beings (Johnson 2005). Freeman *et al.* (2001) believe that the tradition of power as a male preserve has obscured our understanding of women and power, attributing behavioural difference in men and women to gender rather than difference in access to power. Psychological studies that have attempted to disentangle the effects of gender and power by focussing on behavioural dimensions have found that gender differences tend to disappear (Freeman *et al.* 2001). Although behavioural differences may not necessarily be apparent in these studies, the question remains whether women's discourse enables them to bring to the fore an approach which may redefine the way power has been constructed within a patriarchal context. In research conducted by Miller (1982), the findings revealed that power is often viewed as a 'dirty word' by women, concluding that the very term power may have been distorted in the hands of people who needed to maintain dominance and for this reason it has acquired overtones of tyranny. Ramazanogulu's (1989) claim that there is a gap in feminist work dealing directly with women's experience of power still applies today (Mama 2011).

### **3.3 Feminine Archetypes, Gender Stereotypes and Power**

Despite the hegemonic system of patriarchy throughout the world, women have occupied positions of power at various times in history, albeit as individual personas as opposed to a collective group (Richards 2012). The way in which women are presented through the western narration of this history reflects how powerful women were constructed to perpetuate the patriarchal narrative. Joan of Arc (Freeman 2008) is an example of a powerful woman spiritual leader who could by her own physical courage and the power of her faith, inspire an army and defeat a more powerful opponent. However, her powerful image remains up to the eighteenth century and disappears thereafter to be replaced by the domestic image or the romantic sexual imagery about women. Christian teachings of the time ensured that women were represented in non-

heroic terms or in heroic terms of Christian sanctity and self-sacrifice, which usually meant martyrdom (Nicholson 2012). Even in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the powerful Queen Elizabeth I could never be presented in any literature as subverting male power and authority (Conway 2001). In the transitional period when she ruled people still used the image of the mighty woman, but were only comfortable doing it during a period of freedom or crisis, after which the female submits to the male authority. During the Romantic period of the nineteenth century, the idealisation of nature and of women as a sexual surrogate for nature meant that women were depicted in the popular culture of the time through reference to their beauty and passive nature, making it impossible for women of this era to imagine themselves as powerful or authoritative leaders (Conway 2001).

Due to the historical portrayal of women in the west as described above, ideas of women and power have typically been derived from Greek and Roman mythology which have been translated by popular culture into archetypes (Nicholson 2012). The term archetype was widely used by Jung and has come to be understood as the reference to images that arise from the collectively inherited structures of the psyche (Gerringer 2006). The earliest Amazon women warriors in Greek literature represented women taking power through physical courage and a readiness to do violence for a cause they believed in (Conway in Freeman *et al.* 2001). Jung's work highlighted the importance of feminine and masculine archetypes but given the time in which he was writing restricted them to limited gender-bound manifestations (Jung 1981). His archetypes referred to ancient mythology as a reference and were developed into a model by Hill (1992) to include elementary and transformative masculine and feminine archetypes. These include feminine archetypes such as the "Great Mother" (Hill 1992: 4) which nurtures and retains constancy and "Wonder Women" (Hill 1992: 12) who is assertive, goal-directed and action-oriented, much like the modern professional women of today (Griessel & Kotzé 2009). The work of Hill (1992) and other post-Jungian writers (Austin 2005; Griessel & Kotzé 2009) have been directed at differentiating and at times releasing these archetypal images from their embodiment of gender.

While archetypes may describe a psychological process and the aim of those writing about them was to separate them from gender specifically, gender stereotypes are continuously projected onto women from cultural conceptions of gender-appropriate

social roles (Freeman *et al.* 2001). This will be dealt with in the context of leadership in more detail in the following chapter (Chapter 4). Shifting these stereotypes is immensely difficult and women who have attempted to use them to their advantage have often done so with less than optimal results, according to Freeman and Bourque (2001). Feminist theologian, Nicholson (2012) believes that there is a need to dismantle mythic and religious history to establish a lineage of heroines of the past and present, enabling women to flourish and become what they need to be. In doing this she promotes an establishment of the archetype of the “journey of the female self” (Nicholson 2012: 27). The self-development of individual women is related to their conceptualisation of gender issues and the broader evolution of the feminist movement.

However, archetypes are also rooted in cultural contexts and western archetypes have tended to dominate popular culture and academic studies. Burman (2001) argues that the gendered representations of powerful women in the western cultural narrative are often derogatory and are always classed, usually through privileged association with powerful men. Archetypes are communicated through cultural narratives, such as literature, religion and oral tradition which form part of an individual’s heritage. They are the stories that are told as part of society’s social communication process to help humans understand and accept the world’s ambiguous and complex nature (Daba-Buzoianu & Cîrțiță-Buzoianu 2011). While women are represented in traditional cultural symbols of the African spirits and Asian goddesses, these representations have typically not been integrated into our multi-cultural society’s understanding of female archetypes (Mbigi & Maree 1995; Schuitervoeder 2000; Wheatley 2005). In South Africa the women’s struggle gave rise to the well-known phrase in the 1950’s “you have touched the women, you have touched a rock”, portraying the strength of individual women, as well as their collective power (Sisulu in Erasmus-Kritzinger 2003: 11). These cultural images remain excluded from the traditional debates on stereotypes relating to women and unexplored in relation to their impact on women in specific contexts. This highlights the complexities and multiple experiences which have contributed to the evolution of various brands of feminism.

### 3.4 The Evolution of Feminism

The way in which powerful women figures are personified and the archetypes reflected in the popular culture of a historical context are both derived from and will influence the collective way in which women's power is constructed (Griessel & Kotzé 2009). Equally significant is an understanding of the collective feminist school of thought and its attempts to provide an alternative discourse to patriarchy. It is in the exploration of these alternatives that a study such as this is able to recognise and analyse emerging models in engaging with women on the concept of power. Women have tended to be defined in terms of what the dominant ideology wants women to be. But these definitions are frequently removed from women's real nature and do not necessarily reflect what they want to become (Freeman *et al.* 2001; Freedman 2002; Lee 2010; Nicholson 2012).

In western Europe and the United States of America historians have typically used the term 'feminist' to describe women's collective activities to advance women's conditions. However, according to Moses (2012) the term 'feminism' is neither stable nor fixed. Moses (2012) traces the origins of the feminist movement to the period before the French revolution when democratic revolutionaries organised themselves politically with the aim of complete reform of society. Yet, there were deep splits even amongst the earliest feminists, largely on the basis of social and economic class, but also on the basis of religion and support for the monarchy. The development of capitalism and political theories promoting individual rights set the stage for the growth of the feminist movement in the twentieth century (Freedman 2002; Murphy 2010). While divides continue to exist as the feminist movement develops as both a discourse and form of political activism, central to the issues it addresses is women's status and power.

The evolution of and divisions within the feminist movement form a backdrop for this study since it reveals the many facets of how women have engaged with power within a system where they have traditionally been denied it. Freedman (2002) describes the three distinct perspectives on feminism as Liberal feminism which pushed for women's rights to education; Marxist/Socialist feminism which focuses on the organisation of working women; and radical feminism which focuses on issues such as motherhood.

Other feminist historians describe the evolution as first wave, second wave and third wave feminism (Ledwith 2009). First wave is typically used to describe the period from the nineteenth century to the 1960's where the focus was on equal rights and resisting political injustice towards women. The 1960's gave rise to what many feminists call second wave feminism with a rise in activism and an increase in participation in public life (Ledwith 2009; Murphy 2010). According to many feminist authors, such as Freedman (2002) and Moses (2012) it was in this era that women redefined 'political' to include the public and private spheres of women's lives. It is during this wave that women were encouraged to review the sexist structures of their personal lives, also giving rise to the interest in women's development and feminist psychology (Burman 2011; Butler 1994; Ledwith 2009; Rhode 2003). Third wave feminism is the term frequently used to describe the feminism emerging out of the changing intellectual and political context which has given rise to a post-modern approach (Ledwith 2009). Kenway (2001: 60) describes the conceptual approach to this era of feminism as "mini-narratives rather than metanarratives, multiple identities rather than political identities....and discourse rather than the politics of discourse". This wave of feminism brings us to the current context where many feminists argue for a shift of analysis to address the complex interconnectedness of oppression (Burman 2011; Ledwith 2009).

The postmodernist approach to feminism and research in general is an attempt not to fall into the trap of reducing complex contextual relationships between ideas and actions into one dimensional or linear perspectives. While certain periods of the feminist movement may have focussed on different issues, multiple experiences and diverse viewpoints existed throughout these 'waves' (Moses 2012). Writing in the 1990's, hooks (1994) exposes racism as one of the critical contradictions within the feminist movement when she highlights how the radical struggle of black women was not welcome in the early white bourgeois framework. Early second wave feminists were accused by black women as defining 'woman' from a white perspective, exposing how white power arrogantly overlooked difference (Ledwith 2009). Feminism has also been accused of a form of cultural imperialism whose association with the west make it unworthy of analysis of women's experience outside of the United States and Europe (Moses 2012). However, Moses (2012) contests this argument revealing that historically women have grappled with their issues of powerlessness in Asia, Africa and the Middle East within and outside of the narrowly defined feminist movement. This is

the case in South Africa where global developments in feminism fed into South African gender politics although it was the issue of race and class that dominated debates (Morrell *et al.* 2012).

South Africa as the context for this study is a case in point where the focus on transformation on the basis of race and class has once again subjugated women's issues to other priorities (Hassim 2005). Feminists in Africa and South Africa have spanned the spectrum of open hostility and rejection of feminism (Quanta 1987) to engagements around differences within the non-racial country that South Africa is trying to become (Morrell *et al.* 2012). Hassim (2005) argues that eliminating patriarchy as the common interest in feminism is unhelpful since it fails to account for the connection between class, race and colonial forms of domination. The result of this has been the development of a brand of African feminism that is more supportive of patriarchy and builds on existing family and community with a focus on domestic forms of organisation and sisterhood, rather than the analysis of men as oppressors (Morrell *et al.* 2012). Within the South African context Morrell *et al.* (2012) note that in the last decade men have become included in gender activism, which is unusual in the African context and contradictory within a society which remains strongly patriarchal. However, Hassim (2005) argues that the dilution of the women's movement to a 'developmental partnership' in South Africa has long term costs for the political, economic and social empowerment of women. The women's movement in South Africa and the challenges of transformation within the South African business context will be elaborated on in Chapter 5 on diversity and transformation.

Reflecting on the younger generation of women today within the context of the western world Moses (2012) observes that they disassociate themselves from the feminist movement while espousing feminist values. She attributes this to their association of feminism with something old-fashioned, as well as prejudice and with their alienation from politics of any kind, especially progressive politics. Generational differences have been found to influence women's feminist self-identification and levels of activism (Fitzpatrick Bettencourt, Vacha-Haase & Byrne 2011; Sandberg 2013). Much of the popular generational theory promotes the notion that millennial women's increasing confidence about their abilities makes it less important for them to fight for their rights (Codrington & Grant-Marshall 2004; Sandberg 2013; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal & Brown

2007). This is a dangerous generalisation in a society where for many young women, in South Africa and many other parts of the world, gender equality “remains a distant dream in the battle just to stay alive” (Ramphela 2012: 21). The challenge for this generation, particularly within the South African context according to Ramphela (2012), is to transform gender relations through the fundamental change in cultural frameworks that shapes the relationships between men and women. As feminism needs to be re-interpreted by the next generation, so too does the notion of power, which has been at the foundation of feminist debates. While generational differences were not a focus of this study, they do contribute to the social and psychological context of women which could influence perceptions of leadership and power and therefore warrants further empirical research (Parry & Urwin 2011; Sessa *et al.* 2007).

### **3.5 Feminist Perspectives on Power**

The multitude of voices within the feminist movement intercepts the multifaceted nature of the phenomena of power itself as discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 2). From a postmodern perspective this is the myriad of perspectives which come together to form an understanding which needs to be continuously constructed through research of the nature of this current study. For those with a more positivist standpoint, the lack of a clear feminist message on power has created confusion which at times has undermined the advancement of women (Freeman *et al.* 2001). Liberal feminists view the movement of women into male-dominated occupations and positions of political and economic power as an advance for feminism. The second wave feminist movement has restored the image of physically vigorous and powerful women. Believing that their socialisation had disempowered them, some feminists tried to deny gender difference at all to ensure that no acknowledgement of difference could stand in the way of women’s access to public life (Eisenstein 2010). Whereas other feminists stressed that women were naturally different and possibly even superior to men, particularly in their capacity for interpersonal relationships (Moses 2012). However, with some notable exceptions, women tend to be shy about power and leadership (Conway 2001). Society fears that if women become strong and competitive they will cease to be nurturing, according to Conway in Freeman *et al.* 2001), but that fear is the product of a gender system created a few hundred years ago and should not be taken as universal. Eisenstein (2010) contradicts this view however, with the most recent trend of women being welcomed

into corporate institutions and feminism being co-opted by the capitalist system. She points to the media's fascination with the pioneering women engaged in the male-dominated areas of work. However, she asserts that this version of feminism may reflect the middle class economic empowerment of women and emancipation from their domestic limitations, but it cannot be identified with liberation from patriarchal constraints. Burman (2011) also cautions against confusing the current 'feminisation' of corporations, with their emphasis on working on one-self and relationships not to be confused with feminism which questions prevailing gender stereotypes rather than entrenches them.

Radical or third wave feminists have rejected the notion that patriarchy can be challenged by competing with men on existing terms within patriarchal hierarchies (Eisenstein 2010; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012). Instead these feminists have looked at ways in which patriarchal societies have rendered women powerless and at how feminism needs to lead to the empowerment of women on different terms (Ledwith 2009). These terms include looking for ways of sharing and collaboration with other women as well as fostering the empowerment of other women rather than striving for positional power within the competitive paradigm of patriarchy. Radical feminists have turned away from aggressive, competitive western ideals of domination to uncover women's feminine abilities of nurturing, creating and co-operation (Ramazanoglu 1989). A new vision of feminism as proposed by Moses (2012) needs to acknowledge the different meanings of feminism to different people in different times and places and must allow these meanings to emerge so as to address the needs and priorities of women within their context. She calls for global support of women to strengthen the fight against all oppressive forces. Likewise Armstrong (2002: 19) motivates for a "better feminism" which focuses on the interconnection between groups and collective representation and leadership. Kenway (2001) promotes moving beyond a simple structural analysis of women's position by connecting social agents of unequal power. For Ledwith (2009: 696), this recognition of difference in addressing women's oppression needs to address "the reach of global power into a diversity of personal lives".

The focus of third wave feminists on the process of collaboration; the emergence of new and different ways of empowering women; and the recognition of the diversity of

narratives which make up the feminist discourse is expanded on by the eco-feminists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As discussed in the section on patriarchy, this form of feminism is concerned not only with women's oppression, but the very nature of the patriarchal system which perpetuates discrimination, competition, extremism and conflict (Young 1990). Eco-feminists argue that a historic, political and symbolic relationship exists between the denigration of nature and the female in western cultures (Spretnak 1997). Recent feminist literature accuses the feminist movement of failing to transform our society and institutions in the way in which radical feminists and eco-feminists envisaged (Brooks 2011; Eisenstein 2010; Rutherford, Vaughn Blount & Ball 2010). They highlight the way in which women in corporations have been co-opted into the process of corporate globalisation. They challenge the fact that the feminist agenda that promoted the advancement of women along with humanistic values has disappeared as women have taken up positions of power in organisations (Brooks 2011). Instead Brooks (2011) claims that women have allied with the male power structure for their individual benefit and become complicit in exploiting women's labour, destroying the family and cultural diversity and increasing global consumption. Eisenstein's (2010: 426) appeal is for the "construction of 'another world', one where the failed attempts at women's liberation could be remedied, and one where the dreams that women have for their own self-determination would be an integral part of the overall social project."

In recognising how gender analysis now applies to all social issues, including environmental and economic issues, Burman (2011: 651) claims that feminist debate today includes "questions of sameness and difference (between men and women, and between women too), and are transformative of all gender norms." Lombardo and Verloo (2009) regard this ongoing struggle that generates diverse, and at times conflicting, positions as the process by which feminism is kept alive and new opportunities and challenges emerge. They recognise the need for inclusion through equality, the challenging of gender norms through the valuing of difference and the displacement of these norms as the potential for transformation. It is the personal power of self-determination within the tapestry of feminist discourse which generates the collective transformation, both of our notions of women and of power. But the challenge in assuming a feminist approach in analysing these notions is to avoid both total separation from, and amalgamation with, other approaches to the study of power (Burman 2011).

This construction of power is examined under the following headings:

- 3.5.1 Personal and Relational Power in Women
- 3.5.2 Fear and Anxiety in Relation to Power
- 3.5.3 Voice and Silence in Relation to Power
- 3.5.4 Authentic Power and Identity

### **3.5.1 Personal and Relational Power in Women**

Freeman *et al.* (2001) claim that power is no longer solely a male construct. They argue that the challenge of an unprecedented female flux into the strongholds of our society, coupled with a revised feminist consciousness and legal mandate against discrimination has significantly influenced and complicated our conceptions of power. Early studies of power referred to the patriarchal construction of the term, referring to a win-lose or power over mentality. These psychological studies were typically constructed by men and applied to male subjects. With the growing understanding of patriarchy and the way in which gender are socially constructed categories (Mahalik *et al.* 2003), feminism began to make inroads into the field of psychology in its attempts to understand and liberate women from psychological oppression. Harvey (2010) claims that psychological oppression is the most painful component of the oppressed's lived experience since negative messages from the oppressor distorts the person's self-conception and self-respect resulting in low self-esteem. Bartky (1990) confirms this when describing how women oppress themselves psychologically when they exercise harsh control over their own self-esteem. It was the recognition of this psychological experience of powerlessness and the inability to do anything about it that motivated feminist psychology as a political project with a social change agenda (Rutherford *et al.* 2010). While there is debate as to whether feminist psychology has achieved this agenda or whether it remains the agenda (Rutherford *et al.* 2010), this focus in psychology generated perspectives on personal power and women's self-development and attempted to do so on women's terms.

The focus on women's self-development and personal power, such as the empowerment of self-determination, draws parallels with the construction of power as described in the section on Positive Psychology (Chapter 2). The feminist construction of this power,

however, has a relational dimension in terms of liberation from patriarchal oppression, both at an internal psychological level and in inter-personal relations with both men and women. Rampage (1991: 110) describes this form of personal power as “the ability to be self-determining, to act rather than react and to choose the terms on which to live one’s life.” The power of autonomy and personal control over oneself and the direction of one’s life is regarded by Freeman and Borque (2001) as the sense of freedom that follows oppression.

Feminist psychologists have attempted to reconstruct power as something which does not require domination, but rather the ability to act, and the capacity to perform (Harstock 1998). Feminists therefore view power as having qualities of strength, energy, force and ability which result in generative and transformative processes (Harstock 1998; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012; Nicholson 2012; Rutherford *et al.* 2010). Harstock (1998: 63) observes that “important in all these (feminist) descriptions of power is a vision of power as part of the process of change, a process that can be moved forward and directed.” In patriarchal terms power has meant the ability to advance oneself and in so doing destroy or limit the power of others, whereas a women’s perspective of power is to implement what they already have and what they are still developing (Harstock 1998; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012). Schaefer (1992) agrees that men conceive power as limited, whereas women see it as limitless. From a feminist perspective power is viewed as regenerative and expanding when shared (Moses 2012; Nicholson 2012).

However, Conway (2001) in her study on her historical archetypes of feminism challenges this theory, believing that feminist psychologists have made an industry out of relational self, presenting women as a nexus of relationships rather than an ego with boundaries and thus potential to stand out from the group. Burman (2001) claims that literature on gender and authority has tended to focus on maternal imagery in representing women’s roles in leading groups. Conway (2001) claims that forging the image of female power is difficult to do in the current ‘relational’ emphasis of feminist thought. In her opinion, women leaders are able to state their views and defend them strongly against contending opinions, apply their personal ability to get the best performance from others and mobilize them around a common goal. They are no more lodged in a network of relationships than their male colleagues. Conway (2001) argues

that feminist psychologists can't see the 'old boy' network for what it is – a network of sustaining and collaborative relationships. Men don't talk about these relationships because their discourse is supposed to focus on the business at hand. Women, on the other hand, are taught to report on the significance of relationships in their lives, and so they do it. Freeman and Borque (2001) concur claiming that our long standing beliefs about gender roles militate against women yielding the type of power associated with male leadership.

From the studies into women's power cited in Freeman *et al.* (2001) female power has been described as indirect, personal, derivative as opposed to direct, authoritative and status-derived. Indeed women who adopt a stereotypical male leadership style or who occupy male dominated leadership positions are apt to be evaluated negatively in light of this gender-role incongruency. Men may adopt a variety of styles without sanction and their success is not compromised by a so-called feminine style. Women are criticised for adopting a male model of authority and devalued by the stereotyped female model. In their study into women and their experience of success, Freeman and Bourque (2001) found that women would cite the intrinsic reward of work satisfaction in business, worthwhile contribution in politics and achieving according to their own standards, rather than competition and direct power over others. The study raises the question as to whether women have greater concerns about both the possession and use of power than men, which may even inhibit them from achieving higher 'status' in social rank terms. Freeman and Bourque (2001) believe that a female desire for power runs contrary to the established 'truth' that 'normal' women are not interested in power (Sandberg 2013).

Contemporary feminist psychologists, theologians and social scientists (Brooks 2011; Nicholson 2012; Rutherford *et al.* 2010) would argue that this line of thought has been informed by the hegemonic discourses of patriarchy and global corporate capitalism. They observe that women who have moved into positions of power have failed to promote a more humane, progressive and tolerant society and have complied with and perpetuated the system of competition and domination for personal gain. Popular media portrays the oppressive female 'boss' (Eisenstein 2010) while empirical studies into leadership, which will be expanded on in the following chapter (Chapter 4), show that many women leaders adopt an authoritarian model of leadership (Kariuki 2004) which

at times represent an even more oppressive form of their male counterpart. Likewise feminist psychologists argue that feminism has failed to transform the psychology agenda and disrupt the status quo (Rutherford *et al.* 2010), by compromising to meet traditional standards as provided by male researchers. Whichever arguments are pursued, the contradictions within the way in which women's power is perceived within a fragmented feminist framework points to tensions that exist in translating theory into action; as well as contradictions in women's experiences of and ability to exercise power.

### **3.5.2 Fear and Anxiety in Relation to Power**

Women's inexperience in using their power openly as well as fears of power manifests in a variety of ways, according to Schaeff (1992). This is because women have not been well versed in the conventions by which men have been geared since childhood. Power struggles can leave women vulnerable and disheartened (Miller & Cummins 1992). The use of power for their own purpose often results in negative reactions from men which are then internalized by women as wrong (Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009). Power in women is often associated with abandonment, because women are encouraged to remain in a situation which others define, or feelings of inadequacy and anger (Miller & Cummins 1992). The use of power by women is also frequently related to destructiveness for other women that disrupts and challenges their support systems and their relational stereotypes (Valerio 2009). In contradiction with feminist thought which promotes collective action and sisterhood, is the commonly experienced competitiveness between women, popularised by the 'pull her down' rhetoric (Erasmus-Kritzinger 2003; Kolb, Williams & Frohlinger 2010; Valerio 2009). In the absence of being able to exercise power directly women may resort to indirect forms of wielding power through passive aggressive behaviours, or the manipulation and control of people they can, such as other women (Wilson 2004).

Since power is closely related to identity, women who use their power with some efficacy and freedom often feel it will destroy their core sense of identity. Miller (1982) questions whether women are able to enjoy the benefits of their power if it is so intricately linked to anxiety and the risk of loss of identity. The findings of Jamieson's (1995) research support the notion that women are ambivalent about, or fear, their own

power. Jameson found that women in senior positions reject the masculine paradigm but are unwilling to consider their own power. In conducting their study there seemed to be a reluctance to deal with power as an issue. On the other hand, they viewed powerlessness as being an issue of victims and were not comfortable acknowledging either their own power or powerlessness. In a similar study conducted by Henry (1994), the most significant finding was that women were unable to define 'equality' and therefore it remained an abstract concept removed from their everyday life. Jamieson's (1995) research did reveal that women contrasted their own feminine power with that of men, whose strategies they viewed as withholding power and being vested in their status, rather than their own strategies of sharing power. These studies were both conducted in the United States more than a decade ago. Despite the inequities that still exist, women's role in society has changed over the past decade (Eisenstein 2010) and it is fitting that this research study reviews the way in which women engage with power within the contemporary and local context of South Africa.

Another study conducted in the United States of America in the 1990's by Clayton & Crosby (1992) revealed that women are reluctant to identify discrimination against themselves. They observed that "when a woman perceives support for remedial action, she may be more likely to identify discrimination – both to herself and to others – than if she expects no support" (Clayton *et al.* 1992: 94). The implication of this for research on women is that when looking at the ways in which masculine society hampers women, researchers should ideally bring women together to explore these issues in order to offer support (Harvey 2010). However, feminist researchers (Gavey 2005; Mahoney & Yngvesson 1992) caution against simplistic interpretations of women's unwillingness or inability to speak on issues, since their voices are as multiple and diverse as their personal histories and so is the meaning of silence. Just as there are more questions than answers around women's reluctance to engage with power assertively, the same applies to women's expression of themselves through having their voice heard within the spaces they occupy.

### 3.5.3 Voice and Silence in Relation to Power

For women to find their own ‘voice’ is seen by some prominent feminist authors, such as Carol Gilligan (1982) as central to women’s experience and exercise of power. These feminists (Brescoll 2011; Gilligan 1982; Lee 2010) see women’s strength as emerging from the recovery of an authentic voice and the capacity to express it and a women’s subordination in the silencing of the voice. Women historians have supported this view (Gal 1991) on the basis of recapturing the silent past, a symbol of passivity and powerlessness. Volubility, according to Mast (2002) plays an important role in establishing power hierarchies but also in communicating one’s power to others. Brescoll (2011) proposes that women do not spend as much time talking in public forums as men since they fear backlash from perceptions that their behaviour is incongruent with their stereotype by both men and women. This fear has been found to explain the reason why women may fail to promote themselves and engage in aggressive negotiations (Amanatullah & Morris 2010; Moss-Racusin & Rudman 2010). However, some feminist theorists (Lee 2010; Mahoney 2001) challenge this simple equation of voice with authority and silence with victimisation. Lee (2010) claims that it is only within the framework of dominant linguistic ideologies that forms such as silence, interruption, or euphemism gain their specific meanings. Postmodernist feminists prefer the notion of split subjectivity, shifting identifications and selves constructed retrospectively out of cultural myths, distorted memories and psychological fantasies (Hoffman 2001; Nicholson 2012). In this context, silence or not communicating can be a healthy response to being controlled (Mahoney 2001). Weiler (2001) highlights the danger of projecting social identity and assuming authority in speaking for silenced others.

Just as feminists are conflicted over power, conflicting views of silence trigger emotional and anxious responses (Fiske 2010; Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson & Lijenquist 2008; Mahoney 2001; Mahoney & Yngvesson 1992). The feeling of being unable and unwilling to speak brings about a certain shame amongst feminists given the expectation created by feminist psychologists that silence is a sign of inauthenticity or failure to be a real feminist. Efforts to communicate that are not fully successful, according to Galinsky *et al.* (2008) may evoke painful emotions, such as shame, but can also lead to anger which can motivate a subjective sense of agency and resistance.

Authors concur that a space of silence where one does not have to be accountable gives the opportunity to nurture the capacity to speak out, even though the situation may be subjectively experienced as confusing and anxiety provoking (Keltner *et al.* 2003; Mahoney 2001; Mahoney & Yngvesson 1992). Brescoll's (2011) study into the effects of volubility of men and women revealed that for women talking more in an organisational context may not be an effective way of communicating their power to others. Walsh's (2012) article on extroversion versus introversion in leaders claims that the world is biased towards extroversion which supports the pressure that women may feel to 'speak out' should they wish to be viewed as a leader in an organisation. Ultimately, with a level of awareness, silence may help to foster the capacity to speak out with confidence, authority and authenticity (Galinsky *et al.* 2008). Furthermore, in psychology studies on therapeutic practices, silence has also been attributed to a form of contemplation, often referred to as 'mindfulness', which gives rise to a powerful expansion of perspectives which can relate to the growth of individuals (Blanton 2007; Shapiro & Carlson 2009; Siegel 2007).

#### **3.5.4 Authentic Power and Identity**

Recovering their 'authentic voice' was proposed by Gilligan (1982) and feminist authors of the time as a way of enabling women's strength to emerge and be expressed. Just as silence takes on various meanings within the feminist discourse, so too does the concept of authenticity. Feminist writing of the postmodern period that point to the enlightening and at times painful psychological process of understanding and integrating contradictory thoughts and feelings which challenges the notion of an authentic 'self' (Gal 1991; Ledwith 2009; Mahoney 2001; Mahoney & Yngvesson 1992; Nicholson 2012) They reject the possibility of a whole identity that gives rise to a single true voice and attack the idea that a healthy identity is fixed, especially a stable gender identity.

Organisational psychologists, Anderson and Shafer (in Coughlin, Wingard & Hollihan 2005) describe authentic power as a creative life force which we draw on each time we express ourselves honestly and thoughtfully. But they also identify a deeper power which is anchored in the commitment to gain self-knowledge and grow through a continuing journey to self-acceptance. In writing about how women experience power,

they focus on the emotional truths that are revealed through storytelling and how women's stories of power are woven into their beliefs and mental models, socialised by gender, ethnic group, culture and family. They believe that authentic power is to become relentless and undefended in seeking knowledge of ourselves which gives women the capacity to transform reality and reconnect to their soul. This is similar to Nicholson's (2012: 26) "archetype of the self for women" which relates to the contemporary social and spiritual journey towards wholeness. It also relates to the literature on self-awareness and growth in the section on positive psychology in chapter 2 (section 2.3.2).

Anderson and Shafer's (2005) construction of power in relation to their own experience and studies of women in business (in Coughlin *et al.* 2005: 65) include the following characteristics which addresses some of the complexities and conflicts recounted in this chapter:

- It celebrates a wide range of individual traits and styles
- It responds with compassion and generosity to everyday and multifaceted challenges
- It prompts change by openly inviting diverse opinions and approaches
- It seeks continuous awareness of its use to positive effect

This construction of power (Anderson & Shafer in Coughlin *et al.* 2005) encourages individuals to recognise their own power, yet recognise the paradox of independence and interdependence. Feminist authors appear to agree that both men and women need to be engaged in this process of pursuing self-knowledge in the interest of expressing their identity and a redefined sense of personal power (Dickerson 2013; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012; Nicholson 2012). This pursuit of authenticity in leadership is the focus of many leadership studies, pertaining to both men and women, and is elaborated on in Chapter 4 on leadership. Women, however, are still considered key in initiating changes to the prevailing models, since they remain a non-dominant group, trying to function in systems dominated by male views and mental models (Moses 2012).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Feminism's reconstruction of power has arguably made a significant contribution to the promise of a new world order and an alternative discourse to patriarchy creating liberation for both men and women (Brooks 2011; Ledwith 2009; Rutherford *et al.* 2010). However, authors seem to concur that while it may still have the potential to deliver on this promise, it has failed to do so within our contemporary society (Armstrong 2002; Brooks 2011). Perhaps this is too great a call for 'feminism' due to its historical legacy which has often resulted in limited understanding and definition of the term (Moses 2012). The discourse on power which is beginning to emerge in society today across the disciplines of psychology, organisational development and gender studies appears to intersect at the point of a moral and spiritual dimension which highlights our interconnectedness as human beings and joint responsibility for protecting our environment and communities from acts of oppression (Ledwith 2009). It is this leadership responsibility that women who occupy positions of power within a business context both globally and in South Africa are being challenged to review and reconstruct should genuine transformation take place in organisations. This study should generate contemporary South African perspectives amongst women in organisational leadership positions from which those reconstructions take place.

The following chapter will review the development of theories on leadership and the current views on the nature of leadership in contemporary organisations. It is the incorporation of South African women leaders' discourse and experience of power in the theory building around leadership and its deployment of power that marks the contribution of this research to leadership studies in general.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LEADERSHIP THEORIES IN AN ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

#### 4.1 Introduction

Globally, leadership in business today is continuously challenged by the rapid pace of change and the responsibility for creating sustainable organisations for the future (Hatch & Cunliffe 2013). South African businesses operating within global markets are no different (Haywood, Trotter & Brent 2013). Rigid hierarchies do not offer the agility which organisations need in today's world to respond to and capitalise on business opportunities by working across traditionally defined boundaries in delivering products and services to market. Neither do hierarchies reflect the trend in much of the global world towards more democratic institutions which recognise the role of several stakeholders. These structures are being replaced with "flexible networks of skilled, collaborative minded leaders who can come together quickly and address the challenge at hand" (Thomas & Silverstone 2012: 10). In the South African context, the transition to democracy ushered in an era requiring significant social and economic transformation of institutions, participation in a global economy and active engagement with the challenges and potential of being part of the African continent (Muthuri 2013). These fundamental changes in the global and local business environment have catalysed debates and developments within the field of leadership which call for a reconstruction of our understanding of power and influence within the leadership role.

Leadership is described by Kets de Vries (2006: 164-165) as having two essential components:

- Leadership properties which are a set of characteristics, behaviour patterns and personal attributes that make people more effective at attaining a set of goals; and
- Leadership process which is the effort by a leader, drawing on various bases of power, to influence members of a group towards a common goal.

There is a plethora of literature on leadership both from a global and South African perspective and this section will give an overview of some of the key “competing theoretical paradigms attempting to provide a definitive and comprehensive model of leadership and leadership effectiveness” (Nkomo & Kriek in Meyer & Boninelli 2004: 94). These paradigms range from the early behavioural and situational approaches to the notions of transformational leadership and servant leadership to the more recent focus on ‘emergent’ and ‘learner’ leadership with a focus on personal mastery (Avolio & Bass 1988; Greenleaf 1977; Hersey & Blanchard 1977; Kets de Vries 2006; Kotter 2001; MacGregor Burns 2003; Yudelowitz, Koch & Field 2002; Dhiman 2011). These leadership theories emphasise different elements and perspectives of power. While the current leadership theories encompass many styles and approaches which are compatible with the stereotypical view of women, this has not necessarily translated into more opportunities for women. The last section of this chapter on women and leadership will examine why this is the case. The chapter is organised around the following headings:

- 4.2 ‘Trait’ Leadership Theory
- 4.3 Transformational Leadership
- 4.4 Situational Leadership
- 4.5 Servant Leadership
- 4.6 ‘Learner’/Emergent Leadership
- 4.7 Women and Leadership

## **4.2 The ‘Trait’ Theory of Leadership**

Early discussions of leadership assume a male paradigm without explicit reference to gender. The ‘great man’ theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries claimed that men were destined to lead by birth. One of the earliest leadership theorists, Max Weber (Gerth *et al.* 2009) believed that the charismatic leader had exceptional powers and qualities that differentiated him from ‘ordinary’ men. In this theory it was the personal traits of a particular individual which predicted leadership. They reflected personality traits specifically associated with what was termed the ‘command and control’ type of leadership style (Mann 1959; Stogdill 1974). These traits were seen to be inherent rather than acquired through learning or experience. Writing at the same time as Weber,

one of the rare female management theorists, Parker-Follet (1924) promoted the value of collaboration, coordination, the sharing of power and information and the empowerment of the workforce (Wilson 2004). As a woman of her era, she did not ascribe these qualities to being found in women, she promoted them as sound business principles for male leaders to adopt in management positions.

Recent management theorists continue to study leadership qualities of men and women and promote these attributes as essential to the demands of the leadership environment today. One of the most published studies of women leaders was conducted by Helgesen (1995) who applied a methodology used by well-known management theorist Mintzberg (1979) in the 1970's in his study of the effectiveness of male managers. In her study, Helgesen (1995) revealed a number of traits that differentiated women leaders from men when comparing the study to that of Mintzberg. These included women's willingness to share information with others; maintain perspective on issues outside of their job and career; and pace themselves to remain attentive to others' needs. Helgesen (1995) concluded that the relationship focus of women leaders and their concern with process in addition to outcome of the task was a critical advantage for leadership requirements of the times. Theories on the characteristics of 'male' and 'female' leadership will be elaborated on in section 4.7 on women and leadership.

However, even earlier theorists, such as Spotts (1976) recognised that these 'leadership trait' theories were limited in their failure to address the relational dynamic between a leader, their followers and the environment that they operate in. The research into leadership qualities did not uncover a constellation of universal traits distinguishing one leader from another (Conger 1999). The charismatic leadership models that were posited by theorists such as House (1977) and Berlew (1974) were critiqued for ignoring the follower relationship which gave rise to studies which focussed specifically on the 'leader-follower' dyad (Avolio & Bass 1988; Conger & Kanungo 1987). While these theorists subsequently revised their studies to focus on the collective in the organisation, they provided a framework for studying the leader-follower interaction which remains an area of research into leadership effectiveness today (Avolio 2007; Bligh 2010; Ehrhart 2012; Hudson 2013). Hudson's (2013) recent study reveals that regardless of their organisational standing leader-follower interactions are determined by each party's internal psychological models. Leaders with more positive

models were found to be more secure in their relationships with followers and therefore able to be more available and attentive, resulting in more effective leadership, better relationships and increased organisational effectiveness.

Along with the questioning of the behavioural paradigm in psychology and organisational theory, contextual explanations have gained ground in identifying propensity for leadership over above inherent 'traits'. This explanation asserted that the needs of the times would determine who would emerge as a leader (Freeman *et al.* 2001). The rapidly increasing rate of change and the competitive demands on organisations to perform more effectively in the corporate world during the 1980's and beyond escalated studies into leadership and its effectiveness, particularly in the United States (Van Rensburg 2007). The study of the interplay between behavioural traits of a leader and their ability to positively influence followers to move above and beyond themselves became the focus of what was termed 'transformational leadership'.

### **4.3 Transformational Leadership**

Transformational and transactional leadership theories were initially developed by MacGregor Burns (2003). MacGregor Burns distinguished between transactional leaders who exchange relationships with their followers by focussing on team work, task accomplishment and problem solving from transformational leaders who tap into followers' motives and seek to engage them to move beyond their self-interests for the benefit of the group and the organisation (Bass & Avolio 1993; Odetunde 2013). These transformational leaders resemble the early charismatic leaders of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, not by virtue of their position, tradition, or rulings, but from the followers' faith in their gift of exceptional powers and qualities (Freeman *et al.* 2001).

Conger and Kanungo (1998) describe the transformational leader as individuals who are wholly involved in a vision of change and inspire others to pursue their articulated goals (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam 2003). There is attachment and trust in the leader-follower relationship and innovation and creativity are stimulated amongst followers so that they become strongly committed and motivated towards the mission of the organisation (Nicholson 2007). The self-esteem and aspirations of followers are elevated by the transformational leader as they are empowered by the leader's faith in

their abilities and by group cohesion based on shared beliefs (Antonakis *et al.* 2003). This form of leadership “binds leaders and followers together in mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose” (Conger & Kanungo 1998: 20).

The origin of the ‘transformational leader’ was a revolution against the tyranny of tradition, according to Freeman (2001). The leader takes on the role of a change agent who perceives opportunity in a crisis situation and mobilises human minds and emotions towards a vision. He instils faith in his followers and consequently empowers them, reducing their feelings of helplessness and instability (Conger 1999; Johns & Moser 2001). While Weber (in Gerth *et al.* 2009) had envisioned charismatic leadership as transitory, creating and institutionalising a new order, transformational theorists (Avolio *et al.* 1988; Conger 1999; MacGregor Burns 2003) believed that charisma alone would not be transforming enough to sustain and institutionalise change in business organisations. On the contrary, these theorists believed that transformational leaders seek to empower followers to participate in the process of establishing the new order and to question views established by the leader (Avolio & Yammarino 1990; Conger 1999). Judge and Piccolo (2004) demonstrated that transformational leadership is a very powerful influence over leader effectiveness by increasing the intrinsic motivation of their followers and building more effective relationships with them. While transformational leadership theories continue to be explored and expanded on, common to all of them is the emphasis on the leaders’ ability to: create a vision; inspire others; role model; stimulate followers; help to make meaning out of situations; set expectations; and foster a collective identity (Conger 1999; Kouzes & Posner 2002; McLaurin & Amri 2008).

Psychodynamic theorists studying leadership proposed that the followers of charismatic leaders were most likely dependent individuals who created a powerful emotional attachment to the charismatic leader (Kets de Vries 2006). Equally a leader’s narcissistic tendency may result in them constructing a charismatic identity to shape the image they wish to convey and the messages they wish to deliver (Conger 1999; Kets de Vries 2006). However, several leadership theorists argue that followers are often attracted to charismatic leaders because of a more constructive identification with their abilities, a desire to learn from them and an independent conviction in their mission (Conger 1999; Johns & Moser 2001; Judge & Piccolo 2004; Odetunde 2013). The

debate does raise the question around the nature of the power exercised by a charismatic leader and the extent to which it is empowering or coercive.

Freeman *et al.* (2001) critiques the transformational leadership theories further for associating our enduring masculine cultural images with charisma. In a study conducted by Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) while women received favourable ratings on many leadership dimensions, their perceived ability to inspire around a vision was ranked significantly lower than their male counter-parts. While women may be perceived to have other strengths, they concluded that charismatic leadership remains a male stereotype. In contrast with this study, the study using the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (TLQ) designed by Alban-Metcalfe and Alimo-Metcalfe (2007) to measure differences between men and women concluded that generally women display more transformational, while men display more transactional, forms of leadership. Odetunde's (2013) research which investigated the effects of transformational and transactional leadership styles and gender on organisational conflict management behaviour concluded that transformational leadership is a stereotypically gender-balanced style. While research continues to grow in the area of transformational leadership and its effect on followers, Conger (1999) cautioned that we need to be careful of making conclusions without exploring other dimensions affecting leadership such as the understanding of contextual issues. The need for understanding of complex contextual issues still applies to studies of leadership today and in particular to the complex phenomenon of power in relation to leadership (Kets de Vries 2011).

#### **4.4 Situational Leadership and Emotional Intelligence**

The impact of contextual issues on leadership is one of the key considerations which led to the development of situational leadership theories in the 1970's. Hersey and Blanchard (1977) developed the best known situational leadership model which has been revised and developed by themselves and other theorists over time (Blanchard, Hyblis & Hodges 1999; Goleman 2000). The model provides a framework for assessing needs of a situation and identifying a leadership style best suited to it. The model challenged the assumptions around 'trait' and 'transformational' leadership that one leadership style is superior over another. These styles accommodate a range of uses of power. Two of the styles, namely directing and delegating, require a level of leader

dominance, whereas the styles of coaching and supporting require greater power sharing (Shriberg *et al.* 2005). The situational approach has been adopted in some form or another by most current leadership theories which try to clarify what determines an effective leader.

In applying a situational approach to leadership theory, theorists acknowledge the dynamic between personal characteristics of the leader and their context. Applying personal characteristics with a sense of judgement to a situation has been the focus of more recent studies into situational leadership (Goleman 2000; Kets de Vries 2011; Matthews, Zeidner & Roberts 2002). A decade of research linking emotional intelligence to business results, started by McClelland (1973) and developed by Goleman (2000) found that leaders with strengths in a range of emotional competency areas were far more effective than peers in reading situations and creating a positive work climate. Goleman's (2000: 82–83) research investigated how six different leadership styles affected the working atmosphere in an organisation and when they are most appropriate. The following represents a summary of his findings:

- The coercive style which demands immediate compliance works best in a crisis to kick-start a turnaround or with problem employees, but has a negative impact on the climate in the organisations
- The authoritative style mobilises people towards a vision and is useful when changes require a new vision or clear direction and is mostly experienced as positive by employees
- The affiliative style creates harmony and builds bonds and is valuable in healing rifts in a team or motivating people during stressful circumstances and has a positive impact on the work climate.
- The democratic style forges consensus through participation and is best used to get buy-in or consensus, or to get input from valuable employees and has a positive impact on the climate.
- The pacesetter style sets high standards for performance and is most appropriate to get quick results from a highly motivated competent team. However, overall it was found to have a negative impact on the work climate.

- A coaching style develops people for the future and is best used to help an employee improve performance or develop long-term strengths and has a positive effect on the organisational climate.

Goleman's (2000) study supported the situational theorists claim that the more styles a leader exhibits the better. However, it is notable that the styles, such as affiliative, democratic and coaching styles, where power is more diffuse amongst followers were all found to have a positive impact on working climate. Based on his observations of the leaders in the study, Goleman (2000: 87) also noted that "leaders switch flexibly among the styles as needed" and "don't mechanically match their style to fit a checklist of situations – they are far more fluid". Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been linked to organisational context in the several studies which have shown its positive correlation to the organisational climate and employee motivation levels (Kets De Vries 2006; Klem & Shlechter 2008).

Situational leadership which focussed on the leader's 'reading' of the situation and responding appropriately to elicit the most effective behaviour from their followers, emphasises the reciprocal relationship with followers in any given situation. Freeman *et al.* (2001) comment that with this shift in linking leadership to followers and their context, leadership has become more compatible with traditional stereotypes of women's strengths and interpersonal connection and care, than in the days of the 'great man' theories. Equally the flexible and fluid approach to applying a variety of styles (Goleman 2000) is consistent with women's more flexible and process approach to leadership according to Wilson (2004). Applying emotional intelligence as the process by which this is achieved has been widely accepted by theorists as a major factor contributing to leader effectiveness in both men and women (Kets de Vries 2011; Matthews *et al.* 2002).

The 'power' of the leader within this process of applying emotional intelligence (EI) is more reflective of the definitions of power relating to self-actualisation, agency and personal mastery than those associated with influence (Compton 2005; Dhiman 2011; Strümpfer 2005) as discussed in the section on positive psychology (section 2.3.2.2) in chapter 2. EI has typically included having high levels of self-awareness; having empathy for others; and having the ability to manage one's own emotions in various

situations (Goleman 1996, 1998). An understanding and acknowledgement of the role of emotions at work has challenged the scientific ‘business’ paradigm and begun to reinterpret the organisational context and its’ requirements for success. Many leadership theorists believe that this has given women a platform to thrive in the modern economy (Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009; Wilson 2004). The concept of EI has also been expanded on more recently by leadership theorists, such as Kets de Vries (2011), to include the ability to reframe challenging situations in a positive way; remain consistent and resilient in tough situations; to build and operate effectively in teams; and to be able to socially network. These capabilities have become key focus areas in leadership studies and in particular are reflected globally in leadership development initiatives in organisations today (Barsh, Devillard & Wang 2012; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011; Valerio 2009).

However the feminist perspective highlights this focus on emotional and relational competence in business as superficial and problematic in that it promotes gender stereotypes and continues to co-opt women into dominant, patriarchal modes of thinking (Burman 2011; Eisenstein 2010). In a study aimed at understanding the current trend of equating women’s EI capabilities with the future focus of organisations, Thory (2013) found that women fared less well than their male counterparts in acting on their interpretations of EI skills. She concludes that EI assessment and training can be damaging to individuals when used in work environments where masculinised management exists as the dominant paradigm. In a study attempting to validate measures that predict emotional competency, Brasseur, Gregoire, Bourdu & Mikolajczak (2013) found that there was little difference in intrapersonal skills between genders. However, women demonstrated greater levels of emotional expression with men demonstrating greater emotional regulation. Much of the focus of EI in business today is on the self-regulation of emotions (Burman 2011) which has an interesting correlation to a potentially ‘male’ interpretation of the concept. The debate surrounding ‘male’ and ‘female’ characteristics of leadership will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.7 of this chapter on women and leadership. Other theories which have developed in parallel with situational leadership and the application of emotional intelligence are also subject to feminist scrutiny in their perpetuation of patriarchal paradigms. The theory of servant leadership will be discussed and critiqued in the following section.

#### **4.5 Servant Leadership**

Greenleaf (1977) coined the phrase ‘servant leadership’ in his book “*Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*”. The title alone indicates the centrality of ‘power’ to this theory, not in the form of control or domination, but rather in the sense of a legitimacy of worthiness through the service provided to others. Greenleaf’s (1977) writing was in response to his belief that the holders of power at that time were suspect and their actions begged questioning. He constructed the concept of leader as ‘servant’ to their followers above all else and promoted fulfilling this role through a number of processes. These include listening; imagining a better future; accepting and empathising; using intuition and sensitivity; having ethical foresight; using small acts to make a difference; and building community. Several prominent ‘moral’ leaders globally, such as Ghandi, Mother Theresa and Nelson Mandela have been highlighted as the epitome of a servant leader (Sosik & Jung 2010).

While Greenleaf’s (1977) conceptualisation of servant leadership were inspired largely by western, Christian philosophies and led to a number of research initiatives in the United States, Hannay’s (2009) research concluded that servant leadership is a model which appears to accommodate other cultural dimensions as defined by Hofstede (1993) and is suited to workplaces across the globe. Specific to this study is Hannay’s (2009) finding that the servant-leader role seems to be a better fit with those traditionally female characteristics since service is identified as a largely female value. Since servant leadership requires the leaders to understand the needs and desires of their employees it should engender an environment of trust and empowerment (Kolp & Rea 2006). Kolp and Rea (2006) reinforce that this nurturing relationship does not ignore performance, but rather it brings about change to enhance or improve performance. Power distance is another of Hofstede’s (1993) cultural dimensions that Hannay (2009) relates to servant leadership, since power is distributed in the servant leadership model and therefore more readily adopted by democratic and participatory cultures. The view that servant leadership theory is applicable in a variety of cultures, contexts, and organizational settings seems widely supported (Parris & Peachey 2013).

However, Parris and Peachey (2013) highlight that servant leadership, while prominently advocated by popular management literature as a means to create employee satisfaction and organisational success (Block 1993; Covey 1990; Senge 1994; Spears 2005; Wheatley 2005), remains understudied in academia as a leadership theory. They caution against the popularisation of the theory as a management technique which was originally intended as a way of life. Other authors, such as Ngambi (2004) contest the notion that servant-leadership has its roots in Greenleaf's (1977) theory, claiming that the approach has been applied for centuries in traditional forms of African community leadership. Reclaiming a form of African leadership which is believed to be better suited to the world today and to organisations on the African continent is a focus of leadership studies grappling with the integration of theory into practice which respects the local context (Mbigi & Maree 1995; Ngambi 2004; Van Rensburg 2007). In eastern philosophy the quest for self-awareness, meaningfulness and mastery has influenced the field of psychology, as discussed in the section on positive psychology in chapter 2 (section 2.3.2.2) and the applied field of leadership (Dhiman 2011).

While there is merit in calling for further academic studies into the notion of servant leadership as well as non-western models of leadership, many management theories founded on this form of leadership and associated approaches, recognise it as something more profound than a management technique, but as an approach rooted in a personal philosophy and lifestyle practice (Dean 2008; Jaworski 1998; Wheatley 2005). The adaptation of servant leadership into the current business world environment has taken a number of forms, but all of them speak to a quest for an approach which will provide anchoring in a world of uncertainty and chaos (Wheatley 2005). Values based leadership is an example of this in its focus on influencing relationships and organisations positively through choices guided by explicit and consistently practiced values, reflective of a healthy lifestyle (Dean 2008). Other approaches indicate leaders' turning to ancient spiritual traditions from cultures outside of the west for the faith and resilience to deal with anxiety and turbulence (Wheatley 2005).

Wheatley (2005) identifies the following assumptions which are commonly applied to a more spiritual form of leadership:

- Life is uncertain and never stops teaching us about change
- Life is cyclical and chaotic and depressive episodes are sometimes required for change
- Meaning is what motivates people
- Service brings people joy
- Interconnection and bringing people together is essential to avoid disintegration and demise
- People need to work from a space of inner peace and leaders need to manifest peace of mind and acceptance

Whether these theories are rooted in the notion of servant leadership or spiritual philosophies from traditional cultures, Parris and Peachey's (2013: 390) observation of the shifting leadership paradigm in response to the current context is common to all of its origins, when they note:

“As a viable leadership theory, servant leadership can perhaps provide the ethical grounding and leadership framework needed to help address the challenges of the twenty-first century: technological advancements, economic globalization, increased communications, the Internet, rising terrorism, environmental degradation, war and violence, disease and starvation, threat of global warming, intensifying gap between the poor and rich worldwide, as well as many other unsolved issues. Servant leadership contrasts, traditional leadership paradigms, which applaud a Darwinism, individualistic, and capitalist approach to life, implicating that only the strong will survive.”

However, feminist author, Eicher-Catt (2005) argues that the notion of a servant leader does not represent a revolutionary mode of leadership that might reflect a postmodern appreciation of organizational culture and diverse interests and motivations. Instead she contends that it has been developed as a popular leadership discourse which represents a regressive mode of thinking, steeped within religious doctrine that reflects perspective that nurtures patriarchal organisational norms and practice. She contends that “the term ‘servant’ in itself represents a state of submission, complete with various degrees of

oppressive ramifications and power imbalances” (Eicher-Catt 2005: 18). Eicher-Catt (2005) argues that if leaders want to advance workplace democracy, they need to examine ways of creating a participatory moral discourse collaboratively. Cooper (1998) refers to this as a postmodern communication ethic, which incorporates multiple voices and prevents one theoretical framework from assuming a power base.

The key to constructing this alternative leadership framework is in the way in which power is defined, understood and exercised and the voices that are incorporated into this power discourse. While not focussing on the construction of the leadership discourse per se, Parris and Peachey (2013) use the servant leadership framework to provide a challenge to the mainstream western societal values much like the eco-feminists (Ledwith 2009) reviewed in the previous chapter (chapter 3). If ‘strength’ is to be perceived as something other than survival and dominance, the servant or spiritual leader needs to lead from the strength of principles, values and beliefs (Hannay 2009; Walker 2003). This also requires letting go of the leader’s ego and focussing on the self-actualisation of their followers (Hannay 2009) by relinquishing the traditional means of power and entrusting followers with authority and responsibility (Costigan, Ilteer & Berman 1998; Russell & Stone 2002). To do this leaders need a strong self-image and moral conviction (Sendjaya & Sarros 2002) as well as the openness to personal growth which involves receiving feedback from employees on their strengths and weaknesses as leaders (Hannay 2009). This emphasis on personal growth is the reason why global movements in leadership in business have assumed a developmental focus which recognises the continuous nature of learning to lead.

The feminist focus (Dickerson 2013; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012) on women’s personal growth in allowing their authentic identity to emerge is not necessarily a process exclusive to women alone. Leadership theories are advocating that this is a process necessary for all leaders grappling with organisational success within the current context (Sosik & Jung 2010; Valerio 2009; Van Rensburg 2007). However, Eicher-Catt’s (2005) argument regarding the way in which leadership discourse can construct powerful myths which re-enforce a dominant paradigm of thinking, is a reminder that as well as understanding themselves, leaders need to understand their relationship with the context they experience and the rhetoric they develop in relation to that. Developmental models for leadership should aim at promoting an understanding of

the contextual relationship between the leader, their followers and the environment they operate in (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb 2011). The developmental approach to leadership which allows for the unfolding of these relationships is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.6 The ‘Learner’/Emergent Leader**

The contextual focus of Yudelowitz *et al.*'s (2002) ‘learner’ or emergent leaders is reflective of the postmodern organisational theory of complexity (Beeson & Davis 2000; Cilliers *et al.* 2005; Stacey 2003; Van Tonder & Roodt 2008) which studies the dynamic behaviours of “complexly interacting, interdependent and adaptive agents under conditions of internal and external pressure” (Marion 2008: 3) In complexity theory leadership is explored through a focus on the dynamics of relationships since it is viewed as far too complex to be understood as traits or behaviours of one or more individuals. Instead leadership is understood as the enigmatic interplay between multiple, interacting forces (Livingston & Lusin 2009).

Yudelowitz *et al.* (2002) depict this interplay as a dynamic and on-going process of continuous learning, which takes into account both the internal psychological processes of the individual, as well as the context they operate in and the mastery to manage the tensions created between them. Yudelowitz *et al.*'s (2002: 51) model, known as the “Triangle of Tensions”, presents leadership as managing the tensions between the leader’s individual identity, which is a combination of both their past experiences and current emotional life; the ‘canned’ or positional role in the organisation which represents the expectations others have of the leader and all the trappings of rank and privilege; and the emerging role that needs to unfold in relation to the contextual demands of the environment. In line with complexity theory (Livingston & Lusin 2009), leaders in this process may be able to influence outcomes, but they cannot predict how things will transpire and they have to learn and adapt to surprises as they go along. The ability to recognise patterns in the environment; to negotiate situations and use power effectively; to use rhetoric and framing language purposefully; and to understand timing and the impact of physical presence are all regarded as critical by Yudelowitz *et al.* (2000) in managing these tensions effectively. The dynamic nature of the model gives rise to the ‘learner-leader’ which by its evolutionary nature allows it to

include both independent perceptions of followers and the subjective experience of the leaders themselves.

Power is an essential component in Yudelowitz *et al.*'s (2000) model since it operates in every element of the triangle, namely the individual role; canned role and emerging role. The leader's individual identity is the emphasis of studies into authenticity and its relationship with positive psychology's focus on strengths and the power of personal mastery as opposed to social status (Dhiman 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Sheldon & King 2001). Most leadership development processes designed around discovering authentic identity begin with the understanding of the leader's life story (Bill, Sims, McLean & Mayer 2007). Many of these stories narrate overcoming difficult experiences and using these events to give life meaning (Bennis & Thomas 2003; Coutou 2003). One of the most common types of transformative experiences, according to Bennis and Thomas (2003) involves the experience of prejudice. They claim that despite the trauma associated with prejudice, for some individuals it can be a clarifying event, contributing to their sense of identity and personal strengths. This is a significant observation in relation to women leaders and reflects a form of spiritual power that Mindell (1995) conceptualised in the Process Work Model, discussed in chapter 2, in relation to those who have suffered from oppression.

The focus on a leader's need to build personal resilience and remain true to themselves is a strong emphasis in the approach to leadership development today (Krosigk 2007). Avolio and fellow authors' (Avolio & Gardner 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumba, Luthans & May 2004) application of positive psychology to leadership, has given rise to the term authentic leadership. Avolio and Gardner (2005) specifically propose that authentic leadership can stand up to the unique challenges facing leaders today as it creates the conditions for higher trust. An authentic leader, according to Livingston and Lusin (2009) believes that every individual in the organisation has something to contribute, and helps those individuals build and leverage those capabilities. Kets de Vries (2011: 310) concurs when he defines the term 'authentic' as "something that conforms to fact and is therefore worthy of trust and reliance". Puente, Crous & Venter (2007: 17) claim that "authentic leadership is initiated by human relatedness" and when ideas, dreams and concerns are shared in affirming ways. However managing the congruence between the individual leader's inner world and identity and how it is

manifested through human interactions in the environment can be a challenging process (Livingston & Lusin 2009; Sosik & Jung 2010). Self-awareness, self-regulation and self-development are necessary internal tools for the development of authentic leadership, according to Livingston and Lusin (2009) and are often referred to as personal mastery (Dhiman 2011).

