

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*Professional and Managerial Black African Women:
Johannesburg and London's Emerging and Transnational Elites*

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Declaration

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Abstract

The number of women entering professional and managerial jobs globally has increased over the past thirty years. However, only a small percentage of texts within feminist and organisational theory specifically address the lives and experiences of professional and managerial Black African women within the workplace and family life. As such, many organisational and social research questions in this area remain unanswered. This thesis examines the work and family lives of professional and managerial Black African women living and working in Johannesburg and London. It explores how such women with relatively similar colonial histories, cultures, career and professional backgrounds handle their complex social positioning. This complexity, as discussed in the thesis, is created mainly through the way in which identity characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity and class intersect and impact on these women when working in an environment where they are in a minority and viewed in some instances as ‘space invaders’. The impact that these complex social categories, combined with the influences of culture and history, have on their identities as career women, mothers, wives, partners and daughters is also examined.

As Black African women with careers in major cities on opposite sides of the globe, these emerging and transnational elite Black African women remain a rarity and hidden gem to most – making them unique both in the workplace and in communities. In London, they are not only minorities within the UK population but minorities in their role as professional and managerial women within the corporate private sector. In Johannesburg, although part of the majority population in the country, they still remain minorities within the professional and managerial circles of that country’s corporate private sector. The method I use to gather data is the Life History approach which allows me, the researcher, to reveal my participants’ individual views and interpretation of their own work and family life experiences. I do this by conducting semi-structured interviews as a means of collecting their ‘life stories’. These stories told by Black African professional and managerial women reflect their views of reality. Through a form of Life History analysis, this mode of enquiry further reveals the importance of acknowledging difference when implementing government and organisational policies that combat barriers brought about by corporate practices and cultural attitudes within the workplace and society as a whole.

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Acronyms

AA	Affirmative Action
ANC	Africa National Congress
B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BWASA	Business Women South Africa
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEHR	Commission for Equality and Human Rights
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
Dfes	Department for Education and Skills
EEA	Employment Equity Act
EPA	Equal Pay Act
EO	Equal Opportunity
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
FTSE	Financial Times Stock Exchange
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
GED	Gender Equality Duty
GPF	Gender Policy Framework
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HDSA	Historically Disadvantaged South Africans
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
LRA	Labour Relations Act
ONS	Office of National Statistics
RRA	Race Relations Act
RRAA	Race Relations Act Amendment
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SDA	Sex Discrimination Act
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
STASSA	Statistics South Africa
WER	Workplace Employment Relations Survey
WITS	Witwatersrand (University)
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
UNIFEM	United Nations

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Chapter One

Feminist Theory, Organisational Theory and Black African Women

We Black Africans have been blandly invited to submit ourselves to a second epoch of colonization – this time by a universal-humanoid abstraction defined and conducted by individuals whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of their history, their social neuroses and their value systems (Soyinka, 1976:x).

The last thirty years have seen enormous economic and social change with the world witnessing an increase in women's employment worldwide (Burke & Davidson, 2000; Wajcman, 1998; Wirth, 2001). However, progress toward gender equality has not been uniform across the world. In western society, some progress has been made toward gender equality in the public sphere of the labour market and similar changes have been witnessed in the private sphere where intimate relations such as marriage and family structures continue to undergo major transformations (Wajcman, 1998). In Sub-Saharan Africa, women's participation in formal paid employment, though low in comparison with western figures, has also increased, bringing about major changes and new challenges for society as a whole (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004). The micro trends in these various cases, however, are different.

This thesis sets out to examine the trends which specifically address the career and family lives of professional and managerial Black African women originating from Sub-Saharan Africa. Through a mainly sociological understanding, this thesis explores how such women, with relatively similar colonial histories, cultures, career and professional backgrounds, handle their complex social positioning. I focus on the lives of Black African women living and working within the corporate private sector in Johannesburg and London. As Black African women with careers in major cities on opposite sides of the globe, the professional and managerial women, or transnational and emerging Black elite women in my study are unique both in the workplace and in their communities. As I elaborate further in the thesis, although the women are part of the majority population in South Africa, they remain minorities within the professional and managerial circles of South Africa's corporate private sector. This is despite a strong sense amongst South

Africans that of all Historically Disadvantaged South Africans (HDSA), Black African women have benefited the most from employment equality policies. In the UK, Black Africans form part of the growing Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in the country (i.e. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean). However, while the Black African women in my study form part of this growing Black African community in the country, they remain minorities within the UK population, but also remain minorities in their role as professional and managerial women within the corporate private sector. This is in spite of Black Africans having fairly high rates of higher education amongst the country's BME population (Platt, 2007). I therefore attempt to identify some of the differences and/or similarities that exist between these women's career choices and progression and find out how they address socio-cultural and gendered expectations of domestic, social and caring commitments as career women living and working in two urban cities – one African, the other European.

In order to place boundaries around the ethnic and racial identity of my research participants, the individuals in my study are of Black African descent, identify themselves as Black and belong to the following racial and ethnic composition:

- African: Black or Black British
- Mixed: White and Black African; and
- Mixed: Black African and Other.

There are currently differing opinions or inconsistencies regarding the descriptive terminology used to for 'non-white' individuals. This is primarily due to the varying definitions and complex history of individuals classified as 'Black' in both the Diaspora¹ and Sub-Saharan Africa. As I discuss in Chapter 2, race is defined differently depending upon the contexts, resulting in the same physiognomy evoking very different racial responses and assumptions in different contexts. Therefore, in line with countries such as the UK, the USA and South Africa – countries from which I draw much of my literature review research on professional and managerial women – unless specified, I use the phrase 'Black people' interchangeably throughout the thesis to refer to Black Caribbean, Black African, African American, women of color and Black

¹ Definition of Diaspora in the next section.

Other.² In a similar way to other theorists whom I quote in this thesis, I also capitalise 'Black' in the same way as Crenshaw (1988) because Blacks, like Asians, Latinos and other non-white/women of colour, constitute a specific cultural group and, as such, require denotation as a proper noun. The terms 'white' and 'woman of color' are not capitalised as they do not constitute specific cultural groups (Crenshaw, 1994:115). However, I am also mindful of the fact that, like ethnicity, race is a socially constructed identity, defined by culture and that not all persons who fall into these racial and ethnic compositions can be assumed to have the same culture. I therefore use Crenshaw's definition to define individuals who have joined together to create a common and powerful metaphor for explaining the prejudices which they may experience and identify with in life.

In line with the boundaries I put around my participants' racial and ethnic identity, I also insisted my participants' social and geographical location be that of Black African women:

- born and educated in the UK/South Africa;
- born outside the UK/South Africa and educated either in the UK/South Africa or abroad and living in their respective country as permanent residents;
- living and working in the UK/South Africa on company contracts (i.e., expatriates).

The reason for this is to create some parity between some aspects of identity in order to address the significance of others.

² In the UK, the word 'Black' is often used as a political term, adopted in the 1960's and 1970's to symbolise a political and collective struggle against colonialism and the hostility experienced by people from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean (Bhavnani, 1994:5). Today, though, opinion is divided among British Asians about whether they identify themselves as 'Black' (more reason for why the term should be considered a matter of self-definition). In Apartheid South Africa, the term 'Black' was used to classify African people also known as "native" and "bantú." The term includes people of African and Asian origin and "Coloured" (a mix between Black and white, and Malay descent) people. See Seekings & Natrass 2005: ix. Today, a Black person as defined by the South African Codes of Good Practice includes Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Chinese. Such a person should be a South African citizen by birth or descent, or by naturalisation before 27th April 1994, or entitled to citizenship by naturalisation but because of the Apartheid Policy in place at the time, was only able to obtain citizenship post 27th April 1994.

In the case of other Sub-Saharan countries, the term 'Black' normally describe Black Africans only. Interestingly though, the use of Black in South Africa for only Black Africans is coming back with some individuals refusing to consider Coloureds and Indians as Black.

With the exception of the women in my study who were born in South Africa and currently live and work there, the rest of my research participants are part of the growing number of Black Africans who make up the African Diaspora. There is no single accepted definition of the term “Diaspora”. Ionescu (2006:13) broadly defines it as “members of ethnic and national communities, who have left, but maintained links with their homelands.” The African Diaspora has been defined through different periods underlining varying standpoints. Apart from being too complex to interpret without exploring its nature, dimensions and changing configurations, it is all too often misunderstood. As Oucho (2009:4) explains in “*African Diaspora and Homeland Post-Conflict Reconstruction in sub-Saharan Africa*,” the notion that the African Diaspora is homogenous is both simplistic and unrealistic given both spatial and temporal dimensions of African emigration to the rest of the world. With these definitions in mind, the individuals living in the Diaspora that I refer to in this thesis are living and working in both South Africa and the United Kingdom³ and form part of the contemporary diasporas of colonisation, decolonisation and the era of structural adjustment (Ifekwunigwe, 2007). Zeleza (2005:55) defines these contemporary African diasporas which formed since the late nineteenth century as “having emerged out of the disruption and dispositions of colonial conquest, the struggles for independence, and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), respectively...” (Zeleza, 2005).

In an effort to make an original contribution to current methodological and epistemological literature in feminist/gender studies and organisational studies on Women in Management, I specifically examine the lives of professional and managerial Black African women originating from English-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa. The Sub-Saharan region I refer to includes areas of Africa located within the south, western, central and southern African region – in all consisting of 46 countries. Although many of these groups are heterogeneous in terms of their colonial past, ethnic groups and languages, they nonetheless share a number of similar traits which include low levels of industrialisation (with the exception of South Africa and some parts of Nigeria and Kenya) massive rural-urban migration patterns, low formal wage participation rates and

³ Currently the largest African Diaspora population lives in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the US, many of whom have more remote links to Africa (Oucho 2009).

culturally collective ethos⁴ (Aryee 2005:262). Furthermore, my reason for focusing on this group of women is that I view them as sharing a more homogenous experience both historically and culturally, having at one point all been colonised by the British. Apart from the shared language, many of their life experiences have more in common with one another than non-English-speaking countries. Although I recognise that there is a substantial scholarship on Black African women in Women and Gender Studies written in Portuguese, French and other languages by non-African and African scholars, given my research focus and language limitations, I restrict my research and literature review to those studies written in English. I specifically review feminist and organisational literature addressing women in professional and managerial occupations in the US, Europe, Australia and Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing my attention on research which addresses the work-family interface of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women. I concentrate largely on literature in the field of sociology, organisational management theory, history, geography, anthropology, political science, psychology and education – all approached from a multidisciplinary perspective.

In the next section, I outline my rationale for researching professional Black African women and reasons for focusing on women based in Johannesburg and London. I also discuss my methodology and organisation of these chapters.

1.1 Rationale for Researching Black African Women in Johannesburg and London

Who are these Women?

The term *African woman* is too often assumed to denote a poor, powerless and ignorant person whose life is vastly different from that of fellow western women (Bloch et al., 1998). But as various literatures on African women's multiple representations and identities illustrate, Black African women have held positions of power and high status as chiefs, spiritual leaders, ritual leaders, family matriarchs and various other positions within their communities for many years (Cromwell, 1986; Hollos, 1998; Mbilini, 1998;

⁴ I do however want to mention that while there are a certain amount of cultural similarities due to all experiencing British colonialism, the commonalities among the different ethnic groups cannot be assumed. As such, I attempt to illustrate this point in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Okeke-Ihejiriki, 2004). These identities do not in any way resemble the more popular stereotypical negative image often portrayed of Black African women. Like some of these aforementioned African women in traditional positions of power and high status, the women in my study belong to a privileged group within modern day society. They are highly educated and, in most cases, have attended some of the most renowned universities and academic institutions in America, Europe and Africa. They are employed in professional, middle and senior management positions within the transnational or tertiary sector of private business and financial institutions or organisations in London and Johannesburg. In some cases, they also run their own private business ventures on the side. They are part of the social elite and economically mobile and influential group of Black Africans who form part of Sub-Saharan Africa's growing emerging and transnational elite.

London and Johannesburg's Emerging and Transnational Elites

With regard to my referring to my research participants as 'transnational', I do this in the context of their being part of transnational social formations (structures of relationships) spanning international borders (or in the case of my South African participants – spanning provincial borders). This is the conceptual premise I chose to adopt - owing to the numerous meanings in which the meaning of transnationalism has come to be described within the social sciences (Vertovec, 2009; Cano, 2005; Castells, 1996)⁵. As transnational migrants who form part of the contemporary African Diaspora, my research participants have become part of the world's modern day 'transnational communities' sustained by a range of modes of social organisation, mobility and communication (Vertovec, 2009:7). As members of the global Diasporas, their "Diaspora consciousness" is marked by dual or multiple identifications, i.e. their depiction of de-centred attachments, of being simultaneously 'home away from home' and 'here and there' or, for instance, British and/or Zimbabwean/ British Zimbabwean (ibid). As Glick Schiller et al., (1992:11) point out, 'the majority seem to maintain several identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation.' Gilroy (1987, 1993) further adds that the awareness of multi-locality stimulates the desire of the sameness of multi-locality which stimulates the desire of the same 'routes' and 'roots',

⁵ For additional discussions on transnationalism and its meaning, see Vertovec, 2009:3.

while Hall (1990) describes this as the condition of Diaspora or transnationalism which comprises of ever-changing representations that provide an ‘imaginary coherence’ for the rest of malleable identities.

The term ‘elite’, while widely applied throughout social science scholarship as a means of explaining various divisions and stratifications in social organisations (Mills, 1956), has never acquired any consistent definition. In its popular usage, the term ‘elite’ has been used to describe one’s economic status, while others, namely Marx (1967), Weber (1956) and Bourdieu (1979; 1989) have focused more on addressing the ideas of elite formation, reproduction, and the emergence of new elite, in connection with different types of power and influence i.e. military elites, business elite, religious elite and bureaucratic elite Bourgouin (2007:7). My approach to the concept of ‘elite’ in this thesis and my use of the term “emerging elites” is for the most part, used to specifically refer to my research participants’ identities as social elites (i.e., society, family) and economic elites (i.e., professionals, directors, managers, CEOs) primarily within the Black African communities. The women form part of sub-Saharan Africa’s emerging “educated” elite who form part of the growing economic and social-elite both in Johannesburg and London. I do this to differentiate them from elites of a non-economic basis (i.e., political elites such as politicians and judges; religious elites such as bishops and cardinals; and media elites such as editors, authors, actors, musicians) (Bourgouin, 2007:20). By using the term “emerging elite,” I want to clarify, however, that I do not in any way surmise that this social group just appeared out of nowhere in Sub-Saharan Africa as this would be both untrue and in contradiction to what I mentioned earlier about the positions of power and high status (religious, political and social elite) that Black African women have historically held. Rather, I use it as “*a term of reference, rather than self-reference*” (ibid, :23).

My discussion in this thesis also focuses on giving some understanding of how my research participants as emerging and transnational elites, who also form part of contemporary African Diaspora migrants negotiate intergenerational family structures within their countries of origin (in the case of my South African participants) and abroad (for my UK participants). I do this by examining socio-cultural transformations namely family life and gender relations and how these are modified, entrenched and strengthened in light of transnational practices.

In the next section, I give a brief overview of Black Africans in the UK Diaspora and South Africa. Details on the work and family lives of Black Africans in South Africa and the UK are discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

1.2 Black Africans in the UK and South Africa

The UK

Black Africans, like other Black people living in the UK, have been marginalised or ignored in the writings of British history (Killingray, 1994). According to Killingray (1994), while often confused with African-American and African Caribbean people living in the UK, Black Africans are a distinct immigrant minority who have been present in the UK for some 400 years. Initially brought to the UK as slaves and for a variety of servile roles such as seamen, manual labourers and children as aristocratic ‘pets,’ Africans over time began to arrive in the UK for academic schooling (Killingray, 1994:3). In the post-colonial era and with the emergence of newly independent African states, a new wave of Africans, either sponsored by their governments or from the elite African community, began coming to the UK for educational opportunities and skilled training, necessary for their continent’s development (Oucho, 2009). Many returned to their countries of origin, particularly those coming from the elite African community, to form part of their governments or as leaders of their countries.⁶

Over the years, ordinary African citizens have also moved to the UK for a number of reasons. Declining economies and political instability in many Sub-Saharan African countries are just two of the many reasons behind the increase in the number of Black Africans migrating to the UK. Some nationals arriving in the UK for educational reasons opted to remain in the UK due to a lack of available career opportunities or as a lifestyle choice in Africa. This increase in the number of Black Africans opting to remain in the UK permanently was reflected in the decennial UK census in 1991. This census, which was the first census in the UK in which people were invited to indicate

⁶ Adi, H, and Ominiya, B, (1991:581-361)

their ethnic origin,⁷ recorded a total of 201,000 Black Africans living in the UK. This was a significant increase from earlier census records which suggested the following estimates for Africans living in the UK: 1911 - 4,540; 1921 - 4,940; 1931 - 5,202; and 1951 – 11,000 (ibid,:2). Following the 1991 census figure of 201,000 Black Africans living in the UK, this figure increased to 485,277 in the 2001 census (0.8 per cent of the UK population). On the whole, the UK has witnessed “a rapidly increasing diversity of ethnic groups and cultures” over the past two decades (Lupton and Power, 2004:1). As I elaborate in more detail later on in the thesis, the UK population grew by 4 percent during the 1990s with some 1.6 million or 73 percent of this growth attributed to BME groups compared to 600,000 in the white population. As is the case for those ethnic minority populations with a more recent history of migration to the UK,⁸ the Black African working age population also grew significantly over this same period (ONS, 2010). Census figures indicate that the working age population for Black Africans increased from 145,987 to 323,593 over a ten year period.