While the process of self-development and journeying towards authentic identity is supported by many feminist theorists (Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012). Gardiner (2011) critiques the authentic leadership discourse for failing to recognise the social and historic circumstances which affect a person's ability to be a leader. She asserts that the notion of the 'authentic leader' does not address the issues of power and privilege associated with an intrinsic sense of self-worth. Authentic leadership, according to Gardiner (2011) will manifest differently depending on personal and social history and may take on forms that are interpreted differently by mainstream society. The notions of resoluteness and uniqueness which are often associated with an authentic leadership identity (Chan, Hannah & Gardiner 2005; Shamir & Eilam 2005) are brought into question when it depends on confidence in speech and actions and creates no space for the role of silence or doubt (Gardiner 2011).

Gardiner (2011) highlights the fact that leadership studies are not neutral since they take place within systems of power and privilege. Since leaders derive their status from their followers, it is only through their perceptions that leaders can be deemed successful (Denmark 1993). The social power and influence attributed to leaders in official leadership positions is therefore 'tainted' with the societal notions of 'good leadership' (Eagly & Carli 2007; Fiske & Berdahl 2007), accumulated over time from our traditional paradigms which are dominated by patriarchy in our western institutions (Freeman *et al.* 2001). The Triangle of Tensions model (Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002) takes this into account by focussing on the individual's personal identity in relation to expected roles that are projected onto them from society and the organisation, as well as emergent roles that develop through the interaction of these two elements and the events and language that construct perceptions. The constant negotiation between these tensions is represented as key to the development of leadership which are neither rooted in the masculine nor in the feminine (Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002).

However, the question that leadership theorists continue to grapple with is that despite the shifting paradigms of leadership theories which appear to integrate traditionally considered masculine and feminine approaches, women remain under-represented in leadership positions, both globally and in South Africa (Barsh *et al.* 2012; Dormehl 2012). Patriarchy appears to be entrenched which has a disabling effect in allowing alternative models of power from expressing themselves fully within an organisational context (Barsh *et al.* 2012; Dormehl 2012). The following section will focus specifically on women in relation to these leadership theories and why this might be the case.

#### **4.7 Women and Leadership**

Despite the current promotion of leadership styles perceived to be more suited to women (Blumen 1992; Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009; Zichey 2001), the discourse on effective leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century continues to perpetuate a dominant way of thinking which excludes the voices of women, according to some feminist writers (Gardiner 2011). Other authors question whether women are using what is deemed to be an effective approach or tending to follow traditional approaches derived from the entrenched and inherited practice of patriarchy (Eagly & Carli 2007; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Sandberg 2013). The literature on women in leadership confirms that it cannot necessarily be assumed that occupying a position of leadership gives women equal status and power (Coughlin *et al.* 2005; Kolb *et al.* 2010; Valerio 2009; Wilson 2004). While the current study is not in and of itself concerned with why women have not made greater in-roads into leadership positions, this becomes a critical dimension when examining the impact of women leaders and whether they are shifting traditional notions of power. This question will be covered more fully in chapter 5 which deals with diversity and transformation, specifically with relevance to the South African context. What is significant to this part of the discussion on leadership and women is that many researchers have found that women are rejecting the notion of traditional, institutionalised leadership in favour of creating their own organisations with their own agenda and brand of leadership (Clark & Kleyn 2007).

Gender has increasingly become part of the broader debates on leadership and over the last decade studies of leadership and gender in the western world have yielded

interesting results. “Studies have shown that while effective male and female leaders demonstrate similar characteristics and behaviours, including those commonly termed both masculine and feminine, people still associate leadership with a male trait constellation” (Freeman *et al.* 2001: 38). The male traits associated with leadership are typically recorded as “outgoing, verbally skilled, aggressive, decisive and unemotional” and outweigh the female traits of “caring and understanding” (Freeman *et al.* 2001: 38). The current focus on leadership through collaboration and empowerment, rather than the outdated top-down, ‘command and control’ style leadership requires traits that are traditionally associated more with feminine qualities than with masculine ones (Gergen in Coughlin *et al.* 2005; Rhode 2003; Sandberg 2013; Wilson 2004; Zichy 2001). Some leadership experts feel that the form of leadership which emphasises participation and consensus building is rendering these leadership characteristics as genderless so that they are merging into the male model (Gosetti & Rusch 1995). Scrivens (2002) argues that men are in fact co-opting women’s style without acknowledging the source. Yudelowitz *et al.* (2002: 10) supports the notion of a genderless model of leadership by asserting that leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century need to be “androgynous”. However this is contested by many feminist theorists which is elaborate on further in this chapter (Gardiner 2011; Scrivens 2002).

The various debates on gender and leadership will be explored in the next section under the following headings:

- Context For Women In Leadership
- Male And Female Leadership Characteristics
- Leadership Versus Management
- ‘Genderless’ Leadership
- Women’s Rejection Of Corporate Leadership

#### **4.7.1 Context for Women in Leadership**

Leadership has generated challenges for women throughout the ages. Historically it was deemed appropriate only in fields specifically defined as female or in areas related to the home (Wilson 2004). Most theories of leadership have not specifically addressed gender, though they have been proposed within a cultural milieu of male leadership (Freeman *et al.* 2001; Zichy 2001). Historically, female leaders were often portrayed as

so unconventional in their ideas and agendas that they were ignored or ostracized. The only option for leadership amongst middle-class white women within a western cultural context was to carve out a separate sphere of action that could be defined as appropriately female and where they could exercise their own vision and build institutions as an extension of the domestic sphere, such as nursing, teaching and other 'compassionate' temperament professions (Valerio 2009). Working class and black women had even less options available to them in carving out leadership roles. The white middle class ideal of womanhood devalued these women's labour and added to the complexity of power relations in their communities (Freeman *et al.* 2001). This is particularly complex in South African society where the colonial context has given rise to black women fulfilling domestic duties for middle class, working women (Gaitskell, Kimble, Machonachie & Unterhalter 1984).

In addition, women's physiology has always been regarded as a limitation when it comes to leadership (Freeman *et al.* 2001). Motherhood and how to address it remains puzzle at the heart of much feminist discourse. Motherhood and the generative capacity of women have always played a significant role in structuring women's opportunities for leadership (Wilson 2004). Leadership has expanded, but traditional roles and responsibilities have not diminished. The impact of motherhood is felt in a variety of contradictory ways and consequently one of the central paradoxes surrounding women's leadership. The paradox that exists is that motherhood and its restriction to the private domestic sphere have been the antithesis of public power and leadership (Wilson 2004). In fact, motherhood is often used as the rationale for excluding women from politics (Freeman *et al.* 2001). Nevertheless, more recently, mothers' movements have gained clout within certain cultural contexts and have given women a new sense of efficacy which has infused them with a more powerful sense of self and extends beyond the domain that it originally developed (Bassnett 2013). Indeed feminist theorists, such as Wilson (2004) assert that motherhood is one of the best training grounds for leadership.

Adding to the complexity of women's issues has always been the issue of sexuality which exists below the surface in many issues surrounding women's leadership (Freeman *et al.* 2001). Kets de Vries (2006) believes the topic is controversial due to the fear of strong sexual feelings amongst both genders, particularly men. He argues

that many men are scared of women in a leadership context because of the emotions and fantasies they evoke. He believes that women tend to be more comfortable with both sexes. In his view it is this ambivalence about male/female interaction that can lead to a subtle form of discrimination. The strong female, whether physically or intellectually often finds herself open to a charge of abnormality and deviance (Freeman *et al.* 2001). Like power, the sexual dynamics between men and women tends to be a taboo subject in the work context which has gained insufficient attention in the literature. As women and men interact at a more equal professional level in the workplace, heterosexual power dynamics at an unconscious level within organisations need to be better understood (Kets de Vries 2006).

#### **4.7.2 Male and Female Leadership Characteristics**

Much of the literature documenting women's exercise of power and leadership begins with the male prototype of the leader. The focus is usually on how women differ from or compare with men in their attitudes towards power and the exercise of leadership (Valerio 2009). Men and male patterns are assumed to be the norm and standard against which women's behaviour will be measured. This leads to representations of women as 'less able' leaders (Ely *et al.* 2011; Zichy 2001). However, there is also an assumed polarity between men and women which have led some authors to argue that women's emotional and empathetic qualities are better suited to contemporary leadership than men (Ely & Rhode 2010; Helgesen 1995; Scrivens 2002; Valerio 2009; Wilson 2004; Zichy 2001). Several empirical studies have shown that women leaders, on average, demonstrate effective leadership qualities for contemporary conditions (Eagly & Carli 2007). However, Gardiner (2011) argues that most of these studies are behavioural studies which through statistical arguments in establishing women and men's superiority further entrench an unequal power relationship between men and women. In order to understand and integrate women's views into prevailing discourse and models, dichotomous thinking of this nature is not helpful (Freeman *et al.* 2001). That being said, in discussing women in leadership, it is impossible to avoid comparison between men and women. While it is important to determine women's leadership styles and exercising of power on their own terms, bearing in mind that women are not a homogenous group (Ledwith 2009), it is equally important to avoid building an argument that aims to judge either male or female leadership characteristics as superior.

As discussed in chapter 3 on the feminist power discourse, gender based expectations and perceptions still exist around stereotypes (Freeman *et al.* 2001). Cann and Siegfried's (1990) research into gender stereotypes revealed that psychological obstacles to female leadership were found to be related to masculine and feminine associations with each of the following dimensions:

- Consideration and concern with employee-oriented personal relations were attributed to female leadership
- Initiating structure and focussing on task accomplishment were related to male leadership

Leadership studies continue to explore these behavioural differences which generate a range of leadership identities which are shaped by cultural ideologies on what it means to be a good leader (Ely *et al.* 2011). These stereotypes intersect with culture as well as gender so that being an African woman as opposed to a woman of Asian or European decent takes on a specific meaning within a cultural context (Giscombe & Mattis 2002; Hassim 2005). Furthermore women in positions of authority are deemed to be judged by different standards than their male counterparts (Ely *et al.* 2011; Sandberg 2013). What appears assertive, self-confident or entrepreneurial in a man is often perceived as abrasive, arrogant and self-promoting in a woman (Heilman & Parks-Stamm 2007). At the same time when women in authority, performing traditionally male roles are seen to be conforming to female stereotypes they are often liked, but not respected (Eagly & Carli 2007; Rudman & Glick 2001). While several leadership behaviour studies have found women and men to demonstrate different leadership behaviours, there are those that have not (Lord, DeVader & Alliger 1986; Rogers cited in Corey 1996). These studies reveal that effective male and female leaders demonstrate similar characteristics and behaviours. However, according to Rogers (cited in Corey 1996), while this may be the case, followers still associate leadership behaviours with the male trait constellation. Ely and Rhode (2010) conclude that the real challenge that faces women leadership is establishing credibility in a culture that is deeply conflicted about her authority.

While the literature may have touted a collaborative style as female contribution to leadership, it is now a universally accepted rather than gendered approach (Ibarra &

Hansen 2011). In the leadership theories discussed in this section, it is evident that there is common acceptance among theorists that the 'power over' style of command and control leadership is ineffective in the long term (Gill 2013; Kets de Vries 2011; Valerio 2009; Wheatley 2004). However, according to Gill (2013) this form of management style still dominates much of business leadership due to the fears associated with losing control. Fisher and Patten (2013) highlight that in culturally and generationally diverse workplace environments, the authoritarian approach of leaders having all the answers and making the assumptions is no longer appropriate. While a collaborative approach to leadership, typically deemed 'female', has been promoted by leadership theorists, Scrivens (2002) believes that they fail to acknowledge women's role in influencing this approach. Yudelowitz *et al.* (2001) describe effective contemporary leadership as 'androgynous', needing to combine stereotypically associated feminine and masculine qualities. Given our patriarchal framework, it is difficult not to associate androgynous/genderless leadership with the 'male' barometer (Scrivens 2002). Some feminists argue that denying gender differences in leadership is subverting women's issues and is yet another subtle form of male domination of the discourse on leadership (Gardiner 2011). However, as opposed to comparing male and female attributes, what is significant to this current study, is to what extent there is authentic integration of traditionally viewed 'male' and 'female' qualities amongst women leaders and how this influences their view and use of power (Dickerson 2013; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012). One of the most common characteristics used to contrast the style of women and men is the comparison between leadership and management. This is discussed in the following section in relation to women and the way in which they exercise their power.

#### **4.7.3 Leadership versus Management**

In the previous discussion, it is argued that the very stereotypes that labelled female traits as unsuitable for leadership initially are the same stereotypes that deem those traits desirable today (Greenberg & Sweeney 2005; Scrivens 2002; Valerio 2009; Wilson 2004). Traits have not changed but perceptions and interpretation have. If women are especially suited to new leadership positions in organisations, then the question remains as to why they have not been promoted to highest executive positions. Subtle discrimination or, what is known as second generation gender bias (Ely *et al.*

2011), is usually offered as the most plausible reason and will be discussed further in the following chapter on transformation, but the distinction between management and leadership provides another perspective to this argument (Freeman *et al.* 2001). Throughout the developed world the numbers of women in the workforce has grown, along with a significant increase in women with postgraduate tertiary education (Barsh *et al.* 2012). While this upward trend continues in the future and women's visibility in leadership roles grow, the statistics for the most senior leadership positions globally, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, reveal that women remain scarcely represented.

Today, in the US, Europe and South Africa women have increasingly gained access to management positions (Barsh *et al.* 2012; Dormehl 2012). They are generally seen as managers but not leaders, whereas men are seen as both. Distinctions between the two seem to render them as two different areas rather than different points on the same continuum (Freeman *et al.* 2001). Leaders are primarily concerned with the macrocosmic purpose and direction of organisation, whereas managers are more intimately involved in work functions on a day-to-day basis (Kotter 2001). Paradoxically, followers typically engage more personally with leaders while are more directly supervised by managers (Kets de Vries 2011). One of the most significant distinctions between the two is that management is about coping with complexity, whereas leadership is about initiating change (Kotter 2001; Storey 2013). While current organisational literature is beginning to emphasise the emergence of leadership throughout organisations, in spite of formal positions of authority (Gallo 2013; Maxwell 2005), the distinction between management and leadership continues to be drawn to highlight a set of contrasting and complementary behaviours required in organisations. Where leaders are believed to inspire and motivate followers by articulating ideals and overall direction (Ibarra & Obodaru 2009); managers typically involve employees in short-range decision making and providing feedback for continued learning (Kotter 2001). Management deals with the know-how and problem solving in organisations whereas leadership deals with the knowing why and problem finding (Kotter 2001). Leaders empower through direction and inspiration while managers do it through action and participation (Goleman 1998; Ibarra & Obodaru 2009; Kets de Vries 2011). The two may not necessarily be mutually exclusive and may well both be necessary to fulfil roles in organisations. However, as discussed in the literature on organisational theory

on positional power in chapter 2 (section 2.4.1.1), the power associated with each is different. While managers may have significant responsibility, authority and a certain amount of power associated with that, the ‘potency’ of the transformational leader describes a different kind of power, more commensurate with the ‘agency’ of influencing events (Kets de Vries 2011; Valerio 2009).

Research suggests that the visible, heroic work, typically associated with leadership and usually the domain of men, is recognised and rewarded far more than the behind the scenes, yet equally vital work, of building teams and solving problems, more commonly associated with management and often carried out by women (Ely *et al.* 2011). Many of the stereotypically touted ‘women’s talents’ fit more directly in the manager column rather than the leader column (Freeman *et al.* 2001). In a study conducted over five years through the Insead Executive Programme, Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) revealed that women are equally visionary in their approach to leadership as men. However, by involving others in this process they are perceived to be less so. Another finding from the study was that women tended to avoid going out on a limb in situations and preferred to apply a more cautious approach by being thorough, practical and detail oriented. Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) attribute this to women’s perceived need to prove their competence in the face of gender bias. Ely *et al.* (2011) highlight the need for women to construct their own leader identity to break the vicious cycle which continues to align leadership characteristics with males since these roles were initially designed with males in mind. The challenge of constructing a leadership identity which resonates with women and shifts perceptions in the way in which they exercise power, is the lack of sufficient role models and networks with which to relate to co-create this identity (Ely *et al.* 2011).

#### **4.7.4 Role Models and Networks**

Lack of access to powerful, high status colleagues with whom to network is frequently cited as a barrier to advancement for women (Giscombe & Mattis 2002). Most of the developmental initiatives aimed at growing leadership capacity amongst women today include a focus on bringing women together to share experiences and form supportive networks (Valerio 2009). However, Ely *et al.* (2011) argue that due to the limited numbers of influential women within organisations, these networks often fail to lead to

greater leadership opportunities or visibility and recognition for their leadership claims. In an earlier study on how women use networks, Ibarra (1992) observed that women differed significantly from men. Whereas men's networks are typically predominantly male, women tend to network with men and women, often gaining access to opportunity through men and friendship and support from women. More recent research studies have revealed that gender stereotypes continue to impact the way in which women network, causing them to hold back building networks to support their ambitions for fear of appearing aggressive, self-promoting, power hungry and inauthentic (Ely *et al.* 2011; Heilman & Parks-Stamm 2007).

Women's lack of representation in directorships and executive positions in business globally, but growing numbers in senior management positions, reflects their lack of access to sponsors at the highest levels in organisations, which are more readily available to men (Barsh *et al.* 2012). While this observation reflects women's inability to access power through traditional social rank due to their inherited social status in a patriarchal society, it also reflects that women's ways of relating that may not necessarily be linked to traditional forms of social power. Women have less social support for experimenting with and claiming a leadership identity of their own due to the lack of role models with styles that are congruent with their self-concept (Ely *et al.* 2011; Ely 1994; Ibarra 1999) As women move into positions where they are more scarcely represented, they tend to become the object of greater gender scrutiny, according to Ely *et al.* (2011). This perpetuates identity contradictions for women in striking the balance between likeability and competence and can divert attention from the larger leadership purpose at hand in the interest in managing their self-image (Crocker & Park 2004; Steele 2010). The focus on self-preservation in the absence of role models and supportive relationships can lead to the overly competitive and unsupportive relationships which are often observed amongst women within organisations in contrast with radical feminism's promotion of community and sisterhood (Kariuki 2004). Sustaining leadership success in organisations may come at the cost of personal relationships or popularity for women. Sandberg (2013) comments that: "When a man is successful, he is liked by both men and women. When a woman is successful, people of both genders like her less." The lack of advancement to this level of leadership may reflect the structural obstacle of being excluded from traditional power bases, as well as women's conflicted identity around assuming authority and the

impact it has on their relationships, both personally and professionally (Barnett 2005). However, it may also reflect women's outright rejection of the demands and power associated with these top positions.

#### **4.7.5 Women's Rejection of Traditional Leadership Roles**

Just as more women gain access to new opportunities for leadership a significant number decide to abandon high power institutions and forge independent paths to power. There is mounting evidence that many women today eschew the conventional paths to corporate leadership (Freeman *et al.* 2001; Xavier, Ahmad, Perumal, Nor & Mohan 2011). Instead they are forging independent and innovative institutions and organisations in which they can employ different leadership styles and pursue a more explicitly feminist agenda. Women are not waiting for recognition, but rather creating situations where they can start at the top. At the same time they are developing alternative models of leadership and power that grow outside the entrenched structures (Valerio 2009; Xavier *et al.* 2011).

Globally women have increasingly been leaving large corporations and starting their own businesses in unprecedented numbers (Valerio 2009). It is estimated by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Women's Report that 126 million women are starting or running businesses in 67 economies around the world (Xavier, Kelley, Kew, Herrington & Vorderwülbecke 2012). The 2013 State of Women Owned Business Report commissioned by American Express Open reports that over 8.6 million businesses in the United States are owned by women, employing around 7.8 million people. Just under a quarter of small and medium sized businesses in South Africa are reported to being owned by women by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Women's Report (Xavier *et al.* 2012), with the numbers increasing rapidly. Through their entrepreneurial behaviour women are asserting their ability to lead. Old stereotypes of passivity, dependence and a need for vicarious success through family achievement are challenged in their role where they have seized opportunities in an active, assertive and self-promoting way. The long term effect could be a critical shift in cultural perceptions of women and leadership. Women are reshaping perceptions of their leadership potential by being leaders. Rather than waiting to be chosen by a male culture women

can create and provide opportunities for themselves (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009).

Even when women have reached senior positions, the inability to lead in a style that remains congruent with their authentic self remains a challenge. In their study on voluntary turnover of South African women executives, Clark and Kleyn's (2007) findings support that women are leaving paternalistic organisational cultures because they do not accommodate their need for freedom, autonomy and power and their drive to make a difference to the organisation and the country. While the pull factors for women may be the opportunities for entrepreneurship and new ways of working in the modern economy, the push factors cited in this study highlight the negative and limiting impact of traditional male dominated cultures. Factors that drove women away from these organisations included:

- Their own lack of political acumen and negotiation ability in situations
- Burnout and stress
- Isolation and exclusion from the male social networks
- Clash of values between themselves and their boss
- Poor relationship with a key and powerful member of the organisation
- Paternalistic culture
- Lack of female support and mentorship
- Intimidation and active acts of sabotage

The challenges for women in business of leading within a patriarchal structure and system remain significant. In order to retain women in leadership positions, women leaders need to avoid having their identities subsumed by that of their organisations (Clark & Kleyn 2007). In a recent study conducted by Toh and Leonardelli (2012), women were found to be held back from leadership in what they describe as 'tight' cultures, whereas in 'loose' cultures women were able to emerge as leaders. 'Tight' cultures are defined by Toh & Leonardelli as rigid, socially conformist and homogenous cultures which impose tough sanctions on those who step out of line. 'Loose' cultures reflect cultures which do not have as clear norms and are more tolerant of deviation. Heterogenous societies in the midst of political transition are often reflective of loose cultures. Despite the fact that western democratic society is typically

reflective of a 'loose' culture as defined by Toh & Leonardelli. (2013), they go on to argue that the reason women are underrepresented in corporations and even in start up entrepreneurial endeavours is due to their preference to hand over leadership power to men due to their internalised notions that being masculine is more leaderlike.

In her pioneering study in the 1970's of women in corporations, Kanter's (1977) participant observation method revealed that increased numbers alone could correct biased perceptions and educate for appropriate behaviour. Today authors agree that this pipeline or critical mass theory has lost credibility since women do represent a substantial proportion of management today (Freeman *et al.* 2001; Sandberg, 2013). Sandberg (2013) concurs with Toh & Leonardelli (2013) that it is women's internal barriers created through the negative messages derived from gender stereotypes that keep them from assuming positions of power within institutions. While internal barriers are significant in preventing women from taking up leadership positions, women's multiple roles provide another argument for this phenomenon.

Although family commitments were not cited as the primary driver of voluntary turnover in Clark and Kleyn's (2007) study, parenthood still disproportionately affects careers of women and their willingness to take up leadership roles. Rhode (2003) believes that working mothers are held to higher standards than working fathers and are often criticised for being insufficiently committed either as a parent or professional. There are many women who chose not to enter the rat race and make choices about the priorities in their lives, both personal and professional (Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009). Many women leaders and authors (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Sandberg 2013) argue that nothing will change the picture and practice of leadership if women themselves do not choose to pursue leadership. Matchar (2013) observes the trend amongst many women, schooled in the world of feminist consciousness, who are not enticed by joining what they perceive as the type of life they want to shun – alien, pressured, brutally competitive with unappealing rewards. However, Sandberg's (2013) controversial book, "Lean In", challenges women to take up leadership opportunities to create shared experience and the institutional change needed in organisations. One of the biggest hurdles to women occupying leadership positions in organisations is the choice itself, which appears to be only within women's power to change. This phenomenon has given rise to the focus on women in leadership programmes at business schools and the like to

enable the self-efficacy and motivational skills to enable women to succeed in this world (Ibeh, Carter, Poff & Hamill 2008).

Just as women express ambivalence about power, the same rejection of leadership may come not necessarily from a base of ‘shunning’ traditional systems in favour of something more congruent with their values, but as an avoidance of the public role of leadership due to their perceptions of themselves as second class citizens. Psychological suffering of women is deeply entrenched. Schuitevoerder (2000: 93) claims that “many women suffer from inner criticism and self-doubt modelled on oppressive cultural values”. Women themselves have internalised stereotypes. Many women play the passive, victim role, use special low self-confidence vocabulary to express themselves and don’t try and change the situation they find themselves in (Sandberg 2013). Irigaray (2004) asserts that women need to find value in themselves as women and not simply mothers. Sandberg (2013) believes that while there are real obstacles, such as sexism and discrimination, as well as lack of flexibility and access to child care in organisations, internal barriers can be removed by women themselves. She proposes that women should stop opting out before they take a real decision to leave for family reasons, not confuse success with likeability and stop trying to have it all. Sandberg’s (2013) views have been lauded by certain feminists (typically second-wave) as necessary to continue the process of gender transformation. However, other feminists (typically radical feminists) critique her for white, middle-class, capitalist values and taking a dominant stance over what women want and need (Geier 2013).

This opt-out strategy is regarded as a major challenge to individuals and organisations given the contemporary demands on business (Valerio 2009). There is evidence from research studies in the management literature that mixed boards and executive teams perform better than male dominated teams (Barsh *et al.* 2012). Furthermore the presence of women leaders was shown to have a positive effect on the bottom line in the Catalysts 2004 Bottom Line Study (Valerio 2009). Ironically, modern patriarchal organisations are allowed to flourish in part, because of the support of women (Clark & Kleyn 2007). Women support these structures either as customers or as employees, but continue to exclude themselves from decision making or pursuing powerful positions to bring about change in these systems (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Sandberg 2013). Weber in Groshev (2002) believes that society strives not only to give more power to men, but

also to re-enforce men's power, at the same time limiting and depriving women of power. Clark and Kleyn (2007) assert that it will take perseverance and dedication of men and women to convert traditional organisations into the form that is required by the modern economy, but that women need to take the lead in transforming patriarchal structures into structures that truly value all forms of diversity.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

Leadership theories have evolved over time from 'trait' leadership theories to transformational, situational and servant leadership theories, to those of the emerging and 'learner leader' (Avolio & Bass 1988; MacGregor Burns 2003; Greenleaf 1977; Hersey & Blanchard 1977; Kets de Vries 2006; Kotter 2001; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002). While these theories have been influenced by women's perspectives, as with the discourse on power, the extent of their influence both in the world of literature and academia remains a subject for continuous debate (Gardiner 2011; Mauthner & Edwards 2010). Despite claims that women's leadership styles appear to be suited to the current demands of leadership (Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009), the extent to which women are influencing the leadership and power discourse from within their roles within organisations remains an area which is under-researched (Mauthner & Edwards 2010). It appears that even as the numbers of women in leadership increase in organisations their ability to challenge the status quo remains limited both globally and in South Africa (Furlonger 2013; Sandberg 2013). Management studies relating to women in South African business have tended to focus on gender equity and representation at leadership level (Dornmehl 2012), but the substantive issues around transformation are a critical consideration in this study which explores mental models of power that either perpetuate or challenge the status quo. Research into diversity and organisational transformation is discussed in the next chapter, with specific reference to South Africa, as the final area of literature which has a bearing on how models of power are constructed by women within the context of business leadership.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DIVERSITY AND TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

“A radical mind shift; that’s what we need if South Africa is to shift gear from the slow, incremental changes in the numbers of women at executive levels to a dramatic increase in the way we perceive, promote and protect women in corporate South Africa business.” (Maphisa cited in Dormehl 2012: 7)

As Chairwoman of the South Africa’s Business Women’s Association (BWA), Maphisa’s statement, which is also included in the introduction of this thesis, reflects the gender transformation agenda being advocated in South African business today. By focussing on women’s representation at management levels in business, organisations such as the BWA work from the premise that unless numbers of women increase within senior levels of organisations, transformation of patriarchal institutions will not take place. Organisations advocating gender equity in the workplace such as the BWA, have emerged in response to the broader national transformation agenda, driven by the current government in South Africa through the constitution and national legislation. With the transition to a democratic government in South Africa in 1994, the new constitution and associated legislation was implemented to enable the political, social and economic transformation envisaged by the new political leadership (Vermeulen & Coetzee 2006). After 1994 attempts to redress the injustices of apartheid in South Africa became an imperative of every facet of civil society, including business (Thomas 2002). However, the focus on representation and equity statistics appears to have dominated the transformation discourse, often obscuring more substantive organisational transformation. Even Maphisa’s call in the above extract for women’s ‘protection’ in corporate South Africa carries notions of paternalism which seems to re-entrench women’s disempowerment. In order to understand emerging models of power amongst South African women business leaders, it is necessary to understand the broader transformation context they find themselves in. Approaches to gender equity

and diversity in organisations will have a direct impact on women's capacity to transform traditional cultural norms and social constructs, such as power. In this chapter a review of this context will be provided under the following headings:

- 5.2 Gender Equity in South African Business
- 5.3 The Women's Movement in South Africa
- 5.4 Approaches to Managing Diversity

## **5.2 Gender Equity in South African Business**

The Employment Equity (EE) report of 2012 claims that:

Transformation will not advance enough to benefit the majority of the populace adequately, unless individuals from the designated groups are largely employed in positions with authority and with real decision-making powers. Whites and males will continue to dominate in the middle-to-upper levels for the next 127 years as long as employers are caught up with the vicious cycle of continuing to employ people with mainly the same race and gender profile that just exited their organisations" (Nkeli, 2012: iv).

Despite fifteen years of equity legislation aimed at eradicating gender discrimination and advancing women in the workplace, women remain under-represented at leadership levels and the control of business institutions remain predominantly in the hands of white males. The current leadership status of women in business in South Africa is discussed below.

### **5.2.1 Equity Legislation**

Achieving equity in the workplace in a post-apartheid South Africa was intended through the implementation of affirmative action policies and strategies to ensure compliance with the government's introduction of the Employment Equity Act (EEA) (RSA 1998). This Act aimed at eradicating unfair discrimination in the workplace and creating opportunities for previously disadvantaged groups (Vermeulen & Coetzee 2006). Affirmative action was outlined as a policy which required a proactive set of measures designed to counteract unfair discrimination in the workplace. Implicit in the

policy are numeric goals which serve to stimulate the inclusion of people from different backgrounds into the workplace to make it representative of the demographics of the qualified workforce (Thomas & Ely 1996). In terms of the EEA legislation the broad category of 'women' is recognised as a 'designated group', together with categories of 'blacks' (including African, Coloured and Indians) and people with disabilities (RSA 1998). These 'designated groups' are deemed to have been previously disadvantaged prior to the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa and are therefore targeted as beneficiaries of affirmative action. The EEA sets out the purpose of the Act to achieve equity in the workplace by promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment by eliminating unfair discrimination. Unfair discrimination is defined by the Labour Relations Act (RSA 1995) as either direct or indirect and pertains to categories of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, conscience, belief, language and culture. Direct discrimination is defined by the Act as easily identifiable and involves overt differential treatment of employees based on arbitrary grounds. Indirect discrimination is not as easily recognisable as it is a more subtle form of discrimination and involves the application of policies and practices that appear neutral and do not distinguish between employees, but in reality have a disproportionate negative effect on individuals and groups (RSA 1995). National transformation initiatives have aimed at eradicating both direct and indirect discrimination. The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) was formed by the government in 1996, alongside national legislation to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise and report on issues concerning gender equality (Hicks 2012).

To deal with the white monopolisation of the South African economy, direct intervention in the distribution of wealth and opportunities was promoted initially through Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), and then legislated through the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE) in 2003 (Chiloane-Tsoka 2013; Horwitz & Jain 2011; RSA 2003). This Act was designed to promote the achievement of the constitutional right to equality; increase broad-based and effective participation of black people in the economy; and provide a holistic approach to equal opportunities. Employment Equity on its own has a workplace orientation and is considered necessary to promote changes in the social mobility of the workplace, however, it is considered insufficient to address broader social inequality. The BBBEE Act is intended to create a system that will enable growth in black business, and in particular one which brings

women into the mainstream economy as one of the most significantly disadvantaged groups in South Africa (Chiloane-Tsoka 2013). Black women are commonly regarded as a key measurement of progress in the empowerment of all, as their status in society is an indication of how far the country has moved (Chiloane-Tsoka 2013).

Policy and legislation in South Africa continues to be amended to ensure the eradication of systemic social and economic inequalities brought about by colonialism, apartheid and patriarchy (Jagwanth & Murray 2002). As with any legislation, while the acts have noble intentions, the implementation and monitoring of legislation give rise to a number of discrepancies. Chairwoman of the Commission for Employment Equity, Nkeli (2012) states in the latest EE report (2011-2012) that “despite the general appearance of compliance and a façade of relevant internal policies, programmes, processes and practices to promote gender equity in the workplace, practical outcomes largely reveal a reality of continued neglect of gender equity as a constitutional, policy and legislative obligation” (Nkeli 2012: iv). The statement suggests that issues relating to gender in the workplace are not being dealt with in a meaningful way and that the statistics alone of women’s representation in leadership bears testimony to this.

### **5.2.2 Women’s Representation at Leadership Levels in SA Business Organisations**

According to the 2012 BWA Annual Census Report, women represent 52.0% of the South African population, yet only 43.9% of working South Africans are women. The 2011-2012 EE Report (Nkeli 2012) claims that the representation of women still lags behind most levels when measured against their economically active population. The report does indicate that South African organisations have made progress at the professionally qualified and skilled levels for both black people and women. However, women remain grossly underrepresented at top management and senior management level. Research from Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) (Nkeli 2012) shows that more than 90% of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions at Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) listed companies are still dominated by white males, with a number of these leaders nearing retirement. The EE report (2011-2012) (Nkeli 2012) which includes unlisted companies reveals a similar trend, with white males still dominating the senior and executive management level at 73.1%.

The BWA was formed in 2000 as a non-governmental organisation to focus specifically on professional women's mobility in the workplace. They conduct a yearly census, sponsored by South African banking institute, Nedbank, to track women's mobility in leadership positions in the workplace (Dormehl 2012). As the largest and most prominent association of women professionals in the country, the BWA's findings are possibly the most reliable in relation to the representation of women in leadership in South Africa today (Dormehl 2012). The most recent findings from the Business Women's Association Census of 2012, record the following percentages of women contributing to the total population of various levels of executive and senior management in South African companies they surveyed:

Female Executive Managers - 21.4%

Female Directors - 17.1%

Female CEOs - 3.6%

Female Chairpersons - 5.5%

Despite women being a significant minority in senior and executive management positions, the report does record a growing trend in the number of women directors from previous years across the majority of organisations they surveyed. Furthermore, the decrease in companies with zero women directors reflects the strides South African companies are making to ensure the inclusion of women on boards. They therefore conclude that the numbers of women in leadership positions appear to be on the increase, albeit it slowly and marginally (Dormehl 2012).

However, the BWA report also reveals that South Africa is making positive progress in relation to gender equity globally. According to their statistics, South Africa is ahead of Australia and Canada in terms of women directorships and is at comparable levels with Israel and the United States. In a McKinsey Quarterly article on gender representation, Barsh *et al.* (2012) report that Europe appears to be increasing its number of women in leadership positions, but remains in a similar position to South Africa; whereas Asian countries like India, China and Japan have significantly lower numbers of women in leadership than in South Africa; while Scandinavian countries have significantly higher numbers. Despite South Africa's relative progress, the BWA report (Dormehl 2012) claims that there is increasing recognition that a dramatic mind-set change is needed if

women's representation is to increase to the required levels. As a body which aims to track progress and lobby for the advancement of women, organisations like the BWA provide a vital role in focussing on equity statistics. However, they fail to explore some of the deeper debates which influence the complex discourse around equity and ultimately impact on transformation efforts in organisations. One of these debates centres on the relationship between race and gender equity.

### **5.2.3 Race and Gender Equity**

Within the South African context, white women, while being included in the category of designated groups, remain relatively privileged in relation to black women, leading to the questioning of whether they should remain beneficiaries of policies such as affirmative action (Horwitz & Jain 2011; Mushariwa 2012). This is a contentious issue since despite their privilege white women do still suffer from gender discrimination in the workplace (Burger & Jafta 2010; Horwitz & Jain 2011). However, the reports also show that white women are more likely to be employed at senior levels than any other designated group (Grant 2007), supporting the commonly held perception, both in South Africa and in the United States, that white women reap more rewards from affirmative action than other targeted groups, given their historic privilege due to their race and class (Mangum 2008). In the latest Employment Equity Report, Nkeli (2012) highlights the progress made by white women and Indians in the South African workplace and emphasises the need to apply the same vigour and commitment to other designated groups.

The gate keeping role of the white minority and the lack of substantive transformation efforts in favour of reaching quotas have contributed to the allegations of tokenism and 'window dressing' levelled at affirmative action initiatives (Grant 2007; Pickworth 2013). The fact that black women are more significantly represented in the public sector than the private sector is evidence of the white monopoly in business, despite legislation like BBBEE (Horwitz & Jain 2011). The contradictions and divisions that exist amongst women due to their relative privilege is one of the key reasons why qualitative studies need to be conducted into women's discourse at a leadership level to understand what is both different and common in the way in which they construct their experience, so as to revisit transformation efforts aimed at empowering women in organisations. As

discussed in the chapter 3 on the feminist discourse on power, these divisions exist globally amongst both activists and academics. The South African women's movement has also grappled with these issues in the process of dismantling systems of oppression, such as apartheid.

### **5.3 The Women's Movement in South Africa**

In South Africa women were essential to every facet of the anti-apartheid movement and have long been recognised as the “backbone of the struggle” (Britton 2002: 44). Throughout the transition to democracy and into the new dispensation, women have had to continually reassert the connections between racial, class and gender oppression. However, according to Haysom, (in Jones 2000: 106), “when we speak about the women's movement (in South Africa) people are very cautious, because there's a very strong history of organising around political parties or around the liberation struggle.” Historically in South Africa, women's organisation has been around bread and butter issues and feminism has been perceived as a ‘western’ concept with a strong Anglo-American bias. Masenya (cited in Jones 2000: 107) reframes feminism within an African context and calls it ‘womanism’ as a conscious move to prevent the focus on women's rights being viewed as a sell-out or adopting something that is not appropriate to the African struggle.

Many South African feminists question the notion of a shared ‘sisterhood’ amongst women (Hassim 2005; Jones 2000; Mtintso 2003) and argue that there are no universal women's interests. They differentiate between practical and strategic gender interests and draw a distinction between the popular women's movement and the feminist women's movement in South Africa. Because of the existence of gender within other constructs, women, depending on their social context, women experience gender in different ways. Their multiplicity of identities determines their differing relationship to patriarchy and the forms of struggle with which they engage. Their unique upbringing and life experience also elicits distinct styles of leadership, behavioural patterns and approaches to problems (Mtintso 2003). In researching women's experience and their use of power in their leadership roles in South Africa, the diverse backgrounds and experience of oppression of individual leaders is a critical consideration. For this

reason, a narrative research method will be adopted to understand women's past histories and how it impacts on their experiences today.

Because patriarchy intersects with other forms of oppression and discrimination based on, for instance, race and class, it is too simplistic to equate women with gender and women's interests with gender interests (Hassim 2005; Mtintso 2003). According to Mtintso (2003) the presence and representation of the category 'women' does not necessarily suppose a gender transformation agenda, as women do not necessarily represent or even have a common understanding of patriarchy and gender relations. Recognising the diverse views amongst women and participating in the debate, is critical to fostering any gender related studies. The hostility towards western feminists and the accusation of white women academics undermining and patronising 'grassroots' women organisations (Erlank 2005; Mtintso 2003) is an issue of sensitivity which needs to be considered in research with women. In South Africa, the experiences of oppression amongst white and black women have, and to a great extent remain, extremely different. In this study, the fact that all the women interviewed will reflect a similar class status in terms of their position as business' leaders creates the common experience. However, the history of how they have reached this status and the hurdles they have had to overcome to do so may differ significantly.

It is ironical that the manner in which women have been included in formal political institutions in South Africa has tended to displace the transformation goals of structural and social change (Hassim 2005; Jagwanth & Murray 2002). Throughout the 1980's and 1990's these goals were held to be mutually dependent. However, due to the divisions within the women's movement and the inability to mobilise around a clear agenda, Hassim (2005) believes that women's increased representation has not facilitated the redistribution of resources and power in ways that change the basis for women's oppression. She argues that:

the reduction of the women's movement to a 'development partner' and feminist activity to demands for quotas, has long term costs for the women's movement as well as for democracy as a whole, as it reduces the ability of the movement to debate the underpinning norms and values of policy direction as well as within other social movements and in civil society more generally (Hassim 2005: 192).

These observations relating to the women's movement in the political arena can be directly related to the business context, where affirmative action programmes may have increased the number of women at senior levels, but not necessarily succeeded in transforming the organisations' ability to accommodate women's needs and agendas. This study aims at understanding whether transformation is taking place around the issue of power through the individual experiences and actions of women leaders, who may or may not necessarily identify with a broader women's movement. Gaining insight into the incremental and subtle shifts in organisations is important since, according to Britton (2002: 57), "the eradication of gender inequality is going to be neither swift nor even, because the reformers are trying to change the very institutions within which they are working." To change these institutions, it is incumbent on women leaders to bring about an environment that both promotes and values diversity of perspectives if traditional white male cultures are to become more transformed. Organisational approaches to managing diversity are dealt with in the following section of this chapter.

#### **5.4 Approaches to Managing Diversity**

Loden and Rosener (1991) define diversity as that which differentiates one group of people from another along primary and secondary dimensions, with primary dimensions exerting the primary influences on our identity, such as gender, ethnicity and race; and secondary dimensions being the less visible, more variable influences on our identity, such as language, educational background, religion, work style and communication style. Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005) highlight the trend towards definitions of a multiplicity of diversity dimensions. Feldner-Busztin (in Meyer *et al.* 2004) believes that the interrelationship between all of these are complex and individual, be they visible or not, and affect attitudes, perspectives and behaviours in the workplace. They also influence the assumptions people make about those around them and the extent to which they are prepared to trust and work with others. She therefore believes that diversity cannot be left to develop spontaneously, but needs to be valued and managed to offer benefits to an organisation. In the current study, the ability for individual women leaders to influence the culture of their organisation, not only depends on the

individual woman's perspective and practice in relation to power, but also depends upon the organisations' ability to integrate difference into their organisational norms.

There has been much written about the approach to managing diversity in organisations over the past twenty years (Allen & Montgomery 2001; Horwitz & Jain 2011; Human 2005; Rijamampianina & Carmichael 2005; Thomas & Ely 1996). In South Africa, diversity management became a significant organisational strategy linked to the Employment Equity Act legislation of 1998 and the implementation of affirmative action policies to achieve post-apartheid transformation. Drawing from the experience of affirmative action policies and diversity programmes globally, and in the United States in particular, South African management academics attempted to define a process appropriate for rectifying the inequities of the past under apartheid and integrating polarised cultures in the workplace. However, it was argued by these academics that, based on the lessons from the global arena, affirmative action and the appreciation of diversity not only had a moral imperative, but also a sound business rationale (Cox & Beale 1997; Thomas 2002).

Thomas and Ely (1996) have provided the most commonly referenced frameworks regarding diversity initiatives and analysis on where these efforts have not fulfilled their promises (Horwitz & Jain 2011). They recognise three distinct paradigms with which organisations approach diversity:

- The discrimination and fairness paradigm
- The legitimacy and access paradigm
- The learning and assimilation paradigm

These paradigms are useful in understanding approaches to diversity both globally and in South Africa and how they might have impacted, and still influence, the emerging models of power amongst women leaders in South Africa.

#### **5.4.1 The Discrimination and Fairness Approach**

Based on the preceding discussion on gender equity, the discrimination and fairness paradigm arguably remains the dominant discourse on diversity in South Africa

(Horwitz & Jain 2011). It has been a number of years since the implementation of the Employment Equity Act of 1998 in South Africa and organisations came under pressure to implement affirmative action. It cannot be denied that progress has been made to create opportunities for previously disadvantaged groups but resistance to the implementation of affirmative action still exists which can be attributed to persistent racism, sexism and an overriding belief that one group's gain seems to be translated into another groups loss (Feldner-Buszin in Meyer *et al.* 2004; Human 2005).

While it can be argued that affirmative action is the first practical and necessary step towards appreciating diversity, it is recognised that affirmative action alone cannot counter deeply ingrained prejudices and patterns of behaviour (Feldner-Buszin in Meyer *et al.* 2004; Thomas & Ely 1996). The relationship between diversity management, employment equity and affirmative action is viewed in various ways in the literature (Rijamampianina & Carmichael 2005). They are sometimes viewed as interchangeable practices, other times as complementary approaches and some view diversity as a less controversial alternative to employment equity and affirmative action. Rijamampianina & Carmichael (2005) argue that even though diversity management is different from employment equity and affirmative action, their success is interdependent. To be given a chance to succeed, affirmative action needs an inclusive and supportive environment where diversity is valued and managed.

Thomas and Ely (1996: 81) describe the discrimination and fairness paradigm of diversity in organisations as focussing on equal opportunities and fair treatment. In South African organisations this has translated into applying the moral imperative for affirmative action, as well as compliance with employment equity legislation, without necessarily creating the climate in which the potential for diversity is realised (Thomas 1996). This approach to diversity puts pressure on organisations and employees to ensure that everyone is regarded the same and difference does not count. Ironically, the affirmative action programmes implemented to ensure justice between groups, has given rise to resistance because of concerns about justice for individuals (Vermeulen & Coetzee 2006). Horwitz and Jain (2011) argue that South African organisations seem stuck at the level of compliance, rather than organisational culture transformation. In their opinion, the regulatory requirements in South Africa have led to a mentality that focusses on ticking the boxes which has limited significant engagement with

transformation. Furthermore Nkomo and Stewart (2006) argue that the ‘business case’ for diversity is premised on the need to make the political rationale for practices of employment equity more palatable for white male managers. Grant (2007) describes the transformation discourse which exists in many organisations as duplicitous in that it is presented as being supportive of change and will not overtly oppose what is legal and democratic, but will really ensure as little change as possible.

Women as beneficiaries of affirmative action fall prey to some of the accusations levelled at the practice of ‘window dressing’ to meet quotas and decisions being based on preferential treatment rather than merit (Byrne 2009). The white fear of displacement may have contributed to white women’s advancement through affirmative action practices, seeming less threatening to the status quo in the eyes of their white male counterparts (Horwitz & Jain 2011). Not only does the inclusion of women into positions of power potentially undermine their ability to transform institutions when they become part of the leadership ‘elite’, but if the manner in which they achieved those positions is questioned, their power to influence is radically reduced.

#### **5.4.2 The Access and Legitimacy Perspective**

In proposing a business case for diversity, many companies have been motivated by the need for access and legitimacy to diverse markets (Cox & Beale 1997). The positive consequence of this approach is that the organisation drives the process from within, rather than being obliged to fulfil legal quotas. However, according to Thomas and Ely (1996) this approach has often resulted in segmenting organisations according to racial, national or gender stereotypes. The result is that individuals are not valued for their unique perspective but stereotypical ‘fit’ with clients or customers are imposed upon them. Miller and Hayward (2006) in their discussion of gender and occupational stereotypes in the new economy highlight the fact that gender segregation of roles is still in existence and continues to perpetuate stereotypes. This paradigm, therefore, does nothing to challenge traditional roles of women and while women may reach positions of power in the organisation within this framework, they may well be in less powerful roles, where women are perceived to be better suited due to traditional stereotypes.

Equally dangerous with this paradigm is the missed opportunity for sharing views and learning across diverse groups so that perspectives and practices can be transferred amongst them. An African approach to diversity was introduced into the debate in South African literature during the 1990's and aimed at re-defining the approach to diversity according to espoused African values of community and solidarity (Mbigi & Maree 1995). However, this approach has come under criticism for its stereotyping of African values and imposing an agenda onto a process which inherently is about understanding uniqueness (Thomas 2002). According to Rijamampianina and Maxwell (2002) diversity is a natural source of variety which is a condition for learning. The diverse nature of the workforce itself can be a driver of learning within a group or organisation. The conditions for women to best influence the formal and informal norms of an organisation, are probably most conducive within Thomas and Ely's (1996) learning and assimilation paradigm.

#### **5.4.3 The Learning and Assimilation Paradigm**

Many authors (Booyesen & Nkomo 2010; Horwitz & Jain 2011; Op't Hoog, Siebers & Linde 2010) concur with Thomas and Ely (1996) that the most effective paradigm for diversity to benefit the organisation is one of learning and assimilation, where diversity is connected to work perspectives. This enables organisations to incorporate different employees' perspectives into the main work of the organisation and to enhance work by rethinking tasks, redefining strategies and even cultures. Valuing diversity should incorporate the benefits of the similarities and differences between people and allow for the expression of individual attributes in such a way that it contributes to commitment, motivation and productivity (Feldner-Buszyn in Meyer *et al.* 2004; Human 2005). Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005) believe that the process of managing diversity effectively should include motivation for diversity, interaction amongst diverse groups, sharing of the vision and learning from one another. Furthermore Thomas (2002) found that the common element among high performing diverse groups was the integration of diversity.

From a systems perspective, Wheatley (2005) highlights the danger of failing to integrate diversity into the organisational system:

“Life relies on diversity to give it the possibility of adapting to changing conditions. If a system becomes too homogenous, it becomes vulnerable to environmental shifts. If one form is dominant, and that form no longer works when the environment shifts, the entire system can collapse.” (Wheatley 2005: 78)

This is essentially a postmodernist approach to organisations which accommodates fragmented experience into the whole (Hatch & Schultz 1997; Van Tonder 2008). It is within this ideal context that women leaders would be able and encouraged to redefine their roles and notions of power. Horwitz & Jain (2011) describe this context as a culture where leadership is visibly involved in leading change and transforming structures, inclusivity is promoted and human resource capacity is developed to deal with the changing environment. Thomas and Ely (1996) describe the preconditions for a culture that values diversity as one which:

- Values different perspectives and wants to incorporate them into work practices
- Recognises learning opportunities and challenges from different perspectives
- Expects high standards of performance from everyone
- Creates an organisational culture which stimulates personal development
- Creates an organisational culture which is open and where workers feel valued
- Supports egalitarian, non-bureaucratic structure

Women in positions of leadership should ideally be able to influence some of these factors to enable a culture to accommodate diversity. The current research study is interested in what extent they are influencing the organisational culture themselves and to what extent they have simply adapted to ‘fit in’ with the prevailing culture. For diversity to benefit organisations and individuals, shifts need to happen in the interaction between the individual and the organisational system. Thomas’s (1996: 93) observation that “very few of our South African organisations have arrived at a point of fostering mutual adaptation” still applies today. This limits any advantage that differing

views and perspectives as a result of a diverse workforce may bring to organisations (Furlonger 2013; Valerio 2009). By understanding how women construct models of power within their leadership role and strategies they claim to use to influence the culture, the current research aims to understand whether emerging models are evident so that mutual adaptation can take place between the individual and the system. The alternative is that women have to devise strategies to negotiate their way around patriarchal systems and consequently perpetuate them (Freeman *et al.* 2001; Kolb *et al.* 2010; Wilson 2004).

### **5.5 The Transformation Process**

Much has been written globally on transformation and change in organisations which is highlighted in the section on organisational perspectives on power in chapter 2 of this thesis. While this study does not aim to understand transformation in organisations *per se*, the findings of this study should have direct relevance to approaches to gender empowerment and transformation efforts in organisations. Transformation which is often referred to as second order change, is ignited by a new way of thinking and conceptual change that opens up new perspectives on the world (Esterhuysen 2003; Van Tonder 2004). The literature on leadership and organisational change is clear that these new ways of thinking are critical for our postmodern world which is highly competitive and where the past does not predict future success (Esterhuysen 2003; Lewis 2011; Valerio 2009). In South Africa the need for transformation is linked to specific socio-economic and political considerations which have both a moral and strategic rationale (Human 2005; Thomas 2002; Horwitz & Jain 2011). However, as is evident in the slow progress being made in achieving gender equity at leadership levels despite proactive national legislation, transforming a country, its institutions and organisations is not an easy task (Esterhuysen 2003). The challenge of transformation in business remains rooted in the win-lose paradigm associated with power, where those who have profited from the older order of things are expected to relinquish power, while those who stand to gain may have high expectations and develop strategies to ensure they retain the power which they have previously been denied (Esterhuysen 2003; Lewis 2011; Shriberg *et al.* 2005).

‘Collective blindness’ refers to the inhibiting role played by organisational culture and systems which entrench mental models and limit the ability of individuals to see alternatives (Esterhuysen 2003). It is typically those who have not been part of the privileged power system who are able to challenge the status quo and catalyse the required dissonance in an organisation to create second order change (Van Tonder 2004). Without an understanding of how their own models of power are constructed, women leaders run the risk of remaining complicit with patriarchal cultures in order to protect their position. This in turn limits opportunities for engaging with diverse approaches to using the ‘power’ of leadership to transform organisations. Third order change is defined as the empowerment or capacitating of members of organisations to recognise their own models or paradigms so that they are able to change them as they would see fit (Van Tonder 2004). Awareness of these internal mental models mitigate against collective ‘blindness’ at a collective level and at an individual level reflect the personal development journey of leaders.

Within the South African context Booysen (2007) observes that social identity issues are integrally connected to the assumptions which stem from these mental models or ideologies. She claims that it would be “naïve to think that social identity issues will ever completely disappear from the South African discourse” (Booyesen 2007: 14). While South African society continues to experience power shifts, the loss of identity is felt not only by those who are losing power, but also by the groups who are gaining power. This is still experienced most significantly along racial categories, due to the long history of racial polarisation of South African society (Ramphele 2012). The relationship between the power discourse and social transformation in South Africa was the subject of several pioneering and critical discussions amongst South African and international authors in Burman, Kottler, Levett and Parker’s (1997) collection of work, published directly after the transition to democracy in South Africa’s history. The collection highlights the practice of power in language and its role in the process of culture change at a time when South Africa had to actively engage in letting go of old forms of institutionalised power. Twenty years on into South Africa’s democracy it seems highly appropriate to review areas of transformation in our society, using discourse analysis to understand what remains deeply embedded and to continue to challenge transformation efforts to move beyond observable measurement towards more fundamental principles.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The aim of this study is to uncover women's emerging models of power by understanding how they construct their own narrative of power within their lives and leadership roles. The results should enable business leaders and organisational development practitioners to better understand how South African women's empowerment in business could be approached in a more meaningful way and the role which women leaders can play in transforming organisations beyond the level of representation alone.

The literature review has examined the evolution of the various traditional schools of thought on power, as well as the feminist perspectives which have entered this discourse more recently. In understanding how the conceptual theories of power translate into practice in an organisational context, the literature has also focussed on leadership theories as well as diversity and transformation within organisations.

Current views of organisations as complex adaptive systems that need to be sustainable in the postmodern world recommend a collaborative approach to transformation which allows co-creation of the future (Lewis 2011; Wheatley 2005). Women remain underrepresented in leadership positions in corporate South Africa (Dormehl 2012) and those who are in these positions of privilege need to be able to contribute in building systems based on mental models that serve the future rather than the past (Furlonger 2013). Academics and practitioners need to continue to grapple with ways in which that co-creation could be possible.

As this research is constructed within a feminist framework, in itself it challenges traditional notions of management research and aims at transforming the one-dimensional, populist approach to the leadership-power discourse within an organisational context that exists and is practiced in most South African business organisations today. While management schools and leadership programmes may teach future-oriented theories that incorporate alternative discourses to the traditional patriarchal ones, these appear to be adopted superficially, without extensive critique. Instead they become co-opted into the dominant patriarchal discourse with its pervasive

value system that impacts both men and women leaders in organisations and curtails their efforts, be it conscious or unconscious, at genuine transformation of organisational cultures. This research study aims at stripping away the pervasive effects of dominant discourse, allowing opportunities for women's voices to contribute to the theory building of leadership within the South African context. Their models of power may indeed confirm global trends in leadership, but may also reveal novel dynamics and strategies that they deploy to enact their power in their leadership role. This insight should assist organisational development practitioners and leaders in understanding more critically what remains significant in preventing or promoting environments that enable women to have a significant influence in the organisational system. As a unique study in the management discipline, the methodological considerations for this study have been significant. The following chapter outlines the methodology that was used to understand South African women business leaders' emerging models of power.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 6.1 Introduction

The literature review has presented dominant and alternative discourses on power, leadership and transformation in organisations both globally and in South Africa. The debates within the literature have given rise to the overall aim of the research, which is to identify and analyse the emerging models of power amongst South African women business leaders. The specific objectives which the research attempts to answer to establish whether women in leadership are perpetuating traditional models of power or transforming them in the organisations they lead are:

- To understand how women have experienced and developed their awareness of power
- To understand how women leaders view and use power in their leadership role
- To establish whether women leaders challenge or perpetuate the leadership culture of the organisation

This chapter describes the research method adopted in response to these objectives and with the purpose of fulfilling the overall aims of the research. In the discussion the theoretical background is presented as the rationale for the design of the data collection tool, as well as the use of discourse analysis as the method for identifying emerging models of power. The research design and process are also reviewed in terms of their trustworthiness, according to recognised criteria for qualitative research.

#### 6.2 Research Design

The methodology used in this research is qualitative since it attempts to describe and understand models of power and their applications in human terms rather than through quantification and measurement and will allow for the study of models of power amongst women leaders in depth and in detail (Stake 2010; Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durheim 2007a; Venkatesh, Brown & Bala 2013). Terre Blanche *et al.* (2007a: 272)

state that “quantitative research makes sense in situations where we know what the variables are, and are able to devise reasonable ways of controlling or measuring them.” The notion of power and its application by leaders is not an easily quantifiable phenomenon, nor is it able to be controlled. Furthermore the aim of this study is to uncover variables that may not have been articulated previously, since the majority of empirical studies in relation to leadership have been conducted amongst men (Jamieson 1995; Mauthner & Edwards 2010). Venkatesh *et al.* (2013: 22) state that in the field of applied psychology qualitative methods are often preferred because they “involve studying the emotive and cognitive aspects of participants’ life experiences interpreted within the context of their socially constructive worldviews”. This study of women and power aims to uncover models of power that are constructed from the life experiences of women leaders and manifest in their narrative discourse within an organisational leadership context.

The use of a qualitative framework may often be undervalued in a management context, since it is regarded as less ‘scientific’ than quantitative research (Alldred & Miller 2007). However, this reflects a set of prevailing assumptions associated with the paradigm of business and management and it is for this reason, as highlighted in the literature review, that a qualitative approach is necessary to allow women to speak to their experiences on their own terms (Jamieson 1995; Mauthner & Edwards 2010). Qualitative research has become a more widely used method in the social sciences and medical research settings (Ponterotto 2013; Terre Blanche *et al.* 2007a) and has steadily been gaining ground in business and management in recent years (Sinkovics & Adolffi 2012). Silverman (2010: 9) claims that “the quantitative/ qualitative debate should not focus on which methodology is better or even more appropriate, but rather on which methodology is most suited to the question being researched”. Feminists have tended to favour qualitative research methods as they allow the opportunity for alternative voices and theory construction to those that dominate modernist views on truth, knowledge and language (Burman 2011; Dickerson 2013; Gergen 2001).

Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson & McSpadden (2011) point out that scientific research has benefited from the application of intuition throughout history. While qualitative research uses the researcher’s intuition, it also draws from a vast array of conceptual and theoretical principles that have been in continuous development since

as early as the 1890's (Wertz *et al.* 2011). As with any research methodology, qualitative research needs to meet with rigorous, critical standards (Silverman 2010). However, these may be based on a different set of assumptions to those that are typically applied to a quantitative study. These assumptions are outlined in the discussion of this chapter.

### **6.2.1 Social Constructionism**

The specific qualitative paradigm used in this research is social constructionism. Social constructionism originated from the postmodernist movement in sociology approximately thirty years ago (Andrews 2012). The post-modernist era was characterised by doubt in the way in which observations were an accurate reflection of the world being observed and constructionism was a response to this questioning of 'objective reality' (Andrews 2012; Derrida 1997; Foucault 1982; Gergen 2001; Hosking & Morley 2004; Ponterotto 2013). Young and Collin (2004) distinguish between 'constructivism' which proposes that each individual mentally constructs a world of experience with 'social constructivism' which has a societal, rather than an individual focus. Hosking and Morley (2004: 318) describe social constructionism as a theoretical framework which emphasises "the constructive power of human minds and their origins in conversations, conventions and cultural traditions." Rather than aiming to homogenise multiple experience through application of statistics or consensus building, social constructionist research aims to generate multiplicity (Chang, Combs & Dolan 2012; Gavey 2011; Hosking & Morley 2004). Social constructionism emerged as a postmodern method of research which attempts to appreciate the nature of reality as multiple, rather than single and quantifiable (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2007a) and unfolding through narratives rather than converging around predetermined solutions (Chang *et al.* 2012).

According to Schwandt (2003) constructionist research is similar to the interpretive approach of qualitative research in that it focusses on the process by which meanings are created, modified, sustained and negotiated. However, where the interpretive approach is interested in objectively trying to describe the subjective experience of feelings and meanings, social constructionist researchers are interested in the way in which talk is used to manufacture experiences, meanings, feelings and other societal

'facts' (Andrews 2012; Terre Blanche *et al.* 2007a). The interaction of individuals within society is central to social constructionism and the narratives they use to construct and reconstruct this subjective 'reality' are positioned within the wider social discourses or 'cultural stories' (Andrews 2012; Dickerson 2013; Schwandt 2003). This is an ideological framework which is informed by postmodern thinking which is described extensively in the literature review as being concerned with how fragmented experiences are reflective of the greater whole (Foucault 1982; Hatch & Schultz 1997; Gill 2010). It is also an ideology which is concerned with the inequity and oppression of real-world human interaction (Derrida 1997; Ponterotto 2013) which is appropriate for a study such as this. In first deconstructing orthodox views around knowledge and its production, social arrangements of oppression and hierarchies, social constructionists are able reconstruct human experience in ways that allow other voices to be heard and is understandable to other points of view (Jovanovic in Burman 1998)

### **6.2.2 Feminist Social Constructionism**

Feminist psychologist Dickerson (2013) reveals how psychology practitioners working with relationships position themselves to attend to power and privilege by being attuned to the grand narratives that affect us all, such as patriarchy. These are the social discourses or 'cultural stories' which can recreate power dynamics within any relationship, including a research interview setting; organisational development intervention; as well as the organisation and society at large. A social constructionist approach is appropriate for the study of women and emerging models of power since it explores the multiple ways in which women construct power. The approach also invites questions that take us "beyond the surface of our culturally shared common sense understanding of the world" (Gavey 2011: 184). The research is interested in how women have incorporated the hegemonic models of power, which are informed by society, into their current leadership identities; as well as how they are reconstructing these identities in the present and into the future. Gavey (2011: 185) comments that:

"A feminist poststructuralist approach understands and forgives our obedience to dominant cultural norms and values....yet highlights the contingency of these norms. In doing so, it shines light on possibilities for being and acting otherwise – and for imaging more just and ethical conditions."

While there has been steady growth of research and writing on women in management, the literature on feminist approaches to management and associated research methodologies is limited (Davidson & Burke 2004; Mauthner & Edwards 2010). Feminist approaches to management are poorly researched and the understanding of the concept of ‘feminist management’ and its practices are underdeveloped (Mauthner & Edwards 2010). Little empirical research exists in this area and where it does it usually focuses on personal and self-reflective accounts of feminist researchers in management positions (David & Woodward 1998; Eiggins 1997). For this reason the social constructionist framework and the methodologies of discourse analysis of narrative texts applied to this study and discussed more fully in the rest of this chapter are more commonly found within the field of psychology studies. Applying these methodologies within a management context to a study concerned with the psychological construct of power and with a focus on transformation, has involved significant inter-disciplinary integration of both theory and methodology. This is one of the key contributions of this research to the current body of work in management studies.

As discussed in the literature review in chapter 3 on feminist perspectives of power, feminism itself has deep divisions and varied perspectives, and cannot be regarded as an umbrella term (Kenway 2001; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012) Deem and Ozga (2000) coined the term ‘feminist managers’, describing them as women who enter organisations with the specific intention of implementing feminist practices and transforming institutions. However, not all women view themselves as feminists or manage with a feminist agenda (Edwards 2006). Furthermore, the notion of feminist management is still under construction and is conflicted over the tensions between identities of various brands of feminism; individual versus institutional identities; and the contradictory demands for collaboration and competition in our postmodern world (Geier 2013; Mauthner & Edwards 2010). Burman (2011) argues that it is “no longer tenable to describe feminist research as ‘for women, by women and with women’...as was the case in the early days of feminist research”. She claims that gender analysis applies to all social issues today and that management is no exception. Rather than becoming concerned about empire building around different brands of feminism, Burman’s (1998) appeal since the late 1990’s has been to consider diverse and multiple forms of feminist research aimed at strengthening feminist interventions. As an African

feminist, Mama (2011) appeals to feminist researchers to collaborate and exchange views on research as well as “stay connected to movements in a way that will allow ideas to challenge power” (Mama 2011: 18) rather than remain in academic isolation. My position as a feminist researcher and organisation development practitioner committed to facilitating transformation in organisations is discussed below as my own reflection on my role in this research and its broader aims and objectives.

### **6.2.3 Position of the Researcher**

As a qualitative study within a social constructionist framework it is necessary to acknowledge the researcher’s position in relation to the research (Ponterotto 2013). Cohen and Mallon (2001) claim that the researcher inevitably applies their judgement and perspective and while they should not be written out of the social world that they study, they should neither be lamented or obscured. While I have chosen to present the women’s data gathered through the interview in the analysis chapters (chapters 7, 8 and 9) without my interjections as they were relatively insignificant, I am including this section on my position as a researcher to ensure that my role is not concealed in this study. As a woman and an organisational development professional involved in the process of facilitating organisational transformation and leadership development, I have a number of agendas which I bring to this research which need to be highlighted to mitigate any distance I may claim to have from the women whom I interviewed.

While I initially hesitated to position this research as feminist per se, in engaging with the literature and the methodology it became clear to me that this was in fact a feminist study since its focus is on women and power which is at the heart of feminist debates. In addition, the aim of my research is to contribute to the process of transformation in our business organisations by raising consciousness of the impact of patriarchal relationships on how women lead. I believe that I was probably conflicted over my own feminist identity given that the study was being conducted within a management context where the notion of ‘feminism’ is often misunderstood and alienating for many of my male and female colleagues. In addition the notion of feminism is riddled with contradictions in terms of my privilege as a white South African. My own experiences of what appeared to be ‘feminist’ behaviour within a corporate context I found unnatural and complicit with patriarchal notions of dominance. The research journey

has allowed me to more clearly define and construct my own social values in relation to the notion of power within an organisational context. This is necessary for social constructionist research where the “researcher’s own social justice values can and should play a role in the research process” (Ponterotto 2013: 21).

As an organisational development (OD) practitioner, working with transformation in organisational systems and observing some of the continuous challenges faced by women in leadership, another aim of the research is to provide insight into how to empower women to be able to take up their roles in organisations both effectively and authentically. This explicit aim is another characteristic of social constructionist research which typically manifests in the goal of the emancipation and empowerment of groups who experience oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren 2000). This is both an aim of my research and an area of practice both from the perspective of supporting individual women in taking up their leadership roles and in developing leadership capacity in organisations as a whole according to current leadership thinking (Lewis 2011; Thomas & Silverstone 2012; Valerio 2009; Wheatley 2005; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002). As this form of research acknowledges the ideological position of the researcher it also enables the researcher to critique the knowledge or models being constructed within that framework. This research is a critical analysis of the emerging models of power as it aims to understand how women’s models are both limiting and empowering them within the feminist framework of power and current theories of leadership as discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

As an OD practitioner and a facilitator of change I have found it necessary to become attuned to the language of individuals and organisations which both reflect and shape their thinking and behaviour. In this role I am required to be both aware of my own position and relationship with the individuals and the system, but also remain independent of the individuals and system to be able to create the space to generate learning and empowerment from conversations and interactions. A personal aim of this research journey has been the development of my understanding of and competence in qualitative methods which I am able to apply to my practice. I am aware that as an OD practitioner I may be an ‘outsider’ to the organisational system, but I am part of a broader social system, which does not necessarily mean that I am ‘neutral’ in my approach. Ponterotto (2013) argues that we need to move away from the dichotomous

thinking that the researcher is a totally independent entity in the research. It is both the feminist positioning of this research; my work both as an insider and outsider of organisational systems; and my observations of the power of organisational discourse as a vehicle for transformation that has resulted in my choice of method, namely discourse analysis, over and above another methodology. Another key characteristic of discourse analysis, according to Wertz (2011), is that analysts have an obligation to apply their research. This applied and action oriented approach to research lends itself to the field of OD practice. The method of discourse analysis and the rationale for its application to this study is discussed further in the following section.

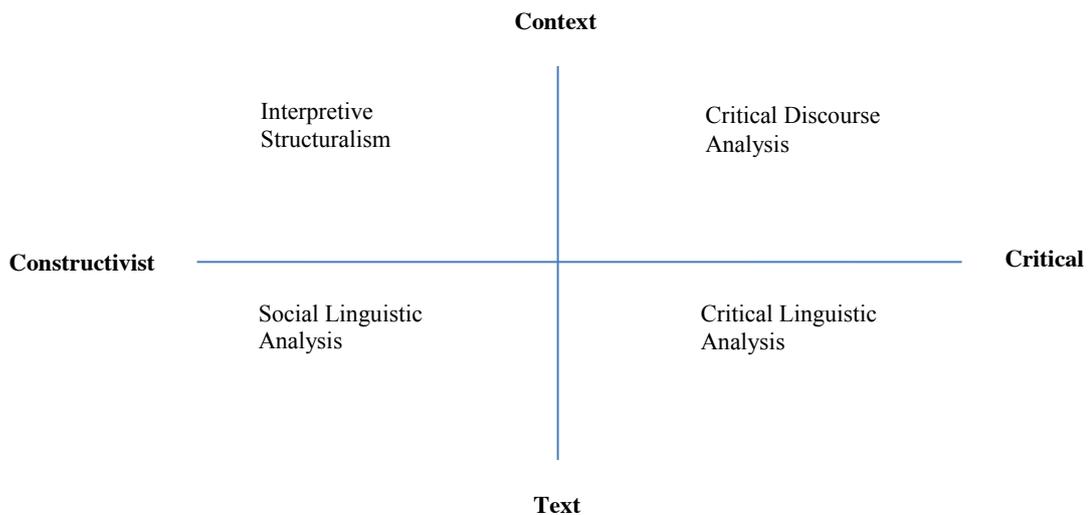
### **6.3 Feminist Social Constructionism and the Method of Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is not so much a method as a methodology in itself since it is grounded in the ideology of social constructionism and is concerned with the interweaving of language, power and subjectivity (Burck 2005). Discourse analysis can be defined as an “act of showing how certain discourses are deployed to achieve a particular effect in specific contexts” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly 2007b: 328). This form of analysis offers a way to scrutinise the language of conversations and the way in which individuals account for; make sense of; and create their world (Ali & Khan 2012; Shotter 1993). According to Burck (2005: 248), discourse analysts “seek to identify the discourses and interpretive repertoires that individuals draw on to make sense of their world, and to examine their consequences and limitations.” Furthermore some formulations and ways of talking are more available than others (Ali & Khan 2012; Burman (2001); Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992; Mtose 2008) because some ways of understanding the world have become culturally dominant or hegemonic. According to Haug (1998) feminist research is connected to a socio-political aim of bringing about change through the exploration of the tensions and contradictions in the findings. The aim of the analysis in the current study would be to establish whether new or different discourses are emerging in women leaders’ encounter with power and the implications this has for transformation in organisations.

The term ‘discourse’ is used in a number of ways, but typically represents a pattern of talk or systems and statements that are taken up in the speech. Discourse is not defined as the outcome or expression of thoughts lying behind or beneath it, but how

psychological states are made relevant and publicly accountable (Burck 2005; Edwards 2006). A basic tenet of discourse analysis is that language is not a neutral or transparent medium through which people express themselves, but a vehicle to construct versions of their social world (Ali & Khan 2012; Burck 2005; Butler 1990; Gavey 2011). A discourse may relate to significant local patterns of talk, such as commonly used slang, or larger scale phenomena, such as sexist or racist discourse. Being able to recognise these patterns of talk draws from our immersion in a particular culture, while simultaneously our ability to stand outside of that culture (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2007b). Social constructionism recognises the power of discourse and its ability to both construct knowledge and influence behaviour. Discourse analysts focus on the ways societal discourses are taken up in personal interactions and how discourse is shaped through power relationships (Burck 2005; Gill 2010; Derrida 1997; Foucault 1982; Levett, Kottler, Burman & Parker, 1997). As a methodology commonly applied in systems oriented therapy, discourse analysis is concerned with the effect of discourse on social identity and relations, and systems of knowledge (Burck 2005). The relationship between power and organisational discourse is highlighted in the literature review in section 2.4.6 of chapter 2 in the discussion on organisational theory. It is therefore fitting that the phenomenon of power which is under scrutiny in this research is understood through analysis of the discourses evident in the text of women leaders, operating within the context of an organisational system.

Discourse analysis has its own complexities as it is a multi-dimensional analytical approach (Yang 2010). The model below (Figure 2) produced by Philips and Hardy (2002) highlights these dimensions:



**Figure 2. Different Approaches to Discourse Analysis (Phillips & Hardy 2002: 20)**

The model proposes two key dimensions to discourse analysis, namely the importance of text versus context in the research and the degree to which the research focusses on a critique of the discourse or on the processes of social construction of the phenomenon being researched. Phillips & Hardy (2002) explain that a more critical approach is concerned with power dynamics as a focus in the research, whereas a more constructivist approach is concerned with the way social reality is constructed. In this research study while the focus is on language in the text, the implications of the language choices are related to the broader social contexts which the participants are part of, including factors highlighted by Wetherell, Taylor & Yates (2001), such as gender, race, social and cultural settings, as well as their position in the organisation. The research is concerned with the ‘critical’ approach to discourse analysis, since as a feminist study it aims at illuminating and reconstructing the operations of power at both conscious and less conscious levels. As with any model, however, the boundaries are not always discrete and authors such as Barry (2006) recommend a more flexible approach where researchers move between the linguistic and the critical. This is the approach adopted in this research study since its aim is to both deconstruct and reconstruct notions of power through analysis of women’s discourse. These are the two critical stances in discourse analysis, according to Gergen (2001), but they are able to be applied in parallel. On the one hand, the research aims at deconstructing and critiquing dominant discourses of power as performed through the interviewees’ text,

while simultaneously identifying the way in which participants construct power in unique and potentially transformative ways.

As much as the ‘critical’ approach may expose power dynamics that exist both within the text and the broader social context, the constructionist approach is particularly relevant to the construction of identity which forms part of this research where women are asked to narrate their experiences on their leadership identity. Gender identity itself is viewed by many feminists as a constructed concept, created by powerful groups, that becomes a shared ideology through complex social systems of knowledge creation that are reinforced and enacted by society and its institutions (Ali & Khan 2012). Language is viewed as the basic tool which constructs these identities and enables them to be realised within a system (Butler 1990). Theorists like Foucault (1982), and Butler (1990) shared the view that language seeks sameness rather than homogeneity and therefore gravitates to common and universally understood descriptors which usually seek social categorisation based on existing power relations. Typically much of the research in psychology is independent of social categories and identities which, according to Levitt *et al.* (1997: 7) subtly and effectively “reinscribes traditional systems of racial, cultural, gender and sexual privilege”. Lombart (1998) claims that when identity becomes a common point its effect is oppressive since it marginalises areas where individuals do not identify and makes it impossible for them to create meaning or bring about change in certain social contexts.

The link between language, power, identity and feminism was a significant consideration in choosing the method of discourse analysis of narratives. The post-modern theory and practice of Organisational Development as outlined in section 2.4 of chapter 2 of the literature review draws on a number of inter-disciplinary approaches in understanding group relations and transformation in organisational systems. Similarly the methodology of discourse analysis of narratives adopted in this research relies on methods used both in applied psychology and literary analysis. Burck (2005: 251) clarifies these links when she states:

“for researchers and systemic clinicians, the notion of ‘discursive practices’ addresses questions of agency through critically examining ways individuals position themselves and are positioned in and through language”.

Unlike content analysis which serves to describe or explain a phenomenon, in discourse analysis the researcher is concerned with the linguistic effect of the texts under study to understand their consequences (Butler 1990; Burck 2005). It is in analysing the ‘linguistic turn’ of these women’s accounts that the research is able to identify and critique the discourses being constructed. The “linguistic turn” is defined as the way autobiographies, stories, myths and jokes are told by Cohen and Mallon (2001: 49). In analysing the “linguistic turn” which gives rise to certain discourses, meaning and effectiveness in language depends not on fixed meanings or clear expression, but on the roles that words and phrases take on in the “ language-games” (Gill 2010: 37) of our lives, and as we move from one context to others being able to recognise what it resembles. This allows for the contradictions and fractures within the discourses and the complex effects that they might have in bringing about change (Gavey 2011). The linguistic focus of this feminist research aims to use language as the key to being attuned to the real-world consequences of the texts produced by the interviews with women. In so doing, this focus aims to reveal emerging models which may be inaccessible through content analysis alone. The nature of the texts being analysed in this study are the women’s stories of their leadership journey and developing awareness of power. These narratives are generated and analysed following a rigorous research process which is outlined below. The reason for choosing a narrative approach in line with the aims of this research is also discussed.

### **6.3.1 Narrative Analysis as a form of Discourse Analysis**

Since the stories of our past and present draw from our cultural framework for discourse (Butler 1990; McAdams 1996), the autobiographic narratives of women leaders is a valid vehicle for understanding how women construct their reality and their power within that. Feminist researchers such as bell hooks (2010) and Braxton (1989) argue that autobiography is a particularly apt way of telling and claiming ownership of one’s life and identity as it enables the author to tell their version of events through uninterrupted means. Braxton (1989) also highlights the fact that autobiography is empowering in that it asserts the ‘author’s’ identity and desired version of reality. As discussed in chapter 3 of the literature review of feminist perspectives on power, identity is not a one-dimensional or static concept, rather it is constituted and reconstituted through discourse within a particular context and for a particular audience

(Cohen & Mallon 2001; Dickerson 2013; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012; Nicholson 2012). Hall (1996: 4) describes the link between this process of ‘becoming’ and representation in the construction of identity:

“Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture as a process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we come from’ so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.”

Narrative identity refers to the stories people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and for others (McAdams *et al.* 2006a; Josselson in Wertz *et al.* 2011). Narrative analysis focuses on the way individuals present these accounts of themselves and views self-narrations both as constructions and claims of identity (Burcke 2005; Connelly 2000; Labov 1997; Linde 1993). The inner narration is described as a process of consciousness by McAdams *et al.* (2006a) and in itself is linked to the construction of power by the neuroscientist Damasio (1999: 30) who asserted that consciousness begins “when the brain acquires the power to tell a story”. Denzin (1989) believes that a life story seems to be one of the psychological means to discover one’s developmental process throughout their life and is therefore an appropriate method to understand the models of power which may still be developing or forming as part of women’s identity or being brought into their consciousness and therefore are in an ‘emerging’ rather than an ‘entrenched’ state.

The protocol followed to solicit the autobiographical narratives is modelled on McAdams’ Life Story Interview (2001). This is a semi-structured interview and composed of several sections wherein the participant relates his or her past, present and future strategies. The goal of the interview is to construct an autobiography of the participant by focussing on life chapters, significant life episodes, role models, current challenges and future plans. McAdams (1996) claims that the life story captured in the interview represents the identity that contemporary adults form and preserve through continuous creation and maintenance of personal narrative throughout their life. This process is viewed as creating the link between a person’s past with their present and anticipated future, thus providing integration to their lived experience. Since the study focussed on power, the aim of the questions were to understand the integration of past,

present and future constructions of the participants' experience of power. The questions in the interview guide therefore followed the structure of McAdam's Life Story interview guide (2001) and dealt with similar themes of questioning in each section. The instrument was adapted, however, to ensure that the questions had a specific focus on power (Appendix 1). The rationale for the instrument will be described in more detail later in this chapter in section 6.4.1.

Using a narrative method for gathering data recognises that the 'narrative identities' which are constructed in the stories being told are multiple, socially constructed and evolving (McAdams *et al.* 2006a). This approach accommodates the issue raised by feminist theorists that women's voices are multiple and diverse and their stories of power are woven into their socialised mental models (Gavey 2011; hooks 2003). Gathering 'narrative identities' allows women to construct their identity in relation to power on their own terms, without any fixed notion of what constitutes the phenomenon. Furthermore Jameson (2001) observes that few studies within a business context combine a concern with everyday narratives related orally with an emphasis on their impact on the larger environment. The focus of this study is not only on the women leader's power discourse within a South African business context, but also the implications of this discourse on culture transformation within their organisations. This focus is one of the unique contributions which the study will make to management research conducted with women in business leadership positions. The relationship between the narrative 'text' and this broader 'context' is discussed further in the section below on hermeneutics.

### **6.3.2 Hermeneutics in the Analysis of Texts**

The research objectives both inform and are informed by the ideological framework of postmodern social constructivism within a feminist paradigm. The chosen method of narrative analysis as a form of discourse analysis provides the framework for the interview questions and the way it is analysed. However, within narrative analysis, as a subsidiary of discourse analysis, there are various ways in which texts can be 'read' and the analysis presented. The way texts are dealt with is referred to in postmodern literary criticism and philosophy as 'hermeneutics' (Stewart 1989). In dealing with the texts from interviews, the approach of social constructionists is to recognise the autonomy of

these texts as well as the relationship with the context they exist in (Derrida 1997). The broader context within which the women's narratives are located is the societal and organisational systems that they operate in. A more immediate context is the interview process and setting itself which positions them as significant leaders within their organisations with something to say on leadership and power. Due to the volume of the texts generated from the interviews, the focus of this analysis will be on the discourses across texts rather than each narrative per se. A more detailed discussion on this process of analysis is discussed in section 6.4.8 of this chapter. This approach of in-depth analysis of several stand-alone 'mini-narratives' within the context of the total autobiographical narrative, reflects a hermeneutic approach to the text.

Hermeneutics also refers to the way in which the parts of a given text relate to the whole (Freeman 2004). This is known in textual analysis as the "hermeneutic circle" (Freeman 1997: 172). This frees the text, according to Ricoeur (1981: 202), not only from the author, but from the "narrowness of the dialogical situation" and "reveals the destination of discourse as projecting onto the world." Josselson (2004, 2008) presents a tension within hermeneutics between 'suspicious' regard for the text, which focuses on critical analysis and reading between the lines, and a more 'trusting' approach which aims to be true to the text itself. Within the framework of discourse analysis, the focus is on a close reading of the linguistic turn of the text and the way in which the reader is receiving it, in relation to the commonly constructed discourses on power, feminism, leadership and transformation. This form of analysis is typically not as detailed as the close conversational analysis found in more psychoanalytic research. By applying hermeneutics to the text, the researcher aims at managing the tension between upholding a respect for the women participants' words used to depict the multiple worlds that are their creation; as well as an ability to critique the implications of those creations in the concluding chapter (Freeman 2004; Josselson 2008).

The theoretical framework discussed in this section provides the rationale for the qualitative approach to the study within a social constructionist paradigm. In understanding and critically analysing South African women leaders' emerging models of power, the qualitative social constructionist paradigm recognises the multiple constructions of power, generated through language and informed by society. Incorporating the feminist framework into this paradigm allows for a sensitively and

critically attuned reading of the autobiographical texts and the way in which language is used either to perpetuate the status quo or to reveal something alternative (Gavey 2011). The use of a narrative method allows women to construct these realities through their autobiography and recognises the emergent nature and inter-relatedness of identity and power (hooks 2003; McAdams *et al.* 2006a). An understanding of the hermeneutics of textual analysis has a bearing on the way in which the researcher approaches and reads the text and enables both immersion and appreciation as a reader, as well as the distance and critique required of the analyst.

## **6.4 Data Collection Method**

The method for data collection is discussed below, including the development of the research instrument, namely the interview guide, as well as the method used for selecting participants in the study.

### **6.4.1 Design of the Data Collection Instrument**

As outlined in section 6.3.1 of this chapter, the interview guide was based on an adapted and abbreviated version of McAdams' Life Story Interview (2001). It was structured around the three key sections identified by McAdams as being central to identity construction, namely the integration of person's past with their present and anticipated future. Three overall research objectives were constructed in relation to the overall aims of the research in order to identify emerging models of power amongst women leaders in South Africa. These three objectives reflected the past, present and future focus of each section of the interview and gave rise to the specific questions in each section that were posed to the participants. The full interview guide is included as Appendix 1.

#### **6.4.1.1 Research Objective One**

**To understand how women have experienced and developed their awareness of power**

The first research objective aimed at soliciting the interviewees' autobiographical narration of past experiences in their lives. The interview started by asking the women participants to reflect on the various chapters in their lives and the significant experiences that impacted on them. The aim of the first question was to get a sense of

the outline of the participants' story and the major events that composed their life. The questions which followed in the first section of the interview, asked the participants to reflect on moments in their life where they felt powerful and moments where they felt disempowered; as well as people who had a positive and negative influence on their life story. The final question in this section asked the participant to reflect on their life story and to comment on how they believed it had been shaped by being a woman. The aim of the question was to confirm or uncover any specific gender related discourses on power which may not have been fully articulated.

#### **6.4.1.2 Research Objective Two**

##### **To understand how women leaders view and use power in their leadership role**

The second research objective focussed more specifically on the women's current leadership roles and power in relation to that. The questions posed to the women interviewed in relation to this second objective focussed on gathering their stories of how they got into their current leadership positions. As in the first section of the interview, women leaders were asked to describe a moment in their current role when they felt powerful and a moment when they felt disillusioned or despondent. The women were also asked to reflect on their perceptions of their relationships with their followers. In terms of the social constructionist paradigm, the focus was not on the actual relationship that exists between follower and leader, but rather the way in which the power dynamics of the relationship is articulated and accounted for. The concluding question in this section asked how the women believed their followers perceptions of them were influenced by their being a woman.

#### **6.4.1.3 Research Objective Three**

##### **To understand how women leaders challenge or perpetuate the leadership culture of the organisation**

The final part of the interview follows McAdams approach (2001) of extending the story into the future by asking questions around how the leader envisages sustaining her power in the organisational system. The questions posed in the final section of the interview focussed on how women aim to influence the organisation as a whole, as well

as what they consciously do to be recognised as a good leader in the organisation. Participants were also asked how they believe they will develop their leadership role in the future. This mode of questioning focussed on conscious strategies deployed to influence at a more strategic level in the organisation, both beyond their direct team and into the future. The questions provided opportunities for the participants to imagine the future, creating the 'temporal' integration of their past and current identity through their narrative (McAdams 2001). Finally participants were asked to reflect on the interview and comment on anything that they wished to add that they believed may be important to the study. This was an open-ended question designed to create the space for women to raise experiences or observations that may have been missed or prompted through the process of responding to the semi-structured questions.

The interview guide was designed based on the methodological framework outlined at the beginning of the chapter. It was reviewed by a specialist in the field of qualitative methodology from the Psychology Department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to ensure that it would yield the appropriate data required and certain questions were adapted accordingly before it was piloted.

#### **6.4.2 Pilot Study**

Once the interview guide had been finalised, it was piloted with a woman leader and adapted slightly to ensure the inclusion of more open ended question at the end allowing for reflection on the interview (Appendix 1). This interview did not form part of the final sample in the study since the leader interviewed was not from the research population group of South African business women, but from a non-governmental organisation. From the pilot study it was determined that it would be necessary to schedule two hours for the interview.

#### **6.4.3 Sampling Techniques Used for Selection of Participants**

The target population for the research included women executive directors and executive managers in business. While it is not possible to get one hundred per cent accurate figures of this total population, a good indication can be found in the 2012-2013 Department of Labour Employment Equity Report (Nkeli 2012). This report records the employment equity statistics as of March 2012 of companies employing

over 150 employees who have submitted their reports to the Department of Labour in accordance with the Employment Equity Act (RSA 1998). It reflects the demographic break down of a total number of 4370 South African companies across the full range of industry sectors. According to the 2012 Employment Equity report, a total number of 3618 women are employed in senior management positions within the population group of 4370 companies surveyed. This indicates the numbers of the target population of women in leadership positions in South Africa.

Purposive sampling was used within this target population to ensure that the women participating met the criteria necessary for the purposes of addressing the research objectives. Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 202) state that the purposive sampling method “seeks out groups, settings and individuals where the processes being studied are most likely to occur.” Purposive sampling is believed to yield as good results as probability sampling with small sample sizes. In addition, it allows the elements for research to be carefully selected (Silverman 2010; Thietart 1999). Since the aim of the research was to identify emerging models of power, the purposive approach which can also be described as ‘theoretical sampling’ was an appropriate method, since this method involves deciding where data should be collected from to address the researcher’s theory-development needs (Kelly 2007). Theoretical and purposive sampling are treated as the same when the purpose behind the sampling is theoretically defined since it builds in certain criteria that helps develop and test the theory being explained (Bryman 1988; Mason 1996; Silverman 2010). This approach to sampling influences the specific candidates that are chosen for the research and their ability to contribute to the process of theory building. In this research it was important to identify women who were operating in corporate institutions, rather than leaders of their own small businesses for example, since the focus of the study was on power within traditional institutions of business. Similarly, it was necessary to include a racial mix of women not only to ensure demographic representation of the population, but also to incorporate the differences in their narrative discourse in building the theory.

The critical criterion in selecting candidates for participation was that they have significant influence within their organisations. This criterion was necessary since the study aimed at understanding the women leaders’ paradigms of power and should the participants’ experience of organisational power be too limited it would have limited

the results of the study. It was also important that the sample group held similar positions of power within their organisation to ensure a level of consistency within the sample group. Since there are a relatively small number of women directors in South Africa, and because they are not the only influential women leaders in organisations, executive managers were also included in the study. Executive managers are defined according to the Business Women's Association Census (Dormehl 2012: 10) as managers who:

- have a significant leadership role in the organisation
- have control over day-to-day operations
- have decision-making powers; and
- usually, but not necessarily, report directly to the board of directors

In this study, all of the women who participated in the interviews reported to the board of the organisation. In addition to ensuring that the women participating in the study have significant influence in the organisation, participants also needed to have operated within that leadership position for a period of five years or longer. This was necessary, once again, to ensure some consistency across the sample and to ensure that leaders interviewed were experienced in the role and not in a transitioning phase from employee to leader.

Purposive sampling was also used to ensure that there was diversity within the demographics of the sample in terms of industry sectors. The industry sectors represented in the sample were selected to reflect the range of sectors represented in the Department of Labour Employment Equity report (Nkeli 2012) and grouped in the following categories which are named by the Business Women's Association Census (Dormehl 2012):

- Basic materials
- Consumer goods
- Consumer services
- Financials
- Healthcare
- Industrials
- Technology

As this is a study of South African women leaders, participants were also chosen to ensure that different races are represented in the sample. Since the research methodology used a narrative approach and South African women living under apartheid would have had significantly different experiences given their racial backgrounds, it was necessary to accommodate this in the sample. The participants reflected a spread across the African, Indian and white population, with white participants making up 60%; African participants making up 30% and Indian participants making up 10% of the sample group.

Out of the total population of 3618 women in top management positions, according to the 2012 Employment Equity Report (Nkeli 2012) the racial demographic spread is as follows:

- White women – 54.4%
- African women – 29.4%
- Indian women – 8.4%
- Coloured women – 7.8%

The sample of women participating in the study followed the general proportional representation of white, African and Indian women. However, Coloured women were not represented in the sample since it was difficult to gain access to a Coloured senior manager.

While participants were purposefully chosen to meet the criteria outlined above, snowball sampling was used to identify possible candidates. Initial participants were identified by contacting women suggested by professional colleagues. Snowball sampling was used thereafter by asking these participants to suggest other possible participants in this study. Snowball sampling is defined as the technique used when the researcher accesses participants through contact information that is provided by other participants (Noy 2007). This process is repetitive in that participants who are contacted by the researcher are then referred by other participants and so on, giving rise to the evolving ‘snowball’ effect. The ‘snowball’ metaphor indicates that central to this sampling procedure is its accumulative nature. Snowball sampling is one of the most widely employed methods of sampling in qualitative research in various disciplines across the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Noy (2007) claims that the

dynamic nature of snowball sampling can generate a unique type of social knowledge which is appropriate for constructivist research since it draws on natural social networks. Furthermore, these natural social networks are viewed as particularly conducive to feminist studies since power relations between the researcher and the research are reduced.

Ten women were identified through the sampling process and agreed to participate in the study. Qualitative researchers recommend a sample size of up to ten individuals for the in-depth study of phenomena (Cresswell 1998; Madsen 2008; Nah 2003). According to Merriam (1998: 77) “the reason that the sample size is small relative to other methods of research is ....the crucial factor is not the number of respondents but the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon”. McAdams *et al.* (2006a) cite a number of qualitative studies using autobiographical narrative interviews similar to the method proposed in this study, where sample sizes range from one to eighteen. Since this study involves in-depth interviews with representatives of a relatively small target population, ten participants is deemed to be sufficient.

#### **6.4.4 Description of the Sample**

Table 1 below represents the biographic details of the ten participants in the study which was collected at the beginning of the interview for purposes of describing the sample. Race in this table is denoted in the same way as it is in the Employment Equity Act (1998), where ‘white’ is a separate category and ‘black’ is broken down into categories of African and Indian. When participants are referred to in the analysis these terms are used for consistency purposes.

**Table 1. Demographic Representation of Sample**

Participant	Industry	Race	Home Language	Age	Family Status	Position in Company	Years with Company
1	Basic Materials	White	English	30-35	Single	Financial Director	5
2	Financial Services	Indian	English	30-35	Single	Managing Partner	5
3	Technology	White	English	40-45	Married with children	Human Resources Director	5-10
4	Consumer goods	White	English	40-45	Married	Marketing Director	5-10
5	Industrials	African	Zulu	40-45	Married	Financial Director	5
6	Consumer goods	White	English	50 and above	Single	Human Resources Director	10 years or more
7	Financial Services	African	Sotho	40-45	Married with children	Managing Partner	5-10 years
8	Consumer goods	White	English	35-40	Married with children	Financial Executive	5-10 years
9	Financial Services	White	English	40-45	Married with children	Financial Director	5-10 years
10	Industrials	African	Sotho	35-40	Single	Chief Executive Officer	5-10 years

#### 6.4.5 Data Collection Process

The participants were contacted via e-mail and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. Once they agreed to participate a time was set up for the interview at their offices. Most of the interviews took over 2 hours to complete. Participants were requested to sign an informed consent form before the interview proceeded which highlighted that the interview was voluntary and that anonymity would be maintained throughout the study. A copy of the Informed Consent Document is included as Appendix 2. Participants were asked for permission to tape the interview on a dicta-phone and a brief outline of the structure of the interview was given before

beginning the process of questioning. The interviews took place in the participants' offices.

Despite the fact that the interview was being recorded, 'process' notes were made throughout the interview to highlight things that happened that may not be obvious from listening to the recording and possible observations for future interviews. These notes assisted in the analysis as it provided some of the more subtle context to the text and documented any issues pertaining to my own reflections which will be discussed in the section on trustworthiness in research. All participants were asked the same set of questions from the interview guide. However, as the data were gathered and the research context became more apparent, interviews were reviewed in light of the data emerging from previous interviews. Limited probing of participants was used to allow for the flow of autobiographical narrative with as little interruption as possible (Braxton 1989; hooks 2003). This allowed for the social construction of the leaders' story and leadership identity within the interview setting in line with the principles of narrative methods (Josselson in Wertz *et al.* 2011)

The refining and progressive nature of the methodology was largely applied to the way in which the texts were being read for analysis. This iterative process of qualitative research is described by Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) as the 'messiness', unpredictable and non-linear nature of fieldwork. This iterative process allows the researcher to gradually refine or shift their focus to reflect 'what really matters'. Stake's (2010) notion of progressive focusing captures this gradual approach, which is well-suited to qualitative research requiring complex iteration between theory and data, and the truthful yet coherent presentation of the research process (Sinkovics & Alfoldi 2012). However, the progressive approach did not alter the interview questions in any way; neither was significant probing necessary since the questions themselves yielded sufficient narrative text for analysis.

#### **6.4.6 Transcribing the Interviews**

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and indicated certain non-verbal communication such as hesitation, pauses, raised voices, sighs and laughter in order to provide sufficient detail for analysis of the way in which discourses were being deployed in the

text. Psycho-analytic studies using the method followed by Close Conversational Analysts, use a specific set of symbols or markers to indicate these conventions (Wetherell 1998). However, the text was not analysed to the level of detail since the study is not psycho-analytic in nature, nor does it follow the conventions of Close Conversational Analysis. Instead a simple system of markers was used. These included:

- Brackets for sighs and laughter
- , to indicate brief pause
- ... to indicate longer pauses and hesitation
- Bold type to indicate emphasis or significant change in tone
- “” to indicate when an participant added inverted commas to the term either with a hand gesture or through their tone of voice and expression

The individual participant’s transcript was mailed back to the participant to give them an opportunity to review the text should they wish to and make comment. None of the participants requested any amendment to the transcripts.

#### **6.4.7 Organising the Data**

The transcriptions of the interviews amounted to between 20 and 30 pages each. The analysis began with close reading and re-reading of the material along with the process notes made during the interviews to enable both the critical distance and the relationship with the text in order to identify discourses (Butler 2005; Gavey 2011; Terre Blanche *et al.* 2007b). During the reading of each interview, notes in the left hand margin were made to begin to describe discourses identified in the text. While the process of organising and analysing the data are not two completely discrete processes, they are separated in this chapter for the purpose of describing the research method. The starting point for the analysis included looking for and highlighting the following features in the text as recommended by (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2007b: 330–332):

- Binary opposites – reading for effect where polar opposites are drawn
- Recurrent terms, phrases and metaphors which lend a particular kind of meaning to the events or objects being spoken about in the text
- Human subjects being spoken about in the text – this relates how these individuals are constructed and what the nature of the power within the discourse is

For each of the three research objectives, relevant extracts from the series of questions corresponding to the objective were identified from each extract as having some of the qualities above and potentially representing a discourse in the text. These extracts were cut and paste onto an electronic grid for each of the interviews. The grid consisted of columns to identify the line of the extract, for easy reference; the copied text itself; a column for identifying or describing the discourse; followed by a column for notes on analysis (Appendix 3). An example of a working grid is included in the diagram below:

**Table 2. Interview Analysis Grid**

Interview Two			
Objective: To understand how women narrate their awareness of power			
Line	Quote	Discourse Description	Analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Binary Opposites</li> <li>• Terms, phrases, metaphors</li> <li>• Human Subjects</li> </ul>		
238-249	And I was so upset, and I spent the next sort of hour running between him and the stupid photocopier machine photocopying this file and I came home and I was in tears and I said to my mum I said I can't believe it I spent 3 years doing my degree, a year in post-grad umm I've excelled academically all my life and here's this 55 year old man telling me that I can't flipping photocopy a file properly (laughs) and I was really upset about it, and at that moment, for that day I felt dis-empowered	Competence; Achievement; Academic Excellence; <b>Possible Discourse:</b> <b>Expert Power</b> Resilience <b>Possible Discourse:</b> <b>Psychological Power</b>	Binary opposite = academic achiever; menial job Human subject = 55 year old male boss constructed as undermining her competence Laughter = absurdity; reflection; observation Flipping = throw away expletive emphasises absurdity and outrage "For that day" constructing her resilience, not allowing it to define her What she is doing with the text is demonstrating her psychological resilience as well as expert power vs senior male rank in organisation

Once the data from each interview had been organised in this way, the interviews were re-read several times to reflect and allow for interrogation of the classification of discourses based on both the literature and the themes emerging across the interviews. The extracts from the grids were then clustered across interviews, by cutting and pasting extracts into electronic files, named according to the common discourses that were emerging from the text. These extracts were re-read several times, both within the

context of the discourses emerging and the context of each individual interview as a whole, all the time engaging in the conceptual work of discourse analysis of narrative texts which is described in more detail in the following section. These clusters were refined through the analysis process and the final clusters gave rise to the discourses identified in the chapters on data analysis and discussion (Chapters 7-9). The finalised table of discourses are included in the research as Appendix 4. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2007b: 329) claim that “it can be tempting to think of discourse analysis a ‘bird-spotting’ exercise, so that all we have to do is identify known discourses operating in particular texts”. The process of analysis was both one of constantly interrogating the discourses identified in the texts, as well as the analysis of the text themselves.

#### **6.4.8 Data Analysis**

Two key questions helped to guide the process of analysis. The first was a reflective question of ‘why am I reading this in this way?’ suggested by Gill (1996) in her research on black identity using discourse analysis. This question is designed to facilitate the critical distance required to identify discourses, so that the multiple ‘authors’ and ‘listeners’ in a text can be identified (Gavey 2011). The cultural framework that the researcher brings to the interview interacts with and draws from the researcher’s own cultural context and the discourses associated with it. The process of analysis aims at moving between two contextual categories, as outlined by (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2007b), the one focuses on the micro-context of the conversation and the other the macro-context of ideologies. As discussed in section 6.2.2.1 on my ideological position as the researcher, my own contextual framework is informed by my narrative and the cultural and societal references of a white woman who grew up in South Africa during the 1970’s and 1980’s. The ways in which I am positioned as similar and different to the research participants, in relation to social phenomena, such as culture, class, ‘race’, education and gender also was taken into account in my reading of the text, alongside an attention to their context (Fine 1994; Jorgenson 1991; Wilkinson & Kitzinger 1996). It is important, according to Terre Blanche *et al.* (2007b) that since researchers are also a part of the text’s context, they need to account for their role relative to the text. This is acknowledged both in sections 6.2.2.1 on the ideological position of the researcher and 6.5 on trustworthiness in the research.

The second question that guided the research process and was critical in the rigour of analysis, was identifying the effect of the text, by asking the question ‘what does the text do?’ (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2007b). As constructionism is not interested in identifying the ‘truth’ behind the text, its aim is to link accounts to actions and patterns in the way the text functions to consequences (McMullen in Wertz *et al.* 2011). Edwards (2006: 46) in his journal article on discourse, cognition and social practices, claims that “Whatever people say is always action-oriented, specific to its occasion, performative on and for its occasion, selected from an indefinite range of options”. Feminist researcher, Butler (2005), supports this performative notion of language. Identifying the aims of the text are at times more obvious or explicit than others and texts may do a number of things at the same time. In his analysis of narratives, Gregg (2006) highlights the power of using structural analysis for analysing self-representation and the interplay between deep and surface structures as a means of identifying implicit structures of identity. In order to convey accounts of who and what we are, Silverman (2010) argues that constructionist researchers need to move from ‘what’ and ‘how’ to ‘why’ questions to understand the varied contexts out of which we draw from experience. Discourse analysis involves a close scrutiny of language to examine the ways in which certain themes and topics are discussed, allowing some ways of thinking, and undermining and excluding others (Burck 2005; Parker 2014). Discourse analysts ask questions about language which try to establish the following (Wetherell *et al.* 2001):

- What actions the conversation performs
- What accounts individuals are trying to create in interaction with each other
- How accounts change as the context changes

In attempting to build on the established tradition of discourse analysis, Antaki, Bilig, Edwards and Potter’s (2003) six key shortcomings of discourse analysis were avoided. These describe how researchers often fall into the trap of under-analysis through:

- Summary rather than analysis
- Spotting features in the text rather than discourses
- Over-quotation or isolated quotation
- Taking-sides in the debate

- Circular identification of discourses and mental constructs where the analysis returns to what is stated in the text
- False survey where the data is treated as if it is true of all members in the category

These are elaborated on in Antaki *et al.*'s (2003) journal article and the researcher's approach in discounting them are discussed below. In the initial phase of the research while discourse clusters were being identified within and across interviews, summaries were helpful as preparation for analysis and consolidating insights, but did not constitute the analysis itself. 'Spotting' features rather than discourses was avoided by following the techniques recommended by Terre Blanche *et al.* (2007b) as discussed earlier in section 6.4.7 on organising data, which correspond with the criteria recommended by Parker (2014). The identification of binary opposites; recurrent themes and metaphors; and subjects within the text helped to identify the discourses. Thereafter the 'effects' of the text and 'how' the conversation was being constructed as opposed to simply 'what' was being said became the focus of analysis. In the discussion of the results, significant extracts are presented, followed by in-depth analysis and care has been taken not to over quote or allow quotes to 'speak for themselves'.

Another potential pitfall of discourse analysis is to take sides by offering sympathy or scolding for a particular position in the discourse. Gavey (2011) emphasises that feminist discourse analysis allows for the complicated and conflicting desires and motivations expressed within a text and it is not the role of the analyst to debate these. While the aim of the research is to critically analyse emerging models of power, the conclusions drawn will critique these models in light of transformation efforts in organisations within a feminist framework. While the researcher may be interested in transformation of traditional patriarchal structures as an outcome of the research, the critique focusses on the implications of the discourses for organisations rather than on the discourses themselves or the positions of the participants.

To avoid circular debate, which results in an observation from the text simply going back to the original assertion, attempts have been made to enhance the observations with accumulated insights relevant to previous data. By analysing each participant's text independently and discussing them in relation to one another, rather than simply

reducing them to commonalities, care was taken not to treat the data as if it is true of all members of the category. This would result in false survey and is another potential shortcoming in the practice of discourse analysis. A heuristic approach, as recommended by Professor Merriam in her seminar on Hands-On Data Analysis at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (2008) was used in this process. A heuristic approach refers to the process of learning from experience and being able to apply that learning back to the process of analysis. This meant that as the techniques became more familiar, the process was refined and revised.

## **6.5 Trustworthiness of Research**

Shenton (2004: 63) states that “although many critics are reluctant to accept the trustworthiness of qualitative research, frameworks for ensuring rigour in this form of work have been in existence for many years.” In his article on strategies to ensure trustworthiness, Shenton (2004) uses Guba’s (1981) four constructs as criteria in pursuit of a trustworthy qualitative study:

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability

By fulfilling a number of the requirements associated with each of these constructs, the trustworthiness of this study is ensured as discussed below.

### **6.5.1 Credibility**

According to Merriam in Shenton (2004: 4) the qualitative investigator’s test of credibility to ascertain whether the research is in fact investigating what is intended, is to ask the question “how congruent are the findings with reality?” The first requirement posited to answer this question is to use research methods that are well established. In this research, the established methodology of discourse analysis has been followed as a means of studying participants’ narrative texts. The method has been outlined in detail, and tried and tested techniques used by specialists in the field have been applied. The process of iterative questioning is also recommended as method to ensure credibility. The length of the interview guide and the number of questions that probed the

phenomenon of power in several different ways enabled the iterative nature of questioning, as well as focussing on the past, present and future construction of identity, following McAdams's autobiographical method (2001). Frequent debriefing sessions with the research supervisor and input from a specialist on discourse analysis with the psychology department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal as well as a specialist in qualitative research with the Faculty of Management at the University of KwaZulu-Natal was another measure used to ensure credibility, as recommended by Shenton (2004). Similarly, member checks are recommended which allows participants to review their transcripts (Shenton 2004). Participants were given the opportunity to do this and none of them indicated any concerns with their texts.

Aside from outside scrutiny, another element of credibility relates to that of the researcher themselves. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that this can be done through 'reflective commentary', part of which may be devoted to the effectiveness of the techniques being employed. This commentary was initiated by the process notes which were made during the interviews which allowed me to monitor my own 'developing constructions' of the discourse. The reflective commentary is incorporated into the discussion of the analysis in the following chapter. As described in the process of discourse analysis and will be evident in the analysis itself, the awareness of my effect on the interviews themselves was considered. As a woman, working in the field of leadership development, with an interest in systemic transformation of business organisations to assimilate gender diversity more meaningfully, the aim of this research has a particular effect on the texts under analysis as discussed in section 6.2.2.1 on the ideological position of the researcher. However, since this is the aim of the research and all research starts out with a certain premise based on the motivation of the researcher, the issue of subjectivity is not under consideration. Rather the rigorous analytical methods applied should ensure that the research is credible.

Patton (1990) claims that the background, qualifications and experience of the researcher is especially important in qualitative research. I have a Masters of Management in Strategic Human Resources from Wits Business School and have worked in the field of Organisational Development for seventeen years, with a specific focus on leadership development over the past nine years. The field is one which applies qualitative methods in a variety of contexts, both through the process of group

facilitation and one-on-one coaching. These practices involve continuous review of qualitative data from the interaction with individuals and relating it to the context of the broader organisational system. The engagement with discourse has formed part of my applied training and practice of working with leaders and their influence on organisational culture. Having also been trained in the field of process oriented psychology, I have drawn from these theories in my practice of working with individuals, groups and organisational systems to facilitate organisational change.

Finally, the examination of previous research findings and an assessment of the degree to which the results of the research are congruent with these promote credibility. Silverman (2010: 38) considers “the ability of the researcher to relate his or her findings to an existing body of knowledge” as a key criterion for evaluating qualitative research. The analysis relates the findings to the body of knowledge on power and leadership, as discussed in the literature review chapters and the conclusion will critically analyse the findings of the current study in light of this existing body of knowledge.

### **6.5.2 Transferability**

Shenton (2006: 69) claims that, “Since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations” The issue of transferability is widely debated, several authors argue that transferability is never possible since all observations are defined by the contexts in which they occur (Erlandson, Harris & Skipper 1993). However, the key issue with qualitative research is not to search for traditional generalisability, the objective is rather to seek an understanding of the conditions under which a particular finding appears and operates (Lincoln & Guba 2000). The sampling method described in section 6.4.3 does not pretend to be representative, although purposive sampling did endeavour to ensure that respondents represented South African racial demographics and industry sectors, as well as age and family structure and length of time with the company as indicated in table 1. It is also important to note that the social constructionist paradigm recognises the multiplicity of voices which challenges the notion that transferable results can be produced from a single study since the context is a key component of qualitative research. Feminist theorists support the notion that it is

dangerous to assume generalisability of women's voices from empirical studies only, but rather to focus on the understanding of those voices within a specific context (Butler 2005; Gavey 2011; Mauthner & Edwards 2010). For this reason the research does not claim to identify a definitive model of power, but rather an 'emerging' model which is the result of the findings of this research.

### **6.5.3 Dependability**

Dependability is achieved through detailed reporting of what was done in the study (Shenton 2004). This chapter is a detailed account of the methods and steps taken in the research which should enable a future researcher to repeat the work if necessary. The in-depth account of the practices used should also enable the reader to assess the extent to which sound research practices were used.

Reflective appraisal of the process of inquiry is another requirement for dependability. The commentary above relates the effectiveness of several steps within the research process. Possibly the most challenging aspect of the research was the clustering of discourses into categories and ensuring the analysis did not suffer from any of the shortcomings as described in section 6.4.8. As the analysis progressed and I became more skilled at the practice, the effectiveness of the analysis improved. This heuristic process enabled continuous critique of the practice of discourse analysis and the opportunity to apply my learning to the method of data collection and analysis.

### **6.5.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is achieved by the steps taken to ensure 'comparative objectivity' (Patton 1990), bearing in mind that no research is devoid of context and therefore entirely 'subjective'. Miles and Huberman (1994) consider a key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits to their own agendas and assumptions. My background and purpose for pursuing the study is stated earlier on in section 6.2.2.1 of this chapter as disclosure of these predispositions.

Another provision for confirmability is the ability of the researcher to provide an 'audit trail' (Shenton 2004) which allows the reader to trace the research step by step via the decisions made and the procedures described. The detailed methodology chapter and

the attached appendices form the track which may be followed in how the concepts in the research objectives gave rise to choice of the research paradigm, the research design and data analysis method.

## **6.6 Ethical Considerations**

Another factor in reviewing the trustworthiness of research is the ethical considerations. One of the ethical requirements for human participants in a study is that the researcher must obtain informed consent from the participants (Wassener 2006). The consent form for this study (Appendix 2) was a way to ensure that prospective respondents understood the nature of the research and could voluntarily decide whether or not to participate. Participants were also ensured of their anonymity and the anonymity of their organisation in the documenting of the findings. In all extracts cited in this research, names of individuals and companies have been changed to ensure anonymity. All of the participants in the study agreed to sign the consent form without hesitation. A letter of thanks for their participation along with the transcript of their interview was sent to each participant by e-mail to give them an opportunity to review them. None of the respondents indicated any dissatisfaction with the transcription of their interviews. Participants in the study have been promised feedback on the results of the research once the project is complete in the form of summarised findings, to ensure that confidentiality is retained. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Research Ethics Committee in June 2010 (Appendix 5)

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The methodology chapter outlines the theoretical framework which has informed the research design and provides a rationale for the use of this methodology, given the aims of the research. The account of the research process aims at ensuring the trustworthiness of the research and therefore the claims that it makes in adding to the body of knowledge on women in leadership and their construction of power within the South African context. These findings of the analysis of each of the three research objectives are discussed in the following three chapters, namely chapters 7, 8 and 9. The findings are consolidated in the concluding chapter where the emerging model of power and its implications for women in leadership are discussed in detail.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:**

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE ONE**

#### **How Women Leaders Narrate the Development of their Awareness of Power**

##### **7.1 Introduction to Research Findings**

Using the method described in the previous chapter, discourses were identified for each of the three key research objectives as they emerged from the participants' responses to the corresponding questions in the interview guide (Appendix 1). Each of the three objectives focussed on a specific component of the participants' narrative around power and the findings are presented in the following three chapters, namely chapters 7, 8 and 9.

- Chapter 7 focusses on discourses relating to the participants' development of their awareness of power through the narration of their past (Research Objective 1)
- Chapter 8 focusses on discourses relating to the way in which women leaders discuss power in relation to their current leadership role (Research Objective 2)
- Chapter 9 focusses on discourses relating to the way women leaders claim to sustain their power in the future (Research Objective 3)

##### **7.1.1 Presentation of the Research Findings**

Key extracts from the interviews relating to these discourses are analysed and discussed with reference to the relevant literary discourse. Through this process of discussion the data yields a more refined understanding of the discourses initially identified, as well as additional emerging discourses that may not have been obvious in the initial analysis. This deepening of understanding of women business leaders' discourse on power gives rise to the emerging model of power which will be presented in the concluding chapter of this thesis (Chapter 10).

The presentation of the findings has been carefully considered in order to deal with the volume of the data, to do justice to the text and the process of discourse analysis as described in the chapter 6 on methodology, and to ensure that it is presented in a way that is accessible to the reader. As discussed in the methodology chapter, once discourses were identified through a process of analysis both within and across texts, extracts were then chosen for in-depth analysis and inclusion in the findings to highlight the discourse under discussion. A characteristic of discourse analysis is that texts are approached in their own right as the data and the extracts of text are instances of the data analysis (McMullen in Wertz *et al.* 2011).

In order to keep track of which narrative the extracts have come from, it is indicated whether they are taken from interview 1-10. To ensure anonymity of the interviewees, the interviews are referred to by number rather than using the interviewee's name or a pseudonym. This is not intended to objectify the participant, but rather to respect the terms of their informed consent (Appendix 2). Names that have been used by the participants in the extracts have been changed to ensure anonymity and denoted with the marking of a \*. Extracts from each interview within the chapter are also given a number so that there is a track of the number of extracts taken from each interview for each discourse. This was necessary for the research process in relating the extracts to the whole text as discussed in the section on hermeneutics in chapter 6.

Where it is relevant to highlight the participant's race, terms are used as outlined in the demographic table (Table 1) in chapter 6. As with the numbering of participants, this is done for purposes of clarity and consistency, not as a method of social categorisation. Where race is discussed by the participants in the extracts of their text, the analysis which follows uses the participants' self-categorisation of 'black' or 'African' in the discussion on the effect of the text.

Since the need for probing was limited during the interviews, most of the extracts presented are the participants' words taken from within their broader narrative accounts. The interview questions encouraged autobiographical flow of narratives in response to the questions with limited interruption, which according to Gregg (2006) allows for the author's self-construction, rather than conversational narrative where there is more exchange with the interviewer. While feminist research aims at avoiding rendering the

interviewer/researcher invisible (Butler 2005; Dickerson 2013; Gavey 2011), there has not been explicit exclusion of my own interjections. Rather the ‘mini-narratives’ which are being discussed in the analysis are part of a broader flow of narrative in response to the research objectives under discussion.

### **7.1.2 Introduction: Research Objective One**

This chapter discusses the discourses emerging in response to the first research objective on how women leaders narrated the development of their awareness of power. The aim of this question is to understand the early experiences of these women and how their encounters with power have shaped the way in which they construct power through their discourse. Following the process used by McAdams (2001), these early encounters, both with significant people and events, provide a framework for their construction of their current experiences, both as a leader and as woman. Participants were asked to respond in the following way relating to their past (see Appendix 1 for full Interview Guide)

- To describe their life as a woman ‘leader’ growing up in South Africa and the significant experiences that impacted on them
- To describe a moment in life when they felt powerful
- To describe a moment in life when they felt disempowered
- To describe and discuss significant relationships in their life that a positive influence on them
- To describe and discuss significant relationships in their life that a negative influence on them
- Discuss how they felt their story is shaped by being a woman

## **7.2 Discourses Identified in Relation to Objective One**

The discourses identified in the relation to the first research objective are discussed under the following headings and are summarised in section 7.3.

### **7.2.1 The Discourse of Racial and Cultural Dominance**

#### **7.2.2 Discourses Related to Social Rank**

7.2.2.1 Expert Power and Intellectual Superiority

7.2.2.2 Positions of Social Prestige And Power

7.2.2.3 Economic Independence

#### **7.2.3 Discourses Related to the Development of Psychological Power**

7.2.3.1 Manipulation and Control

7.2.3.2 Learning and Growth

#### **7.2.4 Feminist Discourse**

7.2.4.1 Authenticity and Female Identity

7.2.4.2 Legitimacy of Power

7.2.4.3 The Power of Challenging Patriarchy

### **7.2.1 The Discourse of Racial and Cultural Dominance**

A discourse identified in four of the participants' narratives is that of a growing awareness of power in relation to racial and cultural dominance within the context of South Africa. Interestingly, this discourse is most prevalent in one white participant's discourse which has the effect of recognising and acknowledging lack of awareness around these issues in her childhood, becoming conscious of them in her leadership role and yet re-asserting her dominance within that context. In contrast, the discourse is evident in two other interviews with black participants who construct their developing awareness of racial dominance and the strategies they deploy to resist it.