Although the Black African population in the UK remains relatively small when compared to other BME groups in the country, their numbers have more than doubled in size between 1991 and 2001 (Markkeanen et al., (2008:7). They remain heavily concentrated in London, with over three-quarters of Black African residing in the inner areas of boroughs of city and other urban conurbations⁹ (Markkeanen et al, 2008:7; Ethnic Research Network, 2005; Lupton and Power, 2004). However, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, my research participants as professionals have tended not to be concentrated in localised BME areas but spread across the city and surrounding greater London suburbs. As a consequence, many remain minorities within their neighbourhoods.

South Africa

Unlike the Black Africans in the UK who are part of a minority population, Black Africans in South Africa form part of the majority population. According to the latest

⁷ This development separated Black British population statistics into Black or Black British African and Black or Black British: Caribbean. A full breakdown of racial and ethnic identity categories of Black people in Britain is given later in the chapter.

⁸ Black African migration to the UK has mostly been in the 1980s and 1990s (See 1991 and 2001 Census)

⁹ A report by Lupton and Power (2006) on the distribution of Britain’s’ main Minority Ethnic Groups in London and across the country gives a comprehensive breakdown of figures and population growth.

census figures, a total of 39.14 million Black Africans form part of the country's total population of 49.32 million (StatSA, 2009:3). Ruled concurrently by two powerful, antagonistic colonial rulers followed by the Apartheid governments of independent South Africa, the country is largely characterised by increasing racial divisiveness (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005:568). Based on a system of racial categorisation and separation, the Apartheid system divided the population into whites, which include Afrikaners and the English, Black Africans, Asians, and coloured (Hart & Padayachee, 2000; Schutte, 2000; A. Thomas & Bendixen, 2000). This division governed every sphere of life from housing and education to access to employment and career development. According to Littrel and Nkomo (2005), non-white males were relegated to unskilled, menial jobs while white males occupied skilled, professional and managerial positions¹⁰. This historical racial divide was accompanied by patriarchal assumptions that women of all races were naturally subordinate to males. Women of all races were expected to be homemakers and were legally classified as "minors." However, when they did find employment, Black African, coloured and Asian women with some education worked primarily as teachers, social workers and nurses while those with little or no education worked mainly in domestic and unskilled factory jobs. In the case of white women, many were employed mainly in administrative and female segregated occupations such as secretarial and beauty therapists jobs.

As in the UK, the South African professional and managerial workforce profile has also changed tremendously over the past two decades. With the end of Apartheid some 16 years ago, the democratic change in government ushered in numerous changes in legislation to address all forms of inequality. South Africa has made huge steps toward gender equity over these years and government has put considerable emphasis on promoting gender equality (Booyesen, 2005; Littrell & Nkomo, 2005; Mathur-Helm, 2004a). Similar to the UK, the government has introduced laws aimed at eliminating patterns of inequalities. However, as I elaborate in Chapters 5 and 6, these formal policies and equality initiatives – though aimed at promoting equality, are achieving very different results. In South Africa, five decades of apartheid and its effect on all South Africans remains evident in many aspects of the South African economy. The quality of education offered in historically Black schools remains inferior and good

¹⁰ It is important to also note here that there were many working class whites in South Africa who were employed to do menial jobs which were proscribed so Blacks could not do them.

teachers remain concentrated in urban and affluent schools mainly located in what were historically whites only and Indian neighbourhoods (Burger and Jafta, 2006) .

Where professional people in South Africa reside and work has also transformed post-apartheid. Johannesburg – a city which has been identified as the economic powerhouse of not only South Africa but as the most powerful commercial centre on the continent (City of Johannesburg, 2010), is what I have chosen over other African cities to study alongside London as I view it as being one African city that has a more comparable organisational environment to London than other African cities. Founded in 1886 following the discovery of gold on the Reef, Johannesburg has grown into a world-class city. It is the provincial capital of Gauteng Province. Gauteng - which consists of Pretoria, Johannesburg and the mining region of Witwatersrand – occupies 2 percent of the land of South Africa¹¹ (Bynes, 1996) and is the most populous province in South Africa with a total population of 9 million people. Johannesburg has a population of 3.2 million people with Black Africans accounting for 73 percent of the city’s total population (followed by whites at 16 percent, Coloureds at 6 percent and Asians at 4 percent)¹². This total population spreads across 1,000, 930 households, with 42 percent of the population under the age of 24 and 49 percent under the age of 34. According to the 2001 census, there were marginally more men (4.45 million) than women (4.4 million) living in Gauteng Province (Statistics SA, 2001).

Since the 1990s exodus from Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD) to the northern suburbs of the city, Sandton became known as the financial and business centre of the country. Today it is home to the Johannesburg Stock exchange (JSE) Ltd, the largest stock exchange on the African continent and the 16th biggest in the world, Johannesburg generates 16.5 percent of the country’s wealth. Employing more than 12 percent of the country’s workforce, more than 70 percent of South African companies

¹¹ South African population density averaged 34.4 persons per square kilometre in 1995. The most populated areas of the country up, until the democratic elections of 1994, were the homelands - with some 300 people per square kilometre. The most urbanised provinces are Gauteng (nearly 96 percent), followed by the Western Cape (86 percent) and Northern Cape (73 percent). This is in contrast to the Northern Province which has a mere 9 percent urbanisation. (City of Johannesburg, 2010).

¹² Referred to as the ‘Rainbow Nation’, South Africa’s population is one of the most complex and diverse in the world consisting of Whites, Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Others. The Black population is divided into four major groups – Nguni, Sotho, Shangaan-Tsonga and Venda. The white population is mainly made up of Afrikaans descent (60 percent), with many of the remaining 40 percent of British descent. There are eleven official languages, namely English, Afrikaans, Ndebele, Sepedi, Xhosa, Venda, Tswana, Southern Sotho, Zulu, Swazi and Tsonga. (<http://countrystudies.us/south-africa/45.htm>).

have their headquarters here. Regarded by some as the most powerful commercial centre on the African continent, Johannesburg is also home to 43 percent of the city's female working population. (Details of structure of women's labour are discussed in chapter 5). Sandton has also witnessed an increase in the number of Black African, Indian and Coloured people moving into the area – previously the preserve on the white population. As I discuss in Chapter 4, many of my research participants are part of the growing emerging middle/upper middle class and transnational elites who have come to work and reside in the area.

1.3 Contribution to Feminist and Organisational Theory

During the past three decades, many theories of gender inequalities have been developed and the number of texts within feminist and organisational theory that specifically address professional and managerial women's experiences within the workplace and family life have grown. However, research on the interface of work and family for BME professional and managerial women working and living in the UK and Sub-Saharan Africa remains very limited, leaving many organisational and social research questions unanswered. To my knowledge, while there is some literature on Asian¹³ women in management, it is largely restricted to Asian countries. So while my aim is not to do a comparative analysis between the differences in experiences of white and black professional and managerial women *per se*, the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class remain an important component in the conceptual framework of my research. As I elaborate in Chapter 2, while feminist economists are amongst those who have made progress in connecting the dynamics of gender, race and class, more needs to be done, particularly in drawing attention to interconnections of gender with race and class, race with gender and class, and class with race and gender (Brewer et al., 2002). According to Browne and Misra (2003:487), most sociologists – feminist or otherwise – who study economic inequality also readily acknowledge that any analysis of women that ignores

¹³ Academic research often aggregate East Asian (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, and Korean etc); South East Asian (i.e., Filipino, Hmong, Laotian, Malaysian, Thai, Vietnamese, etc.); South Asian (i.e., Bangladeshi, Asian Indian (as opposed to Native American Indian), Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc). See Rituc, S and Lee, S.J (2007), *Asian Women and Work-Family Issues*, Sloane Work and Family Research Network, Retrieved February 25, 2010 <http://wfnetwork>
With regard to the UK and this thesis, all reference to the term Asian – unless specified- refers to South Asians, i.e., Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans.

race will be incomplete and may very well simply describe patterns of white women. Likewise, theories of racial inequality that exclude gender from their frameworks are similarly inadequate for understanding the lives of women of color). With regard to Black managerial and professional women working in the corporate world, these women continue to be minorities in terms of both race and gender in a predominantly white- and male corporate environment in the UK and white and Black male environment in South Africa.

With regard to South Africa and literature on professional and managerial women, my literature review shows a growing increase in research that examines the work-family interface of Black and white women. However, literature on the lives of similar Black African women in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa still remains limited. It is therefore my intention to address some of these issues. By doing so, I will contribute to the current process of corporate awareness and change that recognises differentiation amongst women's subjectivities and locations and explore how these differentiated social groups experience different forms and levels of inequality within the workplace.

Visibility to Internal and External Barriers

My other aim in conducting this study is to give more visibility to the overall impact of occupational and emotional stress that the women in my research experience. Scores of Black African women currently exist in a marginal position both within the workplace and within their own societies. Originating from a continent where, culturally, most women are expected to get married and have children of their own, the pressure on many Black African women to succeed in all of their roles can be immense. Despite many Sub-Saharan Black African women having always participated in income-generating activities, declining Black African economies¹⁴ have made it even more necessary for them to engage in full-time paid work, even when overwhelmed with domestic responsibilities. Declining economies and the impact of HIV/AIDS has further contributed to changing gender roles within the region. Countless women are involved in dual-earner families, head single parent families or are single women with caring responsibilities for elderly parents and/or siblings. For others, while male breadwinners

¹⁴ With the exception of South Africa and to a lesser extent Botswana.

remain the norm for a large number of Black African nuclear families, an increasing number of women find themselves assuming the role of main breadwinner or co-provider - whether formally or informally.