#### **Extract One (Interview 1)**

*quite honestly I didn't...you know, we had apartheid and all those kind of things when I grew up and it wasn't something that I even was conscious of ummm... you know..we had a domestic worker, we had gardeners we had a huge property you know I used to play golf.....build forts, or prepare veggie patches those kind of things with the*

*gardener our domestic servant was one of our good friends...and actually as children all the local kids, **the black kids, were our friends**, and that's who we spent time with.. And we played with them and that. Only when we started getting older and we went off to schools, and that kind of thing, did we start to realize... hang on...there are no black people in our schools and that kind of thing. But as kids we were just oblivious to the thing and it was...there is a servant's quarters down there and that's where our servant stayed, and we were up here, and she would have dinner with us if my folks were away or whatever... but that's just how we... and I must admit, I don't even think, maybe it was naivety, I don't even think that I got to probably Senior High School ,not High School, Junior School, that I got to even comprehending any of this. Umm...And it is quite interesting, because you lived in your own world as children.*

In the first text, the white participant positions her narrative within the context of growing up in South Africa under apartheid and contrasts her lack of awareness of the associated power relations between black and white and a growing consciousness of segregation. This discourse is introduced early on in the interview in reference to her own story. The way in which she shifts the discussion from her family context to a broader social context begins with a hesitant and unrelated acknowledgement of “and quite honestly I didn't you know we had apartheid and all those kind of things” and locates apartheid in a vague and poorly understood context re-enforced by the repeated use of the phrase “and that kind of thing”. In her discussion of her relations with both the domestic worker and the black children in the area, there is a certain incredulity associated with the words “and actually” with it being further enhanced by the emphasis on friends in the statement “as children, the local kids, **the black kids were our friends**”, both recognising and re-enforcing the abnormality of this within the apartheid context. The growing awareness of the lack of understanding of these issues is presented as an admission with the hedge “..I must admit..I don't even think...maybe it was naivety..I don't even think that I got to probably senior high school not junior or high school that I got to comprehending any of this”. However, the reflective nature of the comment “it's quite interesting because you live in your own world as children” justifies the poorly understood context and exonerates her of responsibility. The phrasing shifts from introducing the relationship between a ‘white child’ and the politically sensitive term ‘domestic worker’ into the use of ‘domestic servant’ which draws from the colonial rhetoric of power relations between black and white. This shift

in terminology and the fact that the discourse is introduced so early on in the narrative has the effect of presenting her story within the context of an interview on leadership and power where political sensitivity would be expected. However, despite her observed awareness of segregation, her reversion to the colonial terminology of her childhood has the effect of preserving the past power relations of the apartheid era. This discourse is developed further in extract two.

### **Extract Two (Interview 1)**

*So it was quite.. sitting here thinking about it, it was quite an interesting.. environment that we grew up in because we came from a very racist...not my family.... you know, environment there to then go to a school that was different ...okay, it didn't have black people, it was Afrikaans and had boys .. but we still had to be open-minded about people. So you know it was quite an interesting thing , and you just did it, you just got on with it. So and I think that, being culturally conscious, stood me in good stead throughout my career. I think the ability to listen and, not.. necessarily be intimidated by other people's opinions or whatever, but to be able to listen to them and say yes you are right or you are wrong. Because I am not this outspoken person has also stood me in good stead, because I accept that there are a lot of people out there that know a lot more than I do, and I'm willing to listen, and I'll debate. .But because of that, just the kind of person I am, it just allowed me to not always be in the front of the class, and always leading the whole thing, but to be able to sit back and listen to other people's points of view and then to make a decision. And I think that has stood **me in extremely good stead for where I am now in company y....***

The use of the phrase “you know” in this extract attempts to create a universalism linked to the racist, colonial environment of her childhood, anticipating that it is commonly understood by the interviewer as a fellow white woman who grew up in a similar context. There is a definite attempt to distance herself from this racism through making it a universal or denying its existence in her own family in the statement “I came from a very racist...not my family....you know environment”. The narration of the development of her cultural awareness is located within her experience of difference in her school context, related to language and gender. She draws from the universal acceptance of diversity, commonly acknowledged within leadership contexts today in South Africa (Dormehl 2012; Horwitz & Jain 2011; Human 2005; Rijamampianina &

Carmichael 2005; Thomas 2002; Thomas & Ely 1996). But while this cultural consciousness is framed in the context of being “open minded about people” and being able to “listen” to others, she presents a contradiction in her line of argument in the narration when she says “to listen and not...necessarily be intimidated by other people’s opinions”. The contradictions in the narration related to race and culture presents the binary opposites of being dominant and being dominated as well as being open-minded and accepting of others as opposed to the close minded paradigm personified as a “racist”. The emphasis on how this “cultural consciousness” has stood her in good stead in her career and her ability to listen has aided her in her present position, suggests that this is the identity she constructs within the context of her leadership role.

The following discussion in response to the question on the negative impact somebody has had on her story contributes further to this discourse:

### **Extract Three (Interview 1)**

*.....something happened when I was at company y ..that again I think..if we are talking about people..there was an anonymous letter written to the MD of company y..I was wondering if this would come up..when I was there as a senior manager..and it accused me and another manager of a whole lot of things..one of them being..racist..and this MD took the letter and copied it to the **whole** of the company board in Joburg and the executive...and I can tell you right now of everything in my story..that was probably the most traumatic moment..uum..at that stage I had about a year to go until partner assessment..and I just saw my career go up in flames before me...uum..everyone who made a decision as to whether I would be made a partner had a copy of that letter.. and..uum.. it’s not as if I could take it back or get it retracted...I had to in that scenario.. my mentor was so angry that he couldn’t take him on..and so another partner said right let’s take him on...and..and..i remember just crying for days..it was the most traumatic thing..and just having to deal with the whole thing..ask him why he did it and him turn around and say I thought it was the right thing to do..and I had to say to him..you didn’t even bother to investigate it...and find out what..what the story was and you just decided to copy the whole world on this thing and I said..you’ve just absolutely destroyed my career...uum..it was very traumatic and I honestly thought that that was my day at company y...and.. in my mind I still think I know what triggered it..it’s my rationalizing to myself..and what it’s taught me is that perceptions are incredibly*

*powerful..it might be wrong but if people perceive you as something..they can destroy you and...I learnt a valuable lesson about perceptions..*

This account of one of the ‘lowest’ points in her career as being publicly accused of being a ‘racist’ is in response to the question about who had had a negative impact on her life story. The MD, who made the incident public emerges as the villain in the story as opposed to the person accusing her of racism. She acknowledges the perception of racism, not to be true, but as a perception that she can possibly understand rationally “..and in my mind..I still think I know what triggered it..it’s my rationalising to myself..” However, the key focus in this account is the damaging effect this public perception would have on her career through the vivid images of destruction “I saw my career go up in flames” and “perceptions are incredibly powerful...it might be wrong but if people perceive you as something they can destroy you.” The account and the lesson learnt, as she describes it, positions her culturally conscious leadership identity as a ‘learned’ behaviour in adulthood, perceived to be necessary for progressing through and sustaining power within an organisation, particularly within the current context in South Africa. The context of the interview being on women leaders in South Africa also seems to create a framing of the narrative in terms of ‘learned’ leadership developmental processes. This is suggested in her unprompted contextualising of her upbringing at the start of the interview and in her pre-empting comment around the discussion of this incident “I was wondering if this would come up.”

The overall effect of this discourse is to acknowledge the need to be ‘culturally aware’ within the leadership context of South Africa and how that awareness is developed with hindsight from an adult perspective and within the current context of a changed political system. There is not necessarily an awareness of or shift in power relations within the racial and cultural context, however. A contrary effect of the discourse is to re-assert dominance within the shifting power dynamics in South Africa. The narration indicates strategies to avoid being dominated by others and to skilfully manage perceptions around being labelled a ‘racist’. The deployment of discourses to this effect has significant implications for authentic transformation efforts within organisations.

Whilst in the first interview, the white participant immediately positioned her narrative within the context of growing up under apartheid and being part of a dominant race

group. In the following interview, the African participant does not position her narrative within this context upfront. She does so in response to the reason she went to school at an early age.

**Extract One (Interview 5)**

*My sister was 7 years older than me so she was already going to school, and also..I have to thank apartheid in that sense, because in a white school I would never have been allowed to go to school, but in our black schools, there were not many strict rules and..you know, because our education was so poor, and everyone thought you just come to school for fun. You either going to be a nurse or a teacher one day...so there were not many hard and fast rules. And also too, we couldn't afford a maid, at home, and my mother was pregnant with my brother and had to work.. still, and so either I was going to be left alone, or go and live with my grandma. But already, because my sister was 7 years older, I was already reading her books, and developed a very strong sense of self, and they thought to give it a bash and take me to school.*

Access to formal education at an early age forms part of the discourse of intellectual superiority and creation of identity throughout this participant's narrative, which is dealt with in the section on expert and intellectual power (7.2.2.1) of this chapter, and the racial discourse is secondary in the interview. The way in which she contrasts the "hard and fast rules" of "white" schools and the poor education where people went to school for "fun" in "black" schools constructs a social context which gave her freedom which she was able to take advantage of. In so doing her discourse relates to the ability to manipulate a seemingly disempowering system when she says "and also...I have to thank apartheid in that sense". The hesitation and hedge phrase "in a sense" recognise the irony of the statement, however, this adult reflection on her narrative constructs her developing awareness of power as the ability to work a system to her advantage.

Furthermore, the discourse around race and culture in this interview focuses on the challenge of being 'black' in a predominantly 'white' environment and the need to prove legitimacy of belonging. As in the first interview, the awareness of the effects of segregation is only apparent later in the participant's narrative due to the isolated nature of the black and white childhood experiences lived under apartheid.

### **Extract Two (Interview 5)**

*University was quite a tough environment for me because I came from a black background, never... then apartheid ended in 1994, suddenly you know there were a lot of opportunities. But having gone to a black school in a black..you know..now we had no computers, nothing, suddenly I am exposed to...and I went to a white university, University of Natal, you know..most of my peers went to University of Zululand, Fort Hare, and stuff...and I went to Natal University, again because my parents thought I could fit there and also because I had the Anglo-American Scholarship, because obviously it was much more expensive than the other universities. And what helped there was again being thrown in the deep end.*

The polarised terms of 'black' background and 'black' versus 'white' universities are part of the social construct of the racial experiences of growing up in South Africa. The way in which the participant co-opts the interviewer by saying "you know" several times in the text, despite the interviewer being of a different race, refers to a commonly understood history which was polarised. In addition to taking advantage of the system, in this extract the discourse clearly relates to survival within a foreign context as something that contributed to the development of power when she says, "and what helped there was again being thrown in the deep end".

Proving her worth and legitimacy in accessing scholarships and an accounting career which was typically viewed as the domain of white males, is constructed throughout the interview with metaphors relating to the "survival of the fittest". Survival is associated with achievement and being taken seriously when not being part of the dominant culture or race. She presents this through the human subject of the Afrikaans men that she worked with in the following extract.

### **Extract Three (Interview 5)**

*And suddenly umm...I felt you know.. and we had then monthly management meetings..and management they didn't give you eye contact and I had been exposed to Canada, white communities where, when you speak to someone you look straight in their eyes, and here Afrikaans men in the boardroom would sit and discuss things about the mine and when I talk no one looked at me, and someone said what I had said, and*

*suddenly they were heard, and the idea freewheeled. And that was my idea, that was my suggestion!*

Contrasting the binary opposites of Afrikaans communities where she felt ignored and unacknowledged and white communities in Canada where she felt like an equal, constructs her narration of power as one which is constantly asserting itself within a social context which aims to suppress it. This legitimate claim to power forms part of the feminist discourse which is predominant across all of the interviews as well as in the literature (Clark and Kleyn 2007; Ely *et al.* 2011; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Ibarra & Obodaru 2009; Rhode 2003; Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009) and will be discussed later in this chapter. However, in the African participant's discourse, the two are inextricably linked, to the extent that it is difficult for the participants in some cases to distinguish between racial and gender discrimination. This reflects the tensions that exist within the feminist discourse around race and gender which is highlighted in the literature review (Hassim 2005; Mtintso 2003).

In the tenth interview, the narration of her development of power, presents the racial and the feminist discourse alongside one another. When asked the question how her story has been shaped by being a woman, she responds:

**Extract One (Interview 10)**

*Umm..honestly.... I don't know, I don't know..Let me tell you why I say this. I am very much aware of the fact that I am a beneficiary of affirmative action, be it because I am black, or because I am a woman..doesn't really matter. I benefitted from companies in the early nineties knowing that they actually needed to transform their workforce and that they needed to give others an opportunity. I also am aware that throughout I've met people that treated me differently or in a vile manner because I was either black or a woman. But fortunately those people were not decision makers in terms of how my career was going to grow. So..I have been sheltered from it to a certain extent because the people who were my mentors or bosses at the time understood the context within which I was operating and they did what they could to ensure that the environment was conducive...*

She recognises that her story has been shaped both by being 'black' and a woman. Yet in her text, she repeats "I don't know, I don't know" which has the effect of being unable to isolate either. Her response is constructed around being a beneficiary of affirmative action and being a subject of discrimination. While these are polar opposites, disempowerment is associated with both. However, she recounts her career achievement as having been facilitated by others who helped create the right environment for her. The effect of this text is to locate her narrative outside of herself and to position herself either as a beneficiary of good or bad treatment or policies that enabled her to be there. In doing so, the discourse constructs the narrator as a victim within a system and while challenging her legitimate claim to power, re-asserts white, male dominance. This is confirmed in the literature discussion on the negative effects of a "discrimination and fairness paradigm" (Thomas & Ely 1996) as the only driver of affirmative action policies (Byrne 2009; Horwitz & Jain 2011). This is further supported in the fact that she recounts her current relationship with her male boss as highly disempowering.

### **Extract Three (Interview 10)**

*I don't know if it is just my personality as well.. you know I am not quite sure what it is about me that brings out his this very worst, worst side in him, which is always there, but when it comes to me it's just there is something about him that it really really grates him. I'd like to think that he is a lot more evolved than just being a racist misogynist pig (laughter). So I am going to assume that it is something to do with my personality. That I just happen to be the person that brings out the worst in him. So I don't know if that answers your question? And I know that it is probably not the right answer..*

The effect of this text is to deny the hurt and experience of racism that she does not want to label. She does this by using the hedge phrase "I'd like to think that he is a lot more evolved..." but in fact naming him a "racist misogynist pig". This has the effect of articulating her experience of his behaviour while seemingly retaining the moral high ground of refusing to label him categorically. The laughter which follows, however, has the effect of emphasising the irony expressed in the text and the duplicitous talk as a survival strategy in maintaining facades in a hostile environment. There is bravado associated in the way she states "I assume..." and yet this is contrasted with the self-doubt around "I don't know if that answers your question? And I know that is probably

not the right answer". The self-doubt associated with her expression of the racial discourse has the effect of denying the legitimacy of the impact of her experience on her identity and undermines the ability to recognise abuse of power for what it is. This is emphasised in a number of research studies that indicate how women are conflicted about identifying with a victim status and uncomfortable about acknowledging it (Clayton & Crosby 1992; Gavey 2005; Harvey 2010; Henry 1994). The reluctance to highlight abuse of power is a severe limitation in our efforts to transform organisations and engage in authentic dialogue around issues of racism and oppression.

### **7.2.1.1 Summary: Discourse on Racial and Cultural Dominance**

The discourse on racial and cultural dominance highlights the assertion in the literature that there is no universal women's interests (Gavey 2011; Hassim 2005; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012; Mtintso 2003), particularly within the South African context due to different experiences growing up under apartheid. What is common in this discourse, however, is that in their construction of racial or cultural dominance, women are unable to engage in the transformation of the prevailing system through the proposed mutual adaptation and integration of diverse elements (Booyesen & Nkomo 2010; Horwitz & Jain 2011; Op't Hoog *et al.* 2010; Thomas & Ely 1996; Wheatley 2004). Instead they perpetuate the prevailing culture either through re-asserting their dominance and managing perceptions around this; manipulating the system to their advantage and gaining tenure with the dominant culture; or remaining a victim within the system and unable to articulate its abuse. This has significant implications for understanding whether there are indeed emerging models of power amongst women leaders.

### **7.2.2 Discourses Related to Social Rank**

The dominant discourses emerging from the texts related to the development of an awareness of social rank through their narration are:

7.2.2.1 Expert Power and Intellectual Superiority

7.2.2.2 Positions of Social Prestige And Power

7.2.2.3 Economic Independence

These discourses all relate to externally attributed elements of power which are experienced by the narrators as being bestowed on them by others or are perceived to have value in the broader society. These are acknowledged forms of power in the literature discourse around power both in organisations and society at large. They are elements of the social rank component of Mindell's (1995) model of power developed in his theory on process psychology which is explored in detail in the literature review. However, it is interesting to note how these forms of power are constructed in the narration, as it is in the nuance and subtlety in the text that new insights emerge. It is in the discussion of the awareness of social rank that the process of attaining this power indicates a psychological dimension associated with these forms of power. According to Mindell (1995) social rank is a more static form of power, based on external factors bestowed on an individual by society, although it may be present or not within any group or organisation, depending on the rank relationships within that group. Psychological power is a more dynamic form of power since it is either dependent on interpersonal dynamics in relationships or intrapersonal developments within an individual.

#### **7.2.2.1 Expert Power and Intellectual Superiority**

While in several of the interviews, the narrators raise their competence and expertise in relation to their growing awareness of power which is consistent with the literature on forms of power (Mindell 1995; Robbins 1993; Shriberg *et al.* 2005; Van Tonder 2008), it is constructed as an ability to express and demonstrate this social rank within relationships with their peers that it takes on significance. The relational dynamic of power is evident within this construction, as opposed to the inert possession of degrees or good symbols.

Four of the participants recount stories of developing awareness of power around the active demonstration of their capabilities. In the first interview, the narrator recounts a growing awareness of the development of her expert power through increased confidence and the transition into her area of speciality. A theme throughout the narration is the conquering of a fear of public speaking to being able to be in the frontline in an area where she feels in control of her knowledge. The following extracts introduce the discourse:

**Extract One (Interview 1):**

*One thing that I thought hindered my progress as a leader is that I am **absolutely terrified of public speaking**. And I've managed to just in this very..you know at company y..I have had to overcome it but ummm.but as a child I was absolutely paranoid about it*

**Extract Two (Interview 1):**

*I think it was all about a fear of looking like an idiot and making an idiot of myself and it 's quite interesting, because I'm a bit of a class clown, so I actually love people laughing at me and if I can make a joke and everyone can laugh at me and we can be silly.. then that's wonderful.. I think it's a great thing. I don't mind people laughing at me, but there's a difference between people laughing at you in a fun scenario and another one where you are standing up there and you are stuttering over your words and you no one can hear you and the mike's up here and that kind of thing ...that kind of laughter is very different than being a class clown.*

The emphasis on being afraid in extract one is linked to appearing incompetent in extract two and the narration recounts the overcoming of this barrier as a powerful experience, whereas the childhood experience is presented as a disempowering and fearful one. In her narration, rank is recognised in relation to competence and specialist expertise, but power is articulated in terms of overcoming the childhood barrier of being afraid and unconfident to stand up front to becoming comfortable expressing her views from an expert power base. The awareness of her sense of power is related to the experience of public speaking, but the increase of knowledge and expertise is the process by which she is able to dispel this fear and, as she repeatedly says in extract three, "handle it". The effect of the discourse is to establish her ability to master herself within the leadership context. The discourse is apparent again in the next extract when she describes her time spent working in the Philippines.

**Extract Three (Interview 1):**

*.. I had no support..I was paddling my own canoe.and if the partners there disagreed with me I had to take them on and debate it with them..it wasn't as if I could refer to my colleagues or boss..I was the frontline and the only line..so it was quite an*

*experience..and if you think about it..going back to my boarding school days where I didn't want to leave home..now isolated on an island away from nowhere.. and being in the frontline gave me a sense of power*

The military term “frontline” used several times throughout the entire interview makes up a milieu of military phrases and metaphors and will be discussed in more detail in response to the second research objective, aimed at understanding how women leaders discuss power in relation to their leadership role. The frontline as is presented here relates to being ‘upfront and exposed’ as opposed to ‘being at the back and one of the troops’. This discourse constructs competence and confidence within the leadership context of being able to stand alone in your views and opinions, with knowledge, rather than team members as your source of support. The traditional notion of expertise as a source of power is the predominant discourse, but it is the independence associated with this; the overcoming of previous barriers; and a realisation of self-mastery that emerge in this discourse as something more original. These constructs of power relate to Mindell’s (1995) notion of psychological rank, as well as the literature on positive psychology, focussing on resilience and personal growth (Antonovsky 1987; Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003; Dhiman 2011; Lewis 2011; Steger & Dik 2010; Strümpfer 2005; Weigold *et al.* 2013).

In contrast with the first interview, the second participant raises and emphasises her skill in public speaking in response to the question of what makes her feel powerful, although she hedges the question and qualifies it as the ability to influence, rather than claiming it as a source of power, when she says:

**Extract Two (Interview 2)**

*umm.....I can't think of like a particular moment, but generally the moments have always , been... when I speak **publicly** so and it happened throughout High School, Primary School, where I have always been asked to be involved in debating or ummm doing speeches, whether it is motivational speaking or whatever it is umm, but I've always been asked to do those type of things and I think that when I do that (sigh) ....power is such a funny word, 'cause its.. you know you have all of these negative attachments to the word power, so I'm going to use it in that context anyway I think then, that's when I felt a sense of power, not power but influence, the ability to*

*influence people umm because I would look around and often find people hanging on to what I say, or listening intently and...I think that's where I got the sense that people look up to me, umm they feel that I'm a role model, that I'm a leader..umm it was generally in those type of situations and probably the most recent was you know when we did our final presentation in Japan and it went down so well and again people were congratulating me and just talking about you know how well I speak publicly and umm how believable I am I guess..it's at those types of moments when I have felt a sense of "power" – if you want to call it that.*

In the above extract she rejects narrating this experience in terms of power, not claiming to attach the phenomena to it, saying to the interviewer “if you want to call it that” and hesitates to use it due to the negative attachments she believes are associated to the word. In her narration she prefers to use the word “influence” which she explains as people listening to her intently, being “believable” and a “role model”. Within the narration she constructs herself as someone that others will “look up to” and therefore associates her narrative of power with social rank, but also as someone that people find authentic and can relate to, when she speaks of being “believable”. The social rank is therefore qualified through the psychological dimension of sincerity or authenticity which others experience. Unlike in the first interview where the power discourse is around developing expertise and the ability to move into leadership positions as a result of this, in this participant’s discourse, the focus is not so much on expertise but rather on having the intellect and innate ability to communicate with impact.

Both participants relate their experiences of disempowerment in relation to competence. However, where the first participant’s narrative recounts being afraid of looking like a fool, the second participant focuses on being treated as a fool, when she says:

### **Extract Three (Interview 2)**

*I can't believe it I spent 3 years doing my degree, a year in post-grad, I've excelled academically all my life and here's this 55 year old man telling me that I can't flipping photocopy a file properly (laughs) and I was really upset about it, and at that moment, for that day I felt disempowered. I'm told my natural instincts kicked in and the next morning I woke up and said well I'm going to show him, you know and you know, if it doesn't kill you it makes you stronger, that sort of thing, and I think I did (laughter)...*

Her narrative indicates the insult she felt at the way she was being treated, using the expletive “flipping” and the lack of recognition for her intellect through the academic achievements she has. The laughter has the effect of releasing emotion that was once associated with the feelings experienced in this story. The disempowering experience reveals an awareness of the dynamic nature of power in that the social artefacts of excellent academic results and degrees, as well as age and superiority of the male subject are not inherently powerful. The realisation of her power is evident in her spirited response and her determination to “show him” her capabilities. The military metaphor, “if it doesn’t kill you it makes you stronger”, has the effect of actively establishing her power against dominating personas attempting to undermine it.

Similarly in the fifth interview, the narrative is constructed around being intellectually superior and excelling academically. Due to the social context within which the narration is set, this superiority is not automatic as in the second interview, but rather something which she has had to fight for. Competitive and military terms and analogies dominate this discourse which has the effect of recognising this social rank, not as a given, but as something tenuous which needs to be aggressively sustained.

#### **Extract One (Interview 5)**

*And so immediately, in the school environment I had to fight.... otherwise I am the little girl in the corner and everyone around me would have dominated me...so I immediately developed... very strong sense of self and sense of... ummm a fighting spirit..you know..instead of feeling powerless, you know. So fighting for what I believed in, and to excel, and my mother always used to say the only way to beat any prejudice that you might be exposed to at any point in time..is excellence, you know. So as a little young girl, I was determined to beat everyone in class, in school, you know..... I was suddenly....the youngest in any class, obviously, but also the most intelligent.*

“Excellence” is constructed in this extract as a “weapon” against discrimination, not only in her own discourse, but as part of the parental teaching from the female subject of her mother. This has the effect of deeply entrenching this as a value system handed down through the female lineage. Within this discourse of being the best academically, the expected standards of being a scholarship winner is constructed as a turning point in

which access is gained to the social status of a superior education and the recognition of superior academic capability.

**Extract Two (Interview 5)**

*And I was the only one awarded with the scholarship. Umm...I mean that immediately set me apart from the rest and I knew that my education and future was taken care of you know. Then I knew I would never be, because I knew that academically I could do well, but you must understand that I needed to...my parents just were both working in a hospital, my mum a nurse and my dad a clerk..umm... I knew that I could be whatever I wanted to be.*

The construction of power within this social position of being recognised for capability is also a sense of freedom and breaking with the past when she describes the working lives of her parents in contrast to the recognition that “I could be whatever I wanted to be”. However, when she appeals to the interviewer with the phrase “but you must understand” it has the effect of emphasising the responsibility of her educational status in relation to her working class parents and introduces certain limitations to the freedom she constructs.

Responsibility is also constructed as an element of privilege and opportunity in the following extract from interview nine:

**Extract One (Interview 9)**

*And I think that's another key determinant of the opportunities that I have been able to capitalize on it was a top private girls' school...at which when I first arrived I felt inadequate, because the girls who had been there for 12 years their English and literature was way more advanced than I had been exposed to although I was an avid reader..I felt deficient in terms of what I had been exposed to and the repertoire of what I had read by then. But I quickly caught up and assimilated where they were and what they were reading, and what they understood. And you know in the 5 brief years there, which was a world class school, I think.... the school cultivated the belief that I could be anybody I wanted to be..*

Being able to “capitalize” on her education constructs this socially bestowed rank as something which she has to take advantage of. While it is not given the same emphasis as in the previous extract where her advantage was in stark contrast to her parents’ disadvantage, it does attach responsibility to the rank of a superior education. In both extracts, however, the explicit awareness of this power with its responsibility is constructed in terms of self-belief. This psychological dimension of power will be elaborated on in section 7.2.3 of this chapter.

### **Summary: Expert Power and Intellectual Superiority**

What is highlighted in the discourse on expert power and intellectual superiority is that this form of power is something which needs to be aggressively and actively constructed and sustained in a competitive environment. What begins to emerge, and will be elaborated on in section 7.2.3 of this chapter on psychological power, is the connection between this element of social rank and the intrapersonal psychological constructs of self-mastery, as well as the interpersonal perceptions of sincerity and authenticity. The development of expert power and intellectual superiority is a discourse which re-enforces our traditional models of power by constructing it in terms of privilege, prestige and gaining tenure with powerful groups. However, in addition to this, it is also constructed as a strategy for overcoming prejudice and building credibility with others, as well as a responsibility associated with the social rank it affords.

### **7.2.2.2 Positions of Social Prestige and Power**

The traditional discourse of power through social rank achieved by the status associated with informal and formal positions of power is apparent in the text of five of the interviews and discussed in much of the literature on organisational forms of power (Kets de Vries 2006; Robbins 1993; Shriberg *et al.* 2005; Van Tonder 2008).

In the first interview, the prestigious networks revolve around activities that are stereotypically related to the male gender. These include childhood male pursuits; hanging out in the “cool gang” as she describes it; and in her current leadership role playing golf with the CEO. The discourse of social rank and status expands out of the informal role into the more traditional formal roles with attached prestige and status,

when she discusses becoming a prefect and manager to being one of the first women partners at an accounting firm and director of a listed company. The effect of this discourse is to claim the enjoyment of this form of power and the recognition and prestige associated with it.

### **Extract Two (Interview 1)**

*So ja I think the leadership role I played at school **and I loved it, I really did**, I loved the leadership role – it was just the public speaking side of it. I could tell people what to do I could really and I enjoyed it I really did ... class captain, prefect, library monitor and all that kind of thing that's exactly what I wanted to do. Umm so ja I would probably think that being a prefect at school you know and having people respect you for who you were and what you'd achieved umm was quite an important thing for me...*

The emphasis on the positive association with this power is heard in the emphasis and use of the word “loved” and “enjoyed” in this extract at other places in her narration, including the extract below. In the above extract the emotion is also underscored by the overuse of the term “really”. The power associated with position is also narrated in terms of being a role model and the discourse shifts towards a more developmental discourse, which will be highlighted as a separate discourse in this chapter on learning and growth (section 7.2.3.2).

While she claims the social rank and power associated with informal and formal positions in childhood, her account of her awareness of this form of power within the formal leadership context attempts to establish a more mature approach to issues of status with a focus on the more worthy status of being emulated as a role model than the more shallow status of title and position. This is highlighted in extract four.

### **Extract Three (Interview 1)**

*I think I wanted the status of being the first woman leader..to be honest with you I think that was important for me..company y is quite a high profile..whereas at company x we keep our heads below the radar..company y the more you can get in the paper and get in the public domain the better..funnily enough that is not who I am..but the thought of being the first woman partner and being rolled out as that did appeal to me..and I think that I wanted that Noddy badge..*

In this extract she acknowledges her need for status as something which is incongruent with her identity and possibly something which she associates with a certain level of immaturity, using the infantile image of wanting the “Noddy badge”. There is something of a confession in her acknowledgement “to be honest with you” of the shallowness of the public, high profile role as opposed to the depth of the expert, competent identity in the previous discourse on expert power (section 7.2.2.1). This is further dismissed in her account of reaching her current position later in the interview when she states “I think I was at that stage one of the youngest directors on the JSE..so I was told...I never actually researched it.” She makes the statement related to the positional power, but diminishes its significance to her by referring to it as potential hearsay, not worthy of following up. Status in terms of being a woman with power in a male-dominated environment is a separate discourse which will be discussed further in the section on feminist discourse in this chapter (section 7.2.4). Within this discourse of social rank her awareness reveals an emerging identity where status and recognition is enjoyed as a positional privilege, but has more significance in relation to being emulated by others which is discussed in the literature as a form of referent or charismatic power (Hudson 2013; Klein & House 1995; Schermerhorn *et al.* 2005; Van Rensburg 2007).

Unlike the first interview the discourse on prestige and status in the second interview does not revolve around natural associations with networks or traditional male gender activities or images. However, there is an acknowledgement of the active need to pursue the right connections and promote the appropriate public image in the account of her story.

### **Extract One (Interview 2)**

*I don't think I ever sat down and said to myself – ooh I'm not naturally “out there” so I need to be, but somehow... I recognized it and I knew that I needed to put myself out there a lot more and almost get out of my comfort zone and it is something I've always been conscious about and I think that as a person I've developed over the years. Whereas earlier on in my days I'd be walking into a social function a lot more nervous, whereas now it doesn't really phase me and I enjoy the type of interaction and so I think it's those type of things, by just taking chances..umm putting myself out there,*

*proving that I'm a leader, doing things that I would not normally do umm....and making sure that I meet the right people and.....*

The consciousness around the need to make the “right” connections is constructed as something which has grown over time and has now become an active strategy. Overcoming the initial fear relating to these social interactions is similar to the description of conquering a fear of public speaking in the first interview. The awareness of power constructed within this narrative is related to the conscious act of taking social risk and “putting myself out there” rather than automatically being associated with prestigious social networks.

In contrast, interview seven constructs her awareness of power almost primarily through the alignment with powerful people at an early age, which is referred to in the literature as relational power (Shriberg *et al.* 2005). The positive effect of this form of power in an organisational context is discussed in relation to the formation of networks amongst women in the leadership roles (Sandberg 2013). However, the negative potential for dominant group abusive behaviour is also highlighted in the literature discussion on organisational theory and corporate bullying (Cilliers 2012). Unlike in the first interview, power does not centre around male activities, but rather the informal power base of “popular” women.

#### **Extract One (Interview 7)**

*I wasn't always in leadership positions at school, like I wasn't a prefect or anything like that, but for some reason I always was involved with.... I was never... umm.. bullied at school, I always made sure I was aligned with the people who actually bullied the people. in a way I was amongst the leaders of the school from that angle, not from the school perspective, but more from.. like at a social level... and in that way I learnt leadership qualities through that. By learning from so called, the people that everyone just didn't want to associate with, but they demonstrated leadership skills.. because people could listen to them, people were scared of them, in a way.*

She narrates her conscious approach to aligning with the most powerful people in the school when she says “I made sure”. She changes her thought process mid-stream in describing her positions of power from the association focus to the effect that it had, ie

“I was never bullied” at school. The way she manoeuvres the conversation constructs her conscious strategy as a survival instinct required to protect herself and speaks to a competitive and dominating discourse of power, especially when she says “people were scared of them”. She describes learning “leadership qualities” through this form of alignment and recognises the significance of the informal base of power held by people such as “bullies”, operating outside of the formal social system, held by people such as prefects. In constructing her awareness of these dynamics and deployment of this strategy at an early age, she portrays herself as politically astute. Rather than judging the “bullying” behaviour, she presents it as fact. She does not make reference to the bullies again, but speaks about being “popular” and part of the “in-group” as a criteria for power when she says:

**Extract Two (Interview 7)**

*Then moving to high school...same story, I was never a prefect, umm but I continued, you know, being involved with groups of girls that were powerful in the school...umm.....I am just trying to think of my life in high school..yes.. I was amongst the popular girls in school, so for some reason I always attracted the popular girls, and I was amongst the popular people in high school. Again, I made sure I hang out with the popular girls and in that way it gave me that power to be comfortable and to build up my confidence.*

By using the word “made sure”, the consciousness of her quest for power is acknowledged. She uses the group of “popular” people as a vehicle to become comfortable and build her confidence. She constructs the persona of the popular and the bully as one and the same which is an interesting reflection of the power dimension and discourse she is presenting. In recounting her story of being able to stand up to her father which will be discussed later in the feminist discourse on the power of challenging patriarchy (section 7.2.4.3), she is able to assert herself as a woman and not feel bullied by a male authority figure. The overt seeking of power from an early age and the comfort with which she discusses it in the interview, is in contrast with some of the other interviews and what is commonly documented in the literature where women reject having or are reluctant to talk about power (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Gavey 2011; Harvey 2010; Jamieson 1995; Miller & Cummins. 1992; Sandberg 2013).

In her adult years the social rank of associating with powerful people is recounted in terms of more constructive relationships. Instead of positioning these relationships as ones that would protect her she recounts them as relationships that nurtured and developed her.

**Extract Three (Interview 7)**

*Umm... and one thing I mean, if I look at all the jobs that I have had.. I built very good relationships with my seniors, to the point that whenever I was leaving they were okay with it, they weren't okay with the fact that they were going to lose me, but they were always very willing to let me go, to give me time, to counsel me to prepare me for the next job*

Building positive and strong relationships is a discourse which will be discussed in the discourse on the development of psychological power (section 7.2.3). The way in which the participant narrates the development of her awareness of power from the early days of ensuring she was protected and gained confidence through the informal networks of power to her ability to collaborate with and hold respect amongst the formal custodians of power in her working life indicates a maturation process associated with the way in which positions of prestige and power are sought.

In her narration of her awareness of power, participant eight identifies the respect that comes both with her position and her valued judgement as critical constructs. When asked the question about being a powerful human being, she relays the following story.

**Extract One (Interview 8)**

*I will say "I am the Group Financial Manager at company b" and people, their reaction is normally quite strong...because..I don't know whether I don't look like I could be that person or, I think it is perhaps something people don't expect from a woman, but people are...sort of quite impressed. And my husband always says you know he is quite proud of me when I say that and people, you know... react sort of positively. So it is not power in terms of making people do things, or... but it is just the fact that it is a more respected position and that people obviously know what comes with that, you know...*

Her account has the effect of highlighting the social rank and associated respect that comes with positional power, particularly amongst men as personified by the subject of her “husband”. But it also presents the binary opposites of the respected position and the fact that she is a woman and the fact that she is not how society positions a “typical” extrovert type leader. This is further supported in the extract where she highlights people’s judgement of her quietness as a “weakness”. This is a commonly held notion in the feminist literature relating to women finding their authentic voice (Brescoll 2011; Gilligan 1982; Lee 2010) and is challenged by several feminists (Fiske 2010; Galinsky *et al.* 2008; Mahoney & Yngvesson 1992) who question the simplistic equation of voice with authority and silence with victimisation.

### **Extract Two (Interview 8)**

*I have been taught to be sort of fair and level headed and... umm have my say, but without being loud, I have never been known as ...in fact, if people tell me my weaknesses they always tell me I don't speak out enough.*

The ability to assert herself and show good judgement is the power she constructs in relation to her position and the awareness of being able to “have her say without being loud” is in direct contrast with some of the previous discourses where extrovert tendencies are constructed as a power base in presenting a public persona either through social networks or being able to speak in public.

### **Summary: Discourse on Positions of Social Prestige and Power**

The emerging discourse around positions of social prestige and power is related to something more inherent than externally obvious. This inherent power, which will be elaborated on in section on the development of psychological power (section 7.2.3), is constructed as something which can neither be bestowed nor retracted. In these extracts they are constructed through a process of the narrators becoming aware of a range of psychological phenomena associated with their powerful positions. The most significant of these are the maturation of power relations from protective to developmental relationships and the respect gained through the demonstration of sound judgement exercised from a formal position of power.

### 7.2.2.3 Economic Independence

Economic independence is a discourse constructed in the narration of the development of awareness of power in three of the interviews and is a commonly recognised construct of power both in Mindell's model (1995) and the literature on organisational power (Robbins 1993; Shriberg *et al.* 2005).

The third participant constructs her social rank largely in relation to her financial independence and ability to support and assist others. She raises financial independence initially within the context of narrating her life story, but also at the end of the interview as a significant factor. The fact that it is not emphasised in her life path discussion indicates that it is constructed as something significant over and above her story. She minimises it, saying it is not a big thing, but emphasises it and elaborates on it extensively in the interview as a key construct of her social rank in relation to others.

#### **Extract One (Interview 3)**

*The only one thing we didn't touch on is about financial independence. I'll just mention it briefly, because it's not a big thing but it obviously started off.. and I had a student loan and I worked during my 'varsity career so I had a start taking responsibility for my own finances. I think my parents paid for my first year Varsity and from 2<sup>nd</sup> year I tutored and I waitressed and my last year I took like a tiny student loan. But I started off my first job in 1993 at a clothing chain.. I remember with a R5 000 loan and I remember each month checking and thinking **this is never going down** you know! At the same time I was planning to go overseas so I really soon learnt the understanding of money.*

While financial independence is highlighted as part of the construction of her identity as an independent women, it is associated with her relationship to others in the context of being able to support and empower them by providing assistance in setting up their own businesses. It is socially constructed as a form of patronage rather than a means of prestige and status.

### **Extract Two (Interview 3)**

*I think that financial independence is key and even though I don't need to be in a position to earn this type of money and maybe that is also a power thing it definitely gives you financial power. I mean, since my dad died I have been in a position to have the luxury of being able to help my mom. ....We've helped two other people, besides my maid's daughter, which is family and you are more or less expected to do. But we've got two people that came into our lives in the last three years who they've got no bearing on us whatsoever.....*

While she relates the power of financial independence to the ability to provide resources to others, the discourse is not simply related to patronage. It goes beyond the pure financial relationship and is constructed as the power of having advantage and access to resources and knowledge. This is particularly significant in the South African context in that it highlights the colonial and racial discourse which intersects with gender issues, creating challenges in understanding the multiple effects of oppression (Hassim 2005; Mtintso 2003).

### **Extract Three (Interview 3)**

*So you know the concept about empowering people and giving people access to resources and people. And not even understanding how powerful your connections are... that is one of the things I teach in our leadership forum thing...just the introduction of a person to a vac job or the application for a bursary....so just to give them access to your knowledge and experience and it's not even the money that's important. But I do think this thing about financial independence is a motivator to a point and it starts to become irrelevant and then having that financial independence means a whole lot of people rely on you and that there is this power of being able to help other people it becomes so important. It is not about having money, it's what you can do with it and so on.....*

She constructs the awareness around the power of economic rank initially as the ability to be independent of others, but ultimately about the power to change the circumstances of another. The responsibility of having “a whole lot of people rely on you” and the freedom of “what you can do with it” has the effect of presenting economic

independence as a power construct of social rank that carries responsibility with it, as well as privilege.

While economic independence is not a dominant discourse within the narration of participant five, it is raised in relation to her awareness of power and her rank in society.

#### **Extract One (Interview 5)**

*I must recognize that I am one of the very few women who can make a choice. Many women, especially black, lots of women...most probably it is different now.... but earlier on...many sort of things happen to them, they stand back because they don't have the financial or the intellectual...once I had my career and as I said, I found immediately I earned way more than any peer...*

She constructs her awareness of economic power as the freedom to make choices, and positions that within the racial and historical context of the time. She also links this power to superior intellectual capability but tails off here, choosing to focus on her economic rank. So financial independence is constructed not just as the ability to earn substantively, but also to make independent choices and be proactive in dealing with money matters, rather than “standing back”. This has the effect of constructing economic independence as a personally empowering phenomena, whereas in the previous interview (interview 3), the construction of economic independence was around the ability to economically empower others.

In the fourth interview economic independence is related to the power of independence as a whole which will be elaborated on in the next section on the development of psychological power (section 7.2.3), but unlike the third interview it is related to being free from the burden of needing to support others and is ironically constructed within a traditional patriarchal relationship of the male breadwinner.

#### **Extract One (Interview 4)**

*I think the other factor, if I were to be very honest, I think the other factor specially maybe in the last 5 years..I'm not the breadwinner.....I mean obviously when I was on my own, when my husband and I first started..I mean and I'm not saying my income*

*isn't an important part of our family, and how we live our life, but I'm not the breadwinner. So that real responsibility..knowing you are the breadwinner and you've got a family that's dependent on you..to have a good job and continue to have a good job and give them the opportunities.... I think that puts a completely different umm slant on things umm to ja , for guys, I think it's an awesome responsibility that I've never, ever had to shoulder.*

The recognition of the burden of financially supporting a family, shouldered predominantly by men in a traditionally patriarchal society, is constructed as something not often acknowledged when she says "If I were to be very honest". Economic independence in this context is constructed as the freedom to be completely independent rather than the burden of responsibility for others. In contrast by naming the responsibility as "awesome" she associates the power related to the financial role of being the provider, which is reflected in the third interview. The gender dimension within this discourse is discussed in section 7.2.4 of this chapter, but the economic independence discourse as it is constructed here relates to freedom and choice as well as the reverence associated with being able to look after others.

#### **Extract Two (Interview 4)**

*If I really didn't like my job, or if I got pissed off or fired or retrenched...shoo....I mean the self-esteem thing would be difficult to deal with...but we would carry on living a decent life. So I do think it can give you...I suppose that's why for me in many ways the political manoeuvring is not that important....because I go I couldn't give a shit....if you want to promote me....if you don't want to promote me, don't...I really don't care. But obviously if I feel discriminated against I'll get angry.*

In this extract the economic independence is constructed as power within the context of an organisation, where not having to be the breadwinner gives the freedom to take risks and walk away from a job if you are not happy. She changes tack mid statement, instead of saying what this independence can give you and rather focuses on the pressure it relieves, which is the "political manoeuvring" associated to holding onto power. She dramatizes her interaction with the power figure who has the ability to promote her or not, which has the effect of constructing her own power in the negotiating tactic of having nothing to lose. The economic independence of a woman supported by the

traditions of patriarchy is constructed as a privilege. It is ironic that the very system which is constructed as disempowering in so many contexts is constructed as empowering within this context. She does introduce the factor of discrimination which will be dealt with in section 7.2.4 on the feminist discourses constructed in the text.

### **Summary: Economic Independence**

The discourse on economic independence in these extracts constructs a number of contradictory notions of power. On the one hand it entrenches a paternalistic model of patronage between those who have and those who do not. On the other hand it constructs the privilege of being economically empowered and free to make choices; as well as the burden of responsibility which that brings. The contradictions within this discourse draws attention to the complexity associated with economic power and the psychological dimension associated with it. This is an area which is given little focussed attention in the literature, despite the body of feminist literature around structural and political transformation. The literature does highlight divisions amongst the positions of the socio-economic 'elite' feminists and those who are disadvantaged socio-economically (Eisenstein 2010; Mtose 2008). As a result economic independence is often dealt with as a middle class concept of the economic emancipation of educated women (Eisenstein 2010; Sandberg 2013). However, there appears to be limited focus on economic realities impacting women at all levels of society and feminist perspectives on economic independence appear to remain confined to relative social status (Geier 2013).

### **7.2.2.4 Summary: Discourses Related to Social Rank**

The social rank constructed through expert power and intellectual superiority; positions of social prestige and power and economic independence represent the traditionally held constructs of power that are obvious within systems and frequently commented on in literature on forms of power (Fiske 2012; Kets de Vries 2006; Mindell 1995; Shriberg *et al.* 2005). These forms of power are mostly evident in the formal hierarchical relationships that exist in organisations and society, but can also be part of the more informal structures of power, which are prevalent and deeply entrenched nonetheless. What is evident from the participants' discussion is that these forms of

power, both within formal and informal structures, need to be actively pursued and aggressively sustained.

However, what has emerged from the above analysis is that they cannot easily be separated from some of the more dynamic and psychological forms of power which will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter (section 7.2.3). These reflect both interpersonal constructs of power, which relate to the individuals' internal psychological processes and intrapersonal constructs of power which reflect to the nature of power relations. They become more evident in the narrators' construction of their own maturation process and therefore represent a contextual shift within the discourse on how women narrate their awareness of power. The personal psychological process of overcoming barriers and achieving a sense of mastery stems from the power associated with intellect and expertise. Similarly, the assertion of independent thought and ideas is constructed as a personally powerful psychological phenomenon and part of the discourse of intellectual and expert superiority. The intrapersonal constructs of power which reflect a psychological, rather than societally bestowed dimension include the ability to build credibility as a leader through developmental relations; a level of social responsibility; and the demonstration of sound judgement.

### **7.2.3 Discourses Related to Development of Psychological Power**

Discourses related to psychological power are evident in all of the interviews as the narrators construct their awareness of internal resources and capabilities that develop their experience of being powerful. This discourse relates to the literature on psychological interpretations of power, with specific reference to the psychoanalytic studies on narcissism and authoritarianism (Craig 2007; Freud 1933; Gabriel 1999; Gebauer *et al.* 2012; Kets de Vries 2006) and the humanistic studies in psychofortology (Antonovsky 1974; Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003; Carr 2004; Galanter 2007; Lewis 2011; Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi 2000; Strümpfer 2005). In contrast to the power afforded by external societal validation, the characteristics of this form of power are constructed as strategies which are pursued and developed through their narration of qualities which they become aware of and value over time, much like the fluid process described in the literature on process psychology (Anderson *et al.* 2008; Anderson *et al.* 2012; Mindell 1995; Schuitevoerder 2000).

There are many dimensions of this form of power which the narrators link inextricably to their gender role. For this reason, the feminist discourses which emerge are difficult to separate from the construction of psychological power. Psychological features of power will therefore also be discussed in the next section on feminist discourses (section 7.2.4). However, two specific discourses that were discussed independently of explicit gender related constructs and yet were significant in the narrations were:

7.2.3.1 Manipulation and control

7.2.3.2 Learning and growth

### **7.2.3.1 Manipulation and Control**

Manipulation and control is a significant discourse in three of the interviews. In the first participant's narration around achieving her career goals and reaching her current position, she acknowledges an awareness of the psychological game of manipulation and control to "outplay" the opposition.

#### **Extract One (Interview 1)**

*I think if you ask Tracy\* Ja, you ask Tracy\* who worked for me when we were at the company y. Ask Tracy\* about me when I was working towards the top I was not – people hated working for me, they dreaded it um I was hard I pushed people to the limit because that what I wanted to achieve.. I needed to meet a deadline, I needed to produce the goods. I'm a perfectionist as well and I expected people who worked for me to be a perfectionist and um people hated me, **absolutely hated me**. And it was quite interesting – as soon as I became a partner they all just turned round, and they hated working for the other partner, but loved working for me again because I just became completely chilled and relaxed and I think it was because I...I. had got to where I wanted to get."*

The awareness of her strategy and shift in style when she was pursuing her leadership role in contrast to when she reached it, attempts to convince the interviewer of her ability to manipulate to achieve her goals and to assume alternative identities depending on what the situation requires. The rhetorical nature of the discourse is evident in her

inviting the interviewer to verify her approach with the words “you ask, ja you ask Tracy who worked for me...ask Tracy about me when I was working towards the top”. The tone and language has the effect of creating a sense of bravado associated with this ‘tough’ identity. The ability to transition into a more likeable role once her goal was attained is observed with detached reflection when she frames the discussion with “and it was quite interesting” and is further rationalised with “I think it was because I...I had got to where I wanted to get”. This suggests a consciousness on reflection, but not necessarily through the process of attaining her power.

The awareness around the need to be able to manipulate as a form of power is acknowledged in the context of the competitive nature of reaching, as well as establishing, a power base in positions of leadership. This is related in the story of the power play between herself and a follower in her current position.

### **Extract Three (Interview 1)**

*it was fraught it was extremely tough.... and blatantly he undermined me.. if he didn't like my answer to something he'd go to ask Mike\* umm and Mike\* would come to me and say “Oh by the way, Joe\* came to me and asked if he could go to lunch and I told him to come and speak to you” and I'd say “Mike\*... I told him last week he wasn't allowed to go to lunch or play in a golf day, or whatever it was” so fortunately like Mike and I knew where he was coming from so he tried to play us off against one another and it didn't work because we always kept each other in the loop. So if I'd done something I just go to him and say “Just by the way I've done xy and z so if he comes to you .. that's what my answer was” and Mike\* would do the same thing “Oh Joe's\* just been to me, he's said xy and z.. I'm just telling you.. this is what I said” so that he couldn't play us off one against the other. So that is something we engineered behind the scenes to try and counter react.”*

The narration of how her power developed within this new role and within this difficult relationship constructs a sophisticated approach to strategising with campaign like tactics, which will be explored further in relation to the next research objective (Chapter 8) where the effect of military terms used when discussing power and leadership are explored. The establishment of power through military like strategising and ally building within this discourse is aligned to the early ‘trait’ theories of leadership,

described with the patriarchal language of ‘command and control’ (Mann 1959; Mintzberg 1979; Stogdill 1974). However, the tactics of manipulation which she acknowledges as being learnt in relation to the patriarchal figures of both her father and her grandfather are somewhat more sophisticated psychological power strategies.

#### **Extract Four (Interview 1)**

*..I had my grandfather wrapped around my finger..and my father’s got a terrible temper..and so have I.. but between the two of them my father and my grandfather I managed to....learn how to handle people..I think..that’s probably one of my strengths.. I know.. I think I know how to handle people..and.. I don’t enjoy it necessarily but I know how to push the right buttons and to play the game..and definitely knowing how to play the game with my father and my grandfather who were not easy people..helped me deal with Mike..umm..and manage Mike..so I think my grandfather was instrumental*

When she generalises about “how to handle people” it is within the context of managing difficult and strong patriarchal relations which translated into the business context means dealing with male authority figures. She does not acknowledge it as a gender specific form of power, but the ability to “play the game” and “push the right buttons” is framed with stereotypically masculine imagery from the context of sport and industry. The emergence of a “behind the scenes” sophisticated psychological approach is contrasted with the upfront, confrontational style of the ‘dictator’, personified by the male authority she worked under in this role. Perhaps not binary opposites, but dual personas within this discourse is the ‘military dictator’ who commands control and the ‘astute political player’ who gains power through the less obvious process of psychological manipulation.

In the fourth interview, manipulation and control is recognised as a factor associated with power, but unlike the first interview where it is a learnt strategy, in this narration it is constructed as something which the narrator becomes increasingly aware of and tries to resist.

#### **Extract One (Interview 4)**

*I also think in my umm business life I look back, there have been one or two business I have worked for where I haven't enjoyed working there, and the reasons I haven't enjoyed working there were predominantly cultural, I didn't like the culture, the value system of the business and they were predominantly very political businesses where people were overtly manoeuvring for position, or recognition or promotion, or things like that and I just... I didn't feel good in that game. I always joke with my husband, Steve\*, when we watch Survivor every now and then – I would be voted off so fast (laughter) I couldn't play those overt games.*

She uses the term game-playing of political organisations and the rank and power associated with that, as well as the analogy of the reality show, Survivor, where people get eliminated from the game. The power of manipulation and control is constructed as something hostile, competitive and once again links to the milieu of military terms used in the first interviews and the competitive discourses around “survival”. Her game metaphor and the associated self-reflective laughter have the effect of ridiculing these forms of strategies. Her resistance is constructed in terms of the emotion that this hostility evokes when she says “I didn't feel good in that game”. Not only does she construct her identity as someone who is unable to deploy these kinds of strategies to assert her power, but also as someone who is not prepared to due to the negative emotions it evokes.

In recounting her story she constructs the extremely destructive effects of manipulative and controlling behaviour through the persona of her mother.

#### **Extract Two (Interview 4)**

*She was volatile, she used to scream and shout and she was difficult and very dominant in her views. She was manipulative and used to push her own agenda in situations. She had expectations of me being the perfect child and I think that's why she exposed me deliberately to various things. I learnt lessons from the experience but I didn't always trust her and for that reason I need to trust people that I am close to which is why politics is an anathema to me in my work life.*

Trust in this context represents the authenticity of relationships which is in stark contrast to political game playing of manipulation and control. It is interesting that in this discourse, unlike in the first interview, manipulation is learnt from a powerful female. However, in this narration the behaviour described is less conscious than the tactics of manipulation and is constructed through the personification of an out of control and irrational mother figure. The effect of this is to create detachment from the manipulation rather than engage in it and enables the narrator to reflect on the experience as a learning one. There is expression of the abusive nature of this form of power when she says she used to “scream and shout” and “she had expectations of me being the perfect child”. But unlike in the first interview where engagement in the “game” has the effect of colluding with the abuse, in recounting her awareness of power she actively identifies the opportunity for misuse or abuse of it.

#### **Extract Three (Interview 4)**

*We were in a meeting and I could feel the room going quiet when I become quite vocal about an issue and it suddenly dawned on me how much influence or power I had because of my position and I realised I needed to be cautious about how I expressed myself. People don't just hear what I say they associate it with the position. I'm very aware of that...it was an aha moment. It is the element of my role I don't like, people say we must do it because I say so...and I say let's do it because it's a good business idea or it's the right thing to do, but it frustrates me.....I haven't thought of myself as a powerful human being but as someone who has the ability to influence but I've never thought of myself as a powerful human being because I very much work with and through other people. I could choose to be autocratic and use my positional power, but it's not my style in business and it's foreign to what I am comfortable with. I think I am naïve in my expectations and interpretations of these things because it's not who I am.*

In narrating her “aha moment” of awareness of her positional power, she continues to construct her somewhat detached identity as a reflective persona, able to learn from herself and her experiences. This is an emerging discourse around power which will be elaborated on in the discussion on learning and growth in the next section of this chapter (section 7.2.3.2). In this extract she contrasts ability to manipulate and control through positional power with the ability to engage others in action with a purpose, “because it's a good business idea or it's the right thing to do”. Her use of the word

“frustration” once again articulates uncomfortable and negative feelings associated with the ability to control. Her use of the word “naïve” directly contrasts with the word “astute” associated with the manipulative ability to apply tactics to gain a required outcome. Her naivety is constructed positively, however, in the assertion of her identity when she says “because it’s not who I am”. This has the effect of highlighting the persona’s construction of her authentic self, which is another dominant discourse relating to the construction of power in the feminist discourse (section 7.2.4).

In contrast with this authentic persona, two female stereotypes are constructed in interview seven. One is the stereotypical martyr, trying to meet unrealistic expectations and harbouring resentment associated with it. The other is the manipulative matriarch. While evident in this extract, the construction of feminist archetypes is elaborated on in the section on feminist discourses (Section 7.2.4) and is discussed in the literature on feminist perspectives of power (Conway 2001; Gerringer 2006; Griessel & Kotzé 2009; Nicholson 2012).

#### **Extract One (Interview 7)**

*Umm...so umm..now what happened.. was because she was mourning my brother, she was comparing me to my brother, and you know I am not my brother, you know, I am different to him and every time she will ask for something, she will always say to me..you know if my son was around I would be getting this, or I would be doing this... you know, so for me I over-compensated with my relationship with women because...because I felt like you know with my mother I had to give and give and give and give, to get her to start looking at me as I am here for her. Because whatever I tried, wasn't good enough, because it was always like “Oh! if my son was here you know he would be doing this for me, if my son was here”.*

This is related as a story of disempowerment, where the mother subject is constructed as using manipulative tactics to play one child off against another to achieve her outcomes. The effect of this is to highlight the contrasting power models of manipulation and control (Mandal *et al.* 2013) with subjugation and submission, as well as self-sacrifice (Conway 2001). The fact that the disempowering experience is constructed through two female archetypes emphasises the destructive effect of wielding some of the stereotypical power associated with being a woman (Fiske 2012;

Nicholson 2012; Schuitevoerder 2000). The construction of these dynamics as disempowering rejects these psychological models, often used by women in response to traditional models of patriarchy and suggests the need for the emergence of alternative models.

### **Summary: Manipulation and Control**

The discourse on psychological manipulation and control is constructed through family relations which is typically where individuals learn how to deal with power and authority, according to Kets de Vries (2011). It is also constructed within archetypal roles of the conniving political player in the first participant's extract and the emotional blackmailer in the form of the mother in the fourth participant's extract. The potentially abusive nature of these roles engaged in power plays is contrasted with the detachment, reflection and construction of authenticity in the fourth participant's narrative. This is the possible alternative which emerges from the discourse on psychological manipulation and control and resonates with the literature on the emerging or learner leader (Livingston *et al.* 2009; Sosik & Jung 2010; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002).

### **7.2.3.2 Learning and Growth**

In the previous discourses on social rank the developmental transitions of overcoming barriers or fears is implicit in the deeper structure of the text. The narration of the "aha moment" of realisation of power in the previous extract is another example of the discourse around developmental transitions which make up the narration of the development of awareness of power. As this is not always part of the surface structure of the text, this discourse could be viewed as an emerging and not fully articulated one as yet. There are, however, extracts in five of the texts which support this discourse more explicitly. The learning and growth discourse relates to the psychological perspectives on power articulated in the literature in the body of work on positive psychology (Antonovsky 1974; Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003; Carr 2004; Lewis 2011; Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi 2000; Strümpfer 2005). It also relates to some of the more recent literature on leadership and the feminist perspective on pursuing self-knowledge in the interest of expressing authentic identity; and the power of transformative experiences (Bennis & Thomas 2003; Coutou 2003; Dickerson 2013; Krosigk 2007; Nicholson 2012).

In the first interview this discourse is articulated in her narrative largely in relation to her own development facilitated by her leaders and mentors and not significantly in relation to her development of others. She raises role models in the form of her grandfather who “pushed you to be enquiring” and her mentor who “gave me opportunities, put me on things, projects and that to develop me”. However, in response to the question of a moment when she felt like a powerful human being, the story she chooses is one related to the development of others.

### **Extract One (Interview 1)**

*I think one of the moments was when I went to the Phillipines to train people and teach people..sounds pretty arbitrary..but I'm no IT boffin at all..but just to get there and there were all these partners and I was a 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 4<sup>th</sup> year manager and all these people in awe of what I'd come to teach them..partners and managers and peers..and I was there in a country all on my own with..they spoke English but it wasn't their mother language..um..and there I was as an ambassador for company x SA to teach them and make sure they understood the software the right way..and if I got it wrong there was no one coming up behind me to back me up or to reiterate what I'd taught them..it was down to me and the way that business would operate all rested on me..and they treated me like absolute gold..and they actually awarded me with an award for doing it and it was quite..it was quite interesting..and I had no support..I was paddling my own canoe..and if the partners there disagreed with me I had to take them on and debate it with them..it wasn't as if I could refer to my colleagues or boss..I was the frontline and the only line..so it was quite an experience..and if you think about it..going back to my boarding school days where I didn't want to leave home..now isolated on an island away from nowhere..being in the frontline gave me a sense of power.*

The choice of story is an acknowledgement of the power experienced in developing others. However, the discourse around the story is largely related to the prestige and status awarded her, as well as her ability to overcome her fear of being in the “frontline” which is discussed earlier in this analysis in the discourse on expert power (section 7.2.2.1). The value of the role of developing others is slightly undermined through the use of the word “arbitrary” when she introduces the story. This suggests that this not necessarily a familiar discourse in relation to power and therefore to choose it

as the story of one of the first moments of feeling powerful gives significant insight to the fact that this is indeed an emerging discourse in this narration as opposed to an accessible discourse around power. In this extract this sense of power is enabled by others in positions of power, rather than it being integral to her identity. However, in the third participant's text the construction of her teacher persona is central to her identity:

**Extract One (Interview 3)**

*I was a teacher by correspondence etc. and I **absolutely loved** that kind of thing. And that's probably where somewhere deep down I probably knew that this training piece was a massive piece of who I was, and I didn't want to let that go, but it wasn't what I wanted to do as a career. Umm and I was still keen to do the business marketing kind of thing...*

The emphasis on her love for the teacher role and her acknowledgement of it being “a massive piece of who I was” indicates a strong identification with this role which she constructs as something to be sacrificed to pursue a career in business. She describes the business role as “a kind of thing” which in contrast to her love of teaching has the effect of creating a certain diffidence towards the role. The binary opposites of the business and teaching roles as constructed in this extract have the effect of acknowledging the need to suppress the teacher identity within the business context. However, as her narration continues, the discourse of becoming aware of how to apply her capabilities in other contexts and exploring new ways of thinking is constructed as a transition in her development and an ability to focus on the process of learning and application of skills rather than the content.

**Extract Two (Interview 3)**

*And really that was when I realized that it did not matter what the subject matter was, my skills were really in process and design in running things, in co-ordinating, and organizing and making things work.*

The account of her more recent growth experience relates more to transforming relationships than knowledge and capabilities as evident in the text below

### **Extract Three (Interview 3)**

*I changed the way, and I even taught my husband because I kinda started mimicking how my husband always ignores her, or doesn't phone her because she was always just negative whenever she phones it's always something negative, or bad, or needing help or.....Umm and we just turned it around and said.. now let's treat her the way we want..because now you've got kids and you have a different perspective. So it doesn't matter how someone treats you at the end of the day you just need to remember they're still important..the fact that she is your mom she's family whatever, is important, we need to treat her the way we want to be treated one day by our kids irrespective of how we treat them. And it is quite weird because even though my husband isn't very close to her I see that change and there is a book that he was reading that it's a Jewish book that's kind of the same philosophy. And it's amazing how the relationship is so positive and how she's changed.*

This account of being able to transform a relationship and “teaching” her husband to do it too, has the effect of constructing the “teacher” persona as one that has moved beyond that of transferring knowledge and skills, but rather the development of personal growth and psychological rank, defined as the ability to deal with difficult relationships effectively. The construct of the teacher is still part of the discourse as she grows the skills in others and relates it to a theoretical base, from the Jewish book referred to in the text. Unlike the manipulation and control discourse, though, she constructs the strategy deployed in transforming the relationship as having positive outcomes for both parties. The empowering dimension of this discourse is implied when she comments on the “amazing” transformation. The narration of her teacher persona has the effect of constructing the power of a journey in growing personally and effecting change in others reminiscent of the more recent notions of the transformational leader (Johns & Moser 2001; Judge & Piccolo 2004; Odetunde 2013). The connections are not overtly constructed in her narration, however, but rather embedded in the deeper structure of the narrative.

The discourse on empowerment and development in the fourth interview centres around personal insights and learning, but also around the need for stimulation. Her childhood experiences of being an only child and exposed to art and culture through her mother and having her curiosity satisfied by answers to questions by her father is recounted as a

memory, which constructs her growing curiosity as an essential part of her development of power. This identity is constructed differently to that of the expert of intellectually superior in the previous section on social rank. Within this discourse it is constructed as an aptitude and enjoyment of learning independent of others rather than in comparison to others. Her personification of herself as a “sponge” which can “absorb a lot” has the effect of setting up a dynamic between her and the environment which she is able to “take in” rather than pitching herself against peers.

#### **Extract One (Interview 4)**

*I think that's possibly where my curiosity and sponge-like stuff comes from, because at a very early age I was exposed to...she took me to see Margot Fonteyn dance Swan Lake in Covent Garden in London, she did all those things for me and I didn't realize necessarily that these were incredibly special at the time but I think for me it went - shoo - into my head and I had this global view...*

The “global view” that she refers to is not stated as an overt part of the discourse on power, but forms part of the deeper structure of the narrative where she constructs herself as being able to stand outside of herself and observe what is happening in the environment or see “the bigger picture”. Similar to the third participant’s discourse which tracks an evolutionary process of the development of the power associated with her ability to teach others and facilitate personal change, in this extract the “aha moment” constructs the development of a consciousness within the narrator and learning around the less tangible issues of power, which she admits to typically being “naïve” to.

In interview nine, the narrator introduces a discourse around the empowerment of others as part of her own growth and development. She distinguishes herself as a “female in business” which positions the discourse within a gender empowerment framework which she then translates to black empowerment.

#### **Extract One (Interview 9)**

*Because people had believed in me and given me a chance early on, as a female in business bursary wise, vac work wise, articles wise I had been given an opportunity and I could totally see the benefit of doing the same for somebody else and that was like a*

*personal passion of mine to help other people who had aspirations..to do things..to give them that chance so I really replicated the fact that I had been invested in, as a student as a fledgling business person, and did the same and really just took a punt on this guy because I could see potential and ...err.. he started his business, it grew from strength to strength*

The discourse is articulated using terms like “opportunity”; “benefit”; “invested” and the gambling terminology of taking a “punt”, implying the risk and return of a business transaction. At the same time the “personal passion” and generative implications of replicating the support she had received as a “fledgling” introduces the language of nurturing and emotional association in developing others. The nurturing metaphor is extended further in the following extract.

**Extract Two (Interview 9)**

*I didn't have an ego, my ambition was for the company, and for the business to thrive.. so I had that nurturing instinct, it was less about myself and more about the legacy that was left behind and how many people were employed and how many customers benefitted from our solutions, we were there for the long term, that we were adding value to their businesses*

Her own power is constructed in relation to the ability to nurture something that is able to thrive and survive in the long term, without requiring recognition. While this is related to empowering others, she constructs her female leadership persona as having the capacity to empower in the background without needing acknowledgement. The power of nurturing, growth and generation is constructed in this extract through the business activities of employing more people, benefitting others and adding value to them.

In contrast the ability to receive nurturing and emotional support is constructed as an empowering experience in participant ten's narration.

**Extract One (Interview 10)**

*So I have had a host of people who, throughout my career, have been kind enough to.. you know..sometimes spend an hour every quarter, others an hour every month, and*

*just holding my hand.. and some of them I have gone to when things were going horribly wrong, and I have just sobbed, and they have just allowed me to sob.. you know, and then helped me find a solution to whatever was the problem...so I've been blessed. I really have been*

Initially she hesitates to describe the emotional support received in the hedging phrases “you know” and “sometimes. She then goes on to reveal the level of emotional support people have offered her and constructs it as kindness and being blessed. There is gratitude and an acceptance of this as something almost spiritual inherent in the word “blessed” which has the effect of locating power outside of herself. Her expression of vulnerability, however, has the effect of constructing an authentic identity, unafraid of disclosure. Being “allowed” to “sob” constructs the expression of emotion as something which is not always seen as legitimate within a business context and has the empowering effect within this narration of both catharsis and enabling solutions. This constructs power as transformative both through authentic expression and supportive and trusting relationships.

### **Summary: Learning and Growth**

Learning and growth as a discourse operates at two levels within the text in response to the first research objective on how women narrate their awareness of power. The power associated with the ability to develop and transform others as well as relationships is evident in the surface structure of the text. This focus on empowering others' growth and being able to shift relationships towards positive outcomes forms part of the more recent literary discourse on leadership (Antonakis *et al.* 2003; Kets de Vries 2011; Kouzes & Posner 2002; Nicholson 2007; Parris & Peachey 2013). The developmental process of observing and learning from their own personal and transformative experiences is a discourse which is at times more overtly accessible and at times more deeply embedded in the structure of the text. This reflects the literary discourse of personal transformation and growth, captured in both the literature on process oriented psychology (Mindell 1995; Schuitevoerder 2000) and positive psychology (Antonovsky 1974; Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003; Carr 2004; Lewis 2011; Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi 2000; Strümpfer 2005). However, the body of literature on psychofortology focuses more specifically on the innate qualities which give rise to this

personal growth rather than the power associated with the ability to facilitate growth or transformation in others. The role of interdependence and relationship in interpersonal power has been noted and become the focus of more recent studies in positive psychology (Cameron *et al.* 2003; Cameron 2009; Lewis 2011). The growing trend within the literary discourse on leadership is to focus on both the self-awareness and self-reflection associated with personal transformation and growth as an enabler in facilitating the growth and transformation of others (Kets de Vries 2011; Livingston & Lusin 2009; Wheatley 2005).

### **7.2.3.3 Summary: Discourses Related to Development of Psychological Power**

Manipulation and control is constructed as a potentially abusive form of psychological power in response to traditional authority figures in a patriarchal system. An alternative and empowering response to these figures of positional power is to construct an authentic persona through conscious reflection and detached observation of oneself. What differs within the participants' discourse is the extent to which that process of reflection is constructed as a conscious act. Similarly, the discourse around learning and growth as a construct of power relates to this feature of self-awareness, leading to transformation at a personal level and in relationships. While this confirms much of the literary discourse related to leadership and positive psychology which focusses on the empowering nature of personal growth, the participants' assertion of this discourse is at times tentative and even subtle. This suggests that it remains an emerging discourse within the context of leadership in South Africa. While it may be easily accessed in literary theories, it has not yet become a typical discourse of women leaders in South Africa, due to some extent with their continuous grappling with their own legitimate claim to power as evident in the following section (7.2.4) on feminist discourse.

### **7.2.4 Feminist Discourse**

The discourses outlined above are not separate from the experience of being a woman, but they are discourses that could be viewed as being constructed largely independent of gender. The most commonly shared discourses identified in the narration of their awareness of power, however, were related in some way, either implicitly or explicitly to the construction of being a woman. This is not surprising given that the interview was an interview on women and power and leadership and therefore in itself would

have provided a framework for the construction of their narration. What is more significant, however, is the varying constructions within this broader discourse, which relate to the multifaceted construct of feminism itself as outlined in the literature review (Hassim 2005; hooks 2003, 2010; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012; Mtintso 2003; Nicholson 2012).

Another possible interpretation of this prevalence of identification with gender is the fact that through narration participants' typically reflect on childhood socialisation and the influence of male and female role models in the form of their parents. According to Cohler and Hammack (2006: 167) "the coherence for which we strive, and which is portrayed as identity, is realised in and through the stories we tell about our lives". It is therefore understandable that the construction of their female identity is common amongst all of the interviews and emerges as a distinct discourse. However, it has also been highlighted throughout the literature and the methodology chapters that the coherence which appears to be associated with identity is not necessarily the experience of women, who may through their narratives express multiple, ambivalent and even conflicting identities (Gavey 2011; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012)

The discourses associated with the broader feminist discourse in the narration of awareness of power amongst the participants are as follows:

7.2.4.1 Authenticity and Female Identity

7.2.4.2 Legitimacy of Power

7.2.4.3 The Power of Challenging Patriarchy

#### **7.2.4.1 Authenticity and Female Identity**

The inherent and learnt attributes associated with being a woman are typically constructed as contributing to the development of power within six of the ten narrations. However, awareness and development of these attributes are uniquely constructed and similarly, the emerging authentic identities of the narrators are varied in their realisation.

It is noteworthy that in the fourth interview the participant raises the issue of gender in relation to her narrative very early on in her story and in relation to the personal subject of her father. The way in which male role models are constructed is a theme in all of the six interviews. The construction of the male role model who “believes in” either the girl child or the young female employee is a significant construct of the development of female identity. In the fourth interview it is introduced early on, however, locating the interview within the clear social context of gender relations, equality and experiences of patriarchy.

#### **Extract One (Interview 4)**

*I had a very, very good relationship with my father who I think ...what I liked about him..he was a role model for me in the way he conducted his life ...but he also...I don't know how he did it, he didn't do it obviously, but he never made me feel there was something I couldn't do. So I never felt anything about being a girl made me different and this sounds ridiculous, I know, but I never came across chauvinism... until I was at university. And when I came across it for the first time I thought it was a joke...I mean I think that's the kind of sense of self-worth my dad gave me, and the ability to be anything. When I was little I said “I want to be an astronaut” and he never once turned around and said to me “that's a stupid idea for a girl” or anything like that.*

She constructs her father's belief in her as something unusual and as part of her early identity as a “girl”. Her childhood identity is constructed as being unaffected by patriarchal social systems, which she only experiences once she leaves her nuclear family. Her reflection that “this sounds ridiculous” constructs her childhood experience and developing identity outside of a traditional patriarchal model as disconnected from reality and part of the make-believe world of a young girl. Her awareness of power in this discourse is constructed as being able to imagine beyond the boundaries imposed by society. This link between the ability to imagine and power is reflected in some of the earliest literature on positive and transformative psychology (Frankl 1967; Jung 1953) where individuals are able to transcend difficult circumstances by engaging their psyche or imagination in developing alternatives. This concept of transcendence through imagination has been developed further by more recent authors (Lewis 2011; Seligman 2006; Steger & Dik 2010).

In the second participant's narrative, she recounts how others' belief in her has brought her to her leadership roles today. In this interview the narrator constructs her father figure as a role model, but also as a relationship that she battles to define.

### **Extract One (Interview 2)**

*Umm..... If I think back about who influenced that..my father to a large extent influenced the confidence that I had and the confidence that I built during my early years. I certainly saw him as a leader he had his own business, I mean he started off with pretty much nothing and built a successful business..and I would often see him standing up and talking to staff and I always saw people viewing him as a leader. So he was a very strong influence in my life and he and I got along very well we ..almost..we had a very special relationship so he said to me... he always told me that I was very intelligent and always told me that I was very confident and that he saw leadership qualities in me and I think that he saw in me at an early age stuff that I didn't see about myself. So a lot of the influence came from him.*

When she hesitates in being able to define the relationship “we...almost...we had a very special relationship”, there is an omission, inability or unwillingness to explore the depth of that connection. Her mentor on the other hand is positioned as someone who both understands and challenges her through “tough love”. The power within this discourse is derived both from the toughening male relationship, based on intellect and capability rather than human connection, as well as the development of firm self-belief and confidence.

### **Extract Two (Interview 2)**

*Umm I think, other than my dad, because my dad was only around until I was 18 he still continues to have an influence on my life, but the one person who has had **a huge impact** on my life has been one of our partners here, by the name of Bill\*, umm... and the relationship has been has been very special and he's just one of those people who is just a really good coach and mentor and umm recently we had a session between myself, him and umm sort of one of our partners who deals with coaching and mentorship and the reason for the session was that she wanted to learn why our relationship worked well. What he did that was so special that people sort of gravitated*

*towards him, and I think he summed it up quite well and he said “I don’t cuddle people” umm and that’s his style..*

The way in which this role model is constructed, relates the analogy of “cuddling” as an affectionate and protective act which has enabled her independence and developed her strength in her leadership role. The analogy supports the “tough love” rhetoric which positions love in both a family and corporate context within a male construct of something that must be conducted with the goal of making people strong.

When she narrates the influence of her mother on her story, she makes an assumption that this is an unusual occurrence when she says the “other telling difference in my story” and constructs her both as an independently minded and “strong” woman, unusual within the cultural and social context of the time.

### **Extract Three (Interview 2)**

*I guess the one the other telling difference in my story is that I had a very strong mum so even though it was my dad’s business, she worked in the business umm...and I always saw her as a strong female leader in my life, I guess. Umm you know she’s changed somewhat over the last 10 years because she’s much older now and she’s a lot more subdued, but she was always a headstrong woman, never afraid to share her views, always contributing her thoughts and not afraid to go against the norm, I guess. So she was a strong influence in my life as well.*

The subject of her mother is constructed as a strong, forthright figure in contrast with the stereotypical nurturer. However, the tentative assertion of her mother’s influencing role with the repeated phrases “I guess” minimises the power of this influence. She also refers to her mother being “more subdued” in her later years positioning her influence as something which has not been sustainable. This is a common contradiction in the literature which claims that as a result of our historic gender system, society struggles to integrate the nurturing role of women with a stronger, more competitive role (Conway 2001; Ely & Rhode 2010; Geringer 2006; Griessel & Kotzé 2009; Sandberg 2013). The discourse throughout the second participant’s extracts perpetuates this struggle where operating in a man’s world, her power is constructed through the influence of

role models who represent the binary opposites of strength by being “tough” and nurturing, by offering “love”.

In interview nine, the narrator begins by constructing the binary opposites of her mother and father.

**Extract One (Interview 9)**

*So whatever I wanted to do I felt I had the platform, I had support, I had belief I had the opportunity, and I think I learnt a lot of the soft skills from my mother she is a great people person, not that my dad isn't, but she was particularly good on human relations and tolerance and all that good stuff. And then my dad, he is an engineer, and he was always there with finding a creative solution, making something that hadn't been made before to solve the problem....so he had that problem solving ability, that maths ability and he was very much of a realist and he... I suppose through him I learnt that if you wanted to do something you had to find a way and make it happen.*

Her mother is constructed as the traditional “homemaker” from whom she learnt the “soft skills” as she was “good on human relations and tolerance and all that good stuff” while her father is constructed as the “engineer” and “realist” and always “finding a creative solution, making something that hadn't been made before to solve the problem”. The catch all, slightly flippant term “all that good stuff” used to describe the more relational female role has the effect of positioning it as secondary to the solution oriented male role model. In her narration of her awareness of power the attention and belief bestowed on her by males throughout her life are constructed as having the most apparent influence on her.

**Extract Two (Interview 9)**

*Just my father, my maternal grandfather and my uncle who all.. I relayed those incidents of how they showed belief in me.. opportunities to do stuff with them, projects, maths homework, whatever.. Umm I had a boyfriend in High School who also was incredibly supportive, believed in me, he was an incredible gentleman. To this day we are friends. Who...ja.. just came from a lovely family and supported me through, you know, the latter high school years and university years. I think.... if I can distil it, it was a series of good men believing in me in different capacities*

This extract perpetuates the rank that was constructed in the second participant's extracts between male and female role models, by valuing male belief in her as more significant than females. She distinguishes between the way she was treated and the belief these men had in her. She discusses the fact that her boyfriend was a gentleman and goes on to reflect that they all gave her:

**Extract Three (Interview 9)**

*Respectful treatment as an equal with all the potential they would have seen in anybody. They did not treat me as a female....they treated me as a person*

The value of having male role models not discriminate against her and believe in her is valued and allows for her to experience herself as an equal "not a female". Although this relates to not being defined or stereotyped by her gender, paradoxically it has the effect of undermining the value of being "female" in the same way as the inherent female qualities of her mother are positioned rather glibly as "all that good stuff". This locates her discourse within the feminist viewpoint articulated by second wave or liberal feminists (Freedman 2002; Ledwith 2009) which focusses on equality within a patriarchal system rather than valuing a different set of societal constructs as proposed by more radical feminists (Dickerson 2013; Gavey 2011; hooks 2003, 2010; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012).

However, an emerging discourse which is not fully articulated in the text is hinted at in her reflection on the influence of her mother.

**Extract Four (Interview 9)**

*So I think for me as a girl, the fact that my dad believed in me was key. And in hindsight many years later the fact that my mum supported me and believed in me without wanting any recognition for herself.. has probably helped me more than I really realized..*

She recognises the unacknowledged influence of her mother and the sacrifice that went along with it, but she does not articulate it any further. It is almost as if this is an emerging realisation and not yet fully refined, whereas the narration of the impact of

her male role models is something she has constructed throughout her life and rests within her identity as a strong and powerful business women. The positive construction of nurturing qualities in relation to business and the learning and growth discourse (section 7.2.3.2) is directly related to the female gender and is constructed as an inherently powerful “instinct”. She elaborates on this further in the following extract:

**Extract Five (Interview 9)**

*So I think that's probably a female instinct issue of... I can see that I can add value, I can see that I can help this thing, I can make it better, I can turn it around, I can grow it, I can make it stable and I just went on and did that and I suppose it was just that life phase of creating stability and of nurturing things and I did that and it suited me because it was very close to home, the job was close to home, the environment was understanding of my need for flexibility, vis-à-vis my home life, and I needed that, it worked for me and I was therefore proportionally loyal back to the company because it gave me the ability to achieve both my objectives.... both at work and home*

This emerging discourse in the text connects to the more radical feminist viewpoints on power in the literature (Brooks 2011; Moses 2012; Mauthner & Edwards 2010; Nicholson 2012; Wheatley 2005) where women have turned away from aggressive, western ideals of domination to a new form of social organisation which involves feminine abilities of nurturing, caring and co-operation. Interestingly the terms and metaphors that she uses in relation to growing a business is associated with the nurturing of a child and is positioned within a phase of her life where she was in a parallel process of nurturing young children and structuring her work life around her family commitments. The discourse of integration of female “nurturing” into a business environment is constructed as the power of being able to “achieve objectives”. It has the effect of aligning the process of female nurturing to the tangible outcomes which form part of the discourse of business. The emerging discourse in narrating awareness of power is the integration of the unique instincts and experiences of being a woman within a patriarchal environment. This integration is raised in the leadership literature, with some authors proposing that the integration of traditionally perceived ‘male’ and ‘female’ styles gives rise to powerful leadership (Sandberg 2013; Scrivens 2002; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002).

Whereas the discourse in interview nine has the effect of integrating the female and male identity at some level, the assertion of their uniqueness and difference is apparent in the fourth interview. In her narration, the participant constructs her power as a woman in contrast to men, laying claim to gender related characteristics as something positive versus something to be avoided.

**Extract One (Interview 4)**

*Fundamentally being a woman I think you are different, you are differently wired to men....in that..I think, well...I'll speak for myself, I can't speak for all women. I think we are more I think I am more... intuitivity to my environment is high on my agenda, and I think part of that can be negative but it also helps you pick up things quite quickly. I feel like my intuition is good and I am more, I feel I am quite in tune with my intuition, and I think that is something that is probably... a stronger female trait than a male trait. I am not saying that men don't have intuition I think they are possibly brought up or they are programmed in some way to maybe not always give credence to their intuition.*

Trusting intuition is raised as part of her narrative and related to the construct of psychological power innate to a woman's upbringing and persona. But she is clear not to construct this as a stereotype and relates it to her own personal experience when she says "I can't speak for all women". In this way she constructs both the paradox of typically recognised female traits and their uniqueness. This is confirmed in the literature by highlighting the need to recognise the multiple voices of women and the meaning they attach to their stories (Gavey 2011; Mahoney & Yngvesson 1992; Moses 2012; Nicholson 2012). The participant's awareness of intuition also relates to the discourse of psychological power, but is specifically raised in this extract as a construct of gender (Aspinwall & Staudiger 2003; Greenleaf 1977; Parris & Peachey 2013; Van Tonder 2008).

In interview eight, the discourse constructs woman in a leadership role in her business context as something unusual and surprising. Rather than focussing on inherent qualities in women she relates the discourse to their work output.

### **Extract One (Interview 8)**

*I think generally as a woman you have to work a lot harder to be as recognized ...perhaps not so much in the kind of school environment because everyone is sort of there together, but very much kind of when you are out of school and in the working situation. I think the workplace, has always, in the past, been a very male-dominated place..So...firstly to gain the respect of your male colleagues.. But at the same time I think being a leader and being a woman, you bring some kind of compassion and empathy into the workplace, which I think a lot of men don't have umm you know, having to balance work and life, having children and that sort of thing..umm firstly I think it bonds you with other women in the workplace, especially people who work under you and who...but you know just generally, I think you have got a completely different outlook umm men tend to be very hard and very black and white, whereas the women there are definitely different shades of grey.*

The way in which she constructs this argument is that the hard work needs to happen to gain initial respect from male counterparts when she says “firstly”. She then goes on to construct an argument that suggests that respect is also gained by more inherent qualities that women bring to the role that provides something that men are lacking. This extract creates binary opposites of men and women in contrasting the compassion, empathy and flexibility that women have in their thinking as opposed to the rigidity she attaches to men. She also relates how the domestic responsibilities of women create a connection with those working for them. She moves the argument away from traditional personal qualities and domestic roles to focus on skills in the next extract.

### **Extract Three (Interview 8)**

*And I think men also realize that women have sort of attention to detail, which some of them don't have (laughter) a lot more patience, umm.....ja can actually sit down and read something. Some men just can't sit and read something. But ja I think...it is not easy ..I think a lot of where I have got to is because of maybe the extra work I have had to put in, because you are a woman.*

In this context she asserts that “men also realise” which has the effect of acknowledging that attention to detail and patience are key characteristics that men appear to value women for. However, she then takes the argument back to the hard work she has put in

and states it firmly “a lot of” and then minimises it with “maybe”. The effect of her argument is to be balanced and fair and acknowledge the power women have within their role. Unlike some of the previous interviews she does not question her legitimacy in the role, but rather asserts that she has had to put in a lot of work to get there (the implication is that it is more than a man would have). It is in the shift between the personal story, told in the first person, of the hard work she has had to put in to get to a leadership position and the inclusion of the narrator in the universal experience of being a woman, when she says “because you are a woman” that creates the connection between her authentic identity and widely held assumptions about women needing to work harder to prove themselves in a male dominated environment (Ely *et al.* 2011; Ibarra & Obodaru 2009). However, the discourse is not constructed as a feminist debate in challenging the barometer against which women are measured. Rather it is constructed as a valuing of her inherent qualities of thoughtfulness associated with preparation and attention to detail which is reflected in the literature on women’s talents in relation to management (Greenberg & Sweeney 2005; Scrivens 2002; Valerio 2009; Wilson 2004).

In the sixth interview, the discourse centres around the differences perceived between men and women in the business context and how the participant has constructed herself within that. The discourse in this narrative presents a conscious construction of identity rather than a tapping into what feels inherent. At the same time she rejects adopting what is uncomfortable or inauthentic.

### **Extract One (Interview 6)**

*The choice that I made was do you have to be more like a man to get ahead and if that is the case what do you need to develop and I thought well men are normally quite logical and I am actually a logical person, so umm maybe I should play that up, men don't appear to be emotional, so don't be emotional over issues, because they don't appear to be emotional, also it is quite an interesting thing that you see, I even think about it today because there are still some things I do which I think are wrong, but if you go into a meeting and people are talking.. business.. I suppose umm and this is I don't know if this happens everywhere, but I've noticed it... a women when you start talking will smile..men don't smile...I think it is interesting because there is no need to..what are we doing it for? Is it to appear more attractive, is it to be a bit subservient*

*..you know what I mean? I don't know what it is. But it is an interesting observation..that men tend not to smile unless they are joking, of course... but at a business meeting you don't see that,..you know men don't smile at each other as they talk..women do..which is strange behavior too, I suppose. (laughter) ...We are all here, let's have a good time..... (laugh)*

Her focus on male and female traits draws from the stereotype of the logical male devoid of emotion. The tone of the discourse is relatively tongue in cheek when she recounts her observation of the “normally” logical male who doesn’t “appear” to be emotional. The effect of this is to construct the behaviour associated with these stereotypes as something observable, yet humorous. When she talks about the female trait of smiling as “wrong” it is constructed with an element of satire as she continues with laughter and says “let’s have a good time”. When she asks the question “is it to appear more attractive, is it to be subservient?” she constructs the behaviour as the primal and instinctive behaviour of male and female animal species attracting a mate. She colludes with the interviewer as a female “species” when she says “you know what I mean?” and includes herself in the instinctive, unconscious nature of the behaviour when she says “what are we doing it for?” In this extract, her developing awareness of power is constructed around behavioural characteristics which she associates with women and how they contrast to men rather than inherent qualities. The effect of this text is to position herself as something of an anthropologist observer of both male and female behaviour. The awareness of power comes through a similar process of consciousness and detachment which is evident in interview four as discussed in the discourse on learning and growth (7.2.3.2) and relates to the discourse on power as a form of transcendence from the everyday in the literature on psychofortology (Compton 2001; Csikszentmihalyi 2002; Goltz 2011; Maslow 1954) and Mindell’s (1995) spiritual power in his model of rank and power.

She continues to use the metaphor associated with animal instinct and applies an evolutionary component to the discourse when reflecting on her need for authenticity as a woman.

### **Extract Two (Interview 6)**

*I don't know – I think it's a genes thing you know. I mean I often think about it and think we are animals after all and I suppose our ancestry has you know, just the genetic pool we've come from just programmes us to be like this. So I would imagine that men must feel quite uncomfortable. You know the interesting thing is it is going to take generations... because I've noticed now with the younger women coming through in y company. And also people who are in their forties, so they are coming to a watershed in their careers, they are very hard and very tough people ...and I think you know ..gee..you know as a woman I don't want to have to take on some other mantle that feels uncomfortable to me...so..I think you can still be feminine without being... you know and still make it I suppose..*

In the extract she observes the adaptation of behaviour as an evolutionary process within a business context towards more traditionally 'male' characteristics. She observes the adaptation as something which challenges female authenticity and rejects the need to take on "some other mantle". The hardness and toughness of masculinity is constructed as the binary opposite of femininity and adopting inauthentic behaviours as "uncomfortable". While she does not directly relate this authenticity to power she uses the term "still make it" which implies the ability to attain positional power without assuming 'male' qualities. However, the assertion is made hesitantly and vaguely as she trails off without finishing her sentence when she says "without being...you know" and asks the rhetorical question "I suppose?" at the end. Her language use within this discourse has the effect of remaining circumspect about her observations, failing to assert them as absolute. This contrasts with the more direct assertions relating to the discourse in interview nine as discussed earlier. It reveals a subtext in the interview that while the awareness of power may be related to gender based issues, they are experienced personally, with ambivalence at times, and may take on a multitude of meanings which is widely supported by feminist authors (Dickerson 2013; Gavey 2011; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012).

Grappling with identity is a theme throughout the narration of interview ten where the discovery of authenticity is constructed as the transition from one identity to another. She introduces the feminist discourse in the narration of her life story at the outset

positioning the male authority of her father figure as the person who inspired her self-belief. This is evident in all of the interviews, but one.

#### **Extract One (Interview 10)**

*I often say that my father is probably the oldest feminist that I know. In our household we were 3 boys and 2 girls and my father was very deliberate and very specific that whatever girls do around the house the boys do.. and vice versa..so I grew up with the first male role model that I had telling me that it was okay for me to have aspirations to do different things to what society tried to tell me I was born to do.*

By introducing this discourse so early on in the text, it has the effect of locating the entire interview within a feminist framework. The rejection of social stereotypes at an early age locates the discourse within the politically motivated feminist framework of equality. This has the effect of constructing a feminist agenda throughout the interview. However, as the participant continues to narrate her story, the feminist discourse shifts from a focus on equality to that of establishing authentic identity and in so doing shifts from a liberal feminist discourse (Freedman 2002; Ledwith 2009) to a more radical feminist discourse (Dickerson 2013; Gavey 2011; hooks 2003, 2010; Hassim 2005; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012; Mtintso 2003) as outlined in the literature.

#### **Extract Two (Interview 10)**

*I think I've also gone through my own fair share of being a radical feminist you know. When I was a student I belonged to a group that was focusing on women's issues, and I was quite staunch. I think I also went through a phase of de-feminising myself..the way I dressed. I started off.. my mum used to dress me in nice lady clothes and high heels, when I went to Varsity I gave all those away and started wearing flat shoes and tent kind of dresses. It was – I think it was a phase I needed to go through. When I started working umm.....I think..the first probably... 6 years of my working life I probably did a lot to act like those around me, you know I was always aspiring to have the bigger job, the better job umm... and the people that were in those jobs were typically male, so I tended to wear you know your pants suits.. and I think I tried to be tougher than who I really am. And I think I suffered because of that. I think most people thought I was great at what I was doing, I got all the promotions I got all the kudos. But I remember waking up one morning, this was in 1996, and looking in the mirror and thinking,*

*“actually I don’t like this person... she is angry all the time, she is not fun, I don’t enjoy being with her”*

In this extract the participant narrates the development of her self-awareness through the process of assuming a multitude of identities which are symbolised by her dress. Her narration of the stages from radical feminism into a more socially acceptable form of patriarchal adaptation to the business world is constructed as an attempt to locate where she belonged. During her radical feminist stage she identifies with a “women’s group” which personifies the “staunch” feminism which she describes almost as a rite of passage when she says “ a phase I needed to go through”. In the business world the attempt to belong in a male dominated environment and the success associated with it, gives way to an anger and denial of her authenticity. The way in which she observes herself in the third person at a transition point into a more authentic identity, creates the detachment evident in interview four and six discussed earlier in this chapter. This observation of self is a deeper structure within these texts which emerges as a discourse related to the participants’ raised consciousness, and in this case transformation in the narration of their growing awareness of power.

### **Summary: Authenticity and Female Identity**

What emerges in this discourse on authenticity and female identity as participants narrate their awareness of power, is both an acknowledgement of certain inherent qualities, such as intuition and conscientiousness, as well as a process of integrating of “male” and “female” qualities through their construction of identity. In addition the ability to transcend situations and consciously construct an identity outside of societal constraints is evident in the deeper analysis of a number of the texts. The shift from a more liberal focus on equality within a patriarchal system to a more radical focus on constructing identity outside of the realms of patriarchal constructs is another trend in the narration of awareness of power amongst these women. Acknowledgement of authenticity being constructed through unique identities which take on a multitude of meanings is evident in a number of the texts, as well as being highlighted in the literature (Dickerson 2013; Gavey 2011; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012) and needs to be recognised in developing the emerging model of power in the concluding chapter (Chapter 10).

#### **7.2.4.2 Legitimacy of Power**

The first participant's legitimacy in a leadership position is a significant discourse in her developing awareness of power. The issue of legitimacy is raised in response to the question "how has your story been shaped by being a woman?" She articulates a level of insecurity around the legitimacy of her position initially. But even as her acceptance of this legitimate claim to power grows, it is not presented with convincing rhetoric.

##### **Extract One (Interview 1)**

*Funnily enough for the first 6 months or a year I was convinced that company y had hired me as a woman and they wanted to improve their profile in terms of gender..because you know that I was the first woman on the board..um and there are now 2 or 3 of us..and I just thought it was a gender thing and they wanted me to be in the business women's association and improve their profile in that domain and for the first couple of months at company y I actually thought that that's what they wanted me to do...maybe it was my self-esteem..but it was the only way I could rationalize why they had offered me this huge job and I remember I said it to someone..can't remember who..someone said to me "Listen if they wanted me to do that" they would have told me...*

She observes her insecurity introducing the narration with "funnily enough", reflecting on the irrational nature of her doubt around the reasons she had been hired. She then goes on to observe "maybe it was my self- esteem" and tells the story of needing to verify her legitimacy with someone else, but dismisses the significance of this person giving the advice with "can't remember who..someone said to me.." The effect of this is to demonstrate the awareness of her insecurity around the legitimacy of her position, but to present it as something irrational and something she has overcome through the development of confidence in her ability. She goes on to present the security in her legitimate claim to her current position in the following extract when she says, "I know differently now"

### **Extract Two (Interview 1)**

*They would have told you if you were a token..and I thought ok..but I'm relatively unknown,,why take a gamble on me..so it was the only thing I could think of at that time..and I know differently now..I have a huge problem with token appointments.*

In the range of discourses available around how being a woman has shaped her experience it is interesting that the discussion centres around the issue of being a “token appointment”. Legitimate access to power is seen within the framework of expertise and competence which is one of the discourses throughout the narration as discussed previously (section 7.2.4.2). The binary opposite of the token is presented in the extract below, not as only as a competent person, but as “one of the boys” which has the effect of disassociating power from being a woman.

### **Extract Three (Interview 1)**

*I think pre-company y it might have been shaped because I was a woman..at company y I don't think it's got anything to do with it..I might be wrong..but my perception of where I am at at company y is I'm there because I'm good at my job..and I actually see myself as “one of the boys”...*

The argument in this discourse is that in having a legitimate claim to power within an organisation it is necessary to be accepted in terms of the patriarchal system - as “one of the boys”. Not only is external validation necessary but her statement “I actually see myself as...” has the effect of framing her own identity on those terms. There is an assumption in the rhetoric that being chosen on the basis of being a woman means being incompetent and not having real claim to power. The effect of the hedge phrase “I might be wrong”, however, is to continue to raise doubt around her legitimate access to power even within her current position.

The focus on legitimacy in relation to the discourse on being a woman in power has a disabling effect on the ability to claim power as a woman within an organisation. This is common where women fall prey to some of the accusations levelled at ‘window dressing’ associated with affirmative action (Grant 2007; Pickworth 2013) and has the effect of radically reducing their power to influence. What emerges in this extract is the internalisation of these accusations which is constructed through the discourse on

legitimate access to power. This is highlighted in the literature in the discussion on women's lack of socialisation around power which leaves them feeling vulnerable when faced with power struggles (Brescoll 2011; Harvey 2010; Jamieson 1995; Miller 1982; Moss-Racusin & Rudman 2010). Schuitevoerder (2000) also comments on the internalised criticism and self-doubt that women suffer from as a result of oppressive cultural values. As discussed in the first section on the discourse of racial and cultural domination, where there is preservation of the colonial discourse of the past, the preservation of the patriarchal discourses of power are most strongly illuminated within this discourse on women's legitimate access to power.

Whilst in the first interview the effects of patriarchy are not challenged but rather serve to undermine the participant's claim to legitimate power, in the fourth interview the narrator recounts the awareness of the effects of patriarchy as a shock and surprise when she enters adulthood. In narrating the development of her awareness of power, she reflects with hindsight on her childhood experience of equal treatment which is later challenged in her adult years.

#### **Extract One (Interview 4)**

*And the chauvinism I experienced was just about marks, because I enjoyed what I was doing and I was doing pretty well at one stage and this one guy came up to me and said "Ag you know as a girl, what's the point? It's such a waste of time for you girls to come to Varsity" I kind of said to him "What are you talking about??" and I thought it was a joke so I laughed at him initially, and then I realized that he was serious and he just kind of it didn't really register with me...I just couldn't believe what he'd said, It didn't make me think differently about myself, but I just kind of realized that – gosh there are people out there that think of you as a girl or a woman, differently.. Umm and It just made an impression on me...it didn't necessarily affect me in a particular way I guess it was just an awareness it awakened in me, the realization that things aren't necessarily always the way you have grown up with....*

The awareness she refers to contrasts the binary opposites of her childhood where she was made to feel that anything was possible, and societal attitudes that were different to that. The discourse is around not only legitimate access to power, but also to opportunity. The external construct of certain societal attitudes, experienced in the

patriarchal system of a South African Afrikaans University are in conflict with the way she has constructed her identity as a capable woman.

She continues to relate the discourse to a broader societal context when she talks about her first promotion within the framework of Employment Equity. In this extract both issues of equality and legitimacy are raised and have the effect of minimising the effects of gender discrimination.

#### **Extract Two (Interview 4)**

*This was 10 and a half years ago, so it was before BEE became really big in SA, I think women still counted for something, and I think there was an element of that that went into my recruitment. Umm look hopefully they didn't recruit me....I know it wasn't purely on that, but I think it played a role. So in a way I can understand some of the BEE issues of awkwardness although I don't think it comes anywhere close to the racial thing in SA I mean you can't equate women and men versus...I mean I have had any opportunity any man has had, in terms of education and growing up and all the rest.*

She questions the legitimacy of women in power, although not her own, when she says "I think women still counted for something" but hesitates around the possibility that gender equity could have played more of a role in her first promotion than she hopes when she tails off after "hopefully they didn't recruit me..." and then asserts "I know it wasn't purely on that...". But she also goes on to locate gender equity in relation to racial equity and in a fairly flippant way dismisses the underlying or subtle aspects of discrimination against women by saying the "racial thing" and tailing off when she says "you can't equate women and men versus....I mean I have had any opportunity any man..." Her inability to articulate racial discrimination appears as though she is embarrassed to equate her own experiences with racial discrimination because of her awareness of privilege. In this way she minimises the feminist discourse around women being denied opportunity and access to social constructs of power and resists taking the role of victim in relation to men. Her privilege leads to the minimising of experience of discrimination and highlights the divisions within the feminist discourse between bourgeois forms of liberal feminism and radical forms of feminism relating to racial and class oppression (Hassim 2005; hooks 2010; Jones 2000; Mtintso 2003). However, it

also highlights the observation in the literature, that women are typically reluctant to identify discrimination against themselves due to their discomfort with the notion of power (Clayton & Crosby 1992; Gavey 2005; Harvey 2010; Henry 1994; Jamieson 1995).

The acknowledgement of racial and sexual discrimination is constructed as an inevitable reality in interview five and discounted through the perspective of an identity independent of socially constructed labels. In this discourse the conscious rejection of these labels is a strategy constructed to mitigate the disempowering effects of discrimination and rightfully claim power.

**Extract One (Interview 5)**

*And I have always known that I have 2 stripes against me..one female, and two I am black. While I cannot ignore that, many people would like to wish it away, but it is reality you know and umm...but I always say the biggest reality is to sink into your head, to look at yourself not as a woman, not a black, then the other people won't see you as a woman...will see you as equal counterpart. You know. And maybe my other advantage is that I don't have children or dependants, so it helps me, because there is nowhere a male colleague can go, and I cannot go, because I have family responsibility.*

The challenge to the construction of identity within a racial or gender based framework is related the narrator's conceptual identity of herself when she says it is "the biggest reality to sink into your head". Legitimate access to power is constructed as "reality" in the same way that discrimination is constructed as a "reality" when she describes having "2 stripes against me". The internal psychological shift necessary to claim this legitimacy is the argument presented in this text as a way of socially constructed perceptions. The effect of this argument is to narrate the development of power in the deconstruction of internal victimisation and the external construction of laying claim to the right of equal treatment (Harvey 2010; Johnson 2005). The fact that she does construct herself as both a woman and a black woman in this extract and throughout the interview highlights the paradox which this presents and that the process of deconstructing these identities is both conscious and tactical.

In this extract, participant five goes on to acknowledge the contribution of family responsibility as a contributing factor in limiting legitimate claim to power. Her awareness of this is not directly experienced in her narrative, but is elaborated on by participant three in the following extract. In this interview the narrator constructs her gender role in relation to the discrimination experienced of operating in a patriarchal society by identifying the challenges of meeting family responsibilities as well as responsibilities associated with work roles.

**Extract One (Interview 3)**

*So there's this equality, that you've got the same opportunities, you can do just as well, you can excel on the sports field you can go study whatever you want but then there is the realization afterwards that what you chose to study and what you chose to do is very very impacted by the inevitable by what's going to happen in terms of getting married, having kids etc. so I think up until a point I think the gender thing didn't play a role, and I think more recently it has. Not that you get treated that differently in the workplace but I think the reality of being a woman, having other roles becomes so much more magnified in the workplace.*

In this extract participant three develops the discourse by assuming the traditionally constructed role of women choosing to marry and have children when she speaks of it as “inevitable”. She rejects the notion of discrimination in the workplace, but rather identifies the challenges in terms of unrealistic aspirations. In doing this she constructs an argument that undermines women’s legitimate claim to power through having “unrealistic aspirations”. Later in the interview she claims the “glass ceiling doesn’t really exist it is the aspirations that are unrealistic to meet the demands of what you are required to do once you reach a certain position.” The domestic role is presented both as “inevitable” and a “reality”, terms which indicate the inability to challenge or change the status quo. In a similar way in which the first interview perpetuates the patriarchal discourse through the disassociation of women and power, the discourse in this interview does the same through the construction of women in their domestic role. The construction of motherhood as the antithesis to public power and leadership is well documented in the literature as a limitation for women in legitimately claiming power (Bassnett 2013; Freeman & Borque 2001; Wilson 2004).

In the fifth interview, the narrator constructs power as something which constantly needs to be asserted within a social context which aims to suppress it. While attempting this within her leadership role, it proves more difficult within her domestic role of being a woman in a patriarchal traditional culture which constructs not only the conflict around identity but also the collusion with the patriarchal traditional system.

### **Extract Two (Interview 5)**

*In African culture you have to be, women have to be seen and not heard, you know....so often in the first few months my mother-in-law used to tell me “keep quiet” you know... let my husband feel he is in control, he has made the decision, not ,I you know. I must be honest it disoriented my whole thinking, and my whole, you know...I just felt disempowered, you know...I mean marriage..and now I see it is a beautiful institution...it’s everything...but that first year, it was very hard for me.,... and the thinking..and our friends, our community, our church, you know, where women just don’t take leadership roles you know, where women don’t...aren’t meant to think, but are not heard, that’s the best way to describe them... and in this time and day, you know.*

Her awareness of the legitimacy of power is constructed in this extract as an acceptance of and working with traditional structures and systems. While admonishing the role of women in traditional African marriages she claims the institution as a “beautiful” one and goes on to say “it’s everything” which is in stark contrast to her initial claim that marriage led to her “disoriented thinking”. She acknowledges her role in being complicit in the system when she says she lets her husband “feel he is in control”. She constructs herself as the powerful manipulator in the relationship. However, the disempowering effect of not being heard and not being meant to think are presented in stark contrast to the rest of her narrative where she focuses on communication and independent thinking as part of her development of power. In this way the discourse also constructs the paradox of multiple identities where domestic roles and professional roles contradict one another (Eisenstein 2010; Sandberg 2013; Wilson 2004). This is a significant issue which is not elaborated on as it is not the focus of this study but could be an area of further research.

### **Summary: Legitimacy of Power**

The denial of legitimate access to power through the perpetuation of the patriarchal discourse is constructed through the internalisation of the undervaluing of a woman's competence as well as domestic constraints experienced by women. The perpetuation of the discourse questioning women's legitimate access to power is to undermine and stunt opportunities for significant gender based transformation in organisations. Another significant implication for gender based transformation emerging from analysis of the text is the inability of women to legitimately engage with issues of gender discrimination due to the race and class divisions within the feminist discourse. However, a more empowering discourse evident in the texts related to the question of legitimacy is the psychological deconstruction of internal victimisation. The acknowledgement and leveraging of privilege as a means of gaining legitimate access to power is constructed as a positive and pragmatic response to the divisions within the feminist debates around race and class (Hassim 2005; hooks 2010; Jones 2000; Mtintso 2003).

#### **7.2.4.3 The Power of Challenging Patriarchy**

Where the discourse in interview one and three specifically perpetuates the patriarchal discourse, there are several examples in four of the narrations where challenging patriarchy is constructed as a distinct and significant discourse. What varies between interviews is the way in which this challenge is constructed.

In interview six, the participant constructs the persona of her headmistress as the role model which challenged the limitations placed on women at the time.

#### **Extract One (Interview 6)**

*I think the headmistress, who was head of the school that I attended..umm..probably was the person I began to look at as a leader, in terms of a woman leader.. if you know what I mean... because in my generation we didn't have a lot of women in leadership positions, we didn't have a lot of women in senior management positions so it was quite unusual to see quite a strong woman in a position. But then of course, I did go to a girls only school, so.. I mean it was understandable that the headmistress was going to be a woman (laughs) ..but the interesting thing about her was that she talked to us pupils in*

*terms of ..the world really is yours for you to enjoy and to do what you want to do and that you shouldn't allow anything hold you back, you shouldn't think about yourself as having to go and get married and have a family because that's what everybody does, you don't have to comply with the social norms.. as long as, obviously, you are not doing something illegal. But you can be..you try to be the best that you can be..and that was her continuous mantra to say you know ..it doesn't matter what situation you find yourself in there's obviously one thing..you've got to be true to yourself, you shouldn't compromise on your values and you should have huge integrity. I think that that really has stayed with me in my development.*

In this extract she positions her headmistress as a leadership role model who inspired her and others to think beyond the socialised roles of woman as mothers and wives, particularly prevalent in her generation. This is in contrast to the previous discussion where women's socialised roles are constructed as "inevitable." The humour around stating the obvious fact that she was a female leader in a female environment introduces an absurdity associated with the gender based systems of a patriarchal society throughout her interview. The constant use of the terms "bizarre" and "absurd" have the effect of creating a detachment from the patriarchal system she finds herself working in and, albeit indirect, a form of challenge to the system.

### **Extract Two (Interview 6)**

*I worked at company x.. God at company x...this was an interesting thing..at company x they had..I was the HR manager for Company x which is the part of the whole group..the company x Group..they had hotels and all that kind, those businesses at that time. And I remember looking at our performance review process and on the appraisal form was "Are you a company x man?" ...(laughs).. That's bizarre, isn't it? You know..this is in the 1980's..so there you go! I was trying to perform to this because I thought..well..I mean...what do you do? There were no women role models.. I didn't see any women above me that I could model myself on..which is quite an interesting thing because my good old headmistress's words sort of resonated through the years and so did my male friends words who said "don't give up and don't allow other peoples limitations etc. to affect you.*

In the extract she relates the story within the context of the 1980's when women were less prominent in the business world. But the discourse is not a militant one, neither is it one which constructs manipulation of a system as discussed in section 7.2.3.1. In this interview the discourse is constructed around the power of being outside of the system in some respects, an onlooker who is not necessarily subject to its norms and constraints. This links to the emerging discourse of awareness of power being derived from a certain detachment which gives perspective both into the self and into the system. The transcendent nature of this power is similar to that described in Mindell's (1995) model of spiritual power as well as the resilience; self-actualisation and well-being described in the literature on positive psychology (Antonovsky 1974; Carr 2004; Csikszentmihalyi 2010; Lewis 2011; Seligman 2006; Strümpfer 2005) and has emerged in the analysis of other texts in previous discourses relating to psychological power (section 7.2.3)

In the narration of interview seven, the challenge to patriarchy is far more direct when she recounts the story of standing up to her father. She recounts this in relation to the question "can you remember a moment that gave you a sense of being a powerful human being and describe it to me?"

#### **Extract One (Interview 7)**

*I think for me was the one with my father because you know, from our culture as black girls, ... we.. you are taught you have to respect authority, you cannot challenge it and umm I remember when I was called in at home because my dad had had some issues from my neighbours that I was doing this, I was going out with the wrong people, and my dad had to call a family meeting and we are sitting around the table, and he was basically saying to us, he called my brother as well, so the 3 of us sat around the table, and he is saying " these are the things I am hearing that you hang out with the wrong people, you guys are on drugs and..." which really... all the stuff was not true. So I think at that moment that was when I.. said to my dad "I think you have to trust that you have raised us well, and to be able to listen, and then evaluate whether or not certain things are true". And I said to him that day "you cannot judge me by what other people are doing. You've got to trust that I'm your child, you raised me well, I've got the right values and the right principles, to not be doing the things like you've just accused me of doing". And I said "as of this day I think how we must treat each other in this house is*

*to approach things a little bit different, not accuse.. let's just talk and understand where each of us is coming from, and you must always understand I don't get influenced by anyone, I make my own decisions, and you've got to trust that I will make the right decisions". So for me it was a breakthrough because I remember that very well,... you know, because to stand up to my father...he was a nice person, but to stand up to him and actually get him to agree with you, was one of the biggest challenges we always used to have at home.*

She constructs her father both within a patriarchal and traditional cultural context. The way in which she recounts the story asserts her authority in direct challenge to her father's, using the terms "as of this day" and "you must always understand". She uses definite and slightly confrontational terminology which recounts how she stood up to him and sets the terms and the way in which she defines the agenda, despite the gender, age and relational rank. The experience is something she remembers as a significant transition point in that relationship and in her ability to assert her power as a woman. The emerging discourse relating to transformation of relationships is constructed within this text and constructs patriarchal transformation within the context of personal gender based power relations. This reflects the transformative power of personal growth and self-acceptance which is documented in the literature on psychofortology (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003; Lewis 2011; Seligman 2006; Steger & Dik 2010).

Another strategy deployed within this discourse of challenging patriarchy is to choose to opt out of it. This is the nature of the discourse in interview nine, where her choice to move into a more entrepreneurial environment is an active rejection of the deeply entrenched patriarchal structures of the male dominated accounting profession.

#### **Extract One (Interview 9)**

*I came in on the crest of that gender empowerment programme and I could see by the end of it.. that it was a farce,... today, still to this day, it is a farce. That they might have one or two female partners out of..whether it is fourteen or twenty is irrelevant, the point is they are completely under transformed..... And I could see that and I said I'm not staying here to fight this lot, this old boys club, that was pointless to me, and anyway I am more interested in business and less interested in the profession.*

In narrating her awareness of power she identifies the patriarchal system and the superficial attempts to transform it as a “farce”. She constructs her power, not through attempting to fit in with or fight the system, but rather to opting out of the profession which she terms the “old boys club” and focussing on business, which she implies is better positioned to recognise competence. Unlike interview one, being part of a gender empowerment programme is not constructed as a means of denying legitimacy to the role. Her experience of discrimination and being regarded as “secondary” in certain contexts is in direct contrast to the way in which her life story is constructed around self-belief, affirmation and opportunity.

### **Extract Two (Interview 9)**

*I only realized about gender when I was offered a gender bursary, it never occurred to me that I wasn't top of the pile umm going to a really good girls school also, all the girls were successful and accomplished and had fantastic prospects, so I had been the dux and head girl of my Junior School, in the rural environment, because it was a tiny school – it wasn't hard to excel, so I'd been the top of the pile there, I had been the top of the pile in my family..*

She repeats the phrase “top of the pile” which indicates the narration of power around privilege and achievement which is a discourse related to social rank. But in relation to gender, she contrasts this experience with the experience later on in her career of being viewed as secondary by men.

### **Extract Three (Interview 9)**

*I had never ever perceived myself to be secondary because the men in my life had always put me on a pedestal.. I'd always been a strong personality, inherently, but I'd always.... I mean I'd sing for attention, I'd act I would do anything, I was always keen to get attention, and be in the spotlight, as kids are, but I was in that position, I was the firstborn, I was the first granddaughter, I was the first niece, I was the first daughter and I lapped it up and I never, ever considered myself secondary, I never ever considered that I was female and that I was second rate, the gender never occurred to me.*

The experience of being considered secondary is starkly contrasted with the experience of being “first”. The narration of power reveals a discourse that relates to equality between men and women and being regarded as equally competent, as well as being “top of the pile”. In addition the sexual objectification of women in the work environment forms part of the feminist discourse of resisting being viewed as a second class citizen (Eisenstein 2010; Fisher & Ponniah 2003; Kenway 2001; Ledwith 2009).

#### **Extract Four (Interview 9)**

*As soon as I entered company x environment. I realized it was a closed club. I was looked at as a female, I was looked at for my body shape, for my skirt and my legs and my...I mean, you know, without being funny I was an attractive, young, 20 year old girl with long legs and you know going to the audit environment, you are going into a male chauvinist environment, not only the firm but the client environments were even more antiquated in their approach. It would be like “come sit on my knee I’ll show you the pay roll...” all this nonsense, you know..and it was the first time I could see the prejudice within the business environment, the commercial environment.*

Dismissing the prejudice experienced as “all this nonsense” asserts her power as a serious, competent professional who chose not to indulge this behaviour either by colluding with it or by active resistance, but rather by moving into a more empowering environment. She personifies the patriarchal environment in recounting her experience of bullying behaviour by one of the senior male partners and reveals her awareness of power by her ability to withstand it. While sexism in the workplace should be prevented through labour legislation, the subtle and not so subtle elements of discrimination remain a challenge as discussed in the literature review regarding the discrimination and fairness approach to diversity (Feldner-Buszin in Meyer *et al.* 2004; Human 2005; Thomas & Ely 1996). The unconscious sexual power dynamics which play out between men and women in the work context is an area which is largely unexplored and taboo, according to the literature (Freeman & Borque 2001; Kets de Vries 2006). By consciously highlighting this dominating, overtly sexual behaviour, she constructs her power in challenging sexism and patriarchy not only through withstanding these overtures, but also by speaking about them candidly.

### **Extract Five (Interview 9)**

*He was never horrible to me, because I was quite strong, I was quite strong and quite coherent and I had my act together.. so I never came into the direct firing line but I saw him annihilate a number of people and umm everyone said to me “don’t worry – your time will come” and it never did but I the fact that he had crunched so many people in his wake and umm..he really did have a negative, he was like a blot on my articles experience...*

Her constructed identity as a strong woman is emphasised here and links to the discourse around self-belief. What is associated with this psychological form of power is the ability to be coherent and in control, when she says “I had my act together”. Being in control of her own destiny, often described as “agency” in the literature (Strümpfer 2005; Weigold *et al.* 2013), and the psychological astuteness to understand the system for what it is and to manipulate it to her own end, is related to the discourse of psychological power. Because this agency is a direct response to the experience of patriarchy, it is located within the feminist discourse in this chapter.