While, on the surface, these factors may appear to be no different from the experiences of women in western economies who share similar predicaments primarily due to gender, racial/ethnic and class expectations (S. Aryee, 2005:261), numerous Black African women face additional pressure brought about by factors such as the ever-changing economic, social and cultural formations which influence socio-cultural expectations of the modern day Black African family, and workplace stereotypical and discriminatory practices grounded in the intersection of gender, race, class and culture. As more of them move into the formal economy, many spend a great deal of precious time chipping away at both the external and internal barriers that hinder their progress in the workplace. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, relative to white women, Black women and ethnic minorities in the UK and South Africa, for instance, continue to be under-represented in higher grade employment. In instances where they have top managerial and professional jobs, particularly in disciplines perceived as male, they remain a minority with many having no mentors or role models to emulate. In many Sub-Saharan Black African countries, government and organisational family-friendly policies and initiatives are either limited or non-existent – a feature again that can potentially impact negatively on women who may require such facilities as they endeavour to succeed in their roles as career women, mothers, wives and daughters.

It is against this background that I address the following key research questions::

- A. Although barriers to the entry and advancement of managerial and professional women affect all women and are addressed in current literature, their experiences cannot be universalised. Gaps remain in the literature. In what ways can an exploration of Black African women's experiences contribute to existing literature and understanding of inequality in the workplace?
- B. Despite the continued increase in the number of women entering formal paid employment in most parts of the world and making inroads into middle management positions, very few women continue to advance and remain in top managerial and professional positions. To what extent do women perceive internal organisational, socio-economic and political barriers as contributors to their slow progress within or exit from their chosen careers?

- C. Studies suggest that professional and managerial Black women experience greater role conflicts both within the workplace and their communities due to their bicultural life structures. How and in what ways have the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class influenced Black African women's own life histories with respect to employment?

1.4 Methodological Considerations and Data Analysis

Feminism and Personal Narratives

Second wave feminists have played a major role in reviving the use of life histories as a mode of enquiry into the study of personal narratives (Chase, 2005). Challenging the andocentric assumptions of social science which traditionally viewed "men's lives and activities as more important than those of women and/or constitute the norm from which women's lives and activities deviate," (Chase, 2005:655), feminists began to treat women's personal narratives as "essential primary documents for feminist research" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989:4). By paying attention to formerly silenced voices, feminist researchers challenged social science knowledge about society, culture and history (Gluck & Patai, 1991; Reinharz & Chase, 2001). For example, Kanter (1977) tackled the issue of female invisibility within corporate life by investigating the situation of both men and women in the workplace in a study which also included interviews with secretaries and the wives of high ranking executives. Working-class feminists, Black and other non-white feminists also played a pivotal role in highlighting the relevance and importance of acknowledging the complexities and impact that identity characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, nationality, sexual orientation and disability have on their everyday lives. By approaching women as subjects rather than objects – as such consider their subjectivity, these feminist lenses opened up new understandings of historical, cultural and social processes (Chase, 2005:655).

Analysis of Personal Narratives

In an effort to allow me, the researcher, to discover my participants' individual views and interpretations of their own work and family life experiences, I used the Life History

approach to conduct semi-structured interviews to collect my research participants' 'life stories' or narratives. Narratives, as Chase (2005:656) states, "create a way of understanding one's own and other's actions, of organising events and objects into meaningful whole, and connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time." In addition to this, they also communicate the narrator's (researcher's) standpoint to include why the narrative is worth telling in the first instance and as such, expressing emotions, thoughts and interpretations. There are several diverse approaches to narrative inquiry. My approach in this study is a combination of two sociological approaches. These approaches treat narratives as lived experiences interested in the how's and what's of storytelling and highlights the "identity work" that people engage in as they construct selves within specific institutional, organisational discursive and local cultural contexts; and about specific aspects of people's lives (ibid.). When analysing my data, these approaches assisted me to make sense of the personal experiences of my research participants in their capacities as career women, mothers, partners, wives, in-laws and daughters – all belonging to a middle-class and elite background. By noting the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity and class and the impact that these social categories have on the women's life experiences, I also gave consideration to how culturally and historically specific discourses draw on, resist and/or transform those discourses as they narrate their selves, experiences and realities (Chase, 2005:659).

Listening to the voices within each narrative as a means of analysing data is a move away from the more traditional forms of analysing qualitative data where researchers organise material by locating distinctive themes across interviews (Chase, 1995; 2005; Lieblich and Josselson 1995). As I discuss in Chapter 4, I began by using a grounded theory approach in my analysis, locating distinct themes across interviews and coding them. While I found this approach useful, I felt it important to also acknowledge the women's voices and understand how they make sense of their experiences as narrated to me in their own cultural context. In addition, I found this approach useful in making connections not only amongst the various stories that the women told about the causes underlying inequalities but also between constructions of self (i.e., as competent leader, professional, victim, fighter, care giver) (Chase, 1995:23-25).

1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

In Chapter 2 I outline my exploration of feminism and the intersectionality or interrelationship of gender, race/ethnicity and class in Black women's lives and how it remains relevant in drawing attention to the study of professional and managerial Black African women. While feminist economists are amongst those who have made progress in connecting the dynamics of gender, race and class, more needs to be done particularly in drawing attention to the interconnections of gender with race and class, race with gender and class, and class with race and gender. I investigate these intersections in an effort to better understand how these social categories contribute to shaping the lived experiences of these women in both the labour force and family life. I do this by discussing the core theories within feminism that address the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity and class and how the need was recognised. In an effort to draw attention to the problem of difference within feminist theory and how the intersection of these categories impact on the lives of my research participants, I also examine the core assumptions within Black feminist writings of both Western and non-Western theorists. I end the chapter by exploring some of the underlying causes behind inequalities in women's employment experiences.

In Chapter 3 I give an overview of women in professional and managerial occupations. I address some of the primary macro (labour market) and micro (organisational) level issues in relation to women's current employment within the formal sector. With a focus on professional and managerial women and their experiences within the workplace, I bridge the macro and the micro levels, i.e., the idea that while more women are gaining higher qualifications and gaining professional qualifications, they continue to face gender segregation and pay gaps; the fact that in spite of organisations actively addressing gender equality issues by adopting and implementing policies that address barriers created by corporate practices, and behavioural and socio-cultural attitudes, women continue to experience levels of discrimination and choice constraints. I do this by reviewing literature on feminist and organisational theory primarily from the United States, United Kingdom and South Africa. Special attention is also given to reviewing Black women's subjectivity within management literature and their location within the workplace.

In Chapter 4 I outline my methodology and address the issue of identity and difference in the analysis of women's lives. I present some of the reasons I feel more needs to be done within feminist and organisational research when addressing the career and family lives of professional and managerial Black African women. I do this primarily by addressing the epistemological and methodological concerns relating to research/researched experiences and highlighting the importance of recognising the relevance of wisdom production when representing the Other within research. I conclude the chapter by reflecting on my insider/outsider location as a Black African female researcher conducting research on people I identify as being similar to me both in gender, race and class.

I begin Chapter 5 with a brief overview of how colonialism, the settler rule and the Apartheid system influenced and shaped the gendered, raced and classed nature of the South African labour market. I give specific attention to the position held by women within the Apartheid labour market. In this chapter, I focus on South Africa's employment equity policies, addressing the impact these government strategies have had on their intended recipients with attention given to the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE), Employment Equity Act (EEA), Affirmative Action (AA) and Skills Development Act (SDA). Through analysing my research participants' narratives, I explore and question whether these particular policies are succeeding or failing in tackling past employment inequalities

The extent to which these policies promote equality and assist my research participants as Black women working within the UK private sector is discussed in Chapter 6. I shed light on the ways in which the women in my research experience equality gaps.

In Chapter 7, I focus on the role of the Black African family and how my research participants deal with their hybridised social positioning. I explore how such women with relatively similar colonial histories, cultures, career and professional backgrounds handle their complex social positioning. I focus on these historical and socio-cultural influences and the ways in which they intersect racial, gender and class divisions to impact on their identities as career women, mothers, wives, partners and daughters-in-laws.

I conclude the thesis with Chapter 8 where I pull together the findings of my narrative within the discursive fields of gender and employment.

Chapter Two

Feminism and the Intersection of Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Class in Black Women's Lives

As more women continue to work alongside men in professional and managerial jobs worldwide, sociologists, feminists, organisational theorists and others who study economic inequality collectively agree that any analysis of women that ignores race will render itself incomplete (Browne & Misra 2003:487). Likewise, theories of racial inequality that exclude gender from their frameworks are similarly inadequate for understanding the lives of women of color (Reskin & Charles, 1999). As Brewer, Conrad and King (2002) contend, while feminist economists are amongst those who have made progress in connecting the dynamics of gender, race and class, more needs to be done particularly in drawing attention to interconnections of gender with race and class, race with gender and class, and class with race and gender (Brewer et al., 2002).