### **Extract Six (Interview 9)**

*So I got the CA, I got the bursary, I used the bursary for the CA. got the foreign secondment, chalked up all that experience, got that on my CV, and said thank you, ciao. And they were like “uhh uhh don’t you want to stay on?” and I said “no thanks, I’m not interested in the profession” very politely! I didn’t say “because you are a bunch of chauvinists”!*

In recounting her move out of the profession, her awareness of power rests on her ability to exploit the patriarchal environment for her own needs and ultimately reject it for an environment which suited her better. The feminist discourse, rather than being militant, is accommodating and to some extent manipulative. Rather than attempting to revolutionise the system, an alternative agenda is pursued. This is a growing trend amongst career women which is well documented in the literature (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Valerio 2009; Xavier *et al.* 2011). What is not sufficiently documented, however, is the discourse on the manipulation of the system. Typically the debate is presented as binary, focussing either on collusion with or challenge of

patriarchy. A more subtle and pragmatic form of power is constructed through this participant's discourse.

### **Summary: The Power of Challenging Patriarchy**

The discourse around challenging patriarchy represents the multiple ways in which women leaders narrate their awareness of power. One way is to choose to operate outside of the patriarchal system, either by physically removing oneself, or through a mental process of detachment or transcendence from the constraints of the system. Another way in which power is narrated is through the transformation of personal power relations by direct confrontation stemming from conviction rooted in self-belief. This direct challenge to patriarchy is contrasted with a third, more subversive approach in the narration. In this approach the power of self-determination or agency enables the tolerance of bullying behaviour and manipulates the system for personal gain. In contrast with the psychological discourse on manipulation and control, as discussed in section 7.2.3.1, this act of subversion is included in the discourse on challenging patriarchy as it is a conscious process, rather than a defensive response to an abusive system. However, the process fails to transform relationships in the same way that the account of direct confrontation does.

### **7.2.4.4 Summary: The Feminist Discourse**

The feminist discourse in relation to their awareness of power centres around their authenticity and female identity, both as an acknowledgement of certain inherent 'female' qualities as well as the process of integrating both 'male' and 'female' qualities. A discourse which emerges in contrast to the perpetuation of the patriarchal discourse around women's limitations in their positions of power, is the deconstruction of internal victimisation and the acknowledgement and leveraging of privilege as a means of gaining legitimate access to power. The ability to consciously subvert, manipulate and transform personal power relations based on self-belief and agency is another feminist discourse in its challenge to patriarchy. Finally the ability to consciously transcend the organisation and its patriarchal constraints is found in indirect and direct challenges to the system as well as the construction of an authentic identity.

### **7.2.5 Summary of Discourses Identified in Question One**

Women narrate their awareness of power drawing from the milieu of discourses available to them to describe their life and leadership experiences. Their narrations shift between the entrenched patriarchal and colonial models of domination and social rank which need to be actively and aggressively sustained in a competitive world and the more recent interpretations of power which focus on the internal grapples and evolution of coming to a place of self-acceptance (Anderson & Shafer 2005; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012; Strümpfer 2005; Weigold *et al.* 2013). While the patriarchal discourse of power is well entrenched and easily accessible, the analysis reveals that women perpetuate these models in the traditional pursuit of social rank, but also in their abusive use of manipulation and control to gain power. What has significant implications for this research and gender transformation in South Africa, is the way in which women perpetuate the patriarchal discourse which doubts women's ability to legitimately claim power.

However, while an alternative model of power is less accessible to women, their narrations do reveal emerging models. These models reflect the discourse around the power of personal growth, which is reflected in the literature (Anderson & Shafer 2005; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012; Strümpfer 2005; Weigold *et al.* 2013), as well as authenticity and the ability to effect transformation which is documented in the literary discourse on leadership (Antonakis *et al.* 2003; Dickerson 2013; Kets de Vries 2006; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012; Odetunde 2013; Sosik & Jung 2010; Valerio 2009; Van Rensburg 2007). These are more tentatively articulated and at times more deeply embedded in the structure of the text than the discourses relating to traditional models of power. However, across a number of discourses, the process of self-observation and reflection is a common trend. While the power of self-acceptance as described in the literature does not emerge as a discrete discourse, the power of self-awareness emerges as a process on a journey of development. Women do lay claim to their power in building credibility with others and transforming negative relationships, but the process of establishing their authentic identity remains a 'work in progress' rather than something they are able to lay claim to. This suggests that the emerging models of power are still being tentatively asserted due to the hegemonic nature of the patriarchal discourse which exists in the business world and society at large.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE TWO

#### Discourses Identified in Discussion on Leadership and Power

##### 8.1 Introduction: Research Objective Two

The discourses identified in relation to the second research objective on how women discuss power in relation to their leadership role reflected similar categories to those identified in the first objective which are grounded in Mindell's model (1995). The aim of the questions relating to the second objective, unlike the questions relating to the first was to understand the women participants' 'current' constructions of power within their role, which would have been informed by the constructions identified in their previous narrative in chapter 7. It is therefore not surprising that the discourses emerging were similar to those identified in the first research objective. The responses to these question were also not as lengthy to those relating to the previous objectives where women related their past experiences of power. However, while the discourses were similar to those in the first objective and the texts were less extensive, the analysis deepens the understanding of the way in which women construct power and how the models they have developed over time are being constructed and re-constructed within their present leadership identity.

The participants were asked to respond to the following range of questions from the interview guide to understand how they discuss power in relation to their leadership role (Appendix 1):

- The events that brought them to the role and what it took to get there
- A moment when they feel powerful in their role
- A moment when they feel disempowered in their role
- The relationship they believe they have with their followers

- What they believe their followers think of them and how that is affected by being a woman

## **8.2 Discourses Identified in Research Objective Two**

Out of the responses to these questions, the following discourses emerged which will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter and summarised in section 8.3.

### **8.2.1 Discourses Related to Social Rank**

8.2.1.1 Power Relations within the Formal Hierarchy

8.2.1.2 Achievement and Reputation

8.2.1.3 Age and Experience

### **8.2.2 Discourses Related to Psychological Constructs**

8.2.2.1 Decision Making and Responsibility

8.2.2.2 Independence

8.2.2.3 Trust and Collaboration

### **8.2.3 Feminist Discourse**

8.2.3.1 Female Archetypes

8.2.3.2 Discrimination

### **8.2.1 Discourses Related to Social Rank**

These discourses represent the externally attributed elements of power bestowed by society or organisations as described by Mindell (1995).

#### **8.2.1.1 Power Relations within the Formal Hierarchy**

A discourse evident in four of the interviews is related to the participants' hierarchical position in the company and the 'rank' which that affords them in relation to others. In the first interview this is discussed in terms of relationships with those who are both above and below her in the organisational hierarchy:

### **Extract One (Interview 1)**

*And I think the other element that makes me feel quite powerful is that David\* doesn't move without me...it is the frustrating part as well..because I can't get any work done..but there isn't a meeting in that office that I'm not incorporated into for some reason..whether it's pension funds, exporting our product, whatever it is..uum..i'm involved...*

The participant constructs the subject of “David”, the Managing Director and therefore most powerful person in the organisation, as completely dependent on her, when she says “he can't move without me”. The effect of this is to present power in terms of the nature of the relationship with the most powerful subjects in the organisational structure. In contrast, in the following extract, she speaks about trying to bridge the hierarchical divide between her and her team, but ironically the discourse has the effect of re-enforcing hierarchical relationships.

### **Extract Two (Interview 1)**

*I like to think that I have an open relationship....I think that they....I try and bring my..obviously they've got to respect me..I try to earn my respect..but my position demands a certain amount of respect..um..but I try and minimize that gap..and I try and bring myself to be..I..I'm a bit of a team player..I've always been a team player and I'd rather be with them..um .. and sitting there at 9 o'clock at night with them..at their desk..in the trenches..than sitting in my office waiting for them to bring something through to me.*

In this extract she battles to articulate her relationship with her team. The rephrasing and hesitation in the extract has the effect of raising doubt in her perceptions of this relationship and the “openness” that she claims to have. When she raises the issue of respect she contrasts the definite statements of they've “got to respect me” and “my position demands a certain amount of respect” with “I try to earn respect”. By doing this she re-enforces the formal hierarchy as an automatic source of power, while simultaneously trying to construct the notion of ‘earned respect’ as something other than positional power. She uses the terms “team player” and being “in the trenches” (with the team) as a way of minimising her positional power. However, in attempting to reduce the power difference between her and her staff, she draws from the rhetoric

associated with the military and sport, relating once again to “position” in the team, rather than a focus on relationship. In fact, throughout this interview the military discourse is prevalent with frequent terms and metaphors used like “in the trenches”; “got my back” and “in the firing line” which have the effect of positioning her leadership role within a “command and control” military style paradigm documented in the literature on historic views of leadership (Mann 1959; Stogdill 1974). The difficulty in attempting to articulate something different is an indicator that it is difficult to access an alternative discourse due to the entrenched patriarchal ideology.

In the seventh interview the discourse of hierarchy is also constructed through the participant’s relationship with powerful people in the organisation. However, in this interview, rather than the relationship being one of dependence, it is presented as the power of being able to influence and change behaviour of those in power. This is discussed in the following extract:

**Extract One (Interview 7)**

*Uuum it’s because it is a senior person, it’s a senior individual to me which.. I should be taking instructions from him, and to be very honoured.. and for me to be able to change the behaviour of a superior, for me it is a good thing, because normally you get challenged about any ideas you come up with if it is an idea that is not coming from top to bottom, so bottom up it is always a challenge you know. So for me to be able to change behaviour at a higher level, it is fulfilling.*

The participant constructs power in this extract as the ability to “change behaviour at a higher level”. The ability to challenge and influence the hierarchy from a less senior position is raised in her narrative in the discourse on challenging patriarchy (section 7.2.4.3) where she describes the powerful effect of challenging patriarchy. While it is not overtly emphasised in this extract, the power dynamic she refers to is in relation to senior males when she refers to taking instructions from “him”. While the discourse reflects the rhetoric around the social rank of hierarchy in organisations, her description of being able to influence in this way as a “fulfilling” experience positions empowerment as the ability to transform behaviour within a traditional, patriarchal system. The discussion in the text shifts from a focus on a specific relationship, with the term “him” to the more general reference of “a superior” and the hierarchical terms of

“top to bottom” and “bottom up”. This shift has the effect of moving the narrative away from a specific incident towards a more general ability to influence the system through transforming individual behaviour. Transformation of behaviour may be an emerging discourse, but so too is the assertion of the ideology derived from gestalt and complexity theory where systemic influence occurs through individuals’ interactions within a group context and the mutual adaptation between them (Beeson & Davis 2000; French & Bell 1999; French, Bell & Zawacki 2005; Marion & Bacon 2000; Nadler 1998; Stacey 2003; Strümpfer 2007; Van Tonder 2008; Wheatley 2005).

Hierarchy in relation to the dynamics between senior and more junior levels are discussed in interview eight with a similar focus on bridging the gap between them as in interview one. However, in this extract the discourse has a different effect.

**Extract One (Interview 8)**

*I have always been a firm believer that the people who work under you are your foundation and you need to have their support, as much as the people above you. It is no use just pushing everything and making yourself look good to the people above you when the people below you can't stand the sight of you. So it is really a balancing act between subordinates and superiors, umm.... and I think it has been developing over time being able to communicate with like the board of directors, to kind of not feel intimidated by them and the positions that they have and realizing that they really are, just normal human beings.*

In this extract the power relating to hierarchy is discussed in terms of the support of those both positioned above and below the participant. The use of this term has the effect of introducing a more collaborative approach to power structures which is highlighted in the discourse on trust and collaboration later in this chapter (section 8.2.2.3) The way power works in organisational hierarchies is constructed around perception or “how you look” when she speaks of not “making yourself look good to the people above you when the people below you can’t stand the sight of you”. She contrasts the false construction of rank with a recognition that we are all just “normal human beings”. This has the effect of making overt her internal process of mentally and emotionally stripping away the hierarchical power barriers of an organisation to be able to lead effectively. Her discourse is deployed to identify and reject the projections

which are so typically placed on leadership (Blasé & Blasé 2000; Cilliers 2010; Gould, Stapley & Stein, 2004) and indicates a psychological astuteness in making what is typically an unconscious process, conscious (Gabriel 1999; Goleman 2000; Gould, Stapley & Stein, 2004; Kets de Vries 2006; 2011; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002).

### **Summary: Power Relations within the Formal Hierarchy**

The discourse that seems to emerge in these interviews in relation to power within the hierarchy of an organisation is either that of transforming behaviour within the system or entrenching positional power based on formal organisational structures. While this discourse poses either a challenge or perpetuation of the established patriarchal model of power, it also highlights the debate within the literature around the psychological behavioural paradigm of power which relies on organisational structures for authority and a systemic approach to organisational power where transformation occurs through the mutual adaptation of individuals and the organisational system (Beeson & Davis 2000; French & Bell 1999; French, Bell & Zawacki 2005; Marion & Bacon 2000; Morgan 1997; Nadler 1998; Stacey 2003; Strümpfer 2007; Van Tonder 2008; Wheatley 2005). This power of transformation occurs through the interpersonal ability of leaders to influence upwards, but also through the interpersonal psychological process of stripping away barriers inherent in hierarchical relationships which is reminiscent of the psychological processes involved in self-actualisation and agency (Compton 2005; Elliot 2002; Strümpfer 2005; Warner 2009).

#### **8.2.1.2 Achievement and Reputation**

The discourse on achievement and reputation is evident in seven of the ten interviews. It is introduced in relation to the participant's leadership role in the second participant's comment below:

##### **Extract One (Interview 2)**

*Umm so I got quite a kick out of the win I must say so that gave me a sense of power and again it helps with my track record and just cements my leadership.*

The achievement discourse in this extract is constructed in the form of a competitive term of "the win" which is directly related to a sense of power. The associated response

is presented in sportsman like terminology associated with the adrenalin rush of winning when she speaks of getting “a kick” out of it and it helping with her “track record”. The power associated with achievements like this is constructed as a momentary sensation, however, the cumulative effect of these are described as “cementing” her leadership role. The achievement discourse is directly related to legitimising her leadership role and the power associated with it.

The achievement discourse presented in interview three is related to hard work and significance of the project. Unlike in the previous extract, there is no direct link made to the associated power with this achievement, but it is presented as a significant factor in the participant’s move into her current leadership role.

### **Extract One (Interview 3)**

*I almost killed myself literally in doing this job because the expectations of getting the whole company buy in at a very senior level and I was really not a senior person at the time umm and to put it into an online system and get it to every single country across different languages – not just on the system but educated on how to use the system, the philosophy, what did we want to do, in terms of cascading the strategy, how it is going to work, training materials, everything it was a massive, massive project umm and I literally was working..I don’t know.. and I had just broken up with a boyfriend I was literally working 20 hours a day, my hair was falling out I was on planes to Australia, I had conference calls with Australia. I was on conference calls at 5 o’clock in the morning and maybe it was good that I was kind of this single girl cos I kind of could just go with whatever the needs of the job at the time, but when I look back it was horrendous. And we were very very successful. We launched it umm to all our regions around the world and.... ja it is still the system.*

The achievement discourse is constructed in terms of self-sacrifice when she describes how she “almost killed herself” and goes on to describe “I was literally working 20 hours a day, my hair was falling out...I was on planes to Australia”. The effect of this is to amplify the personal sacrifice and intense work focus which resulted in a significant and sustainable achievement. The achievement itself is amplified when she repeats words like “massive” and “very, very, very successful”. Indirectly the power associated with this achievement is derived from its sustainability when she says the programme

she introduced is “still the system” and the exposure the project gave her resulting in her becoming a company director. The self-sacrificing discourse has the effect of focussing on what goes into achieving the power associated with her leadership role, in addition to the achieved outcome of a successful project and the recognition by the organisational system. This self-sacrificing discourse is one which can also be related to one of the female martyr archetypes (Conway 2001; Nicholson 2012), which will be discussed further in section 8.2.3 of this chapter.

Whereas reputation is related to something tangible that remains in “the system” in the previous extract, the fourth participant when discussing her current leadership role focusses on her “track record” as in the first interview and her reputation amongst superiors.

#### **Extract One (Interview Four)**

*So I had got really good experience of both divisions umm and I'd done well in both of them and I think I had a good track record and whilst Frank\* didn't work with me day to day , because Steve\* was my MD, there were board meetings, and opportunities where we all came to x Board Meetings or y Board meetings that the x guys came to and we sometimes had to present to or talk and participate and I guess in some instances I must have made some kind of impression on Frank\* and Steve\* – so I definitely think it was a combination of the legacy and what I had achieved..*

The discourse in this extract focusses less on specific achievements and more on general reputation and impressions created amongst superiors. She presents her achievements in general but definite terms when she speaks of having “really good experience” and having “done well in both of them”. The effect of this is a confident assertion of her success in a leadership role which she goes on to describe in terms of having left and “impression” and a “legacy”. Rather than focussing on single, significant achievements her discourse relates to the perception of others and constructs her reputation as something sustainable beyond a tangible system or project. This discourse has the effect of making a more confident claim to legitimate leadership and constructs power as a combination of the intangibles of perception and reputation with the tangibles of achievement. This is congruent with the literature on situational leadership which claims that it is only through the perception of others that leaders can

be deemed successful (Denmark 1993; Goleman 2000; Klem & Schlechter 2008; Kets de Vries 2006) and is therefore dependent on the prevailing ideology of “good leadership” within our institutions.

The discourse of achievement and reputation in interview seven is also presented in terms of process and outcome, with her focus on the process of attaining this form of power and respect as opposed to the single events. This is reflected in the following extract:

**Extract One (Interview Seven)**

*It has taken a lot of hard work, umm.. and time, I think it's.. in the workplace it is all about building a reputation. You know I started out as... I've always worked kind of in the corporate office ..umm but I started out as kind of group accountant and then have moved from there..but..I would say it has taken time and just building up that reputation, showing people that you are hard-working, conscientious and continuously bringing things to the table..on how to improve things, how to improve processes, building relationships.. I think that is really important.*

Her focus on “hard work” is not described in the self-sacrificing terms of interview three. Instead the discourse is related to a process of building reputation and continuously improving processes and relationships. The discourse is related to perceptions in the way she explains how it is about “showing people” and “bringing things to the table”. However, the emphasis in this discourse is on a continuous and inclusive approach as opposed to a series of individual achievements. This discourse has the effect of introducing a collaborative dimension to the leadership role and the power associated with it (Den Hartog, House & Hanges 1999; Ely *et al.* 2011; Hannay 2009; Scrivens 2002). It also has the effect of reflecting power through reputation as something fluid which requires continuous creation and re-creation, as opposed to something static. This model of power emerges as a more dynamic process which is reflected in the literature discussion on power (Adams 2012; Anderson *et al.* 2012; Compton 2005; Fiske 2012; Kolar 2011; Mindell 1995; Neuringer & Jensen 2010; Schuitevoerder (2000)

Unlike interview seven, interview nine presents achievement and reputation in terms of traditional, patriarchal military terms.

**Extract One (Interview Nine)**

*I think it does take umm... it takes credibility in terms of having come up through the ranks in one or other way. To have the street credibility from having come up through the ranks, having some experience of grass roots in the machinations of the business. I think it is very difficult to come in as an outsider, and have credibility, you know, people wait for you to sink or swim if you come in from the outside you are not accorded the immediate respect.. you have to prove your stripes, so..you know..this is still very much an old school environment of “fantastic, you are the new boy on the block, great... let’s see what you can do, and then we’ll decide about you, see if you are any good.”*

The mixed use of metaphors in this extract is interesting. On the one hand, the participant constructs achievement and reputation in overtly patriarchal military terms of “coming up through the ranks” and “earning your stripes” as well as the associated old boys club language of “you are the new boy on the block”. The effect of this is to re-assert a patriarchal model of power through achievement by proving yourself, not only according to the entrenched system, but also in an implied hostile environment. These terms are interspersed with current reference to ‘street culture’ with the terms “street credibility” and “grass roots”. While these terms have the effect of introducing something less institutional, they remain rooted in patriarchy within this context. Rank is accorded to those who have “done their time”. She ends the extract by addressing the “new boy” and speaking from the role of the persona of the patriarch. This has the effect of positioning herself outside of this system and its script. She does not relate this as a personal experience that she identifies with, but rather as an observation of the patriarchal system and how it works. The challenging observer role she positions herself in has an empowering effect in that she is able to see the system for what it is and not be directly influenced by it. This has a similar effect to the transcendent nature of power discussed in the previous section, which is reminiscent of Goltz’s description (2011) and Mindell’s model (1995) of spiritual rank and power as connection to a state which is outside of the events of everyday life.

### **Summary: Achievement and Reputation**

While respect through achievement and reputation is a traditional social construct of formal power, on deeper analysis of the extracts a number of other constructs emerge. These include the power associated with sacrifice as something both noble and resulting in a sustainable outcome, which is not unlike the power derived from a superior reputation, sustained through a process of continuous creation. Another discourse which emerges in relation to the rank of achievement and reputation is the ability to observe the system without being fully engaged in it and therefore not as invested in its measures for success.

#### **8.2.1.3 Age and Experience**

Another discourse related to social rank evident in three of the interviews is the discourse around age and experience. In the first interview this is constructed as a phenomenon which influences power relations, despite gender.

#### **Extract One (Interview 1)**

*I think there's a combination there..I think my age is another thing...I think if I was an older woman I would probably appeal to the women in my team and in my position..the fact that I'm a young woman..appeals to the guys as well..so I look at guys like Dave and Piet and they sit there and they think..you know what if she can do this at the age of 33..I can do it..uumm and I know that Tandi has aspirations to be...to be....like me..and she's told me that..uumm and she wants my job..umm and I think..I think being a young woman..at that stage..not feeling so young anymore..was a huge thing in the company that had never been done before..it was the first time a woman, apart from the secretaries had got through the glass doors. First woman on the board..at the age of 33..I think I was at that stage.. one of the youngest directors on the JSE..so I was told...I never actually researched it..and I think.. to hold my own..amongst knowledgeable men and specialized men that have 25-30 years in the industry and that I can hold my own with them..uum...I think is quite a ...to me it would be..if I was sitting in their shoes..it would be quite a thing for me...*

Power is constructed both from the perspective of younger men and women in the organisation and older men in the organisation. In the discussion of age rank in relation

to younger men and women, the participant constructs both her youth and gender as an inspiration to those who are younger than her. In relation to her position amongst older men, she constructs power as the ability to “hold her own” amongst people with knowledge and experience who are entrenched in the system. She also constructs her age rank within a competitive discourse of being the first woman on the board and the youngest director on the JSE, although she attempts to minimise the significance of this with “I never actually researched it”. The effect of the discourse in this extract is to re-establish the hierarchies within organisations of both those lower down the hierarchy having somebody to look up to, as well as having been accepted into the official institutionalised seat of power. She constructs the subject of the role-model in terms of status rather than the referent power where followers choose to identify with the power source rather than personal characteristics. In this way she reconfirms positional power which is well documented in the literature on organisational behaviour (Schermerhorn *et al.* 2005; Shriberg *et al.* 2005; Van Tonder 2008). The power of position is derived from title and status which may generate compliance from followers, but not necessarily commitment.

In the second interview power is also discussed in terms of the relationship between age and gender. Age is constructed as an additional factor in challenging legitimate claim to power within her leadership role.

### **Extract One (Interview 2)**

*So I knew I was very young and I also know that I look younger than my age umm and people meet me. . they look at me ...especially when I'm in my civvies and in my jeans and a tee shirt – they think that I am still in my 20's – so that is always a challenge for me. Because in this industry experience counts umm and especially when clients meet you they actually want someone – we joke about it – they want the grey hair they want the institutional experience, so it is always been a bit of a challenge...umm...so I was a fairly young partner and dealing with clients much older than me has always been something that I've always been conscious about and something that I try and make the client feel...umm more comfortable with...*

The age discourse is constructed in terms of client's perceptions of experience levels and the active process of shifting those perceptions based on appearance. The effect of

this discourse is to recognise the need to deal with entrenched perceptions or stereotypes regarding age and rank and the associated awareness that comes with that. Unlike the first interview, the discourse in this interview does not necessarily re-assert the age hierarchy, but rather recognises it as an artefact of the industry as personified in the “grey-haired” senior. The discourse constructs age and experience as something which needs to be both humoured, when she says “we joke about it” and actively managed when she says “I try and make the client feel umm more comfortable..” Consciously dealing with negative projections is a psychological process which actively manages how a leader is perceived. It is part of the discourse which makes up the body of literature on organisational culture where individuals attach symbolic meaning to their leaders and the leaders’ are aware of the need to manage this (Brown & Thornborrow 1996; Kets de Vries 2006; Schein 1985; Tourigny *et al.* 2003). This awareness in managing projections and perceptions attached to symbols reflect the emotional intelligence and ‘learner leader’ characteristics described in the literature review (Ely *et al.* 2011; Goleman 2000; Kets de Vries 2011; Matthews *et al.* 2002; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002). In this case an awareness of age rank and the attached meaning it assumes is the subject of the discourse, but it is the discourse around dealing with projection and perception that appears to be emerging as significant in relation to power and leadership on deeper analysis of the text.

In interview seven the age rank is constructed through the generational distance between the participant and her younger team members rather than the experience and seniority distance.

### **Extract One (Interview Seven)**

*So..., here I am among the oldest people, at age 33. So you are dealing with the very young, the Y generation, we've got that so...normally how I approach them it is the way I approach things with my daughter, the technology, the excitement you know.*

*..The dynamics are totally different..they are like “what's in it for me?” before they do anything... they take leave on their boyfriend's birthdays...it's like... it's my boyfriend's birthday and I am taking leave, do you mind? And I'm like ...but I didn't even take leave on my birthday, or my daughter's ..... and that's why I say I keep in touch....my daughter keeps me... educated on the young and how they think, the technology, the things, so I am like the cool mum and I come to work and I bring the fun side of things*

*to... everyone. And I try and ...but it was challenging at first, I didn't understand it, and because I have got such high standards of work ethics and I put everything into my work, as I do with my family as well, but I never understood why.. people have to leave at 4.30 when you have a deadline*

The discourse focuses on the generational difference between the 'Y generation' and the participant's generation which is documented in the literature on generational theory (Codrington & Grant-Marshall 2004; Sessa *et al.* 2007). The 'Y' generation is personified in the subject of her daughter which has the effect of positioning her in a maternal relationship with her team. To some extent this re-enforces the hierarchical rank relationship of age. But unlike the discourses which relate the discussion of age within the context of a more institutional and patriarchal system, this participant contrasts the binary opposites of the fun, excitement and "what's in it for me" attitude of the younger generation with the hard work ethic of her generation. By personifying herself as the "cool mum" who is trying to understand this generation she relates the power of her leadership role to an attempt to bridge the generational divide. This is an emerging discourse within the discourses on social rank and draws from a more nurturing discourse of understanding and empathy than of the dominance associated with hierarchy. The psychodynamic approach to organisational theory recognises the power of the emotional role which leaders fulfil within groups, often drawing from idealised family archetypes, such as the mother (Gabriel 1999; Kets de Vries 2006; 2011). However, in this text the significant issue is the intentional role she plays in what is often an unconscious power dynamic.

### **Summary: Age and Experience**

While the age and experience discourse relates to the power of social rank, the emerging construct of power in the extracts discussed above relate to an awareness of these rank issues, the dynamics associated with them and ability to manage them. Another emerging construct of power within the leadership context of today is the ability to empathise with those who are from a different generation and to engage with their emotional needs as a leader.

#### **8.2.1.4 Summary: Discourses Related to Social Rank**

Social rank in these interviews is power constructed through the traditional hierarchies of position in the organisation; achievement and reputation; and age and experience. However, what emerges in the analysis of the text is a transformational feature of power in the ability to dismantle psychological and structural barriers within a hierarchy and influence despite position. Detachment from the system and emotional engagement with the individuals being led are other features that emerge as empowering within this discourse of social rank.

#### **8.2.2 Discourses Related to Psychological Constructs**

The discourses discussed below relate to how the participants discussed power in their current leadership role. Unlike the previous section where power is discussed in terms of a socially constructed ranking system, these discourses relate to the participants' inter and intrapersonal processes, which is why they have been categorised as psychological constructs. The following discourses were identified in relation to psychological constructs:

##### 8.2.2.1 Decision Making and Responsibility

##### 8.2.2.2 Independence

##### 8.2.2.3 Trust and Collaboration

#### **8.2.2.1 Decision Making and Responsibility**

Four of the participants discussed decision making in direct response to the question asking what makes them feel powerful in their leadership role. In the first interview decision making is related to responsibility and the ability to "say no" as evident in the following extract:

##### **Extract One (Interview 1)**

*Uuh...I feel powerful when I've got the ability to make a decision..and once I've made that decision I can follow it through..whether it's hiring someone..promoting someone..or what to do with this financial number..uum.I find that...you know having*

*that ability.. and maybe it's because that transition between leadership being new..and coming off a base where I didn't have that ability to make a decision..the decisions were always made for me..uum..I feel quite powerful when Michael empowers me to make those decisions..I feel quite powerful when I'm given the responsibility to do something.*

Decision making in this extract is constructed as the ability to act and is contrasted directly with the disempowering effect of having decisions “made for me”. Ironically, the discourse is constructed around being “empowered” by a more senior person to make the decision and therefore has the effect of re-enforcing hierarchical relationships in legitimising power in the organisation. While the ability to act and take responsibility is a psychological phenomenon, within this discourse it something which is “given” and therefore depends upon the external environment rather than the internal psychological resources of the participant. Her response is developed further in extract two:

**Extract Two (Interview One)**

*And I've got the ability to say yes or no..whereas in the past I was told..off you go..go and get a cheque drawn up and implement...and now I've got the ability to say no and the power to say no..if someone comes up to me and says can we do x,y and z and if I say no that's the end of it*

Within the discussion on the power of making decisions, the participant emphasises the ability to “say no” in this extract. The focus on decision making in this extract is on the prevention of others taking action rather than the empowerment which is referred to in the previous extract. The way the “no” is used here repeatedly constructs the subject as the autocrat who says “that’s the end of it” which directly reflects the way she constructs her own experience of receiving orders from above when she says “I was told...off you go”. The effect of creating these binary opposites is to polarise power into those who have it and those who don’t. It also has the effect of entrenching power as an oppressive phenomenon which is perpetuated by those who have been denied power previously. This is well documented in the literature on the effects of power associated with oppressive systems such as patriarchy and those who resist relinquishing power in transformation efforts (Esterhuyse 2003; Lee 2010; Lewis 2011; Shriberg *et al.* 2005; Van Rensburg 2007).

In interview five the discourse on decision making is related to the significance and extent of the decisions and inclusion at the highest level as explained in the following extract:

**Extract One (Interview Five)**

*That everything depends on me – what we report to the press, what we report to the board, what we report to.. externally and internally..I write and draft and do all of that – obviously then I take it to my boss to review and just for sign off, you know. But I feel that I am part of every decision that is being made, or I support, I am part of the support team. I sit on Exco, I sit on Boards of our companies.*

The magnitude of responsibility is emphasised in the fact that “everything depends on me”. The effect of this is to construct power as a phenomenon which makes an individual indispensable. This relates to a broader discourse of being needed which is further reflected in focus on inclusion when she says “I am part of every decision that is made”. In highlighting her role as part of the “support team” she uses a term which re-enforces the discourse of being needed. This is similar to the way in which power is constructed by the first participant. However, in this extract she constructs her power through involvement at an organisational level rather than being indispensable to her boss. This shifts the discourse from one which relies on power through personal patronage to one where power is constructed through organisational contribution. Rather than focussing on power related to outcomes or associations, the focus on contribution constructs power as being part of the process of decision making and a valuable input into the transformation processes of an organisational system (Nadler 1998; Stacey 2003; Van Tonder 2008).

In interview eight the power of being needed relates more specifically to solving others problems and the ability to determine the boundaries in doing that. This is described in the following extract:

**Extract One (Interview Eight)**

*It is having to make decisions..but I would say.... dealing with people and if people need a loan, or something like that..they will come to me and say you know I need a*

*loan and you know the position of power, I suppose in that situation, is whether you grant them a loan or not. Umm and how you deal with a number of issues..I mean I have..I think the biggest problem I have is people issues and I have people in and out of my office all day, with SO many problems! And sometimes the power is saying well actually this is not a work-issue..and you know just get back to work, and leave me alone..you know, not in those kind of terms..but umm..*

The effect of focussing on the example of the employee coming for a loan is similar to the first participant where power is constructed in terms of those who have it and those who don't. In this extract the focus is on making a material and substantive difference to somebody's life and solving their problems. The discourse is constructed specifically around having access to resources that others don't. However, the psychological discourse related to power in this extract is the ability to draw boundaries between what is the leader's responsibility to solve and what it is not. The dismissive "just get back to work, and leave me alone" which is not necessarily articulated in these words to the subject who lacks resources, but rather reflects the internal dialogue which asserts boundaries and limitations in relation to the power of the role. The effect of this discourse is to assert both the contrast of being able to influence people's lives and being able to choose not to engage with their personal issues. This shifts the conversation to dealing with the psychological process of choosing how to respond to situations which forms part of the discourse on psychological resilience documented in the literature (Antonovsky 1974; Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003; Carr 2004; Lewis 2011; Strümpfer 2005). It also challenges the literature which highlights women's difficulty in asserting their ego and defining boundaries as a limiting factor in claiming power (Conway 2001; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Sandberg 2013).

In a similar way the freedom of choice to make and act on decisions is the focus of the next participant. However, this is not related to a personal level of engagement as in the previous extract, but rather at a systemic level within organisational structures and levels of accountability. When asked what makes her feel powerful in her current role as CEO, participant nine responds:

### **Extract One (Interview Nine)**

*The ability to make decisions....decision making ability. The ability to make a decision and implement it. Where you don't have to refer to more and more layers for confirmation, whatever.... It's two-fold it's one that you are accountable for the decision, and two the ability to make and implement the decision without impediment. So – you are happy to take the glory or the blame but you have to be able to go for it. Just implement what you believe should be done...*

The discourse constructs power not only as the freedom to make a decision but also the freedom to “act” or implement without constraint. The action orientation is emphasised with the phrase “go for it” and the introduction of the last sentence with the “just implement”. The language contrasts the freedom, and to some extent abandon, associated with acting on one’s conviction as opposed to the restriction of having to refer to “more and more layers”. The effect of this discourse is to construct self-determination or agency as a source of leadership power which forms part of the broader discourse on power and positive psychology in the literature (Compton 2005; Goldstein 1995; Strümpfer 2005).

### **Summary: Decision Making**

Decision making and the authority to deny others is constructed within the texts as an oppressive form of power and is drawn from the patriarchal discourse. However, an alternative discourse emerges as power is also constructed as making a contribution to the organisational decision making process as opposed to being an enforcer of decisions. In addition to power derived from decision making, the cognitive process of choosing to respond to challenging situations and the potential for self-determination are features of this discourse.

### **8.2.2.2 Independence**

Three of the participants discussed independence in relation to power and their leadership role. Independence was constructed both as the ability to do things “their way” and as the ability to be self-reliant as analysed in the following two extracts.

#### **Extract One (Interview 4)**

*Umm I think ...and it's only what I think..just by doing things my own way and earning I think credibility for the results we get and how we work as a team, because people obviously judge how they think your team is doing, how your business is doing, and they come here and they sit in these collective meetings and they have a look and they talk to people and they also get a sense for ..you know is it an cohesive team, or not a cohesive team, or is it a broken team, or not. So they have their own views. And by and large I think they can see that we are not a dysfunctional team that we are a strong functioning team and we do things well and I think that by me doing things my own way and obviously with the team shaping who we are....Well, maybe "my way" is not different to anybody else, Lisa, maybe I just feel it's different to anybody else, maybe it's not..umm I feel if I wanted to I could have become more masculine in the way I run the business and the way I interact, with my peers, with the shareholders and even with my team. So I feel I could have adopted more masculine traits in the way I do things. So... what do I mean by that, I mean in my head probably much more rational, much less in tune to the emotive things much less accommodating. I am quite accommodating in many ways, I listen to people's feedback, to people's challenges."*

In this extract the participant constructs the power she experiences as doing things "my own way". When asked to elaborate on that she contrasts it with a "masculine" way of doing things and in so doing constructs her way as something distinct from that. However, she constructs this distinctive style as resisting a more "masculine" approach rather than positioning her approach in gender terms as being more "feminine". By distinguishing her approach as individual without necessarily framing it as any particular style she constructs power within the leadership context as an intuitive process with positive results. This is emphasised when she says "maybe I just feel it's different to anybody else, maybe it's not." She reflects the differences she "feels" as a conscious process when she asks herself "so what do I mean by that" and "in my head". This has the effect of acknowledging her own construction of reality and not presenting it as absolute. It also emerges as her strategy for ensuring the listener, in this case the interviewer, is following her internal conscious process of sense making.

In the extract she reflects on her “feeling” of doing things intuitively in contrast with a traditional paradigm of “masculine traits” which she constructs as “more rational, much less in tune with the emotive things, much less accommodating”. However, the intuitive approach she describes is constructed in very tangible behavioural terms at the end of the extract around accommodating people and listening to their feedback and challenges. The construction of her leadership style in these behavioural terms only emerges in elaborating on the statement “my way” after being probed by the interviewer. Initially in her discussion the intuitive process of leadership is constructed as powerful due to the results it delivers and the credibility and respect she believes she has earned from these results. When she elaborates, the results are not constructed as business oriented alone but the focus is also on the team’s effective functioning. The power of having an independent style is not constructed in this interview within a defined feminist framework but describes both the process and outcome of leadership. The process is one of conscious sense making of what is being done intuitively or subconsciously. The outcome she associates with her power of achievements results in collaborative and connected relationships which will be further discussed as a separate feature of the discourse related to psychological constructs (section 8.2.2.3) and is recognised as a potentially emerging discourse which is evident in the recent literature on collaboration in organisations and women’s leadership style (Gergen 2005; Kolp & Rea 2006; Rhode 2003; Sandberg 2013; Wilson 2004).

The independence of self-reliance is evident in participant nine’s discourse. This discourse positions self-reliance as a disempowering inability to draw boundaries and focus.

### **Extract Three (Interview 9)**

*But females are inclined to be self-reliant and take on the world of responsibilities and chores, without saying “hell no..I’m not doing that, I’m playing golf on Saturday..I’d better get someone else to wash the car and do this and that and the next thing”. We tend to feel we have to fit it all in. We just absorb whatever is required to be done, we don’t say “that’s not my job, I need extra resource or capacity to do it”..... Men have absolutely no problem with drawing the line, and saying that’s it I am only doing these 3 things, the rest will fall off the list or go to someone else or... it’s not so important....I think they focus more singularly.*

In discussing power this participant constructs the self-reliance of women as a disempowering phenomenon and contrasts it directly with men's ability to focus and "say no". By using the phrase that women take on "the world" of responsibilities and chores, she constructs negative associations with the female archetype of the self-reliant martyr who is reluctant or incapable of serving her own needs or asking others for help. The term "absorb" is contrasted with the boundaries created by "drawing the line" and has the effect of constructing women's lack of power in taking on other's needs and agendas. Singular focus is constructed as the positive ability of a man to draw boundaries and in so doing has the effect of diminishing the power associated with self-reliance of the previous extracts. This supports the literary works which claim that women face challenges defining their ego and establishing boundaries (Conway 2001; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Harvey 2010; Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009).

### **Summary: Independence**

In constructing power as the ability to lead independently, collaboration emerges as the outcome of an intuitive "female" style, without the erosion of psychological boundaries and as the antithesis to the disempowered self-reliant martyr, devoid of personal boundaries. Another significant discourse which is evident in analysis both in this section and in previous analysis in this chapter is the power related to the process of making unconscious processes more conscious.

### **8.2.2.3 Trust and Collaboration**

Six of the participants introduced the discourse of trust and collaboration in discussing their power in relation to their leadership role. All of them constructed this discourse in response to the question about their relationship with their followers. However, the way in which trust and collaboration is discussed in the various interviews constructs power in relation to their role as a leader in a range of diverse ways.

In the first interview, the power relating to trust amongst team members is constructed through the military metaphors relating to loyalty and retribution.

### **Extract One (Interview 1)**

*..Sorry just on that..trust and honesty..trust and honesty..I'm huge on trust..if I don't trust you you're not going to get anywhere..if I can't rely on you..and trust you to do something to the 150% of your ability..then unfortunately you don't stand a chance with me..and betray that trust..and put a knife in my back..and that will be the end of you..a person will never come back from that with me..umm..that's how big that is for me..and to have my team..and that trust with..Sandy\* and Michelle\*...and slowly the others..it's huge..and it's huge.*

By using the aggressive metaphors of “put a knife in my back”; “that will be the end of you”; and “a person will never come back from that”, the participant constructs her power in relation to her leadership role as the capacity to demand loyalty and deliver vengeful justice which draws from the patriarchal rhetoric of a military or vigilante context. The way in which in the word “trust” and “huge” are repeated has the effect of creating a forcefulness associated with this extract and the aggressive images. The psychological phenomenon of trust in this extract is positioned in stark contrast with collaboration. In this context power is derived, not through trusting relationships, but rather through the ability to secure allegiance.

In comparison, the following extracts construct trust within their team as a phenomenon which gives them their power as a leader, and more specifically as a woman leader.

### **Extract Two (Interview 2)**

*But I think there is a bit of a difference, I think they see me as more compassionate umm more of, more willing to listen and take into consideration their feelings, I think women generally are seen as more collaborative. But I think they know I like to consult and listen to their point of view before I make decisions umm... but they also know that I will make the decision. Even though sometimes they may not like it. So I think they trust in that. So I think there is a bit of a difference between my relationship with them and my predecessor's relationship with them, by virtue of the fact that I am a woman...*

In this extract the participant constructs the binary opposites of “feminine” and “masculine” leadership by comparing herself with her male predecessor as the

individual subjects in the text. By positioning women as more collaborative than men, rather than relating the discourse of trust to a traditionally patriarchal context, this participant constructs power as the capacity to draw from a perceived “feminine style” of leadership to gain trust in the decisions she takes (Eagly & Carli 2007; Ely *et al.* 2010; Helgesen 1995; Scrivens 2002; Valerio 2009; Wilson 2004). While at a surface level the way in which she contrasts these styles of leadership perpetuate the male and female stereotypes, the deeper structure potentially reveals something different. In contrasting her style with her male predecessor, she uses the word “more” several times which has the effect of positioning her power as enhancing rather than detracting or opposing the leadership offered by men. She also contrasts the collaborative act of consulting on decisions with making unpopular decisions and relates “trust” to both when she uses the non-specific, catch all term “they trust in that”. Power through building trust in a team is therefore constructed in the integration of both a more “feminine” collaborative approach and a more “masculine” decisive approach. The power of this integration is an emerging discourse within this participant’s text and is discussed in the analysis of the previous question, as well as critiqued in the literature on ‘androgynous’ or ‘genderless’ leadership (Den Hartog *et al.* 1999; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002).

Trust is extended to include the empowerment of team members in the following extract. As in the first extract, this participant focusses on loyalty and dependability in the leader-team relationship. However, while the discourse around trust has a similar effect of sustaining the leader’s power in relation to the team, unlike in the first interview, this is achieved through affable and empowering language rather than vengeful analogies.

#### **Extract Four (Interview 5)**

*I feel that I have earned a lot of trust through my flexible style... that come year end, those busy times, my staff will come in and work till 3 in the morning if they have to, to meet the deadline, and to make sure that they impress me, you know. And I appreciate, I tell them how much I appreciate that all the time..you know. So while my boss always says Siwe\* is a very dangerous leader because she appears gentle and laughing and it’s okay, but at the same time they’ll do anything and everything for me...I believe in...I*

*always said I don't want anyone to walk out of my office feeling lower than they came in..you know... While I have power, I always believe, that power.. if you let it go..it comes back to you, you know.*

In the extract the participant uses the hedge phrase “you know” frequently, which has the effect of appealing to the interviewer to both acknowledge and agree with what she is saying. This results in both a collaborative tone in the discussion, as well as the requirement for affirmation. The effect of asserting the participant’s views without the force or aggression of the first participant, but with a need for affirmation, has a potentially undermining effect, unlike in the second participant’s extract, where views are asserted eloquently, but without the need for affirmation. The terms relating to affirmation are evident in the extract when she talks about her team making sure that they “impress” her and telling them how much she “appreciates them”; as well as ensuring they feel important by not walking out of their office “lower than they came in”. These phrases as well as the delivery of the extract construct power as trust earned through motivating and affirming relations. This is personified in her representation of herself in the third person, as “gentle and laughing” which she contrasts with her boss’s personification of her as a “dangerous leader”. Unlike the extract from the second interview where there is an emerging discourse of integration of masculine and feminine styles. In this extract her “gentle” style is astutely constructed to achieve unwavering loyalty which she highlights when she says “they’ll do anything and everything for me”. The effect of this is to construct power as coercive through the management of perceptions. While it is recognised in the literature that the management of perceptions is integral to any follower leader relationship (Denmark 1993; Goleman 2000; Kets de Vries 2006; Klem & Schlechter 2008), the way in which the argument is constructed in this text suggests an astute manipulative strategy, duplicitous in contrast with the discourse on the power of authenticity which is discussed in section 8.2.3.1 as well as in the literature (Avolio & Gardiner 2005; Dhiman 2011; Kets de Vries 2011; Livingston & Lusin 2009; Sosik & Jung 2010).

This astuteness also starkly contrasts the effect of her need for affirmation when engaging with the interviewer. The contradictions she reflects on in her leadership style

are described in the extract as “flexible”. However, by the end of the extract she articulates the contradictions with a clear image of the transient nature of power when she says “if you let it go...it comes back to you, you know”. The effect of the “you know” at the end of this statement, qualifies it as a universal wisdom, rather than seeking affirmation from the interviewer. On deeper analysis then, the contradictory nature of the way in which power is constructed is an emerging discourse around the transient nature of power and how it is consciously used to positive effect, while being misinterpreted as “powerless” within the patriarchal business culture. The discourse within her text reflects the discourse in the literature on the transient and dynamic nature of power (Adams 2012; Anderson *et al.* 2012; Compton 2005; Fiske 2012; Kolar 2011; Mindell 1995; Neuringer & Jensen 2010; Schuitevoerder 2000).

In the final interview which relates trust to the participant’s discourse on leadership and power, the discourse locates the phenomena of trust within the corporate business culture of professionalism and ethics.

#### **Extract Six (Interview 9)**

*Trust. One word, trust. Credibility and trust. So you by your own actions and involvement people realize your capability and that you are credible in terms of your opinions **and** your contribution to the business and that you have the business’s best interests at heart. And that there is a trust, both trust from a professional perspective **and** a personal perspective. That ethically you will have the business **and** their personal interest at heart, that you will be ethical and principled about your decision-making. So I mean to this day, a decade later, I have trust with everybody I’ve worked with, I would say without exception I hold the trust with everybody I have worked with. Except the people I fired for fraud! (laughter) They don’t like me!*

The binary opposites of personal and professional perspectives are constructed in this extract and the need for both is highlighted in the way in which the participant emphasises and repeats the number of “ands” in the discussion. This has the effect of constructing power once again as an integrated phenomena, but in this case drawing from both personal interests and professional ethics, as opposed to masculine and feminine styles discussed earlier on in this section. Trust is constructed as the

congruence which results from this integrated approach. She re-enforces this with the joke about not having trust with and being “disliked” only by those people who have been “fired for fraud”. In this extract power is constructed in terms of positive and trusting relationships with co-workers, but also in the ability and willingness to make decisions which protect the business from exploitation. Unlike the previous extract where the discourse focussed on the transfer of power, this discourse focusses on power derived from personal values and attitudes translated into congruent actions. Power in this extract is constructed as positional power of being responsible for both the strategic and financial success of a business. However, while power is related to the business context, it is devoid of some of the patriarchal military images and analogies evident in some of the previous extracts discussed in this chapter. The literature highlights a potential obstacle to women experiencing power in their leadership role as gender based stereotypes attached to accomplishment (as a ‘male’) and to employee relationships (as ‘female’) (Cann & Siegfried 1990; Eagly & Carli 2007; Ely *et al.* 2011; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Rudman & Glick 2001; Sandberg 2013). However, this participant’s text constructs power both through successful business outcomes and relational processes.

#### **Summary: Trust and Collaboration**

Trust and collaboration is one of the discourses related to the psychological power constructed by the women leaders interviewed. As in the previous section the construction of power within this discourse is transient, easily manipulated and dependent on the perspective of those within the system. Yet, the integration of opposites, such as the traditionally regarded “masculine” and “feminine” leadership traits; as well as the integration of business or professional interests and personal and relational interests, emerges as a more sustainable model for the construction and continuous re-construction of women leadership’s power.

#### **8.2.2.4 Summary: Discourses Related to Psychological Constructs**

An emerging discourse related to psychological constructs of power in the participants’ discussion of their leadership role, is related to the body of work on positive psychology which focusses on self-determination (Bühler 1971; Compton 2005; Strümpfer 2005) as well as the ability to do this through making a contribution to others (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2003; Bakan 1966; Cameron *et al.* 2003; Cameron 2009; Lewis 2011).

Another emerging discourse is related to the discourse around gender based leadership traits and argues that power is derived from the use of an “intuitive” female style, as well as the integration of traditionally regarded male and female leadership traits. Finally the discourse which appears to emerge both within leaders’ narratives from question one and the discussion on their leadership roles in question two is the power relating to the process of making unconscious processes more conscious, both to oneself and to those within the organisational system.

### **8.2.3 Feminist Discourse**

The discourses evident in response to the second question regarding how women discuss power in relation to their leadership roles are constructed around two feminist themes, namely:

#### 8.2.3.1 Female Archetypes

#### 8.2.3.2 Discrimination

#### **8.2.3.1 Female Archetypes**

Seven of the interviews introduced discourse on power through female archetypes in discussing their leadership roles. The archetypal “hard-arsed” women boss is constructed in the second interview in opposition to the way in which the participant constructs her own identity as a leader in the following extract:

#### **Extract 1 (Interview Two)**

*I think something that the women at this company do very badly is they become too hard..for some reason female partners... a lot of the female partners, and I can't generalize and say its all of them but it's a lot of them in my experience are these tough, hard-arsed women umm and they are known for that, they almost do it on purpose, I think they overcompensate.... and I was at a meeting once where you know my new leadership role was announced and there was a female manager, senior manager, at that meeting and afterwards she came up to me and she said to me you know “congratulations I'm so happy for you, it's so nice to see a nice female partner doing well” so I paused and said “what makes you say that?” and she said “you know a lot of the female partners in Joburg (because she is from Joburg) are just so hard you forget*

*that they are women and they actually behave like men “umm...and it’s something that, firstly I don’t think it’s in me to behave like a man..it’s not something I want to do I don’t think that it’s something that you have to do in order to succeed. But it just made me even more so conscious of that and that the female partners, I don’t know about other firms, but certainly at this company have a reputation of being worse than men in fact a lot of trainees and managers, if they had their choice wouldn’t want to work with a lot of these female partners ..*

Implicit in the story she relates about her colleague congratulating her is that by resisting taking on this archetypal role she retains the power of success in her position. This is implied when she is congratulated as a female partner “doing well” and contrasts this identity with the archetypal macho women leaders who do “badly” because others don’t want to work with them. Power in this discourse is constructed as being congruent and comfortable with her feminine identity. The construction of the tough woman boss subject is related to the patriarchal male stereotype when she says “they become worse than men” and when she trails off after saying they “overcompensate”, leaving the words ‘for not being a man’ as implied, rather than stated. This supports the literature that confirms the way stereotypes are associated with male and female leadership styles (Cann & Siegfried 1990; Eagly & Carli 2007; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Rudman & Glick 2001). She does not construct specific behaviours around this identity in this extract, and she is careful not to generalise, which supports the feminist argument in the literature that women should not be homogenously defined (Conway 2001; Freedman 2002; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Lee 2010; Nicholson 2012). However, the characteristics are constructed as something other than the extreme version of a stereotypical “male” style of leadership, which in this extract is qualified as “hard-arsed”. It constructs the image highlighted in the literature of the oppressive female boss, usually constructed for purposes of self-preservation, leading to overly competitive behaviour in women with potentially antagonistic behaviour towards other women (Eisenstein 2010; Kariuki 2004; Sandberg 2013). Ironically though, while the participant claims her authentic leadership style as a woman as something other than the “masculine” stereotype, the participant’s choice of the word “overcompensate” still positions women in an inferior relationship with their male counterparts, in that they are constructed as having something lacking which drives their behaviour. The secondary status of women remains a deeply rooted, internalised construct as is discussed in the literature on the

effects of patriarchy (Harvey 2010; Johnson 2005; Kenway 2001; Ledwith 2009; Lee 2010).

An alternative archetype to the “hard-arsed boss” is provided through the maternal archetype in the following four extracts:

**Extract 2 (Interview Three)**

*I think being a woman there's...my team are all females and every single one of them umm 5 and every single one of them bar one is married with small kids..so so they definitely relate to me as a woman and I'm very umm I'm very open to them that they can work from home, they can take their kids to school in the morning, they can go out and drop their kids at home if they want to, they can take their kids to swimming lessons...I don't even want to know the details..umm I trust that they'll get the job done, I'm not a clock-watcher and I don't believe that umm you can at a senior level just be around at work from 8 to 5 without the role that you play as a mom.*

In this extract the maternal archetype's power in relation to leadership is constructed as the ability to relate to other mothers in the workplace and offer them support. This identification is highlighted through the detailed examples given in the extract relating to family responsibilities that women carry. This has the effect of illustrating the empathy in the relationship with team members and the trust that this generates. In this extract the archetypal role of the mother is not directly related to the discourse of power, however, the construction of trust as the result of this identity relates to leadership power within an all women team.

In the next extract power is constructed directly through the archetypal mother-daughter relationship as an analogy for the leader-follower relationship.

**Extract 4 (Interview Seven)**

*I think they think of me as a mother... you know because I remember..there was..she's not here anymore..this lady, but she used to be, I used to be her performance manager, and because she saw me more as, because I mean, she was a difficult person in a way, because she was not dressing-up appropriately you know and umm she didn't respect authority. But for me I needed to understand her background because I would listen to*

*the way she would talk to her parents, and for me that's when I used to think to myself, now I understand why she does not respect authority, because at home she doesn't understand a mother and a father and how to talk to parents, you know. And I ended up I had to deal with issues of "you not dressing up appropriately you know" sometimes I used to sit here thinking, you know I feel like I am talking to my daughter, who is 13 years old, because every time with my daughter I've got this thing with her I used to say to make sure you are wearing the right top you've got to stand in front of the mirror and raise your hands and if you can see your body then it is not the right top for you, or your skirt is too short. So I was having this conversation with her in the workplace, with someone who should know these things from their parents, and I was crossing the boundary to say now I am more like a mother figure to them.*

In this extract the participant constructs power by relaying an intimate conversation between the leader and team member reminiscent of that between a mother and a daughter. The story personifies the subject of the mother figure and contrasts it with the traditional notion of a "boss" by highlighting how assuming this role was "crossing a boundary". This metaphor also constructs the maternal leaders' role as a substitution of the daughter figure's 'real' parents by assuming the power of authority and respect in the relationship. At a surface analysis the maternal archetypal power is constructed as the traditional authority role of a mother who takes responsibility for the education of her children around societal norms. But deeper within the structure, the power of the role is constructed as being able to "understand her background" and identify what is lacking in the 'daughter' subject's development and education. The emerging discourse evident in this extract around power is the intimate understanding and empathy of team members and the ability to provide guidance and development that may have been lacking in their past. This is congruent with the literature on the powerful emotional role of leaders in groups (Gabriel 1999; Kets de Vries 2006, 2011; Stapley 2006).

In the final extract where the mother archetype is related to the discourse of power, the focus is on her own identity in terms of the leadership role as opposed to relationships with followers.

### **Extract 5 (Interview Nine)**

*Part of it for me is to achieve the objectives I wanted to achieve as a mother and a wife, I needed to umm not carry full responsibility for the business. So, by the time I took the 2 I.C. equivalent role, by the time I wasn't head of the business, I had been head, I had been building up to and head of the business, I had been in the business 7 years. And my family was suffering, just on a time basis, not obviously on my commitment to them, but the available time. My problem was I would lie awake at night worrying about the business, not about my children and their issues, or whatever they were. Not that they have issues but I was spending a disproportionate amount of my mental energy after hours worrying about the business, and I believe that it wasn't that important to me, business is business it is a way of making money to pay bills. Umm it didn't define me, business doesn't define me. You know ..for a lot of guys with egos in business, if they are not the CEO they are nothing, they are just a nobody whereas for me if I stop working tomorrow I will just say how wonderful..you know I can have a year off yay! Catching up with my photo albums and catching up with my daughters, going to all their functions, and their things, and being more involved in their projects and plant a veggie garden and I'll just think of all the wonderful things I can do. I won't think "Oooh I'm a nobody!"*

Power in this extract is constructed in the integration of both family and business roles. In response to the question about whether what her followers think of her is influenced by her being a woman, she chooses not to focus on the followers but rather on her own identity. By relaying the challenges of meeting competing demands of business and family responsibility and choosing to give up a certain amount of business responsibility to take a "second in-charge" role, the participant ironically constructs her power in relation to leadership as being comfortable relinquishing a certain amount of power. Beyond the "letting go" of power is the way in which she constructs her identity outside of her leadership role and contrasts this with "guys with egos" whose over-identification with their positional power causes them to feel like a "nobody" without it. By juxtaposing her own identity as detached from positional power and embracing the relinquishing of this responsibility in the joyful and slightly frivolous phrases such as "how wonderful" and "yay" and "I'll just think of all the wonderful things I can do", she constructs the power of her self-esteem as independent of an organisational leadership role and equally vested in the maternal and family responsibility of the

maternal archetype (Bassnett 2013; Eisenstein 2010; Freedman 2002; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Hill 1992; Moses 2012; Wilson 2004).

### **Summary: Female Archetypes**

What emerges from the discourse relating to these archetypes is the power associated with empathy and understanding of team members and being able to provide them with guidance. Power is also constructed through the archetypal maternal role as detached from positional power, with self-esteem vested in roles outside of the organisational system.

### **8.2.3.2 Gender Discrimination**

In discussing power in relation to their leadership role, three of the participants explicitly raise the issue of dealing with discrimination. In the first extract the participant's discourse constructs the disempowering experience of having limitations placed upon her as a result of her being a woman.

#### **Extract 1 (Interview Eight)**

*Sometimes I feel like they are quite happy with the women being at a certain level of development, they don't really want to push them that one step further. ..you know, rather just keep them at a certain level, there are very few that are sort of pushed beyond that.....The glass ceiling is very real.....keep them in their place. You sometimes get that impression.*

The participant uses the widely accepted metaphor of the "glass ceiling" to construct the barrier that she experiences in relation to developing beyond her current leadership role. She reverts to third person, both in speaking about those who impose the barrier and the women who experience it. The use of the third person has the effect of distancing herself from the experience, but representing it as part of an institutionalised system, where opposing parties exist as "they" and "them". She also uses the words "you know" and "you" which have the effect of including the interviewer in the universal experience, rather than stating it as entirely personal. The disempowerment associated with the experience is constructed as alienation from the system in which she operates and is documented as a key reason for the high turnover of women in

organisations (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Rhode 2003; Rosen & Korabik 1991; Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009).

The systemic and institutionalised discrimination described in this extract is constructed as an “impression” in much the same way that the “glass ceiling” is a metaphor. The contradiction inherent in the metaphor being described as “very real”, yet an “impression” at the same time constructs the subversive nature of a more subtle form of discrimination than the explicit denial of women’s access to leadership roles. In addition to alienation from the institutional system, lack of trust in the dominant power within organisations questions the gender transformation agendas of organisations. This is further explored in the last section of this chapter where question three focusses on the leaders’ discourse around being able to influence the organisational system more broadly.

In the next interview, discrimination is raised in relation to the discourse on power based on paternalistic perceptions of women.

### **Extract 2 (Interview Ten)**

*Umm...I think they (my followers) are surprised by me being a woman. I have had a couple of them come and tell me subsequently ..that when I first joined..because you know when you sit on the Board, because you know, the company is not listed so you don't I don't think people knew, one who I was and what I looked like and most people say I look younger than my age. And at that stage, when I joined, I didn't have any hair I am not talking my hair was short..my hair was almost gone. And one of them said you know you walked into the boardroom and you were introduced and we all thought “How can they bring this little girl? First of all, she doesn't know about the industry, and she's way way too young.” And some have said they didn't think I was going to survive the harsh company environment. Umm so I think there is that sense of surprise.*

The “sense of surprise” that is repeatedly used to describe her relationship with followers constructs her power as discrediting the prejudices of the dominant power, personified in this extract as “the Board”. Her relaying of the paternalistic comments, such as “how can they bring this little girl?” that were told to her after she joined, are contrasted with her ability to “survive the harsh company environment”. The effect of

this is to highlight the challenge of operating in a prejudiced system without critiquing the system itself. The construction of power in this extract is to prove the system wrong as opposed to transforming the system itself, by “surviving” in the system, rather than manipulating it to her advantage or thriving in it. Ironically this has the disempowering effect of re-enforcing the hostility of the patriarchal institution which is a common response to the effects of patriarchy according to the literature (Dickerson 2013; Fisher & Ponniah 2003; Harvey 2010; Johnson 2005; Ledwith 2009). It also prohibits the mutual adaptation between the individual and the organisational system as contended in the literature on diversity (Booyesen & Nkomo 2010; Horwitz & Jain 2011; Op’t Hoog *et al.* 2010; Thomas & Ely 1996; Wheatley 2004).

In the following extract a similar paternalistic experience is introduced in response to the question regarding what makes the participant feel despondent in her leadership role. However, in this extract the participant constructs power not as the ability to prove the paternalistic system wrong, but rather to take the moral high ground around the discrimination.

**Extract 3 (Interview Four)**

*It's an arrogant attitude, it almost makes me feel like he knows everything, and we know nothing, that's how it makes me feel. It's very disempowering and it's very arrogant, because he almost gets on this intellectual high-horse about..well he does...because he says “well this is how I think and this is the way I go, you know, I am a deep thinker” and you go..well... what do you mean? That we are all not deep thinkers? You know maybe that's a bit because I am a girl, I don't know umm because he'll pontificate about himself, and talk about how smart he is and he goes about things, and by implication therefore that we don't think about things in a smart manner, or a sophisticated manner, or a robust manner and I just find that completely unnecessary, it's not constructive in the slightest.*

In this extract power is constructed as the rank experienced between the superior intellect of the paternalistic male boss and the inferior intellect of the “girl”. She personifies herself as “a girl” in response to how her male boss addresses her and challenges her ability to think. The belittling of herself through this term is juxtaposed with her final authoritative statement at the end of the extract where she uses self-

righteous terms for emphasis such as “completely unnecessary” and “in the slightest”. The effect of this is for her to take the moral high ground from her constructed position of weakness as a “girl”. The emerging discourse which is not fully developed in this extract is the moral self-righteousness of the subject experiencing discrimination in the form of being belittled. In this particular extract it is introduced through the disempowered female archetype. However, the power associated with its corollary is constructed in the reaction to paternalism rather than an assertion of an alternative wisdom.

### **Summary: Gender Discrimination**

The rhetoric on gender discrimination in the participants’ texts presents both the disempowerment within and alienation from the patriarchal system as the antithesis of leadership power. However, attempts to assert an alternative debate around discrimination are inadequate and reflect the assertion in the literature that women tend to be ambivalent about power, not wishing to construct themselves as either victims of oppression or the wielders of power (Clayton & Crosby 1992; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Gavey 2005; Harvey 2010; Henry 1994; Jamieson 1995; Lee 2010; Miller & Cummins 1992). Rather the texts present weak attempt at challenging discrimination through surviving the system or admonishing it.

### **8.2.3.3 Summary: Feminist Discourse**

While the female archetypes are constructed with typical maternal imagery in this discourse, the sense of power results from the ability to connect with others in the organisation in an empathetic and meaningful way. The maternal role is also represented in this discourse as an opportunity for fulfilment outside of institutional power. In contrast the way gender discrimination is constructed reflects disempowered and stunted attempts at challenging patriarchy head on.

## **8.3 Summary of Discourses Identified in Objective Two**

In analysing how women discuss power in relation to their current leadership role, as is in their narrative, the discourse which entrenches traditional patriarchal models of power is evident, both in the re-enforcement of social rank and in the entrenching of

stereotypes associated with certain female archetypes. The emerging discourses construct power as a transformational process enabling the leader to determine her own future, as well as dismantle psychological and structural barriers within the hierarchy and make a contribution to organisational decision making. The emerging discourse which constructs power in relation to their style of leadership reflects the integration of male and female leadership traits and the use of intuition and empathy in the role. Being conscious of unconscious processes in the system which requires a certain detachment is constructed as a feature of power in response to this question. Ironically this is contrasted with the disempowering effect of ambivalence amongst women leaders towards highlighting the full effects of gender discrimination which is discussed in relation to feminist perspectives on power in the literature review (Henry 1994; Jamieson 1995; Miller & Cummins 1992; Sandberg 2013).

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS: RESEARCH OBJECTIVE THREE**

#### **Discourses Indicating Strategies Women Claim To Use To Sustain Power in Their Organisations**

##### **9.1 Introduction: Research Objective Three**

The third research objective focussed on how women construct the way in which they go about sustaining their power in their organisations into the future. The future focus of the questions relating to this objective gave rise to responses that were different to the previous two objectives and the discourses identified reflect that. The aim of the objective was to generate discussion about the envisaged future, as well as the impact on the broader organisational system. Since the focus moved beyond the direct experience of women, either in their past or current role, it proved to be the most challenging question for participants to respond to. This inability to easily access a response is reflected in the first discourse identified in the texts as that of disempowerment within the organisational system and will be discussed further in the analysis of the discourse. As shown in Appendix 1, the nature of the questions the participants were asked in relation to sustaining their power in the organisation were:

- To describe how they have tried to influence the broader organisation through their leadership
- To discuss what they consciously do to be recognised as a good leader in the organisation
- To describe how they believe they would develop their leadership role in the future

Participants were also asked to reflect on the interview and include any other comments that they believed would be relevant to the study on women and power in leadership.

## **9.2 Discourses Identified in the Third Research Objective**

The following discourses were evident in response to the third research objective and are discussed in the sections below and summarised in section 9.3.

### **9.2.1 Disempowerment within the organisational system**

9.2.1.1 Lack of Strategy

9.2.1.2 Operating Outside of The Corporate World

9.2.1.3 Family Responsibility

### **9.2.2 Leadership Style**

9.2.2.1 Relational/'Female' Oriented

9.2.2.2 Traditional/'Male' Oriented

### **9.2.3 Systemic Influence**

9.2.3.1 Networks and Sponsors

9.2.3.2 Having a Voice

### **9.2.1 Disempowerment within the Organisational System**

In general these questions proved the most difficult for respondents to answer, evident in the hesitation and lack of ability to clearly articulate a response in several interviews. For this reason, the text was less substantial than the previous two questions and it proved more difficult to cluster discourses. This trend gave rise to the identification of the first discourse which relates to leaders' disempowerment and inability to sustain power in the organisation. This is not surprising given that this was the most direct question regarding the overt use of power and that typically, women are uncomfortable discussing power (Clayton & Crosby 1992; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Gavey 2005; Harvey 2010; Henry 1994; Jamieson 1995; Lee 2010; Miller & Cummins. 1992). In this discourse, participants were either unable to articulate strategies; or constructed them as an inability to influence the organisational system; or a choice to opt out of influencing the system, either by accepting less influential roles or by working outside of the corporate system where they are able to establish their own agenda.

### **9.2.1.1 Lack of Strategy**

In this discourse the inability to influence the organisation and sustain power is constructed through the inability to articulate a clear strategy. This lack of articulation has the effect of constructing a discourse of disempowerment as the binary opposite of empowerment.

#### **Interview One (Extract 1)**

*eerm ...hfff...I think it's been tough... for a number of reasons..okay..I think the first one is my background, where I've come from. You know and I mentioned it earlier..I didn't come from a commercial background ...so nothing I used to do at company x could have any bearing on what I do now. So I could never come and say well we used to do x,y and z at my previous job, why don't we try it? I've got nothing to work with .okay so anything I come up with is conceptually mine or I've read about or whatever ..okay..umm. so that's been a bit tough because I've come from a zero base, if that's the best way to describe it.. I think the other section that's made it quite difficult has been the previous management style that didn't allow for change...Umm and a third thing that I think is inhibiting that process...is the stress...not the stress. ...but the pace and demands of what is required of finance team in general..we don't have chance to breathe....umm we don't have time to think of doing things differently*

The way in which the interviewer sighs at the beginning of this extract and uses hedge phrases like “umm” repeatedly indicates her inability to clearly articulate a response to the question. In her opening sentence she says “okay”, which is repeated a few times in the extract, and then goes on to list why it has been difficult to influence the organisation and sustain power in it. This appears to be a strategy to engage the interviewer's sympathy in understanding the reasons for not doing something which she perhaps, within the context of the interview, feels she should have been able to do. The result is that her list is presented almost as a set of excuses for “failure” to change or influence the organisation more significantly.

The disempowerment discourse through the lack of strategy is also evident in the way she constructs herself as unentitled to influence as a result of not having been with the organisation long enough. She rationalises this as not “having a commercial

background” and coming off a “zero base” which has the effect of undermining the expertise and knowledge she brought into the position from outside of the system. At a deep level within the structure of the interview she further perpetuates the entrenched power dynamics and rank of expertise and tenure within the organisational system and in doing this rather than being able to sustain power, constructs herself as continuously grappling with her ability to sustain power within the organisation. This tenuous nature of power is confirmed in the literary discourse on leadership where the fact that women occupy equal positions of power, does not necessarily translate to equal status or extent of power as that of men in organisations (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Kanter 1977; Rhode 2003; Sandberg 2013).

In the next interview, the disempowerment discourse is more overtly stated through the participant’s despondence in her leadership and the organisation.

**Interview Ten (Extract 1)**

*you know I think when I started off at company y I umm... I went out of my way to play exactly that role...ja...I think that I’ve had..one too many knocks to believe that that is possible, I just don’t..you know..I’ve been there 3 years, I know that for as long as we have the leader that we have, I will never succeed at that, that direct influence.*

In this extract the participant constructs her leader as the obstacle to being able to extend the power and influence within the broader organisational system. She constructs her strategy to grow her influence or power in the organisation as a redundant exercise and in so doing entrenches her disempowerment within the system. She creates the metaphor of being beaten when saying she’s had “too many knocks” and extends that in the next extract when she talks about people being “shattered” and “broken”. This re-enforces the rhetoric associated with the abusive power of oppression.

**Interview Ten (Extract 2)**

*There is a part of me that has become a bit more cynical since I have joined company y. Umm in that....I think that sometimes good doesn’t win..and I have seen very good people come and go at company y and leave shattered and broken.. you know.. and not broken because they were not good people working in a good environment, but vice*

*versa. Umm.. So... I think if there is one thing that I do know.. more than ever..and not withstanding that, you know, the knocks that you get you know. ....so..short answer to your question..I think for me it is to do whatever I can to be the antithesis of the kind of leadership that I am experiencing with my own boss, to do whatever I can to be different.*

In responding to this question she constructs the lack of strategy through her stated cynicism and the metaphor of defeat. She ends the extract with a clear and ironic assertion that to sustain power she needs to be the “antithesis” of her current boss. The construction of herself as the binary opposite of the ultimate custodian of power in the organisation, her boss, re-asserts her own identity but is presented as a flippant and unrealistic strategy within the current organisational context. The irony has the effect of further entrenching the sense of defeat and cynicism associated with the discourse of disempowerment.

### **Summary: Lack of Strategy for Sustaining Power**

The discourse of disempowerment highlights the tenuous nature of women’s power within patriarchal systems and indicates that oppressive and abusive models remain well entrenched in organisations today (Agervold 2007; Cilliers 2012; Dickerson 2013; Fisher & Ponniah 2003; Gavey 2011; Marais & Herman 1997; Samnani 2013). Women leaders remain ambivalent towards both claiming power or positioning themselves as a victim within the system as is argued in much of the feminist literature (Clayton & Crosby 1992; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Gavey 2005, 2011; Harvey 2010; Henry 1994; Jamieson 1995; Lee 2010; Miller & Cummins 1992).

#### **9.2.1.2 Operating Outside of the Corporate World**

Another discourse associated with disempowerment is the discourse of opting out of the corporate world and therefore the patriarchal power dynamics associated with it.

#### **Interview Four (Extract 1)**

*So that’s the real question I’m asking myself right now...will that give me more life satisfaction and feel like I’ve really made a difference...umm because sometimes, Lisa, if I look at a corporate job, as much as I know I have made a difference, I kind of feel*

*like..I'm out of here someone else will come and carry on. The legacy of these brands, this company is much bigger than me it's got a history way beyond when I was born, it's going to carry on way beyond when I leave here so... I know that this is a moment in time and I feel sometimes I could really do something more meaningful.*

In the extract above the participant's discourse in relation to opting out of the corporate world is constructed as finding a way to make more of a "difference" and do something "more meaningful" which is a construct of the positive psychology discourse in individuals need to find meaning and purpose to be able to thrive as human beings (Carr 2004; Lewis 2011; Seligman 2006; Steger & Dik 2010; Strümpfer 2005). It also relates to the discourse on eco-feminism which questions the involvement in competitive, patriarchal, capitalist systems and seeks alternative more sustainable and collaborative systems for the development of society (Brooks 2011; Eisenstein 2010; Rutherford *et al.* 2010). The binary opposite of something which is meaningful and satisfying to the individual is contrasted with the institutional legacy of a company. The way in which she constructs the institution as something "much bigger than me" with a history and future spanning way before and beyond her lifetime, has the effect of entrenching the power of an institution over an individual and therefore the relative futility of being able to influence the institution. While she does not clearly construct what something "more meaningful" would be, it is articulated as an ideal which is unable to be attained within an institutional framework of a business.

In the following extract, rather than focussing on meaning, the discourse focuses on independence and the need to own the business agenda.

### **Interview Nine (Extract 1)**

*I want to start my own own business..umm.. and create something from scratch. I inherited this business through lifestage when I was looking for a consulting assignment after I had had my first child I had absolutely no intention or inclination to start something from scratch, I needed a flexible working arrangement, and.. ja what I would do from this I would what the learning I would take from this..when this comes full circle in terms of business cycles, when the business is either sold, or whatever happens, or outgrows me, that's fine. I would want to start something from complete scratch, on my own umm and build something up, I think, that's what I would like to do.*

*Drawing on the experience I have gained umm... I am just passionate about entrepreneurship!*

The participant uses the terms starting from “scratch” a number of times and refers to doing it “on my own”. She constructs the ideal means of sustaining power as that independent self-determination in which she creates and owns the business agenda. She goes on in the next extract to contrast this with the futility of trying to shift the patriarchal corporate institutions.

### **Interview Nine (Extract 2)**

*It is like trying to beat them at their own game is not going to work. Men are in a position of power because they've had the cartel going on for hundreds of years. And it is not going to be fixed from within. It's got to be challenged from the outside..and unfortunately..and I've seen it myself..the way to succeed in male-dominated businesses is to emulate men. You know to be feminine, to be sensitive, to be a great listener, to be compassionate, doesn't get you anywhere in business.*

In constructing her strategy of sustaining power, this participant locates her argument within the feminist discourse of ‘challenging’ patriarchy from a place of independence where a woman defines her own agenda (Freeman *et al.* 2001; Rosen & Korabik 1991; Valerio 2009; Xavier *et al.* 2011). Much like in the first extract in this section from interview four, she constructs the futility of trying to influence the male patriarchal business environment. But in this extract, rather than the focus being on finding meaning or significance, the discourse constructs the argument that in order to succeed in this system women have to collude with it. In so doing they deny themselves of what she constructs as their feminine qualities, such as sensitivity and being compassionate (Ely *et al.* 2011; Helgesen 1995; Scrivens 2002; Wilson 2004). Interestingly, along with the previous extract, her argument constructs the world of “business” as something different to that of “entrepreneurship”. The term “business” in this context is used as a metaphor for the entrenched patriarchal system of the corporate world, whereas “entrepreneurship” in the previous extract is constructed as the process of starting something from “scratch” and “building it up”. This is an inherently feminine metaphor of giving birth to and nurturing something entirely new and independent of an entrenched system. The effect of this contrast is to assert a female agenda from the

outset as an emerging and sustainable model of power for women leaders. This literature reviewed confirms that for women power is a process of change that involves implementing what they already have and are still developing (Freedman 2002; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Ledwith 2009; Lee 2010; Moses 2012; Nicholson 2012). In contrast, sustaining power within the patriarchal system is constructed as ultimately disempowering.

### **Summary: Discourse on Operating Outside of the Corporate World**

The discourse regarding strategies to sustain power in the organisation construct the pursuit of power as something which needs to be related to a nobler purpose and potentially outside of institutions which are bound by traditional patriarchal paradigms in favour of organisations which have an inherently female agenda.

#### **9.2.1.3 Family Responsibility**

Women's roles and responsibilities in relation to family and domestic life are also related to the disempowerment discourse and lack of ability to influence organisational systems.

#### **Interview Five (Extract 1)**

*But unfortunately there are not enough women out there and women.. the choice between career and homemaker....so it is a two-way thing as well. But I feel that women also have to recognise the challenge that if they want to get further, especially in the corporate world.... there is a choice to make you know, you can't be supermom and a super..because it will take years before we stop competing against men, you know, so...once you realize that you can't have it both.. you are able to make, it is sad, but it is reality... you know the fact that..there is talk that.. I know that some companies have facilities for children and all of that.... those will help.. but to really move all the way to the top, the women that are my role models, that I know of, they have had to make the choice.*

In this extract the participant constructs the disempowerment discourse around a choice between the binary opposites of “career woman” and “homemaker”. She focuses on the “choice” women need to make between the two and places responsibility on women to

accept the “reality” as opposed to organisations to better accommodate women when she says “it is a two-way thing as well”. Her argument draws from the competitive discourse of climbing the corporate ladder and in so doing further entrenches the traditional power structures of the corporate environment. The competitive discourse not only establishes women as having to compete with men in this environment and in so doing having to relinquish their traditional domestic responsibilities to do so, but also sets up the homemaker and career women in direct competition with one another. She tails off her sentence when she says “you can’t be a supermom and a super...” which has the effect of undermining a mother’s ability to have any other identity outside of her maternal role. This remains a commonly held stereotype within patriarchal society as discussed in the literature review (Conway 2001; Nicholson 2012; Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009; Wilson 2004). As a career woman she constructs the “homemaker identity” as both disempowered and defeated within the corporate context, when she says “once you realise you can’t have it both” and “it is sad, but it is a reality”. The way in which she speaks from the career woman subject in this extract and addresses the “homemaker “ subject has the effect of establishing her superiority in relation to this role. In addition it lays claim to her positional power through the sacrifices she has made as a woman to be able to compete in a man’s world. At a deeper level of analysis, the disempowerment discourse in this interview is created by denying women any other identity to be able to sustain their power within an organisation.

As in the previous extract, the following extract raises family responsibility as a choice preventing women from increasing and sustaining their power in the organisation. However, while choice in and of itself represents an act of empowerment, in terms of having an identity outside of the corporate world, it is constructed as a “lack of choice”.

#### **Interview Eight (Extract 1)**

*I think it is influenced by being a woman because I am not prepared to give my life to the company. You know I think I could get as high as I wanted to, but it would require working extra hours, and just really giving my life to the company..which I am not prepared to do because I have another life. So there is almost, you get to the stage I think.. where you have to make a conscious decision as to which way you are going to go..you know, if I didn’t have children then maybe I would push it all the way, but I do, and I am quite happy with that. I think that is where also a woman can understand that*

*and is happy with the position that she is in, knowing that she's balancing her life, whereas I think with men it is always about getting to the top.*

The participant constructs herself as having “another life” outside of the company and in making the choice to pursue power further within the organisation would be denying herself of this life. Unlike the previous extract, she is the “mother” subject and therefore takes accountability for the choice she makes as opposed to imposing it onto other women. She repeats the phrase “I am not prepared” which has the effect of asserting her decision as an empowered choice. Similarly she constructs acceptance as opposed to defeat in relation to this choice when she states a few times that she is “happy with that”. While in this interview the accountability for and acceptance of this choice has an empowering effect, the construction of another identity raises the disempowered argument of being unable to influence the organisation beyond a certain level. This corollary is constructed when she says “if I didn't have children then maybe I would push it all the way”. The contemplation of another possibility should she be free of family responsibility has the effect of alluding to a sense of disempowerment, albeit tentative.

In contrast to the previous extracts, the next extract asserts women's right to this identity within the corporate environment, but rather than sustaining power, constructs the constant negotiation which needs to take place when a woman with these responsibilities operates in a patriarchal environment.

### **Interview Seven (Extract 1)**

*And it is very important, as a woman, to find your place in a man's world. Umm and don't be shy too....just.. you know what, I've got to go..I've got to go pick up my daughter from school....you know, set those boundaries up front..because most of the time we think men should know that I'm a mother and I have to go and pick up my kids from school. They don't know that... because they are not familiar with that concept.. it's not for them, they leave it to their wives to handle. It's changing, but they won't know that until you communicate upfront to say “please make sure that all our meetings are scheduled at this time of the day, because if you schedule them after hours..I have got to go pick up the kids, so I can't make the meeting”.*

While the extract has the effect of constructing the empowerment of women establishing “boundaries” and asserting their needs, at the same time it constructs the constraints and limitations which these responsibilities have on being able to “find your place in a man’s world”. Like the previous extract, the participant addresses the mother subject by constantly referring to “you” as if educating the subject on how to assert her needs. She constructs her male counterparts as subjects who are unfamiliar with these needs and need educating too when she says “they won’t know that until you communicate upfront”. She raises specific examples of logistical arrangements which has the effect of highlighting the continuous nature of this negotiation. In addition, by constructing the stereotypical “wife” in the support role for her male colleagues, she illuminates the lack of support for the career woman who is fulfilling this dual role. The continuous negotiation and sole responsibility for family commitments are therefore constructed as part of the rhetoric on women’s disempowerment due to family responsibility.

In the final extract which raises family responsibility as part of the discourse on disempowerment, the focus shifts onto the organisational system, rather than the women themselves.

### **Interview Nine (Extract 1)**

*But because companies are not geared to support women with flexible working, or working from home or sabbatical periods or whatever...women put their families first and their careers second..and by the time they pick their heads up a few years later, because they are not supported, they have to leave the work environment, if they can’t just deal with the 4 months maternity leave they have to leave the working environment, the policies and the culture don’t support retaining women through that brief period of their career.*

In this extract the woman subject is created the third person as “they” unlike in the others where women are addressed by the participant in the second person as “you” or where experiences are recounted personally through the first person as “I”. This has the effect of constructing an observed universal experience for women from which general principles apply. It constructs a more detached and intellectual feminist debate around the structure and systems of organisations prohibiting women from remaining with and

sustaining power in corporate organisations (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Rhode 2003; Valerio 2009). This debate represents the discourse of the disempowerment of women as a direct result of the patriarchal structures and culture of organisations that fail to accommodate women's child bearing role in society. This feminist discourse argues against the discrimination women experience in being able to operate in a patriarchal system as a result of their biological make up and traditionally stereotyped roles.

### **Summary: Family Responsibility**

Despite the choice around family life and the ability to negotiate around family responsibilities being constructed within these texts as empowered acts, the discourse around family responsibility is constructed around the disempowerment women experience within organisations. This has serious implications for the way in which organisations support women with family responsibility and is a critical area for further research in women and leadership studies.

#### **9.2.1.4 Summary: Disempowerment within the Organisational System**

This discourse constructs women's disempowerment as both structural and psychological due to the deeply entrenched patriarchal systems within organisations which appear immovable and give rise to a sense of defeat in a number of the women interviewed. What does emerge within this discourse, however, is the strategy to overcome this experience of disempowerment through constant negotiation with the organisation around women's issues such as family responsibility and through creating alternative systems of their own by operating outside of patriarchal institutions.

### **9.2.2 Leadership Style**

In discussing the strategies women claim to use to sustain their power in organisations, several of the participants spoke about their leadership style as being relationally based and in line with the traditionally perceived notions of more 'feminine' leadership characteristics. However, participants also identified specific leadership traits that are not necessarily associated with feminine characteristics but rather with the more 'male' leadership styles of a patriarchal structure.

### **9.2.2.1 Relational/ 'Female' Oriented Leadership Style**

The relational or female traits of leadership are typically associated with collaborative ways of relating to followers as described in the literature review (Den Hartog *et al.* 1999; Scrivens 2002; Valerio 2009; Wilson 2004). The first participant discusses this as a conscious strategy:

#### **Interview One (Extract 1)**

*I may have come across in a lot of it being very people orientated and ironically I don't think I am umm I try and be and it might be sub-consciously now that I have trained myself to be conscious of people and feelings and a number of times every week I say I wish I had robots working for me and not people because I find it very demanding to look after people and manage people umm... but I think I've sub-consciously, not sub-consciously – consciously tried to make an effort to focus on that aspect because I think part of being a great leader you have got to have a great team behind you..you are not much of a leader if you don't have a team following you*

The strategy constructed within this discourse positions relationships as an essential part of leadership but creates the tension between the ability to do it sub-consciously and consciously. In contrasting these opposites, the effect in this discourse is to suggest how much effort it takes and that there is sometimes a fair deal of resistance within herself to making that effort. When she corrects herself a few times as to whether it is conscious or sub-conscious, it suggests that this strategy has not been integrated into her leadership style, nor is it something she has necessarily mastered. She uses an interesting metaphor for managing when she states I find it very demanding to “look after people” and then continues to call it managing, suggesting that the relational strategy has not yet moved beyond a paternalistic relationship where leaders take responsibility for others (Eicher-Catt 2005; Ely *et al.* 2011; Gabriel 1999; Kets de Vries 2006, 2011). While at a surface level her discourse suggests relationship based leadership, the deeper structure still positions the team within a rank relationship where she takes responsibility for them as opposed to relating to them personally. Ironically this is reflected in her suggestion that at times she wishes she had “robots” working for her.

In the second interview, the participant identifies feminine leadership traits as consultation, collaboration and listening which leads to trust in the relationship:

**Interview Two (Extract 1)**

*Shoo..(laughs)..umm.....I think that part of my leadership style is to be more consultative, more collaborative umm.... and I think that one of the things as a woman is that people trust you more, you know there you seen as someone who will listen to their side of the story. And those are the types of relationships I have with my clients and those are the types of relationships that I've encouraged other people within the organization to have.*

The initial response to the question on how she tries to influence the broader organisation through her leadership style is the exclamation “shoo” followed by laughter. The effect of these hedging strategies is to highlight the magnitude of the question and diminish the conviction of the response. The response which follows, however, is a strong assertion of women’s relational traits, which are emphasised through the repeated use of the word “more”. This has the effect of positioning the discourse around relational leadership traits as a women’s domain, where women are able to exceed men’s capabilities. This relational construction of women is part of a broader debate within the feminist literature where some authors believe that it is part of the dominant patriarchal ideology to present women as the nexus of relationships without egos and boundaries (Conway 2001; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Sandberg 2013).

In the following extract, women’s leadership traits are also constructed in relation to men and are contrasted in terms of rank and superiority.

**Interview Five (Extract 1)**

*You don't have to lose that soft side to influence men, you know, I think. But you have to have solid output, be there, communicate, use that to your advantage the communication, use...ummm..use your multi –tasking ability to your advantage, but you don't have to be hard, cold and be like them to get further. I've certainly not I, you know, I was scared most of the time, and tense, not bossy, in meetings I tend to be the last to talk, they've said all their say, and I've listened.. and we have the ability to think*

*ahead – three more steps naturally than men, we can see the outcome of their decision – project it forward – than men and we can use all of those to our advantage. So we must not lose that feminine .....but we have to recognize the limitations as well..and then we will be less frustrated and happier, I think.*

The leadership traits which have sustained her power in the organisation are constructed by this participant by contrasting binary opposites of styles associated with men and women. In discussing women, she moves between using the pronoun “you” which has the effect of including the interviewer in the shared assumptions she is making about women and “I” where she uses her personal experience to support her argument. However, unlike the word “we”, which she only uses at the end of the extract, the “you” has the effect of positioning her as an expert, giving a lecture to other women. Her repetition of the words “use” and “to your advantage” builds her discourse around a competitive paradigm in which leadership characteristics are used to manipulate situations.

When speaking about men, she talks about “them” in the third person which has the effect of polarising male and female leaders and setting them up in competition with one another. She builds the competitive discourse through extreme use of comparative language, in which men and women’s approach is compared. The superior rank of women is constructed around their ability to “communicate”; “multi-task” and “think ahead”. She contrasts this with the perceived inferior rank of being “soft” and “feminine”. But while at a surface level she builds her discourse around not losing those elements of being a woman, on deeper analysis of the structure, her competitive and comparative address to women has the effect of urging them to “take men on” and assert their power through more covert methods. This is highlighted when she relates her personal experience of “being scared” in meetings, but being able to use her listening to predict outcomes. Feeling disempowered and potentially abused in this context is contrasted with the power of being able to “outsmart” the men. Her construction of a clear strategy to sustain power both entrenches the patriarchal construct of competition and domination. This is confirmed in the view expressed in the literature that women find ways to survive in an oppressive system that may involve more oppressive forms of power than their male counterparts (Eisenstein 2010; Kariuki 2004). It also highlights the observation made in the literature review that women often

have to gain power through proving competence in the face of gender bias (Ely *et al.* 2011; Ibarra & Obodaru 2009).

The discourse around the nurturing element of women's leadership characteristics is constructed in the next participant's extract as a strategy for sustaining power through respect amongst followers, rather than in relation to male counterparts as in the previous extract.

### **Interview Seven (Extract 1)**

*I think what I said is the whole thing of being a mother also bring in that aspect into the workplace and as much as you be firm, but at least you still have that woman, soft side of things where people can come to you and open up to you about any issues that they might be going through. And that nurturing side of a woman comes into play a lot in the workplace, because people, especially the Y generation, they want to feel like you care for them, you know, you love them, you've got to acknowledge that they have worked hard, because they've given up their weekends, their time off with their friends, to do work for you. So you've got to acknowledge that. You've got to nurture them like they are your little kids. The older generation doesn't understand that mothering people in the workplace, but that is where we are moving.....*

In this extract the focus is on the next generation in the workplace. While power is constructed in parental terms through the generation gap of the leader and her followers, the mothering metaphor is constructed as the way in which leadership will move into the future. She personifies herself as the mother figure, who is concerned with these young people's needs. In doing this she constructs her discourse around empathy and understanding of followers' needs, as well as the terms love, care and nurturing that she uses in constructing her discourse. What emerges in this extract is that sustaining power is not constructed around the organisational system, but rather around the individuals that will be part of the organisation's future. The ability to influence the system through interaction with the individual is part of the broader debate in the literature on organisational transformation and culture (Booyesen & Nkomo 2010; Horwitz & Jain 2011; Kets de Vries 2006, 2011; Op't Hoog *et al.* 2010; Thomas & Ely 1996; Wheatley 2004).

In the final extract relating to the discourse on women's leadership traits, the participant also focusses on her relationship with her followers, but constructs this as less of a personal and emotionally connected relationship than that associated with the mothering metaphor. She constructs her relational style as that of building integrity and trust with followers.

**Interview Nine (Extract 1)**

*I have been a..consultative, not consensus based, but highly consultative type of leader, to really try to get buy-in to the business objectives and direction we are going in, because I really believe in the power of people to make things happen. So in hindsight, over the years I probably spent too long consulting, which just also goes back to the ability to build trust and buy-in, and to influence and be a respected leader, through winning trust through both credibility and inter-personal actions but..so I tried to lead from a position of credibility and authority through building that trust... the down-side of that has been that it has been labour-intensive, it has been resource-intensive to build those relationships, it takes time, and it takes a great personal drain on you.. to keep having discussions with people on a regular basis to keep them on board, and take their issues on board and try and counsel them on how to cope with their issues..so....my influence has always stemmed out of having personal credibility.*

As with the second participant's text in this section (Interview Two, Extract 1), this participant's discourse is constructed around the collaborative and consultative leadership traits which are often associated with women. Unlike the second participant however, there is conviction in the approach and its effectiveness in sustaining power. However, the learning she highlights around spending too long consulting and the "personal drain" of relationship building is positioned as a counter argument for integrating a more authoritative and decisive style into a collaborative and consultative approach to achieve what she refers to as "personal credibility". The discourse is constructed around reflection on her approach and actions and the ability to integrate that into her current approach to leadership. This has the effect of assimilating a range of leadership styles which is promoted in the literature on situational leadership and emotional intelligence (Blanchard *et al.* 1999; Goleman 2000; Kets de Vries 2011; Matthews *et al.* 2002); as well as constructing the ability to sustain power and credibility as the ability to continuously learn from and adapt behaviour as an emerging

or ‘learner leader’ (Dhiman 2011; Livingston *et al.* 2009; Marion 2008; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002).

### **Summary: Relational/ ‘Female’ Oriented Leadership Style**

The emerging strategies for sustaining power within this discourse of relational leadership styles is the focus on the immediate, personal relationships rather than focussing on influencing the broader organisational system. Another strategy which emerges is the ability to integrate a range of leadership styles into leadership practice and adapt and learn from these continuously.

#### **9.2.2.2 Traditional/ ‘Male’ Oriented**

When responding to the questions aimed at soliciting the strategies women claim to use to sustain power in the organisation, an alternative discourse to the previous one around the relational “female” oriented style of collaboration and consultation, was also constructed around more traditional paradigms of patriarchal leadership styles.

#### **Interview One (Extract 1)**

*And I think if you’re loyal, if you dedicated, you’re on call, you’ve got the right competencies you then automatically become a role model to anyone else and you need to have those qualities as a role model to nurture and bring people up through the organization. Umm....but I think there’s definitely a beyond the call of duty requirement that they value... And I value it you know I value it when my team work on the weekends or you know if they go the extra mile for something, I value it. It’s important.*

In this extract the participant uses military metaphors throughout the description of what is valued in the organisation and therefore what she subscribes to as a leader in order to sustain her influence. Her use of the terms “loyal”; “dedicated”; “on call” and “beyond the call of duty” have the effect of constructing a military model of leadership. Despite the fact that she refers to the “nurturing” of others, when she speaks of role models needing to “bring people up through the organisation”, people’s development is presented in terms of the organisational rank and hierarchy, much like within a military context.

Although the next extract does not draw from the discourse of the military ‘command and control’ type of leadership it has a similar effect of constructing a patriarchal leadership model in which leaders are in a paternalistic relationship with their followers through their access to economic power.

### **Interview Three (Extract 1)**

*Be consistent.....and be fair and that's why this issue that's come to light now is against.... everything I've done for the last 6 years . I don't think we've been consistent in the way we have handled it and I don't think we have been fair. ....I think in the position I am in and I had this conversation with the Financial Director this week. We are often faced with.. often faced with people diversities, we're faced with the hardships people face etc etc and you are so tempted when you know the individual s to make an exception. You've got the power to give someone an advance or not give them an advance, you've got the power to make an exception to earning bonus, because, you know, they're a good guy, they've worked hard you know, he was just unlucky, he was in that dept. – it is so easy to justify it. But I think you get to the point, you've got 5000 people, and yes you've got to be flexible I'm not saying don't be flexible but make sure that the principles that were applied are fair and consistent*

“Fairness and consistency” are advocated as the leadership traits which are valued by the participant and are argued as qualities which should be valued by the organisation. However, the story she relates constructs the leadership in the organisation in a paternalistic relationship with a financially disempowered employee with the ability to use that power based on subjective criteria. The construction of these two subjects, namely the financially disempowered employee and the financially empowered leaders, who are able to grant and withhold financial assistance builds her discourse around a paternalistic model reflected in the economic relationship between parent and child.

Her argument for fair and consistent criteria has the effect of creating objectivity within this model, however, it does not challenge the model in and of itself. Instead the paternalistic parent/child relationship is perpetuated through this discourse, and the engagement between the organisational leaders and employees is based on unequal power dynamics. The effect of this is to position herself as a leader who retains this power base, rather than rejects it. In her quest for “fairness” and “consistency”, she

constructs a benevolence and integrity associated with this power, although it remains rooted in a patriarchal model. These positive constructs are not typically associated with power in the literature, rather the negative associations of abuse and corruption are more commonly related (Cilliers 2012; Rosenblatt 2012; Samnani 2013; Waite & Allen 2003). However, while not directly related to the construct of individual power, the emerging discourse in recent feminist theory focuses on the power of collective transformation toward humanistic values and ethical considerations at the heart of transforming society (Brooks 2011; Eisenstein 2010; Rutherford *et al.* 2010).

In grappling with the traditional patriarchal model, the following extract reveals the participant's strategy for sustaining power within the organisation as being able to integrate aspects associated with a more traditionally "male" style of leadership into her own style, without compromising her value system. Rather than perpetuating the traditional model, however, this discourse constructs her internal process of consciously integrating these aspects into her own style of leadership.

#### **Interview Four (Extract 1)**

*I have had to become more rigorous and more challenging and more demanding because that is what the shareholder has... that's the benchmark the shareholder has set. It is something that at times has been difficult, for two reasons, one because I have had to figure it out what that actually means, in this environment and I have equally had to take people on the journey with me who have come with the other company's legacy, where that rigour was not required and you know I'm the messenger and I was also part of the other company, so I'm not the new person that's coming from the outside, so I am one of them in a way, and I've had to change some of the ways we do things, some of the standards we set for ourselves, so that has been something I've had to consciously do and I have also had to in my own mind make sure that I buy into it, that I'm not just doing it because that's what my boss requires. So my sense check for myself is always is it making me compromise any of the values that I hold dear*

In this extract the participant contrasts the rigorous demands and standards of the shareholder with the process of taking her "people on the journey with me" to understand it and having to "in my own mind make sure that I buy into it, that I'm not just doing it because that's what my boss requires." This contrast of two binary

opposites of outcomes and process constructs a discourse in which traditionally “male” and “female” leadership traits are integrated. The outcome focuses on results and shareholder value is positioned as something which needs to be adopted as a requirement. However, the process of adopting this focus is constructed through a collaborative approach with the people being led as well as a process of self-reflection or “sense check” to ensure that she doesn’t “compromise any of the values that I hold dear”. This broadens the discourse on conscious and reflective leadership to that of authenticity as a process of expressing ourselves honestly and thoughtfully and a continuous journey of alignment between the personality and the soul (Avolio & Gardner. 2005; Krosigk 2007; Livingston & Lusin 2009; Sosik & Jung 2010).

The three subjects constructed in this extract are her shareholder and boss who represent the traditional authoritarian power in the dynamic; the people who she leads and who have come with their own “legacy” and need to implement the changes required by the authority; and herself whom she positions as the “messenger” within the dynamic. The way in which she constructs the subjects has the effect of acknowledging the power of all parties in the dynamic. The authority is acknowledged as being unable to achieve their required outcomes without valuing the past experiences of the people who need to execute. In addition the messenger is constructed as having to feel authentic in delivering the message to her followers and having to adapt in how she expects to deliver the outcomes. This reveals an interesting and emerging model of power, where not only does it represent an integration of ‘male’ and ‘female’ leadership traits, but also an acknowledgement of the power of all parties within a system, having the ability either to genuinely respond to or resist the authority’s demands. The strategy for sustaining power in this participant’s discourse goes beyond perpetuating the patriarchal model, but achieves the outcomes required of the system through a broader engagement with all parties within the system as well as her own self-awareness, reflection and adaptation. This form of engagement with all stakeholders in the system is reflected in the literature on organisational transformation as key to ensuring an organisation’s sustainability and therefore leadership power (Lewis 2011; Wheatley 2004).

The next extract supports this discourse of integration of process and outcomes. In the analysis of this interview in the previous section on relational leadership, this

participant constructed the need for integration of ‘male’ and ‘female’ leadership when reflecting on her experience of consultative decision making. She continues exploring that theme in this extract, and constructs her discourse further around integrating a more decisive and self-assured approach which is traditionally associated with a more ‘male’ style of leadership.

### **Interview Nine (Extract 1)**

*So I am learning that, you know, the pace of business demands that when we decide to agree on a strategy and implement it, we don't then have to have 27 workshops to buy into it. Which is one of my weaknesses. I always want people to come along because they believe in something, not because it is what we have decided to do as a company, and the bigger the organization gets, the less you can lead by personal credibility, you have to then lead by position and authority. So, ja that's where I've come from, and where I am going to now is "Guys, this is the agreed strategy and this is what we are doing" ...you are either in, or you're out, we haven't got time to mollycoddle you.*

The argument in this discourse is presented around making quick decisions and leading by “position and authority” due to the pace of business demands and the size of the company. The discourse is constructed, however, as a learnt approach based on previous leadership experience and reflection of what she refers to as her “weaknesses”. She constructs the need to lead more authoritatively in contrast with her approach in the past which she challenges through her use of exaggeration when she says “we don’t have to have 27 workshops to buy into it” and “we haven’t got time to mollycoddle you”. While this has the effect of challenging a highly consultative approach as a means to achieving an outcome, it does not negate it, as the exaggeration constructs a protracted approach which needs to be contained. Unlike the ‘command and control’ and paternalistic models in the previous extracts from participants one and three, her authoritarian model of leadership is constructed within the context of the size and pace of business. It is also contrasted with her preferred consultative approach in which she “always wants people to come along because they believe in something”. The structure of her discourse is not centred on the authoritarian paradigm; rather at a deeper level it is constructed around her ability to learn from her experiences, reflect on her behaviours within the context of the current organisational system, and integrate alternatives to achieve the results. The process of learning and self-reflection, as described in the

literature, is highlighted once again as a critical emerging model in her discourse for sustaining power in an organisation (Dhiman 2011; Goleman 2000; Livingston *et al.* 2009; Marion 2008; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002).

### **Summary: Traditional/ 'Male' Oriented Leadership Style**

In discussing strategies to sustain power what emerges through the discourse on traditional leadership styles which are typically associated with 'male' characteristics, is the need to achieve task and outcome through engagement and power sharing with followers. Another emerging construct, similar to that identified in the previous section on relational leadership styles (section 9.2.2.1), is the ability to learn and adapt leadership behaviours through a process of conscious self-awareness.

### **9.2.2.3 Summary: Leadership Style**

The discourse on leadership style as constructed in relation to the leader's future and broader influence presents a relational style which focusses on immediate and personal relations within the organisation. The more traditional task oriented style, typically associated with 'male' characteristics is constructed in association with power-sharing. Both styles are presented as conscious responses to situational needs and are adapted and integrated through continuous learning.

### **9.2.3 Systemic Influence**

In contrast with the first discourse which constructed the disempowerment women experience in the organisational system, the final discourse emerging out of the question relating to sustaining power in the organisation is an acknowledgement of systemic influence in the organisation through methods that feature their engagement with the system, rather than their rank 'within' the system as per the traditional model of social rank. These two methods emerge as discourses in their own right within the broader context of systemic influence. They include the discourse of networks and sponsorship and the discourse of having a voice in the organisation.

### 9.2.3.1 Networks and Sponsors

Developing networks and identifying sponsors within the organisation is constructed differently in response to this question than that of social positions of power and prestige relating to question one or power relations in the hierarchy discussed in the analysis of question two. There is a different construction of engagement in relationships as opposed to the social rank related power which is less dynamic in nature.

#### **Interview Six (Extract 1)**

*I do a lot of lobbying, I also sit on the Corporate Affairs Leadership Counsel and umm I certainly do a fair amount of influencing in terms of that. Umm the most important thing for me is being able to talk to people.. you know..have side issues with them...have off the line discussions. Well – not off the line, but you know, if we are at a meeting..to actually get a couple of guys and start talking about “well what do you think about this and where are we going with it?” and I do that quite a lot with the HR director of one of our subsidiaries. Because we are both in Africa and we umm we support each other....I don’t umm ...I haven’t aligned myself with anybody...because I think it’s a bit dangerous to do that anyway...*

In this extract the participant constructs the discourse around the formal and informal networks she develops. While she is part of a formal lobbying group, she constructs the informal networks and discussions as significant in her ability to influence within the organisation. Her emphasis in this extract is on the need to “talk to people” and to get people to start talking. In constructing the informal nature of these discussions, she attempts to describe them first as “side issues” and then as “off-line” discussions. The way in which she modifies her statement and assumes a shared meaning with the interviewer when she says, “well – not off the line, but you know,” has the effect of drawing the boundary between informal discussions and politically underhanded discussions. She constructs a similar contrast between the “support” she experiences from another director and avoiding “alignment” with anybody specific. The effect of contrasting supportive networks which engage and lobby others with politically motivated networks which she describes as “dangerous” highlights the potential sensitivity associated with networks. What emerges as a result of the way in which she

ensures that her integrity is understood by the interviewer in this extract, is to construct the discourse around sustaining power through networks based on relationship and dialogue as opposed to political expedience (Ely *et al.* 2011; Heilman & Parks-Stamm 2007; Ibarra 1992).

In the following extract, she continues to qualify networks, first by rejecting the term and then, once again, by modifying her assertion and reframing the term. She also contrasts the role of a “sponsor” as a strategy to sustain power within an organisation with the role of networks.

### **Interview Six (Extract 1)**

*I think in larger organizations you normally need a sponsor..that's another thing which I think is quite interesting. I have had some sponsors, I haven't always had sponsors. It's easier if you have sponsors. What I have achieved has not been through networking, which is also a very strange thing... I suppose indirectly it has been networking..because obviously people form an opinion of you and what you can do and how well you do it and therefore they would be influenced by you.*

The participant constructs the “sponsor” as someone who is able to facilitate the ability to influence, particularly in a large organisation. She does not go on to define what a sponsor is, but accesses the term from an assumed commonly shared corporate language where it is used to describe someone who supports and advocates another within an organisation. While she does not qualify this or refer back to the previous extract, the sponsor is presented as a legitimate role as opposed to the discussion on “aligning” oneself with someone in the previous extract, which is constructed as a “dangerous” and therefore potentially illicit. In reflecting on her influence through networks, she does not refer back to the informal networks of support and dialogue as in the previous extract, but rather reframes “networks” in this extract as the indirect result of people’s opinions based on achievements. The effect of this is to construct people’s perceptions as an essential element in forming relationships and sustaining power in organisations. The discourse in both these extracts highlights the power of both informal and formal relationships which forms part of the literary discussion on organisational dynamics and culture (Kets de Vries 2006, 2011; Nadler 1998; Schein 1985; Van Fleet & Griffin 2006). Her own strategy is constructed around retaining

integrity within these relationships through accessing legitimate and formal vehicles for sponsorship and lobbying; sincere engagement with others and credibility based on achievements.

The following extract does not focus on general networks and sponsorship within the organisation, but on the way in which women within organisations support or fail to support one another.

### **Interview Two (Extract 1)**

*I think the one thing that's always fascinated me is whether women support each other in leadership roles. Umm..and I don't know the answer to that.... I don't know if it is superficial supporting, or real supporting but it is something that has always fascinated me, I think because women do have a lot of close friendships at work as well that does tend to have umm an impact so you know I talked about the three of us who were managers at the time and we all went for assessment together, and at that point in time there was only one space available for a partner and the one manager left so it then became the two of us, and it hurt our friendship to a large extent... I have had some female partners who have been so supportive and I've had others who..I just don't trust.... And I think it's a travesty.*

Rather than constructing the discourse around what strategies the participant uses to sustain power, this participant poses a question around the challenge associated with sustaining power. In posing the question as to “whether women support each other in leadership roles” she frames her personal experience within a broader feminist debate around the nature of women’s relationships with each other. In the extract she contrasts the notion of “superficial supporting with “real supporting” and “close friendships” with female partners “I just don’t trust”. As in the previous extract, the insincerity of politically expedient relationships is part of this discourse. However, by relating it within a gender specific framework, the effect of this discourse is to bring into question whether women are able to feel that they can safely and legitimately sustain power when those they regard as “close” to them are potential competitors in the company hierarchy. The impact of competition on the “friendship” relationship in this incident is described through the emotion of “hurt” which highlights the painful personalised experience associated with this academic debate. She ends the extract, claiming that it is

“a travesty” that she cannot trust certain women. The presumption that women should be supportive of one another and the disillusionment that they are not, and are easily pitted against each other in a competitive environment, has the effect of keeping women’s claim to power as tenuous and isolated. This further entrenches traditional notions of power which can be bestowed or removed and the fear associated with the loss of it. It highlights the discourse in the literature around fear and anxiety that women experience in relation to power and the potential risk of losing their identity in claiming power confidently (Miller & Cummins. 1992; Sandberg 2013).

The need to connect to other women in leadership positions is raised in the following extract as something which could have been a helpful strategy to sustaining power, as opposed to something which was actively pursued.

#### **Interview Four (Extract 1)**

*I suppose the one thing if I reflect back on my career and I guess it comes back to my not being very good at networking is I would have liked a bigger network of females in a similar position to me, that I really could have connected with in a very confidential, open and transparent way. It’s almost like having a support group, and I don’t feel like I’ve got that....But I think if I go back in time I just think gee, it would have been nice to have had more opportunities to interact, and network and discuss things, and not always just about the business side, for me it is almost more about the human side of the jobs we’ve got.*

In fantasising about the kind of support the participant would like to have received from other women, she constructs an ideal notion of “confidential, open and transparent” interaction which contrasts with the previous participant’s personal experience of relating to other women in the work environment. The notion of a “support group” that discusses the “human side of the jobs we’ve got” indicates the yearning for an alternative space where women can express themselves authentically and a safe environment in which their tenuous claim to power is not undermined. Both the previous extract and this extract construct the discourse around the absence of female support, although this extract focusses on the positive ideal while the previous focusses on the negative past experience. Both position the support of other women as significant in feeling less vulnerable and isolated within their leadership roles.

However, the projection of the ideal within this extract has the effect of redefining how women could network with one another as a distinct possibility which could be a future strategy in helping to sustain power and influence within a leadership role.

The participant extends this fantasy beyond the notion of women supporting one another in the following extract:

**Interview Four (Extract 2)**

*And I'd like to know how men feel about themselves. That is what I'd like to know. How different are men? Because I've always felt they are quite different, and maybe they aren't really. They just might not be very good at talking about it you know from the emotional side, you know, admitting their vulnerabilities you know men I don't think men are necessarily as open about their vulnerabilities as women. And you know at times you do feel vulnerable, because you know people are looking to you to have the answer and sometimes you don't really know how to do it and you muddle along as best you can and sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't*

In this extract the participant includes men in the discourse which extends beyond women's claim to power, but rather identifies the need for support of all leaders in being able to expose their vulnerability and in so doing risk the "loss" of the traditional indicators of power. By introducing the extract with her curiosity around how men feel, the participant's discourse does not assume to understand men. However, the question has a rhetorical tone to it when she continues to assert, albeit it tentatively, that men are not necessarily "as open about their vulnerabilities as women". The question is posed almost as an invitation to men to join women in talking about the "emotional side" and "admitting to their vulnerabilities". The effect of this invitation to engage with men at an authentic and emotional level is to recognise the tenuous nature of power associated with leadership in general and the exposure that it leads to. While it remains in the realm of the future as a proposal, rather than a reality, the dialogue she envisages with men is a strategy for deepening the learning amongst leaders. In constructing the discourse in this way, the participant positions the male subject and leader as somebody to engage with and understand as well as somebody to share with and learn from. The emerging discourse in this extract is around the integration of male and female traits, which is highlighted in the literature (Dickerson 2013; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012;

Scrivens 2002; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002); as well as that of building authentic and genuine relationships and creating dialogue between women and men about the way in which they lead (Lee 2010; Valerio 2009).

### **Summary: Networks and Sponsors**

While networks and sponsors are constructed as a strategy for sustaining power, the analysis of this discourse highlights the binary opposites of politically expedient relationships which represent alignment and collusion with the power structures within a system as opposed to sincere engagement with others to develop power through credibility and integrity. Another emerging discourse related to networks and sponsors is the redefinition of how women relate to and support one another and the call for dialogue around shared experience amongst leadership peers, both men and women.

#### **9.2.3.2 Having a voice and influencing the strategy and culture**

Another discourse in responding to how women leaders believe they sustain power and relating to their systemic influence in the organisation can be described as having a voice in the organisation.

#### **Interview Five (Extract 1)**

*If you excel.. you don't have to talk much and be "out there" and trying..your work speaks for itself. Over and above that I am involved in a lot of forums, but with my open communication style, if I want to speak to the FD I just pick up the phone and speak to him immediately, you know. If I need to speak to the CEO less so though, because he is a very quiet, introverted person. But I am more fortunate than most people because I sit with him on Boards, on different Boards, so I do tend to, you know, talk to him more often than most people..... And I think it's because of my openness.. I make sure that my voice is heard at meetings and forums...*

In this extract the participant uses the metaphor of speech in a number of contrasting contexts. Initially she negates the need to have an actual voice but rather describes a strategy as allowing achievements to speak for themselves. This she addresses to a women listenership, as in other parts of her interview, using the pronoun "you". She then switches to her specific strategy which she describes as "over and above"

achievements, when she starts talking in the first person. In the first person she constructs the power of her voice as the ability to be heard by influential people in the organisation. The effect of this switch is to construct the commonly held notion that “work speaks for itself” as a universal principle in contrast with her specific strategy, where access and ability to engage with other powerful influencers in the organisation is the way in which she gets her “voice heard”. The model of power which she relies on to do this is that of positional power and the power of association (Shriberg *et al.* 2005). She repeats the term “openness” in describing the way in which she gains access to and engages with leaders at this level. This is contrasted with the “introverted” nature she describes in the CEO. The way in which she constructs herself as the extrovert and initiator of relationships is in direct opposition with her assertion that it is not necessary to be “out there” to gain a voice. The contradictory nature of the two strategies she constructs for being heard, namely the work speaking for itself and having access to powerful people in the organisation, results in the discourse being structured around formal and tangible methods of creating influence, as well as informal and less tangible methods.

In the following extract, the participant also constructs “being heard” around the positional power of “superiors”. However, she also constructs her discourse around the ability to think strategically and to be able to demonstrate this to all role players in the system.

#### **Interview Eight (Extract 1)**

*I think you need to make yourself heard... you need to be able to.. speak to your superiors about any issues, or any ideas you might have, you need to.. have the support of your staff, umm .....and I think you need to be able to demonstrate that you have put a lot of thought into whatever it is that you present to whoever you present it to..sort of looking at a whole picture from all angles.*

In this extract, she uses “you” as a universal term for women. Unlike in the previous extract, she uses this throughout the extract which results in a consistency within the discourse which is able to be applied generally. She constructs both “superiors” and “staff” as generalised subjects in the extract, rather than focussing on specific positions as in the previous extract. She also constructs the engagement with other powerful

players in the organisation around ideas and issues, as opposed to the manner in which they are approached. “Voice” in this extract is constructed as expressing yourself in a way which exhibits the thinking process behind the statement. The strategic nature of this thinking is captured in her image of “looking at a whole picture from all angles”. The strategy she advocates to be heard and sustain power in the organisation is constructed around considered and strategic thinking which is made accessible to the audience so that they are able to understand and support it. The measured pauses and repeated framing phrase “I think” has the effect of reflecting the considered thought process with which she delivers her response to the question. Unlike the previous extract where there is contradiction within her discourse, there is noticeable congruence within this extract. The silence in her pausing and time taken for contemplation has the interesting effect of delivering a deliberate and congruent response which carries a certain weight. This reflects the varying roles that silence can assume in conversation and highlights its potential ability to wield power, contrary to common belief, in allowing for a considered response (Lee 2010; Mahoney & Yngvesson 1992).

In the following extract the discourse on strategic thinking as a strategy for sustaining and influencing power in the organisation, is constructed in terms of ideas and creative visions, but also around the execution of that through attention to detail.

### **Interview Three (Extract 1)**

*I'm an ideas person and an executor, so I 'm quite creative but I'm also very, I'm very, very visionary.... and because of my attention to detail I can see the vision, I can paint the picture, I can sell the concept, I can package the concept... but I can deliver the concept. So right through from the idea to the actual campaign from deciding where the logo's going to go literally that kind of level of detail.*

She constructs the discourse around the binary opposites of visionary thinking and detailed execution. Unlike in the previous extract where the emphasis is on the thought process and engaging with people through that, the terms used in this extract are taken from the business discourse around marketing products. She describes strategic ideas and execution as “concepts” which are “sold” and “packaged” through the large scale of events of “campaigns” and the small scale details of “logos”. The contrast has the effect of highlighting the commonly held stereotype, as supported by the literature review that

women tend to focus on details more than men (Freeman *et al.* 2001; Ibarra & Obodaru 2009). However, she does not relate it in any way to her gender. The use of this metaphor has the effect of constructing power around the ability to sell and market, not only concepts, but also oneself in the organisation. Throughout the extract she repeats the words “I can”, which supports this deeper analysis of the structure of her text. In this way she constructs power as something which has to be created and continuously “sold” as an active and engaging exercise as opposed to something which is passively inherent.

Similarly in the following extract, the strategy for sustaining power is constructed around active engagement with the system on strategic issues.

### **Interview Eight (Extract 2)**

*You could kind of, in this position, I think, become very much ivory tower, but we try very hard not to do that and to become part of the future so the divisions will say.. well, we need a new concept.. well how is that going to impact our numbers..well what kind of concept..how much are we going to pay for it..bring it into the numbers, do scenarios kind of planning.. so really very much involved in the future, and I think that is the part of my job that I enjoy the most.*

In this extract the “ivory tower” where power is static and inherent is contrasted with the active engagement with people in the organisational system around issues that influence their future. The effect of this contrast is to construct power as a dynamic phenomenon which depends upon the interactions between members of the system. Unlike the previous extract, however, in this extract the active construction of power is not through self-promotion but instead is constructed around asking questions and dialogue. In the extract she reflects the kind of conversation that would take place between a department and herself. The interaction reflects the exchange between departments and her area of expertise and represents the engagement between them around their needs and her understanding of those needs and how it impacts her area of the business. The conversational language of “well”; the questions she uses to understand the issues and the use of the inclusive term “we” have the effect of creating a collaborative model of power, as discussed in the literature (Greenleaf 1977; Hannay

2009; Kolp & Rea 2006; Ngambi 2004; Parris & Peachey 2013) which is quite contrary to the notion of the “ivory tower”.