While all women's lives are shaped by race and class, and indeed gender, it is important to avoid essentialism, as not doing so captures neither women's everyday experiences nor the structural realities of inequality (Brewer et al., 2002). This is undoubtedly the case when studying the employment patterns of all women. As Bradley et al. (2007) reiterate, whilst all women have less of a chance of getting into top jobs when compared to men, women from most minority ethnic groups, when compared to white women, have far less chance of successfully gaining employment in professional jobs¹⁵ (Bradley et al., 2007:9). These research findings are indicated further in patterns of Black professional and managerial women working in the corporate world which show that, whether in their country of origin or in the Western world, this group of women is still a minority in terms of both race and gender in what is still a predominantly male corporate environment. According to Brewer et al. (2002), with few exceptions, economists who have conducted research on the position of women of color in the

¹⁵ Bradley et al., (2007:9) do, however, acknowledge that there are exceptions to this with British Chinese and Indian women whose employment patterns remain fairly close to those of white British women (i.e., the majority population).

United States have paid scant attention to the intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity and class.

In this chapter, I address the intersectionality or interrelationship of these social categories and how they structure professional and managerial Black women's lives.¹⁶ I investigate the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class in an effort to foster a better understanding of how these social categories contribute to shaping the lived experiences of these women both in the labour force and family life. While I elaborate on women's global employment history and job assignment, occupational segregation and lack of job mobility, and intra-household or intra-family resource allocation, and other related topics in more detail in subsequent chapters, in this chapter I focus on why there remains a need to acknowledge the challenges that are brought about by the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class. As Brown and Misra (2003:487-8) reiterate, intersectional approaches maintain that gender and race are not independent analytical categories that can simply be added together (King, 1988; Weber, 2001). Rather, an alternative intersectional theorizing where possible, is required if one is to capture the combination of gender and race.

I begin the chapter by discussing the core theories within feminism that address the intersectionality of gender, race/ethnicity and class and how the need was recognised (Bradley, 2007; Hill Collins, 2000; McCall, 2005; Weber & Higginbotham, 1997). In an effort to draw attention to "*the problem of difference*" (Spelman, 1990:4) within feminist theory and how the intersection of these categories impact on the lives of professional and managerial Black women, I examine the core assumptions within Black feminist writings in section two of the chapter. I do this by examining writings by both western and non-western theorists (Amos & Parmar, 2001; Browne & Misra, 2003; Carby, 1997; Crenshaw, 1991; Spelman, 1990). I end the chapter by exploring some of the underlying factors contributing to women's slow progress and advancement into professional and managerial positions. I do this by discussing how the intersectionality of gender, race/ethnicity and class are interlocked with what Acker (2006) describes as "inequality regimes" that continue to occur within labour market. I ask the question:

¹⁶ I do not solely focus on Black African women's experiences in this chapter but rather on Black women as a whole as described in my introductory chapter. The reason for this is to enable me to give as comprehensive a review of as much literature as possible that addresses both professional and managerial Black women and women of color (where appropriate for the discussion).

How do these social categories determine what Black women ultimately have access to within society: economic power, education and entry into influential social and career networks?

2.1 The Concept of Intersectionality, its Meaning and Importance

The concept of intersectionality – i.e., the connection between multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations (McCall, 2005:1771) or an analytic tool used to describe the interaction between systems of oppression – grew out of efforts to specify how race and gender relations shaped social and political life (Jordan-Zachery, 2007:255; Weldon, 2005:2). Over time, the meanings of intersectionality and its use as an analytic tool have grown and changed. But as Jordan-Zachery (2007:255) cautions, while the growing use of intersectionality has been an exciting development and a move that should be encouraged as part of researchers’ efforts aimed at “*decentering normativity*”, care should be taken in the use of this concept. To date, researchers using the term have continued to employ it in numerous ways, often inconsistently and ambiguously (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Before delving into the specific writings on intersectionality by multiracial, multicultural and postcolonial feminists – who Browne and Misra (2003) identify as being responsible for the development of intersectionality, I give a brief overview of its various meanings within feminist research.

While critical race theorist Kimberle Crenshaw has been credited for coining the term intersectionality in 1989, the concept has been around for much longer. According to Jordan-Zachery (2007), this concept goes back as far as 1832 when Maria Stewart¹⁷ articulated a critique of difference by challenging the functioning of race and gender by declaring,

Methinks I heard a spiritual interrogation – ‘Who shall go forward, and take off the reproach that cast upon the people of color? Shall it be a woman?’ And my heart made this reply – ‘If it is thy will, be it even so, Lord Jesus!’ (Richardson, 1989:45)¹⁸

¹⁷ Maria Stewart (1803-1879), renowned African American abolitionist and one of the first American women known to leave copies of her speeches.

¹⁸ This quotation is from Maria Stewart’s second public lecture, “*Why Sit Ye Here and Die?*”. It was given on 21 September, 1832 in Franklin Hall in Boston, the meeting site of the new England Anti-Slavery Society. Although as an abolitionist she usually attacked slavery, in this address, she condemns

Although more than a century has passed since Maria Stewart uttered those words, it is indeed Crenshaw (1989) who was credited with developing and launching the concept of intersectionality. A legal scholar, Crenshaw (1989), like other critical race theorists, introduced the term to avoid the pitfalls central to identity politics (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). She rejected the notion of gender, race/ethnicity and class as separate and essentialist categories arguing that intersectionality “denote[s] the various way[s] in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s employment experiences (Crenshaw, 1989:139). Crenshaw (1989, 1991) further highlights comparison of the legal statuses of Black women, Black men, white women and other individuals who have gendered, raced/ethnic and classed positions. She does this by adopting an analogy with road junctions where violent accidents repeatedly occur but are never reported, in which she states,

Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group tries to navigate the main crossing in the city. ... The main highway is ‘racism road’. One cross street can be Colonialism, the Patriarchy Street. ... She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989:139).

According to Crenshaw (1989, 1991), intersectionality not only shaped the experiences of Black women but that of many women from marginalised race and ethnic groups. The location of these women at the intersection of gender and race, added Crenshaw (1991), makes their experiences structurally and qualitatively different from that of white women. By highlighting this issue Crenshaw (1991), as did Stewart (1832), offered the foundations of an analytical framework within which Black women’s lives could be understood. As Jordan-Zachery (2007:255) adds, in so doing Stewart and Crenshaw proposed a political framework that could demonstrate the importance of acknowledging and addressing the many oppressive structures that Black women are confronted with. In essence, intersectionality was used not only to discuss and

the attitude that denied Black women education and prohibited their occupational advancement. In fact, she argues that Northern African American women, in terms of treatment, were only slightly better off than slaves. The text appears in Richard, Marilyn (1987:45-49), *Maria W. Stewart, America’s First Black Woman Political Writer* (Bloomington Indiana University Press) <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=1832-maria-w-stewart-why-sit-ye-here-and-die>

comprehend the positioning of Black women but also as a way of liberating these women and their communities (Jordan-Zachery, 2007:255-6).

Crenshaw's (1989; 1999) view of intersectionality articulates a politics of survival for Black women. She distinguishes between structural intersectionality and political intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1994). *Structural intersectionality* occurs when inequalities and their intersections are directly relevant to the experiences of people in society while political intersectionality centres more on the relevance of the impact of inequalities and their intersections with political strategies (Jordan-Zachery, 2007:256). Structural intersectionality can be of assistance in understanding why for instance, gender, race and/or sexuality can be seen as a barrier to advancement in a particular occupation. As I discuss later in the chapter, structural intersectionality or inequality remain important themes for my examination of my research participants' work lives.

As the concept of intersectionality has advanced over time, so too have its uses and the challenges levied against it. In the next section, I focus my attention on how other researchers have used intersectionality to “*articulate a politics of survival for Black women*” (Jordan-Zachery, 2007:256). I also pay specific attention to multicultural feminists' critiques of Crenshaw's intersectional approach which they viewed as tending to obscure specific problems uniquely experienced by Black women and which differ from those of Black men and white women.

The Complexity of Intersectionality and Feminist Research

As mentioned in the previous section, the concept of intersectionality, grew out of efforts to specify how race and gender relations shaped social and political life (Weldon, 2005:2). Over time, researchers have used intersectionality to include “the connection between multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations” (McCall, 2005:1771). According to Browne and Misra (2003), a great deal of the work which builds on Crenshaw's analytical framework is rooted primarily in the work of scholars falling under the rubric of multiracial feminism, multicultural feminism or

postcolonial feminism¹⁹ (Baca & Thorton, 1996; Browne & Misra, 2003; Lorber, 1998; C. T. Mohanty et al., 1991). [As I point out in this section,] these feminists have played a pivotal role in embracing intersectionality and bringing this debate to the forefront in the academy.

Feminists' position in this debate is such that following critics' first allegations that feminism claimed to speak universally for all women, and in so doing failed to understand what it means to be a woman under different historical circumstances, feminist research became aware of the need to move beyond the limitations of using gender as a single analytic category (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005). According to Brah and Phoenix (2004:76), throughout the 1970s and 1980s, this concept of '*global sisterhood*' caused a great deal of debate and concern as on going research was perceived as failing to acknowledge the power relations that divide women as a whole. Furthermore, the privileging of white and middle-class western views as the "norm" within feminist research was seen as one major contributor to this debate which criticised the way in which issues were theorised and how this process was done (West & Fenstermaker, 1995). As Young (1990) posits, white middle-class women's position as researcher and author gave them the advantaged viewpoint in what was perceived as a racist and class-bound culture. This, coupled with a Western tendency to construct theories around the self as distinct from "other", further distorted some feminists' depictions of reality in predictable directions (Baca & Thorton, 1996; West & Fenstermaker, 1995; Young, 1990). Adding to this debate, Hurtado (1989) further noted that, due to the requisite time and resources that were required in the production of feminist writing, published feminist scholarship remained beyond the reach of many non-white women in earlier days explaining,

without financial assistance, few low-income and racial/ethnic students can attend universities; without higher education, few working-class and ethnic/racial intellectuals can become professors (Hurtado, 1989:838).

¹⁹ Brown and Misra (2003) also make a note here about the importance of acknowledging that while multiracial feminist theory is largely interdisciplinary and draws on a range of disciplines i.e. from literary criticism to political science, their comments here (as will also be the case in this chapter) focus on sociological contributions to multiracial feminist theory.

When it came to the question of race, race-based critics have further pointed to the racism and classism of white, middle-class feminist scholars themselves as being part of the problem. According to West and Fenstermaker (1995), despite their numerous expressions of awareness and concern over the difficulties experienced by minority and working-class women, the gate-keepers for important feminist journals were mostly white and as mainstream as male gate-keepers for most social science or humanities publications (Baca & Thorton, 1996:293; Hill Collins, 1990). To illustrate this point, Rich (1979) further contends that although white (middle-class) feminists most likely did not deliberately regard their race as superior to any other, they remained often time afflicted with a form of “white solipsism”. This solipsism - described by Rich as the tendency to “think, imagine and speak as if whiteness describes the world” (Rich, 1979)²⁰, made it virtually impossible for them to envision how women who are not white and middle class fit into the picture. The creation of this tunnel vision, according to Rich (1979:306), simply did not perceive non-whites’ experiences or existence as worthy or significant, unless in intermittent, impotent guilt flexes, which in some cases had little or no long-term, continuing usefulness (West & Fenstermaker, 1995:11)²¹.

2.2 Understanding Differences Between and Within Groups

Once the importance of incorporating women’s distinctive experiences in order to gain a better understanding of their different historical circumstances had been recognised, the broader issue of male bias in research raised questions about how to proceed (McCall, 2005:1775). In an effort to counteract researchers’ inclination toward neglecting and misrepresenting women’s experiences within research, from whatever vantage point, Scott (1986) looked at how the introduction of gender as an analytical category, feminism as theoretical perspective, and male dominance as a major social institution, became necessary (McCall, 2005). These debates inspired feminist scholars to question the very construction of modern society i.e., the valued categories that were associated with the male side of the modern male/female binary opposition which they identified as contributing and enacting the exclusion of women and femininity

²⁰ Spelman (1990:207) does however, point out here that in philosophical literature “*solipsism is the view according to which it is only one’s self that is knowledgeable or, it is only one’s self that constitutes the world*”. See this page for more details.

²¹ More recently Ali (2007) has commented on this debate as I illustrate at the end of this chapter.

(ibid:1776). For example, Black scholars such as Davis (1981), Lorde (1984) and Hill Collins (1991) argued that,

systems of [masculinist] domination systematically glossed over the experiences of marginal groups in the US, such as Black women, by implicitly taking white, middle-class women or Black men as the exemplary victims of systems of sexism or racism (Prins, 2006:278).

Spelman (1990) further developed this argument by specifically drawing on a number of white feminist writers who had developed their own analysis of sexism and classism. By comparing and contrasting these works with “other” forms of oppression, Spelman (1990) found the basis for additive models of gender, race and class and the “ampersand problem”. Citing de Beauvoir’s work, for instance, which tends to address comparisons between sex and race, or between sexism and racism, between class, or between sex and culture..., and comparisons between sexism and racism and sexism and classism, Spelman (1990:115) pointed out how this literature illustrated a readiness to look for links between sexism and other forms of oppression as distinct from sexism. According to her, these attempts to add “other” elements of identity to gender or “other” forms of oppression ultimately worked to disguise the race (white) and (middle) class identities of individuals perceived as “woman” in the first place (Spelman, 1990). Concurring with this argument is Weldon (2005) who also perceived these forms of links as inadequate as they tended to obscure specific problems experienced by Black women. According to Weldon (2005), Black women faced many problems as “*Black women*” and as a result, their unique perspectives, identities and experiences could not be derived from examining the experiences of Black men or white women (Weldon, 2005:3).

In her book ‘*Ain’t I a Woman*’, bell hooks (1982) similarly questioned the common analogy many feminists used between the situation of women and the situation of Blacks. She argued that Black women’s experience had been obscured by a political movement and theoretical discourse that tended to focus on Blacks and women as separate groups stating that this situation implies that “all women are White and all Blacks are men” (hooks, 1982). She further added that because of such issues, a new approach to examine the intersection of these systems of inequality was needed in order to better understand the distinct and frequently conflicting dynamics that shaped the lived experiences of individuals in these social locations.

In addition to this, other women of color, in the United States in particular, further argued that by highlighting the issue of differences amongst women and how their experiences were misrepresented, their oppression was not the same as that of men. According to Hill Collins, there remained a need to recognise class, racial, ethnic, sexuality and gender subordination (Hill Collins, 2000) while hooks (1984) cited the ongoing oppression that Black women faced from fellow Black men and from whites of both genders. As hooks added, white women had participated in this oppression directly or indirectly by either remaining passive about unjust structures that oppressed women or by contributing to them (hooks, 1984). This failure in the critique of gender-based and race-based research to account for lived experience at neglected points of intersection (McCall 2005:1771) will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

2.3 Methodological Approaches and Researching Intersectionality

While McCall (2005:1772) attributes women's studies and feminist researchers with furthering and advancing the theoretical development in intersectionality, she has however been quick to point out that not enough attention has been paid to methodology, particularly to how intersectionality had produced new sets of methodological conundrums. In an attempt to address this problem, McCall (2005) highlights three approaches that she identifies as being useful in thinking about intersectionality, namely the anticategorical approach, intracategorical approach and the intercategory approach. According to McCall (2005), the anticategorical approach is distinguished by its deconstructive stance and rejection of categories (i.e., hegemonic structures of classification and social ordering). McCall (2005) construes this tradition as part of an anticategorical methodological approach from which the premise of intersectionality draws its analytical origins. The aim to challenge structural hierarchies or master statuses is viewed as a means to achieving social justice (Perry, 2009:231). McCall's (2005) second approach, intracategorical analysis uses categories in a strategic manner while remaining critical of categorization. This approach, which positions Black women and women of color in the formation of the condition of intersectionality, forces us to recognise the points at which singular and multiple identities intersect and differently use and vary our lived experiences (Perry, 2009:231). So unlike the third approach, the intercategory approach also necessitates the provisional use of

categories, but in this case, the focus is on comparisons between groups. McCall (2005:1774) identifies intracategorical complexity as an approach which is suitable for researchers focused on particular social groups at neglected points of intersection as it enables them to reveal the complexity of lived experience within such groups. This approach starts with complexity and works its way towards unravelling the implications (McDowell, 2008:503).

According to McCall (2005), the intracategorical complexity is a particularly helpful approach for analysing the experiences of Black women. Reiterating the arguments by Crenshaw regarding the problems brought about by additive intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1994), McCall (2005) continues by cautioning that it is impossible to understand a Black woman's experience from prior studies of gender combined with prior studies of race as the former primarily focused more on white women while the latter focused on the experience of Black men. To illustrate this argument, McCall (2005) gives the example of Black women's position in society during the days of slavery in the United States. Black women were perceived to have achieved equality with Black men relative to white women because the conditions of slavery and white supremacy gave them no other choice but to work along side Black men (McCall, 2005:1780). This argument resonates with earlier work by Davis (1971) and King (1988). Davis specifically indicated that "the alleged benefits of the ideology of femininity did not accrue" to Black female slaves as they were expected to toil in the fields in the same fashion as Black men (Davis, 1971:7). Similarly, King stated that while Black women workers endured similar physically demanding labour and brutal punishment as Black men, the women were also subject to forms of subjugation that only applied to women (King, 1988:47). As Davis also noted previously in *Women, Race and Class*, "If the most violent punishments of men consisted in floggings and mutilations, women were flogged and mutilated, **as well as raped** [my emphasis]" (Davis, 1982:7).