Execution according to a set of values is raised in the next two extracts in response to the question on how the participants sustain power and influence the broader organisation. In the following extract, the participant constructs these values in terms of ethical behaviour and hard work.

### **Interview Six (Extract 1)**

*I think, just in behaviour I hope I live the values. I think people accept the fact that what they see is what they get. Umm that I am confidential, I mean I am honest, I don't have an integrity problem I have a bias for action, I have a huge capacity for work..which I don't believe shows anything except that I am being horribly...what do you call it...I am being horribly abused! (Laughter)*

Unlike the previous extract which constructs the nature of exchange with others in the system, in this extract power is constructed and sustained through perceptions of others when she says “people accept the fact that what they see is what they get”. Authenticity is constructed as a strategy for sustaining power through the underlying personal characteristics of integrity; honesty; follow through or action; and a high work ethic. What emerges in this discourse is the power of congruence between people's perceptions and their experience of a leader who upholds certain commendable values or qualities. This sense of congruence generated by authentic leadership is discussed in the literature relating to authentic and emotionally intelligent leadership (Avolio & Gardner 2005; Goleman 2000; Krosigk 2007; Livingston & Lusin 2009; Sosik & Jung 2010), as well as the elements of positive psychology (Carr 2004; Lewis 2011; Seligman 2006; Steger & Dik 2010; Strümpfer 2005). The flippant comment at the end about being “horribly.....abused” followed by laughter has the effect of offsetting the noble qualities she ascribes to herself and introducing humility into the discourse. The humour contrasts with the sincerity she describes and prevents the discourse from becoming self-righteous or congratulatory.

In the following extract, values are constructed in relation to rank and behaviour in the organisational system.

### **Interview Seven (Extract 1)**

*I always say as top management it is very important for us to lead by example..if we've got these values, let's then live those values, because you can't expect a junior person to live those values, if you are not living those values. So everytime I always emphasize on those values, and if they are ever challenged I am always the first one to umm to to.. talk about it in partners or managers meetings I raise those issues and say if we are not living them, how can we expect everyone else to? In a way then I am more.. it is all about your values and your integrity, so for me that is how I look at things.*

By constructing the subjects of “top management” who need to lead by example and “a junior person” who needs to follow that, the participant locates power within the organisational hierarchy. Unlike the previous extract where the rhetoric is focussed on internal values, in this extract it is focussed on the dynamic between the powerful and those who are less powerful. She delivers this extract as a lesson when she begins “I always say...” and ends with the rhetorical question “how can we expect everyone else to?” The effect of this is to construct power through the defence of moral obligations. Unlike the previous extract where these moral obligations are intrinsic and unassuming, in this extract they are delivered with a greater degree of self-righteousness in upholding something institutional as opposed to something inherent. The final statement “for me that is how I look at things” minimises the intensity of the self-righteousness, but does not have the same humbling effect as the final statement in the previous extract. However, what does emerge in the way in which she constructs her ability to sustain power is a level of conviction with which organisational values are accepted. This is reflective of the spiritual power discussed in the literature review (Goltz 2011; Schuitevoeder 2000).

### **Summary: Having a Voice**

Sustaining power in the organisation by having a voice and being able to influence strategy and culture emerges in these participants' discourse as a process of exchange and dialogue between various role players in the organisation. Authenticity and congruence between behaviour and others' expectations emerges as another strategy for gaining a considered voice and sustaining influence in the organisation at a strategic level. Finally upholding values, either those that are universally perceived as

commendable or those that the organisation has articulated, with a certain degree of conviction, as well as humility is constructed in these extracts as a strategy for sustaining power. The construction of “having a voice” is therefore not only about volubility in an organisation, but also the way in which leaders behaviours and actions ‘speak’ of their intentions.

### **9.2.3.3 Summary: Systemic Influence**

The emerging constructions of power in relation to the discourse on systemic influence is the ability to sincerely engage with others through the creation of credibility and integrity which is achieved in the congruence between behaviour and others’ expectations in the organisation, as well as the upholding of organisational values. Systemic influence moves beyond simply that of the organisational system when the discourse draws from the context of the gender relations in urging men and women to dialogue and share their leadership experiences in order to learn from one another.

### **9.3 Summary of Discourses Identified in Question Three**

In discussing their strategies to sustain power within the organisations, the leaders’ discourses range from the inability to devise strategies to overcome their psychological and structural disempowerment within the organisational system to the creation of new and alternative systems of their own. Within the system, the process of power is constructed in response to this question through continuous negotiation and engagement with members of the system, be it around women’s needs; achieving outcomes; developing personal relationships and building credibility through genuine networks. Another emerging discourse is the process of constructing power through continuous self-observation; learning and adaptation of leadership styles. The re-definition of how women relate to and engage with both other men and women leaders is related to the personal development discourse on the emerging or ‘learner leader’ (Dhiman 2011; Livingston *et al.* 2009; Marion 2008; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002) and on the feminist discourse of continuous identity construction (Dickerson 2013; Ledwith 2009; Nicholson 2012; Moses 2012).

#### **9.4 Summary of Research Findings**

The process of discourse analysis has highlighted the discourses relating to power identified in data generated by the in-depth interviews. Having recognised the way in which power is being constructed through the participants' patterns of speech and the effect of their language use, the discourses which have emerged will be integrated into a model of power and critically analysed in the concluding chapter (Chapter 10). The summary which follows consolidates the key findings which have been discussed throughout Chapters 7, 8 and 9 which will give rise to the model presented in Chapter 10.

In discussing their strategies to sustain power within the organisations, the leaders' discourses range from the inability to devise strategies to overcome their psychological and structural disempowerment within the organisational system to the creation of alternative processes of their own. In analysing how women discuss power in relation to their leadership role, as is in their narrative, the discourse which entrenches traditional patriarchal models of power is evident, both in the re-enforcement of social rank and perpetuation of stereotypical female archetypes. The development of their awareness of power through recounting their narratives shifts between numerous positions within discrete discourses. An identifiable and familiar discourse is one which entrenches traditional patriarchal models through domination and re-assertion of domination within the changing socio-political context in South Africa; as well as the undervaluing of women's legitimate claim to power resulting in manipulative tactics to sustain it.

Power is constructed in response to the question on their current leadership role and strategies to sustain power through continuous negotiation and engagement with members of the system, be it around women's needs; achieving outcomes; developing personal relationships and building credibility through genuine networks. The discourse which appears to be emerging and is at times articulated more tentatively is the construction of power as a transformational process enabling the leader to determine her own future, as well as dismantle psychological and structural barriers within the hierarchy and make a contribution to organisational decision making. In relation to their style of leadership, the emerging models of power appear to reflect the integration of male and female leadership traits and the use of intuition and empathy in the role.

Another emerging model, which is at times explicitly presented and at times more deeply embedded in the structure of the text (McAdams 2001), is the power constructed as part of their personal psychological development and growing identity, as both a leader and a woman. These include the personal growth associated with self-mastery and transformation of self; as well as the development of an authentic identity which integrates both positive 'male' and 'female' characteristics; along with sound judgement. The psychological process of power is also constructed in relation to the organisational system where self-awareness and observation are not only a construct of personal growth, but also provide a form of transcendence from oppressive experiences. Collaborative and developmental relationships emerge as another process for engaging practically and positively with power in the system.

Another emerging discourse is the process of constructing power through continuous self-observation; learning and adaptation of leadership styles. The re-definition of how women relate to and engage with both other men and women leaders is related to this discourse around 'learner leadership' (Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002) and positions power both as an internal psychological construct and a dynamic construct of relationship. Being conscious of unconscious processes in the system which requires an element of detachment or transcendence from the system is constructed as a feature of power in response to this question. Ironically this is contrasted with the disempowering effect of ambivalence amongst women leaders towards highlighting the full effects of gender discrimination. The model presented in Chapter 10 will attempt to represent these elements of power which seem to shift in the discourse between the entrenched traditional constructs of power which enforces rank bestowed by a patriarchal society and the psychological processes which result in the personal transformation of leaders and relationships within the system.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **AN EMERGING MODEL OF POWER: IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

This chapter integrates and consolidates the findings from the data analysis discussion into a model of how women's discourse on power has emerged through this research process; its implications for women in leadership; organisational transformation; and feminist research in management. The aim of the chapter is to draw conclusions from the study, based on the findings from the research and informed by the comprehensive review of the literature. The limitations of the research and recommendations for future research are included as part of this chapter. The implications of these findings are discussed in relation to transformation efforts in organisations and developmental processes aimed at women's empowerment. In this way, a significant and original contribution of this research, not only to the body of knowledge, but also to the practice in relation to leadership and organisational development, is proposed. The chapter is structured around the following headings:

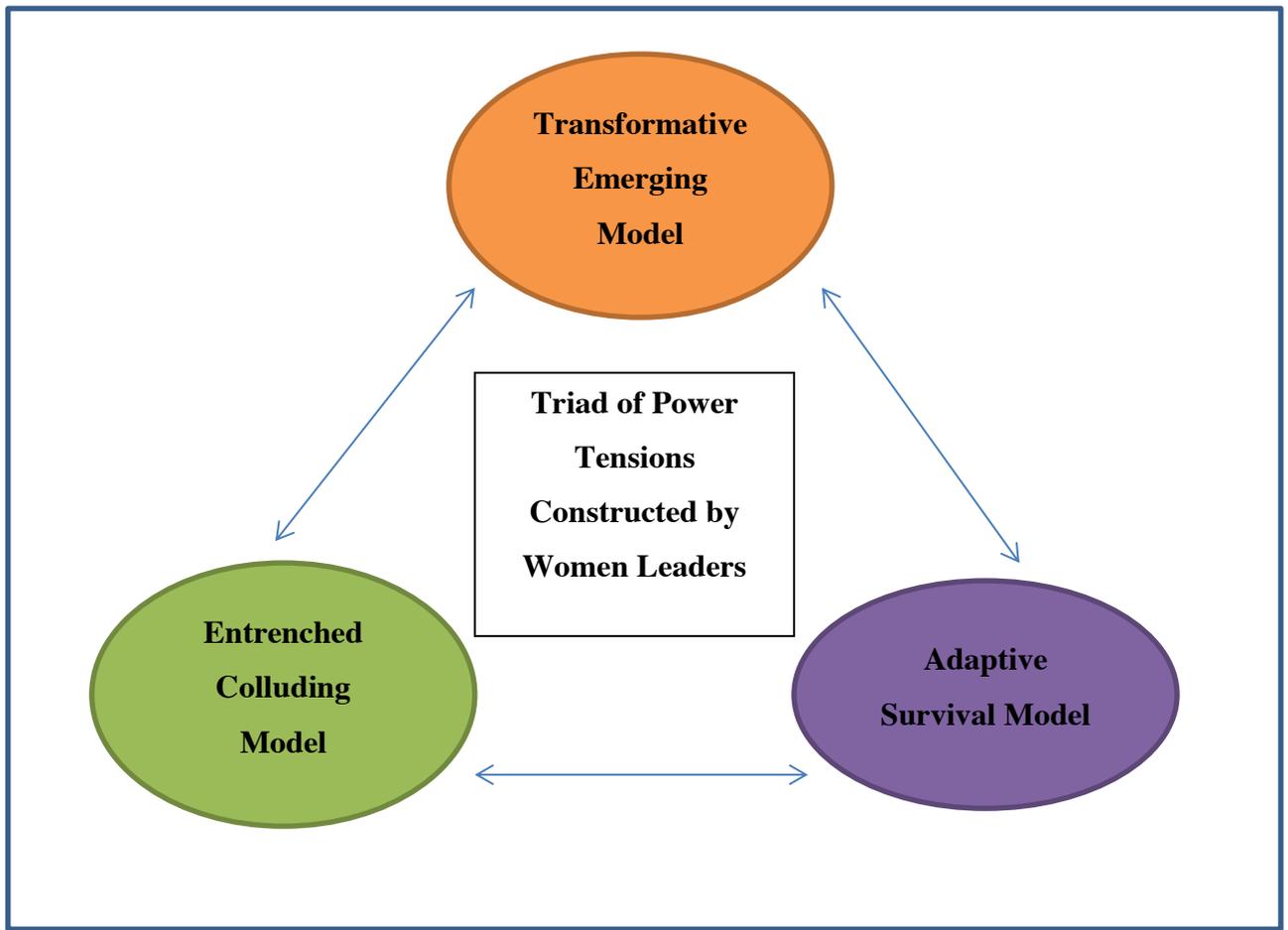
- 10.2 Triad of Power Tensions: Entrenched, Adaptive and Transformative Models of Power
  - 10.2.1 Entrenched Complicit Model
  - 10.2.2 Adaptive Survival Model
  - 10.2.3 Transformative Emerging Model
- 10.3 Implications of the Research
- 10.4 Limitations of the Research
- 10.5 Recommendations for Future Research
- 10.6 Concluding Comments

## **10.2 Triad of Power Tensions: Entrenched, Adaptive and Transformative**

### **Models of Power**

Based on the preceding discussion of the research findings as well as the discussion of the literature, an emerging model of power cannot be presented without drawing the relationships between women's varied responses to the effects of patriarchy. In remaining true to the feminist observations that women's perspectives include a diversity of opinions, as well as ambivalence and incongruences in constructing their identities (Ledwith 2009; Lee 2010; Moses 2012), the 'emerging model' is presented within a broader schema. This framework indicates the dynamic tensions between three constructions of power which seem to surface through the analysis and discussion of the data. By presenting the tensions between these constructions as a fluid and dynamic process, the model is in keeping with the postmodern approach of social constructionism which allows for the generation of multiplicity and acknowledgement of complexity, rather than convergence into a single entity (Burman 2011; Chang *et al.* 2012; Gavey 2011; Hosking & Morley 2004; Parker 2014).

The conceptualisation and presentation of schemas or frameworks is useful only in that it provides an accessible, visual representation of the inter-relationship between phenomena (Giere 2004). However, models, particularly of psychological phenomena, should not be regarded as absolute or definite, but rather as the representation which they are and which can generate on-going critique and debate. The 'triad' which is represented below uses a similar visual representation format to that of the "Triangle of Tensions" of the "Learner Leader" as depicted by Yudelowitz *et al.* (2002: 51). This is a fitting schematic representation as it indicates the continuous tension that women grapple with in responding to their role as leaders within patriarchal systems. The overall model is presented and discussed below, with each element of the model being discussed in a separate section.



**Figure 3. Triad of Tension: Constructions of Power of Women Leaders**

The ‘Triad of Power Tension’ model, representing the multiple ways in which women leaders construct power, reflects how women grapple with the tension of constructing power drawing from the cultural narrative and discourse of patriarchy in constructing their identity as women leaders within their organisations. The triad model reflects the process of constructing power as a dynamic one, where an individual may move between all three models of power within their role; or they may construct their discourse and leadership practices around one or two of the three models more naturally. This allows for the conflicting contradictions within women’s identity narration as highlighted in the literature (Dickerson 2013; Gavey 2011; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012; Nicholson 2012) as well as accommodating the unconscious and conscious choices women continuously make in relation to their response to the power dynamics of patriarchy. A brief overview of the ‘Triad of Tension’ model is provided below before discussing each element in detail.

The 'Entrenched Colluding Model' represents the construction of power which ensures that the patriarchal notions of dominance and oppression of women is sustained and in fact entrenched by their discourse and strategies. This model of power ensures that the status quo remains in-tact through women leaders' consent to forms of oppression. It is accepted that patriarchal models are typically the broader societal discourse that women are drawing their notions of power from in either constructing the perpetuation; adaptation or transformation of traditional power models (Dickerson 2013). The overall aim of this research is to understand whether these models enable or contribute to transformation within organisations; the empowerment of women; or the development of progressive leadership theories as discussed in the literature review (Goleman 2000; Kets de Vries 2011; Livingston *et al.* 2009; Valerio 2009; Wheatley 2005; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002). While the role of the feminist researcher is not to judge women's response to patriarchy per se (Gavey 2011), the aim of the research is to critically analyse models of power and understand how women are either perpetuating or transforming the status quo with the view to reconstruct what it means to be powerful as women leaders in South African business organisations.

The 'Adaptive Survival Model' represents the discourse and strategies which indicate attempts to operate within and adapt to patriarchal systems through survival and coping mechanisms. On the surface these models of power appear to be closely linked to those that entrench patriarchy and could be considered as colluding with the status quo (Harvey 2010; Hassim 2005; Ledwith 2009; Mtintso 2003). However, it is necessary to identify the subtle difference in these models of power and the role they play in enabling women to operate and succeed in patriarchal business institutions (Conway 2001; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Rhode 2003; Sandberg 2013; Wilson 2004). These forms of power do not result in transforming power relations in organisations, but they may upset elements within the system and begin to challenge the status quo, without necessarily further entrenching the dominant patriarchal discourse. These elements of power are more ambiguous and harder to recognise than the starkly contrasted 'entrenched' and 'transformative' models. However, they fail to question the nature of consent with patriarchy (Ledwith 2009), neither do they focus on an alternative wisdom (Nicholson 2012).

The 'Transformative Emerging Model' is the model which has been the aim of this study to highlight and reveal. It reflects the feminist nature of this research which is aimed at contributing to the transformation of gender relations in organisations and the empowerment of women. The model represents the future direction of women in leadership, who remain constrained by the 'entrenched' and 'adaptive' models either within their own psyche or within organisations and society at large. Acknowledging the relationship between all three is a critical part of the process of recognising how to deal with the tensions that exist between them and enable women to become more adept at working with their own emerging model.

In creating this model from the findings of the analysis, the tension existed quite strongly between all three components in participants' response to the first question in relation to their past narrative. This is understandable since it is based on these women's experiences of socialisation as they grew up and discovered their identities as women and leaders. The adaptive and emerging models are more prevalent in the last two questions relating to their current and future leadership roles. This could be due to the fact that their construction of power in relation to their leadership role is already a challenge to patriarchy to some extent, since as leaders they are women in positions of relative power in the traditionally male oriented institution of business. The final question regarding their future as leaders gave rise to some elements of the emerging model, but also highlighted the lack of clear future strategies amongst women for influencing organisational power dynamics. As a model surfacing from this study which drew from women's past, present and future constructions of power, the triad reflects how past and current experiences may give rise to elements of the entrenched and adaptive behaviour based on socialisation and survival strategies which will affect models of power going into the future. Typically management studies that promote future power strategies for women have appeared in popular literature with little empirical substantiation or the sensitivity required of qualitative research to include multiple voices of women (Geier 2013; Mauthner *et al.* 2010). However, the challenge women participants had in articulating a future focus highlights the need for studies like this to focus on emerging constructions of power which will serve women and men in their future leadership of organisations. It also emphasises the value in theory building which accommodates women's discourse and experience to validate their intuitive

wisdom and enable confidence in the application of alternative models to those represented in mainstream society.

### **10.2.1 Entrenched Colluding Model**

The entrenched model of power re-asserts dominance and oppressive models of power through collusion with the patriarchal system. This model is achieved by women leaders gaining tenure in a patriarchal system where they adopt these methods of power and assimilate them into their own construction of power. In this model the social rank of mainstream society is re-enforced and the hostility of the business environment is perpetuated through leadership discourse and behaviours. The perpetuation of this model is discouraging in that these power models are considered redundant by the literature on current practices in leadership (Gill 2013; Ibarra *et al.* 2011; Kets de Vries 2011; Livingston *et al.* 2009; Storey 2013; Valerio 2009; Wheatley 2005). In the South African context they are also linked to the colonial and racial systems of domination which remain prevalent within this model of power (Hassim 2005; Mtintso 2003). These entrenched patriarchal models are alive and well within our organisational systems and can be perpetuated by women, despite the fact that they may have experienced oppression as a result of them. This highlights the observation that patriarchy has become a dominant system which is not simply about gender, but rather a manifestation of a certain value system (Dickerson 2013). It supports the claim in the literature that having women in positions of power does not necessarily predict a change in organisational culture which is more accommodating of women's needs, since the patriarchal discourse of business and associated models of 'control over' forms of power remains well integrated in our narratives (Freeman *et al.* 2001; Furlonger 2013; Grant 2007; Horwitz & Jain 2011; Sandberg 2013).

Alternatively the power model of dominance and oppression is also entrenched through women choosing to remain or perpetuate their role as victims within a system. This is evident in their discourse which either positions women as secondary to men or allows for the erosion of women's boundaries. However, this model is also entrenched through silence on significant issues, such as the inability to recognise or articulate abuse. Typically feminist studies have focussed on the disempowered and the disenfranchised in relation to abuse (Gavey 2011). As leaders within business, the women being

interviewed in this study are privileged and powerful relative to many other women in society. It is therefore concerning that abusive relationships remain an oppressive presence for some of these women in organisations. Women's apparent acceptance and compliance with psychologically abusive forms of power has been documented in feminist research (Gavey 2011). Rather than judging the individual victims of abusive relationships, the concern lies with the insidious nature of abusive power and the inability to tackle it head on (Gavey 2011; Harvey 2010). This is an issue which affects both women and men according to the recent studies on corporate bullying and is an area which warrants further research (Cilliers 2012; Samnani 2013).

An additional dimension which re-enforces this patriarchal form of power is the clash of domestic roles where women are unable to integrate other identities into the power associated with their organisational leadership role. This is reflected in the interviews where women were unable to integrate, either practically or psychologically, the role of mother or nurturer into their leadership role and is supported by the literature (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Rhode 2003; Sandberg 2013; Valerio 2009). While this is not the only additional identity which women have outside of their leadership role, it remains a key differentiator in our society structured around patriarchal values between the roles of men and women. In support of this observation, it is significant that out of the total of the 10 women leaders interviewed, 4 of them had children. While this was not the focus of the analysis, the demographics indicate that less than half of the women interviewed are mothers as well as business leaders. This feminist gains that have been made in achieving equality in the workplace will never be sufficient without bringing about changes in societal notions of the role of mother and nurturer to accommodate a range of identities shared by both men and women (Bassnett 2013; Freeman *et al.* 2001; Rhode 2003; Wilson 2004).

### **10.2.2 Adaptive Survival Model**

The adaptive model of power reflects women's strategies to adapt to the context they find themselves in, in ways that help them cope or survive the system to their advantage, but not necessarily in a way that is sustainable. With its individual survival focus, this model is not conducive to extending power to other women. These include many of the elements that were highlighted in the data analysis as discourses that were

potentially emerging but seemed to only take women so far in redefining power. In integrating and consolidating the findings this model of power may at times appear to be complicit with patriarchy and at other times seem to be empowering women, where in fact on closer analysis it is doing neither explicitly.

Women's active and aggressive construction of expert power and intellectual superiority which is highlighted in the analysis appears to be an establishment of traditional societal rank. While this is true, within this context it indicates that a survival strategy of women is to assert their intellectual capabilities; as well as their need to be taken seriously and appreciated within the system. While this strategy does perpetuate the social rank of expert power, in the context of developing organisational leadership capacity, it also reflects an empowering process of having a depth of knowledge and expertise to draw from. This form of power is constructed by the participants who raise it as something which requires continuous management and generates anxiety at times due to its tenuous nature. Likewise the power attained through sheer hard work and proof of competence is also something that requires continuous maintenance. While this form of power may feed into the gender based notion that women have something to prove (Ibarra & Obodaru 2009), it has yielded results for women in gaining respect and the agency and self-actualisation that comes from a sense of achievement (Compton 2005; Strümpfer 2005). When pursuing expertise from the premise of being an inferior second class citizen (Ibarra & Obodaru 2009), or hard work with the self-sacrificing discourse of the martyr archetype (Nicholson 2012), this form of power is more reminiscent of the entrenched patriarchal model.

Managing image and reputation with the view to being well regarded and emulated by others is another adaptive behaviour which places women in positions of power. Once again this is a model of power which requires continuous energy and attention. The focus of this construction of power is typically on the outcome rather than its process. This is much like the power derived from the traditional notion of the charismatic leader, as discussed in the literature review (Antonakis *et al.* 2003; Kets de Vries 2011; Kouzes & Posner 2002), which has the potential to exhibit destructive qualities of narcissism where self-awareness is lacking (Conger 1999; Kets de Vries 2011). It is an identity constructed out of political expedience to be seen and judged as worthy, but it

does not necessarily alter power relations. The tenuous nature of constant image management reflects the precariousness of women's position in leadership roles.

Possibly the most explicitly articulated element of this model of power in the interviews is women's manipulation of the patriarchal system to their advantage, without directly challenging it. This indirect and individualistic approach may be regarded as complicit with traditional power models and does nothing to constructively dismantle patriarchy. However, the political astuteness described in some of the interviews of ways women negotiate around the system and use 'feminine' qualities to gain support and build relationships through politically expedient networks is a survival strategy which seems to be prevalent in corporations (Conway 2001; Greenberg & Sweeney 2005; Sandberg 2013; Scrivens 2002; Valerio 2009). Some of these strategies appear to be the focus of women's programmes designed to advance women, but ostensibly promoting ways to be effective in a 'man's world' (Furlonger 2013). They are not necessarily constructive models, neither are they transformative, but they do promote a sense of agency for women in achieving their individual agendas. This model of power does move beyond entrenching the effects of patriarchy in that women actively deconstruct the effects of psychological victimisation in order to confidently apply their political astuteness and achieve their outcomes. However, this does not necessarily create an environment that is conducive to other women succeeding and does not offer a substantive alternative to the domination discourse.

Other identities are accommodated in in this adaptive model of power when women negotiate to get recognition and create space for the other roles they may play in their life outside of work. However, these identities are not integrated into their work role. Instead it takes constant negotiation and adaptation to accommodate these roles. As is discussed in chapter 5 on transformation and diversity, this does not reflect genuine transformation where there is learning and assimilation between the organisation and the system (Booyesen & Nkomo 2010; Horwitz & Jain 2011; Op't Hoog *et al.* 2010; Thomas *et al.* 1996), rather it requires the individual women to continuously adapt to the needs of the organisational system through compromise and potential sacrifice, but without rejecting their other identities entirely.

While this model may not challenge the patriarchal system outright, it is a reaction which attempts to assert women's power in various ways which may or may not necessarily be effective. Where responses to patriarchal relationships have been recounted in the interviews as ineffective and stunted attempts to highlight victimisation, they have tended to take on a critical, self-righteous approach rather than a powerful assertion of something alternative. A less direct challenge to patriarchy in this adaptive model is constructed through women's detachment from or rejection of the system. Women may choose to disengage from the power dynamics within organisations as a survival strategy and in so doing limit their ability to lead or influence the organisation (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Sandberg 2013); or they may leave corporations due to their feelings of alienation, without consciously integrating their learning or a change in approach to apply to models of power in other contexts (Clark & Kleyn 2007; Valerio 2009).

A potentially positive component of this model is the use of positional privilege to advantage others. However, in the findings, this construction of power is raised in relation to the economic independence and the advancing of those who lack resources, not in relation to the advancement or empowerment of other women within the organisation. The tenuous nature of power and the individual focus in this model lacks a collective dimension that may enable this form of power to be generative for women as a group. This is possibly the biggest drawback of this particular model in ensuring 'survival' women's focus remains individualistic and does nothing to further the collective potential of either women or men to transform organisations. The 'adaptive' model acknowledges that when women leverage power through this model, they are constructing something slightly different to the dominant discourse, but it is limited and not necessarily transformative or sustainable.

### **10.2.3 Emerging Transformative Model**

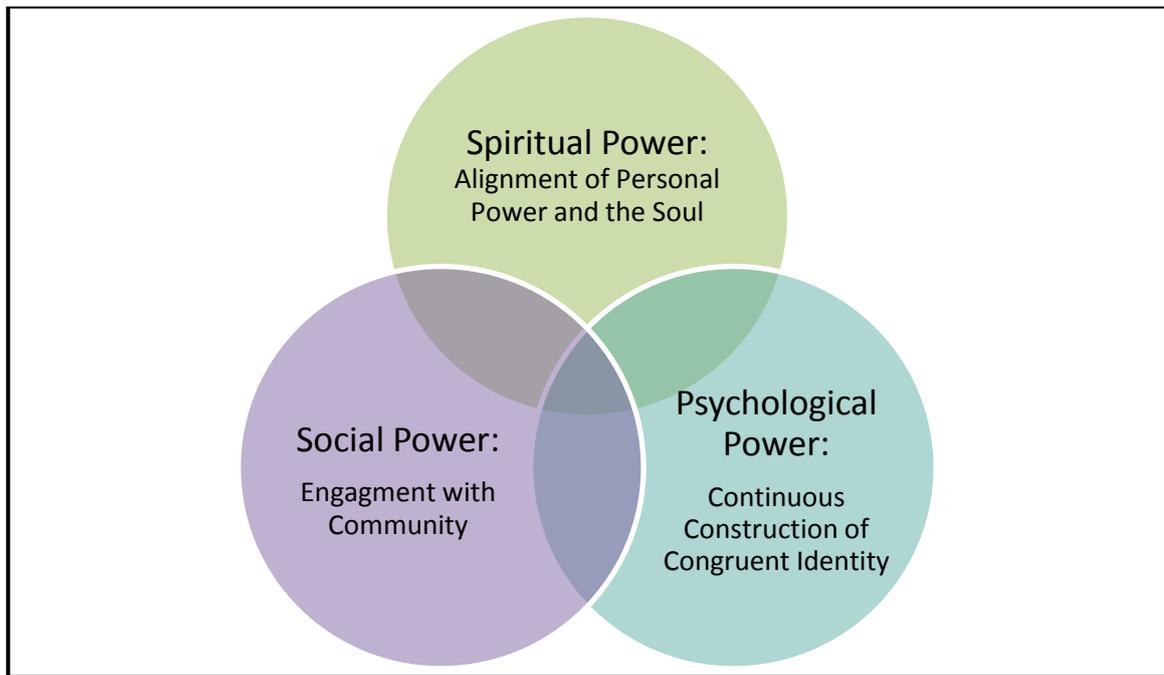
The 'emerging transformative model' is a model which indicates an alternative discourse to the traditional discourse on power and integrates current models of power from positive psychology; the feminist discourse on power; and emerging leadership theories into the women participants' discourse and strategies. It represents an alternative wisdom to those proposed in the previous two models, namely power which

entrenches patriarchy and power used to adapt and survive the system. In chapter 7,8 and 9 the findings have been discussed in relation to social rank, psychological power constructs and feminist discourses. This model of emerging transformative power integrates what has been highlighted in the discourse as emerging and alternative into the three dimensions of power taken from Mindell's model (1993, 1995), namely spiritual, psychological and social power. Grouped together it could be argued that they represent a feminist perspective of power since it is a transformative model.

While the dimensions of power are grouped around these three elements taken from Mindell's model (1993, 1995), they reflect a different interpretation of these dimensions within this emerging transformative model of power which are described by their subheadings, namely:

- Social – engagement with community
- Psychological – continuous construction of congruent identity
- Spiritual – alignment of personal power and soul

In all three of these dimensions there are elements that are constructed as positive and potentially transformative for individual women and leadership in general. While this construction of power represents a positive process, the positioning of this model remains within the broader framework as part of the dynamic tension between entrenched patriarchal and adaptive survival models of power. In this way the overall 'triad of power tensions model' accounts for both the influence of dominant models and the complex process of asserting new models. Within the framework of a transformative emerging model, they intersect and interact with one another as represented below:



**Figure 4. Emerging Transformative Model of Power**

### **10.2.3.1 Social Power: Engagement with Community**

In this model of power, rather than positioning social ‘rank’ as power, social construction of power represents how women interact and engage with those in the broader organisational community, namely their followers, peers and superiors. Since this is an area which gains little discrete attention in positive psychology (Lewis 2011) it is an area for future research and one of the significant insights and contributions of this research. The transformative model emphasises that an awareness of power and rank is essential to engage with stakeholders positively and deconstruct hierarchies that create barriers between themselves and others. The ability to recognise, understand and work with rank draws from both psychological and spiritual dimensions of transformative power, but the social component is represented in the positive and transformative relationships of constructive engagement with people (Goltz 2011; Mindell 1995; Schuitevoerder 2000).

The social dimension of transformational power is manifested in the way in which networks are constructed through sincere engagement in relationships with integrity, through the process of dialogue that enables the recognition of leaders’ vulnerabilities, as well as the establishment of credibility. Credibility is also generated through

authentic identity construction which relates to the psychological and spiritual dimension of power. It is manifested in the social dimension, however, through congruence between what people expect and how their leader operates (Kets de Vries 2011; Livingston & Lusin 2009; Sosik & Jung 2010).

Another element of social power is the ability to contribute to organisations either through decision making or developmental relationships which grow others. In this relationship leaders assume power as role models, not to be revered, but rather as enablers of learning. They are also powerful through their emotional connections with others, not through charismatic reverence, but rather through sincere empathy and engagement (Dhiman 2011; Livingston & Lusin 2009). Meaningful and personal relationships are powerful in contributing to and creating ‘community’ rather than institutional influence of the organisation as a whole. The model also enables the positive transformation of relationships through constructive challenge to and confrontation of abusive and oppressive power dynamics.

#### **10.2.3.2 Psychological Power: Continuous Construction of Congruent Identity**

The psychological element of the emerging model represents women’s ability to overcome prejudice and build credibility through continuous construction of their identity. It incorporates the observation in the literature that identity construction for all individuals is an on-going process (McAdams *et al.* 2006a). For women in particular it is about what we have become and are becoming (Dickerson 2013; Ledwith 2009; Moses 2012; Nicholson 2012). This process allows for the integration of several identities; as well as traditionally regarded ‘male’ and ‘female’ qualities, since identity is continuously under construction (Gergen 2005; Rhode 2003; Sandberg 2013; Scrivens 2002; Wilson 2004). It does not render the power of leadership as ‘genderless’ (Scrivens 2002; Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002) but rather as ‘gender-full’ in that it values and embraces the positive qualities recognised in these gender based styles. This does not necessarily mean that women leaders use every element of these styles in their own practice, but rather that their discourse values the integration of a diversity of styles and that women need not construct themselves through such rigid definitions.

The psychological process of power construction allows for continuous change and personal transformation that is brought about through the self-awareness of emotional intelligence and self-reflection associated with the 'learner leader' (Yudelowitz *et al.* 2002). It incorporates the self-doubt, often negatively associated with the ambivalent expressions of women, as a sign of strength in sustaining humility and advocating self-reflection (Gal 1991; Ledwith 2009; Mahoney & Yngvesson 1992; Nicholson 2012). The model relies on self-awareness and reflection to make unconscious processes conscious to both the individual and to those they lead. Through reflection power is constructed as being able to make sense and learn from what are typically intuitive processes and share that with others. It acknowledges flexibility in responses and the contextual interpretation of responses which is referred to in the literature as 'agility' (Kolar 2011). The power of engaging other people in the organisation in the leader's process of consciously making meaning from events and experiences also reflects the developmental focus and need for dialogue inherent in the social component of this power model.

At the same time as being focussed on process, the psychological element of this model recognises the value of achieving outcomes through agency and self-actualisation, with self-esteem being vested in a range of identities. Through this focus on positive outcomes the model recognises the need for women to establish boundaries and choose how to respond to situations, as a result of their self-insight and reflection. It prevents others' agendas from eroding these psychological boundaries or their personal convictions.

### **10.2.3.3 Spiritual Power: Alignment of Personal Power and Consciousness**

The analysis of the data did not illuminate the discourse of spiritual power as starkly as is presented in this model which is why it is not highlighted as a discrete discourse in the analysis chapters. However, tentative constructions of power touched on elements that were reminiscent of spiritual power inherent in Mindell's model (1995) and Goltz's theories (2011). As the role of the concluding chapter is to integrate the empirical findings with those from the literature, this form of power is an essential element in a transformative model. It is an area which is gaining attention and worthy of further research in an organisational context (Goltz 2011). It is also a form of power which

remains inaccessible as a discourse, particularly within a business context, which is why it may have been tentatively constructed by certain participants' narratives.

In some narratives, the construction of spiritual power is enabled through the overcoming of personal barriers which translates into self-mastery and self-actualisation which transcends the constraints of the organisational system, as described in the literature (Compton 2005; Dhiman 2011; Seligman 2006; Strümpfer 2005). Transcendence from the system in this element of the model is not the same as the detachment described in the adaptive survivor power model. Power is constructed in this model both as transcendent and engaged, in that the leader appears to detach from societal ranking while remaining engaged through the conviction of values and the humility with which those are pursued. This form of power is constructed as enabling meaningful engagement with the system from a participant observer status. Unlike models which equate transcendence with detachment (Moacanin 2003), this model intersects with the social element of power in that it recognises interdependence and promotes engagement with community while transcending social systems. This subtle shift in focus highlights the need for further work in the intrapersonal focus of positive psychology and communal focus of spiritual power within organisations (Cameron 2009; Goltz 2011; Lewis 2011).

The continuous congruence in identity construction which is discussed in the psychological dimension of power is also achieved through a spiritual form of power by aligning identity with a heightened level of consciousness or the 'purpose of the soul' as described in the literature (Anderson & Shafer 2005; Nicholson 2012). The recognition of a significance or purpose beyond the organisation is raised in some of the interviews explicitly and in others more indirectly. In its indirect articulation this form of power emerges through the conviction of values and pursuit of integrity. While it shares elements of the psychological dimension of power, the heightened and transcendent nature is an indicator of something slightly more profound than the congruence experienced within the context of the organisation. It is also a form of personal power that mitigates abusive forms of controlling power through humility in the interviews and is supported by the literature on spiritual power (Goltz 2011).

### **10.3 Implications of the Research**

The research has confirmed that patriarchal models of power remain entrenched in women's discourse of power and highlights the challenges they face in incorporating alternative interpretations which are promoted by positive psychology theorists; current leadership thinking and feminist perspectives. However, it also highlights that alternative models are apparent, at times consciously and explicitly constructed, while at other times more tentative and ambiguous. These alternative models reflect many of the elements of the theoretical re-interpretation of power, but at the same time they highlight some of the nuances and tensions in actively constructing these interpretations within a leadership context. The implications of this for women and men in leadership roles is to acknowledge and recognise how to work with these tensions to ensure meaningful transformation in organisations, that enables both gender equality and organisational shifts to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to create successful businesses within a sustainable world.

It has been argued in the literature review that increasing the number of women in leadership positions is not a guarantee for the empowerment of women or the transformation of institutions. The tensions between the patriarchal, adaptive and transformative models of power significantly reduce women in leadership's ability to act as the change agents they are often expected and hoped to be. As long as this remains the case the prevailing debates regarding the existence of the glass ceiling versus women's unwillingness to take up leadership roles in organisations will continue to be limited in promoting gender equality and empowerment in organisations. The numbers of women in leadership roles is merely an artefact of transformation. Even if their numbers do increase substantially, the assimilation of new models of power for a changing leadership context does not appear to be a significantly conscious process to enable women to influence much beyond their own survival. The debate therefore needs to shift to focus more specifically towards raising consciousness amongst men and women on paradigms which prevent us from creating more inclusive organisations. This is particularly relevant in our South African institutions where patriarchy takes on different meanings within different cultural contexts. The complexity and conflicting nature of approaching patriarchy remains a politically sensitive area in the business arena and one which is difficult to engage with openly and constructively.

A further implication of this research is for the vast number of women's empowerment programmes that are emerging in the business development arena. Women's developmental initiatives need to find ways to engage women in this form of consciousness-raising, rather than promoting the adaptive strategies prevalent in the 'how to survive in a man's world' approach (Furlonger 2013). By raising awareness around the issues of rank and power and enabling leaders to explore their past narrative, current and future identity construction, men and women leaders need to begin to understand their relationship with their social context and the way in which these inform their mental models. It is proposed that only through this personal process of consciousness raising that personal transformation can take place and viable alternatives become possible. The articulation of an emerging model as something which is congruent with the needs of contemporary business is another important outcome of this research for women's development as leaders. By facilitating women's developmental journeys, while validating models they may be tentatively asserting, developmental programmes should aim at raising consciousness and confidence in applying new models. This approach needs to be a key component in gender empowerment and leadership development programmes in general.

While the focus has been on women in the research, the arguments in the literature and the findings from the data analysis have yielded a transformation agenda which is far broader than gender empowerment alone. This agenda advocates alternative models of power to enable the necessary shifts in leadership to achieve more collaborative, humane and sustainable organisations. This is regarded as an important agenda for society as a whole and is therefore neither the focus of men or women alone, but of individuals with their own specific contexts; of collectives and social groups; and of our shared humanity. It is this focus which needs to be incorporated into and advocated as part of the new wave of feminist management research so that it can become a recognised field of study which is valued by both men and women in the field of business. It is a potential outcome of this research which aims to bring together theories from a range of disciplines, such as management and the humanities; as well as feminist perspectives which have not been substantively articulated within a management context, globally and particularly in South African management research.

#### **10.4 Limitations of the Research**

While the research has followed the rigour of a qualitative empirical study, it is important to acknowledge the limitations in its claims. One of the limitations of this study is that the findings cannot be generalised because of the social constructionist approach that was used in the design of this study. The research cannot claim that all women leaders in South Africa construct power in this way. Rather, the model represents the findings from this study and the sample group surveyed.

While the study does acknowledge the impact of other significant discourses, such as colonialism and racism, on the discourse of patriarchy, the focus of this study per se was not on race or class. These multiple complexities have a significant impact on each woman's story and construction of power and warrant further exploration in the South African context. One of the problems with discourse analysis as highlighted by Widdicombe (1993: 157) is that it does not give the researcher an element of "power and control over other people's words". While the research methods outlined emphasise the focus on the text and narratives of the participants, my own background as a white woman, who grew up in South Africa, prior to democracy, cannot be separated from my reading of the text. Additional studies of power using discourse analysis in the South African context, conducted by researchers with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, are therefore necessary to contribute to the varied and abundant ways in which discourses can be understood, constructed and reconstructed.

The skill of the researcher and the mental models which they bring to the research process is always a limitation in research and more specifically in qualitative research of this nature. As discussed in the methodology section, all research has a values based paradigm from which the researcher operates. In qualitative and feminist research such as this my own values are an intrinsic to the aims and approach of the study. These are acknowledged and made transparent in the Research Methodology Chapter (Chapter 6) in the discussion of the research frameworks which have informed the research, as well as the position of the researcher. However, a limitation in any research, and in a study such as this, is the ability of the researcher to honestly and clearly identify the lens through which they view the world. While the effects of this have been acknowledged in the methodology section and rigour has been applied to ensure trustworthiness and credibility in the research process, the necessary reflection on qualitative research raises awareness of lessons learnt through the process that may alter approaches to subsequent studies. My most significant lesson has

been recognising my own frameworks during the research journey and developing my skills of discourse analysis and refining those through the research process. While this is a personal benefit of the study, it means that the starting point for any future research may be different since expertise has been developed through the research process itself. At the same time, this is in fact a characteristic of feminist research, according to Haug (1998), who claims that the feminist process of research will ultimately change the position of the researcher, as well as those participating in the research.

### **10.5 Recommendations for Future Research**

Throughout the discussion, both of the literature and the analysis of the data, areas for further research have been highlighted. The most significant areas for future research are discussed in this section, as well as additional methodological approaches to this specific research objective, which could build on the current study.

The ‘emerging transformative model’ highlights the social phenomenon of power within a positive and transformational framework, as well as the spiritual component of power within a leadership and organisational context. Both the body of theory on positive psychology recognise that the study of positive relations and interdependence and how it applies to an organisational context is an area which requires significant attention given the challenges of our world today (Cameron *et al.* 2003; Cameron 2009; Lewis 2011). Equally the models of social power typically ignore the spiritual dimension and how spiritual practices and power are exercised in organisational contexts (Goltz 2011). The corollary of this is to increase the studies into power abuse in corporations, specifically corporate bullying, which has been highlighted as a growing area of concern which is significantly under-researched (Cilliers 2012).

The literature highlights that in the western world, many of the younger generation claim that feminist movements are something of the past, relevant to the generation who had to fight for women’s basic rights to equality (Moses 2012). This claim has been contested by authors who motivate for a ‘revival’ in the feminist movement based on their experiences of organisations where true equality has not been achieved (Sandberg 2013). With an increasing interest and need to understand the impact of generational differences in the workplace, it would be valuable to consider the influence of

generational differences amongst women in constructing their notions of power. This is another area which has gained much attention in the popular management press but has yet to be substantiated with sufficient empirical research (Sessa *et al.* 2007; Parry & Urwin 2011). It is also an area which would assume unique and multiple dimensions within a South African context given the social and cultural differences within and between generations (Ramphela 2012).

Within a South African context specifically, further studies need to be conducted on the effects of racial and class based power models on patriarchy and women leaders within South African society and its implications for transformation (Mtintso 2003). The impact of being part of the socio-economic elite and privileged classes both in terms of past and current contextual realities is a complex and necessary considerations for further studies into women, leadership and power. This is particularly significant in light of the accusations levelled at affirmative action practices that white women are the key beneficiaries of the system (Mangum 2008).

With regard to furthering the research on emerging models of power amongst women leaders, it is recommended that research be conducted using a methodology that enables dialogue between various stakeholders in the process of power construction. The literature recommends that the coming together of women and the sharing of narratives and experiences is a valuable methodology for feminist research. This is also highlighted by some of the participants as an experience which they would value. Equally, the literature and some of the women interviewed express the need for dialogue with men around frameworks and experience of power. Future studies should consider engaging both men and women in this process.

Finally, since another key dynamic in the construction of leadership power is with the followers of the leaders themselves, future research into this topic should consider incorporating followers' experiences and observations in relation to power construction. In this way future research would further the social and interdependent process of power construction.

## **10.6 Concluding Comments**

The emerging models of power amongst South African women business leaders have the potential to transform patriarchal institutions to become the organisations that men and women need to create for a future South Africa and a sustainable world. All leaders, both men and women, can benefit from the journey of engaging meaningfully with their organisational community; continuing to construct a congruent identity; and aligning their personal power with their soul. The challenge for women in advocating this model of power rests in the tensions that exist in negotiating their way around entrenched patriarchal and adaptive models. However, the awareness and acknowledgement of these tensions is essential in empowering women to move beyond the struggle for representation and having their voice heard to providing valuable and unique contributions to the leadership of organisations. In business and society, the need for this is clearly articulated by Kavita Ramdas (2013), women's rights activist and academic, in her recent address to a group of women graduates:

“We need much less domination and much more imagination to succeed in this twenty-first-century world. We need uncommon women because the world faces uncommon challenges to which there are no easy solutions....We need women who are so strong that they can be gentle, so educated that they can be humble, so fierce that they can be compassionate, so passionate that they can be rational, and so disciplined that they can be free. We need uncommon women. And here you are.” (Ramdas, Mount Holyoke College, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2013).

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## **APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **OVERALL RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

**To understand what the emerging models of power are amongst South African women business leaders?**

### **Objective One**

**To understand how women leaders in South Africa narrate the development of their awareness of power**

### **Interview Questions**

In the first part of this interview, I am going to ask you some questions about your personal life experiences. Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

1. I want you to describe your life as a woman 'leader' growing up in South Africa. Think of your life as having different chapters and different experiences that created the leader that you are today. I would like you to describe the chapters in your life and the significant experiences that impacted on you. Describe these moments and the feelings that they generated as well as the impact they had on your life. This first part of the interview is to give a sense of the outline of the story, the major things that compose your life.
2. I want you to describe one of the first moments in your life when you had the feeling of being a powerful human being.
3. Can you describe a specific moment in your life growing up when you felt disempowered?

4. I want you to think of a significant relationship that had a positive influence in your life. This would be someone who had one of the greatest influence on your life story. Can you describe that relationship to me and give me examples of how that relationship influenced you positively?
5. Can you describe a significant relationship that had a negative influence in your life? Can you describe some examples of how that relationship influenced you negatively.
6. How do you think your story is shaped by you being a women?

## **Objective Two**

**To understand how women leaders in South Africa discuss power in relation to their leadership role**

### **Interview Questions**

Now let's turn to your leadership role.

7. I want you to describe the events that brought you to this leadership role. What did it take for you to get into this position?
8. Describe a moment when you feel powerful in your leadership role
9. Describe a moment when you feel disillusioned or despondent in your leadership role
10. Describe the relationship that you believe you have with your followers
11. What do you think your followers think of you and how do you think that is influenced by your being a woman?

## **Objective Three**

**To understand what strategies women leaders claim to use to sustain power in the organisation**

### **Interview Questions**

12. Can you describe how have you tried to influence the broader organisation through your leadership?
13. What do you consciously do to be recognised as a good leader in this organisation?
14. How do you believe you will develop your leadership role in the future?

13. Please reflect on the interview and add anything that you believe you may have left out or which may be important for me to know in this study on women and power in leadership.

## **APPENDIX 2: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**

### **INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**

I, Lisa Caroline Kinnear, am a student currently registered for a PhD in Management/Leadership at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu Natal. A requirement for the degree is a dissertation and I have chosen the following topic:

*A Critical Analysis of the Emerging Models of Power amongst South African Women Business Leaders*

Please note that this investigation is being conducted in my personal capacity and does not reflect any plans of the university to conduct any similar research. I can be reached at [lisakinnear@vodamail.co.za](mailto:lisakinnear@vodamail.co.za) or 0828025273. My academic supervisor is Dr Ortlepp, based in the School of Management on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu Natal. She can be contacted at [Ortleppk@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Ortleppk@ukzn.ac.za) and her telephone is 033 2606168.

The purpose of this research is to understand how women leaders in South Africa view and use their power in their leadership roles. The information gathered from this study will include data retrieved from an interview schedule which asks the participant to discuss their life story, as well as their leadership role. Please note that your name or that of the organisation you represent will not be included in the report. The information that will be submitted in these interviews will only be seen by me, the research supervisor and the examiner. Your anonymity is of utmost importance and will be maintained throughout the study.

Your participation in answering the interview questions is completely voluntary and you are in no way forced to continue participating in the interview. You have the right to withdraw at any time during the study.

I appreciate the time and effort it would take to participate in the study. I would be very grateful for your participation as it would enable me to complete my dissertation and my degree but it will also contribute to the vast research on leadership, globally, and will be pioneering in providing data that will give insight into the unique experiences of South African women leaders. The insights gained will help organisations better able to address issues of diversity, as well as leadership development and retention of women.

I..... (full name of the participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at anytime, should I so desire.

Signature of

Participant.....

Date.....

### APPENDIX 3: TEMPLATE OF INTERVIEW ANALYSIS GRID

<b>INTERVIEW NUMBER:</b>			
<b>OBJECTIVE 1</b>	<b>TO UNDERSTAND HOW WOMEN NARRATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR AWARENESS OF POWER</b>		
<b>Line</b>	<b>Quote</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Binary opposites</li> <li>• Terms, phrases, metaphors</li> <li>• Human subjects</li> </ul>	<b>Discourse Description</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 2</b>	<b>TO UNDERSTAND HOW WOMEN LEADERS DISCUSS POWER IN RELATION TO THEIR LEADERSHIP ROLE</b>		
<b>Line</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Discourse Description</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 3</b>	<b>TO UNDERSTAND WHAT STRATEGIES WOMEN LEADERS CLAIM TO USE TO SUSTAIN POWER IN THE ORGANISATION</b>		
<b>Line</b>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Discourse Description</b>	<b>Analysis</b>

## APPENDIX 4: DISCOURSE CATEGORIES FOR EACH OBJECTIVE

<b>OBJECTIVE ONE</b>			
<b>Intvw</b>	<b>Initial Descriptors</b>	<b>Discourse Clusters</b>	<b>Discourse Categories</b>
1	Racial and Cultural Dominance	Racial and Cultural Dominance	Racial and Cultural Dominance
	Development of Expert Power and Intellectual Superiority	Development of Expert Power and Intellectual Superiority	Social Rank
	Positions of Social Prestige and Power	Positions of Social Prestige and Power	Social Rank
	Manipulation and Control	Manipulation and Control	Psychological Power
	Learning and Growth	Learning and Growth	Psychological Power
	Legitimate Access to Power as a Woman	Legitimacy of Power	Feminist Discourse
2	Intellectual Superiority	Development of Expert Power and Intellectual Superiority	Social Rank
	Positions of Status and Prestige	Positions of Social Prestige and Power	Social Rank
	Validation from Male Role Models	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse
	Legitimate Access to Power as a Woman	Legitimacy of Power	Feminist Discourse
3	Economic Independence and Privilege	Economic Independence	Social Rank
	Teaching and Learning	Learning and Growth	Psychological Power
	Independence as a Woman	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse
	Gender Discrimination	Legitimacy of Power	Feminist Discourse
4	Economic Independence	Economic Independence	Social Rank
	Manipulation and Control	Manipulation and Control	Psychological Power
	Learning and Growth	Learning and Growth	Psychological Power
	Legitimate Access to Power as a Woman	Legitimacy of Power	Feminist Discourse
	Authenticity as a Woman	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse
	Validation from Male Role Models	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse
5	Racial and Cultural Dominance	Racial and Cultural Dominance	Racial and Cultural Dominance
	Economic Independence	Economic Independence	Social Rank
	Intellectual Superiority and Education	Positions of Social Prestige and Power	Social Rank
	Self Belief	Learning and Growth	Psychological Power
	Gender Discrimination	Legitimacy of Power	Feminist Discourse
6	Challenging Patriarchy	The Power of Challenging Patriarchy	Feminist Discourse
	Gender Differences	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse
	Authenticity	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse
7	Racial and Cultural Dominance	Racial and Cultural Dominance	Racial and Cultural Dominance
	Positions of Informal Power	Positions of Social Prestige and Power	Social Rank
	Manipulation and Control	Manipulation and Control	Psychological Power
	Challenging Patriarchy	The Power of Challenging Patriarchy	Feminist Discourse
	Responsibility of Care-Taking Role	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse
8	Positional Respect	Positions of Social Prestige and Power	Social Rank
	Self-Belief	Learning and Growth	Psychological Power
	Gender Differences	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse

Appendix 4: Discourse Categories for Each Question

<b>Intv w</b>	<b>Initial Descriptors</b>	<b>Discourse Clusters</b>	<b>Discourse Categories</b>
9	Intellectual Superiority and Education	Development of Expert Power and Intellectual Superiority	Social Rank
	Empowerment of Others	Learning and Growth	Psychological Power
	Gender Equality	The Power of Challenging Patriarchy	Feminist Discourse
	Female Qualities	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse
10	Racial and Cultural Dominance	Racial and Cultural Dominance	Racial and Cultural Dominance
	Establishing Identity	Authenticity and Female Identity	Feminist Discourse

Appendix 4: Discourse Categories for Each Question

<b>OBJECTIVE TWO</b>			
<b>Intv w</b>	<b>Initial Descriptors</b>	<b>Discourse Clusters</b>	<b>Discourse Categories</b>
1	Command and Control Leadership	Power Relations within the Hierarchy	Social Rank
	Hierarchical Power	Power Relations within the Hierarchy	Social Rank
	Age and Experience	Age and Experience	Social Rank
	Decision Making and responsibility	Decision Making and Responsibility	Psychological Phenomena
	Trust	Trust and Collaboration	Psychological Phenomena
2	Achievement	Achievement and Reputation	Social Rank
	Experience	Age and Experience	Social Rank
	Collaboration	Trust and Collaboration	Psychological Phenomena
	Female attributes – soft vs hard	Female Archetypes	Feminist Discourse
3	Achievement	Achievement and Reputation	Social Rank
	Empowerment	Independence	Psychological Phenomena
	Female attributes - supporter	Female Archetypes	Feminist Discourse
4	Achievement and Reputation	Achievement and Reputation	Social Rank
	Independence	Independence	Psychological Phenomena
	Collaboration	Trust and Collaboration	Psychological Phenomena
	Female attributes – soft vs hard	Female Archetypes	Feminist Discourse
5	Decision making	Decision Making and Responsibility	Psychological Phenomena
	Independence	Independence	Psychological Phenomena
	Trust	Trust and Collaboration	Psychological Phenomena
6	Hierarchy - influencing upwards	Power Relations within the Hierarchy	Social Rank
	Making a contribution	Achievement and Reputation	Social Rank
	Trust – psychological contract	Trust and Collaboration	Psychological Phenomena
7	Hierarchy – influencing upwards	Power Relations within the Hierarchy	Social Rank
	Reputation and Hard Work	Achievement and Reputation	Social Rank
	Generational Relations	Age and Experience	Social Rank
	Female attributes – maternal	Female Archetypes	Feminist Discourse
8	Hierarchy	Power Relations within the Hierarchy	Social Rank
	Reputation and Hard Work	Achievement and Reputation	Social Rank
	Decision making	Decision Making and Responsibility	Psychological Phenomena
	Discrimination – glass ceiling	Gender Discrimination	Feminist Discourse
	Female attributes – soft vs aggressive	Female Archetypes	Feminist Discourse
9	Credibility	Achievement and Reputation	Social Rank
	Decision making	Decision Making and Responsibility	Psychological Phenomena
	Self-reliance	Independence	Psychological Phenomena
	Trust	Trust and Collaboration	Psychological Phenomena
	Female attributes - maternal	Female Archetypes	Feminist Discourse
10	Trust	Trust and Collaboration	Psychological Phenomena
	Discrimination - stereotypes	Gender Discrimination	Feminist Discourse

Appendix 4: Discourse Categories for Each Question

<b>OBJECTIVE THREE</b>		
<b>Intv w</b>	<b>Discourse Clusters</b>	<b>Discourse Categories</b>
1	Lack of Strategy	Disempowerment within the Organisational System
	Relational/Female Oriented	Leadership Style
2	Traditional/Male Oriented	Leadership Style
	Relational/Female Oriented	Leadership Style
	Networks and Sponsors	Systemic Influence
3	Traditional/Male Oriented	Leadership Style
	Having a Voice	Systemic Influence
4	Operating outside of the corporate world	Disempowerment within the Organisational System
	Traditional/Male Oriented	Leadership Style
	Networks and Sponsors	Systemic Influence
5	Family Responsibility	Disempowerment within the Organisational System
	Relational/Female Oriented	Leadership Style
	Having a Voice	Systemic Influence
6	Networks and Sponsors	Systemic Influence
	Having a Voice	Systemic Influence
7	Lack of Strategy	Disempowerment within the Organisational System
	Family Responsibility	Disempowerment within the Organisational System
	Relational/Female Oriented	Leadership Style
	Having a Voice	Systemic Influence
8	Family Responsibility	Disempowerment within the Organisational System
	Having a Voice	Systemic Influence
9	Operating outside of the corporate world	Disempowerment within the Organisational System
	Family Responsibility	Disempowerment within the Organisational System
	Relational/Female Oriented	Leadership Style
	Traditional/Male Oriented	Leadership Style
10	Lack of Strategy	Disempowerment within the Organisational System

## APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



4 September 2012

**Ms Lisa Caroline Kinnear 871870229**  
School of Management , IT & Governance

Dear Ms Kinnear

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0425/010/D**  
**New project title: A Critical Analysis of the Emerging Models of Power amongst South African Women Business Leaders**

**Approval and change of dissertation title**

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted full approval for the above mentioned project:

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years**

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

.....  
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**

cc Supervisor Dr Karen Ortlepp  
cc Academic leader Professor KK Govender  
cc School Admin. Ms D Cunynghame

**Professor S Collings (Chair)**  
**Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee**  
**Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building**  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa  
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za  
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