Historian Gerda Lerner (1973; 2005) gives further impetus to the discussion on Black women's domestic and reproductive responsibilities. Lerner sees this oppression of Black women under slavery as having coupled with further responsibility of not only performing the same duties and work as men but also having to take responsibility of childbearing and childrearing as well (Lerner, ; 1973:15). According to Lerner (1973),

while simultaneously using their reproductive and child-bearing activities to enhance the quality and quantity of the slave “capital” economy, Black women were also mistresses and sexual slaves of white men. In all, these experiences distinguished them from white females’ sexual oppression as it could only have existed in relation to racial and class based domination (King, 1988:47). Hence, this mother/housewife role, when viewed in this context, does not have the same meaning for women who (historically) have been racially oppressed as it does for those not so oppressed (Davis, 1971; Spelman, 1990:123).²²

In view of the relevance of taking on an intersectional approach in both theoretical and empirical studies, Hill Collins (2000) and Glenn (1999) support the latter arguments by adding that as race and gender are socially constructed, they not only influence individual identities but also influence the way in which individuals are organised within the society in which they live. In addition to this, these categories remain mutually constituted to produce and maintain social hierarchy. These interlocking systems of gender, race and class are what Hill Collins (2000) identifies as constituting a “*matrix of domination*” and it is within this matrix that an individual can simultaneously experience disadvantage and privilege through the combined status of gender, race/ethnicity and class²³ (Browne & Misra, 2003).

In the same vein, I look at Baca Zinn & Thorton Dill (1996:329) who further state that from a multiracial feminist perspective, “Race, gender, class and sexuality are not reducible to individual attributes to be measured and assessed for their separate contributions in explaining given social outcomes.” This observation is also acknowledged by Glenn (1999) and Higginbotham (1997) who additionally highlight the ways that privilege and disadvantages are linked (Browne & Misra, 2003). Moreover, this one-dimensional understanding of inequality ultimately breaks down under an intersectional lens. In the case where radical feminists make claims that men oppress women, Browne and Misra (2003:489) perceive them to have missed the

²² I develop this point further in Chapter 7 where I address the issue of professional and managerial Black African women and negotiating boundaries in contemporary society.

²³ I take note here, as do Browne and Misra (2003), that in addition to gender, race/ethnicity and class, other social categories notably sexuality, ability/disability, religion and age also position individuals within a matrix of domination. However as this thesis focuses primarily on the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity and to a lesser extent class, sexuality and age, I do not refer to the latter categories in any great detail due to the scope of my research.

potential complexity of the economic relation between some groups of men and White women (as is the case for instance when white women earn more than Black women, men and so forth).²⁴

In this section I have attempted to illustrate the relevance of understanding the lived experience of Black women through the acknowledgment of differences that exist between them and women of other races. The discussion has thus far been based primarily on literature from western theorists. Moving away from debates of the North, I now focus on some of the writings of Black African women and theorists from the South and discuss their views on oppression, gender inequality and differences stemming from the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class.

2.4 Intersectionality and Black African Women's Perspectives

For the vast majority of Black African women, liberation from gender (sexual) oppression has always been intertwined with liberation from other forms of oppression including slavery, colonialism, apartheid, racism, poverty and the like. According to Steady (1985:23), several factors set Black African women apart – they are oppressed not simply by gender but because of their race and class. Although the women in my study are considered to be from a relatively privileged group in terms of their educational backgrounds, middle/upper class status and access to job opportunities²⁵, the vast majority of Black African women's lives are structured by a converging system of gender, race/ethnicity and class oppression. As Steady (1985, 2005) explains, because the vast majority of Black African women are relatively poor, the women's movement²⁶ – fashioned around a western middle-class mindset - remains an alien concept to most, particularly as it has historically been perceived as an attack on men rather than on a system which thrives on inequality. She states,

Bourgeois feminism fails to deal with the major problem of equitable distribution of resources to all socioeconomic groups. Such an approach leads to

²⁴ A point I expand on later in the chapter.

²⁵ hence minimising class exploitation for the most part

²⁶ It is worth mentioning here that these same tensions are similarly articulated by Crenshaw's view of feminist and racial liberation movements in the United States. See Crenshaw (1994), *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color*. p93-118

a concentration of energies on sexual symbolism rather than on more substantive economic realities (Steady, 1985:24).

For many Black African women, aside from differences stemming from the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class, additional factors such as their history, sexuality, nationality and culture also play a role in defining their identities. These factors, argues Steady (1985, 2005), not only define their realities and their movements from different standpoints, but also create goals that ultimately respond to their needs. So while gender equality is as important to many Sub-Saharan women as it is to their Western counterparts, it is often not the number one priority. Like other women worldwide who have been affected historically by slavery, colonialism²⁷, Christian missionaries²⁸ and the impact of imperialism by powerful Western countries, Black African women living both in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Diaspora, share a common context of struggle (C. T. Mohanty et al., 1991). As Moyo and Kawewe (2002) contend, beyond western borders, people living in countries whose social formations were previously constituted under a racialised society of colonial capitalism continue to grapple with the consequences of such a system as they attempt to assimilate favourably in the current global economy (Moyo & Kawewe, 2002:164). Some of the long-term effects of these experiences have resulted in different meanings being attached to gender and a difference in the priorities and/or issues that are identified as defining women's oppression (ibid). For this reason, Moyo and Kawere (2002) insist that it remains imperative that attention be given to these issues by researchers if they are to fully understand the prevailing systems that have historically constrained Black African women. If this approach is taken, researchers will then be able to have a meaningful understanding of how oppressed groups investigate ways to escape from, survive in and/or oppose prevailing socio-economic injustices (Hill Collins, 1998:xiii). To further illustrate this point, I refer to Moyo and Kawere's (2002) example of the situation in pre-independence Zimbabwe (which I might add, also reflects the experiences of other Southern African countries including Apartheid South Africa). Racism, they state, operated to sustain the

²⁷ This is, of course, with the exception of 'colonial' countries namely New Zealand, Australia and Canada, where white populations were not subject to genocide, economic exploitation, cultural dissemination and political exclusion (see Loomba 1998). There are exceptions to this: Jolly (1995), for instance, highlights the situation in South Africa where White Afrikaner settlers 'historically saw themselves as victims of English colonisation and ... The imagined continuation of this victimisation having been used in the past to justify the Apartheid system.

²⁸ Islam in some cases

supremacy of “whiteness” and as such, was used as an ideology for organising social life (Moyo and Kawere (2002:166).

More details pertaining to how the Black African professional and managerial women in my research continue to organise their work and family lives are explored in Chapter 7. In this chapter, I discuss how they negotiate boundaries and limitations placed upon their mobility within formal employment and family life in contemporary society. In line with my discussion of why it remains imperative to recognise that gender, race, ethnicity and class are not distinct and isolated realms of experience, I now focus my attention on the impact of “*controlling images*” (Loomba, 1998; 2005b) brought about by efforts to explore and explain this intersection of categories.

Race, Gender, Ethnicity, Class and Impact of Controlling Images

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, it has been argued that the condition of Black women cannot be explained by the category race alone. The concept of intersectionality illustrates that one cannot adequately study race and ethnicity without studying gender (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007:14). Similar to other social signifiers mentioned above, race and ethnicity are largely constructed through words and actions. Historically, race, according to Loomba (1998:121) has functioned as one of the most powerful and yet delicate markers of human characteristics. Similarly skin colour – signifier of cultural and racial difference – has also become the privilege marker of races. As Miles further explains,

either ‘Black’ or ‘white’ but never ‘big-eared’ and ‘small-eared’. The fact that only certain physical characteristics are signified to define races in specific circumstances indicated that we are investigating not a given, natural division of the world’s population, but the application of historically and culturally specific meanings to the totality of human physiological variation... ‘races’ are socially imagined rather than biological realities (Miles, 1989:71)

Race and ethnicity are generally seen as connected. Ethnicity – an affiliation of people sorted by cultural and historical characteristics - is defined here as a modern term for socially constructed identity. Although people may no longer live together in the same geographical location, a shared cultural history, i.e., shared values, shared language and way of life, define their common ethnicity. But as Sollers (1989) adds, ethnicities are

re-invented in each generation and reinforced by a variety of socio-cultural practices in the interest of nationalism, particularly as more people immigrate to where they are forced to “reconsider” their ethnic identity in their attempts to assimilate more easily in their new country.²⁹

Race and ethnicity according to Acker (2006:442), incorporate multiple social realities which are often reflected through gender and class differences. Intersections between races are frequently ignored which can be problematic for some. As I briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, some of my research participants of mixed racial parentage (Black African and European White) have chosen to identify themselves as Black and not as the Government and socially ascribed ‘Coloured’ identity³⁰. Their reasons as well as the reasons of those who chose to identify themselves as belonging to more than one racial category are also discussed later on in the thesis. For now, I focus more on why the category race has been used as a primary tool of social oppression. As DeFrancisco and Palczewski state, it still remains difficult to give a precise definition of race other than to say that “race is a way in which groups of people are socially identified” (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007:14). In countries with Black or dark-skinned nationals, race has particularly been used as a primary tool of social oppression. But differences within race are often marked out by shades of colour. In the United States, the Caribbean or South Africa for instance, fair skin has been preferred socially – even amongst the Black Africans themselves. According to hooks (1995), a fairer-skinned person of color is more likely to be perceived as attractive and successful than is a person of darker skin. Lont (2001) attributes this bias towards whiteness as being widespread due to the globalization of Western values, products and images, which view whiteness as “the norm to which all other racial identities are compared” (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007:15), with the comparisons rarely being different and equal. When this central position of whiteness is allowed to become normalised to the extent that white persons

²⁹ See DeFrancisco & Palczewski (2007:14) for examples on this where they make reference to Jewish, German and Italian immigrants to the United States in the 1700s. The ways in which my research participants “reconsider” their ethnic identities in their attempts to assimilate in the new South Africa and fit into the UK society is discussed in more detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

³⁰ In addition to the explanation I give in this chapter, I would also like to highlight Browne & Misra’s example of the situation in the United States where the dominant white defined racial category of Black by “the one drop rule” categorised an individual who had any Black ancestry as Black (see Wright (1992) for additional information on contemporary US census shifts in racial categories). Another example is the changing shift in the Black and ‘Coloured’ identity in South Africa – again a subject I give more detail on in Chapter 5.

see their superiority as the norm and not as culturally created, the conceptualisation effectively hides the power of this category. For this reason DeFrancisco and Palczewski assert that it is particularly important that researchers recognise whiteness and the strategies of whiteness in the study of gender adding, "...if one does not, race remains a concern only for non-whites, and gender, when studied alone, remains implicitly an identity owned solely by whites" (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007:15)³¹.

As with race and ethnicity, gender is also a category that is socially constructed to maintain social hierarchy (Browne & Misra, 2003:489). Defined as "... the varied and complex arrangements between men and women, encompassing the organisation of reproduction, sexual divisions of labour and cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity" (Bradley, 1996:205), gender creates social differences between women and men that go beyond any biological and physiological differences. According to Essed (1991), literature on the struggle of Black women has explicitly criticized rigid economic reductionism and argued that Black women living in white dominated societies (or as is the case of a country like South Africa where the majority population is Black but the economy has historically been controlled by the white minority population) experience exploitation through race. This situation, according to Essed (1991), can also be said to be the case for gendered oppression. But as she points out, the discussion of the experience of Black women where Black feminists seem to agree that race, rather than gender remains the primary source of oppression still poses the question in terms of whether it is racism, sexism or the intersection of both gender and race³² that remains the primary source. Essed (1991) instead chooses to perceive the two as intertwined and juxtaposed becoming more a hybrid phenomenon or what she terms '*gendered racism*'. Gendered racism is what she perceives as describing the racial oppression of Black women as structured by racist and ethnicist perspectives of gender roles (Carby, 1997,1982). Essed (1991) notes, however, that not only women, but Black men as well, are confronted with this racism structured by racist constructions of gender roles³³.

³¹ This point is also made by Mohammed (2002) who writes about the racial makeup in Trinidad. Mohammed points out how preference for light skin in this country also reflects the higher status of those who do not work outside. Thus those who do not work outside are more pale and receive more status. This way of thinking can be applied to situations in other Sub-Saharan, European and Asian countries.

³² Class should also be included here

³³ While I think the issue of Black men's agency and the impact of racism on them is important, I do not discuss it in greater detail as it goes beyond the immediate scope of this thesis.

Values and practices associated with gender are extremely complex as they are interwoven with the beliefs and practices associated with race and other factors (Browne & Misra, 2003). For instance, Browne and Misra (2003) argue that the traditional definitions of femininity that include passivity and weakness within Western literature describe the social norm for a white middle-class woman, - a practice that historically constructed Black femininity in union to this image (Browne & Misra, 2003; Spelman, 1990). Hill Collins (2000) discusses these “controlling images” that denigrate and objectify Black women - i.e., asexualized Mammy, aggressive, domineering, and unfeminine – as images that work to justify their racial and gender subordination.

References to Black African women’s agency in the limited existing literature on the history of the Black African continues to be criticized as being distorted, racist and sexist (Beoku-Betts & Njambi, 2005:122; Koopman, 1995). Many perceive this material as rarely addressing the agency of these women and when so, often in stereotypical images – from fertile and nurturing earth women to beasts of burden, voiceless victims, lazy and debauched young beauties (Azevedo, 2005; Beoku-Betts, 1976; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997; Walker, 1990). French scholar Gobineau (1853-1855) produced material on Black African women that has come to be known as the master text of nineteenth century European racism. Mama (1995:19) refers to his text *L’essai sur l’inegalite des races humaines* (1853-1855)³⁴ as a text that illustrated Black Africans as completely devoid of intelligence, unable to think in any reflective manner ... lacking sophisticated linguistic skills and the scientific and political faculties of Europeans. As such, and in line with the prevailing notions concerning the inferiority of women, Black African women were identified as the *females* in the human family.

Such controlling images are part of the process of “othering”³⁵ whereby a dominant group is able to define and create a subordinate group through the creation of categories and ideas that label the group as inferior. These images, according to Browne and Misra (2003), reinforce racial divisions by condescendingly comparing Black women with white women. In addition, the images also reinforce gender inequality amongst the two

³⁴ Gobineau, Count de Joseph-Author, was a French diplomat and writer who wrote this essay on the Inequality of the Human Races (1853-55) which asserted the superiority of the white race over other races, labelling the “Aryans” or Germanic people as the “summit of civilization.” [Http://encyclopedia2thefreedictionary.com/Gobineau,+Joseph-+Author,+count-de](http://encyclopedia2thefreedictionary.com/Gobineau,+Joseph-+Author,+count-de) Accessed 7 September, 2008

³⁵ I discuss the concept of Othering in great detail in my methodology Chapter 4.

groups of women by inferring that white women are weaker and in need of more protection (from white men). Furthermore, the casting of Black women as not feminine enough inadvertently posits racialised white forms of gender as normal and superior and ultimately according white women racial privilege (Browne & Kennelly, 1999; Collins, 2000; Johnson-Odim & Strobel, 1999). Once internalised, these controlling images provide the template by which other power differences subsequently become infused into other aspects of social life ranging from identity and self-concepts, to interpersonal interactions with co-workers and organisation of management structures (Browne & Misra, 2003; Collins, 2000; Weber, 2001). The organisation of management structures or, more specifically, the gendering of organisations and organisational practices and subsequent societal inequalities which ultimately create what Acker (2006) describes as “*inequality regimes*” is what I aim to focus on in the final section of this chapter. Before doing so, I conclude this section with a brief discussion on how class and its intersection with gender and race/ethnicity impacts on the women in my study.

Unlike gender and race/ethnicity - which are historically constructed and as such, change over time, - I find class difficult to define in that it means different things to different nationalities and at different historical moments. Historian Gerda Lerner (1997; 2005) refers to class as the amount of access an individual has to resources³⁶ and to power (i.e., decision-making power, power of their lives, the lives of others, power in their own communities). Similarly, DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007) perceive class as what individuals usually use to refer to income levels, which again are measured differently depending on the respective country’s economy. The exact income levels of upper class, middle class and lower classes change with the economy and class definitions of the respective countries. Income alone does not, however, sufficiently define class. Neither do educational attainment or professional qualifications. For scores of professional Black African women for instance, being Black middle class is not what they were born into but rather where they arrived through social class mobility³⁷. Their social class³⁸ – and how it intersects with race and gender - determines what they ultimately have access to within society: economic power, land acquisition,

³⁶ Resources here can be defined culturally and in other ways, but remain real and quantifiable (see Bell and Nkomo 2000:17).

³⁷ Also important to note that this is true of many people from all racial and ethnic groups.

³⁸ Social class in this context includes predominant cultural ideologies, values, beliefs and ways of viewing the world (DeFrancisco and Palczewski 2007:17).

political power; education; technology; and entry into influential society and career networks. Furthermore, this creation of “multilayered locations, relations and experiences that differ according to gender, race and stage in the life cycle” (Bell and Nkomo 2001:17) can also present additional complications. As Black African women with careers in major cities on opposite sides of the globe, the emerging and transnational elite Black African women in my study remain more privileged than most women in sub-Saharan Africa. However, this economic success and social privilege has also brought about additional strain for some particularly in their relationships with co-workers, immediate and extended family and community members. How this hybridised social order impacts on their day-to-day experiences of work, family and community life will be discussed in more detail in this and subsequent chapters.

As my thesis focuses on the lives of professional and managerial Black African women who are part of the continent’s transnational and emerging elites, the discussion in this final section explores some of the underlying causes of inequality experienced by high-skilled employees. I do this by providing an introductory overview of Acker’s (2006) discussion of the relevance of acknowledging inequality regimes as an analytical approach to understanding the creation of inequalities in the labour market

2.5 Intersectionality, Labour Market Relations and Inequality Regimes

As I have indicated earlier in the chapter, research in recent years which highlights the use of an intersectional approach has primarily focused on women of color (Browne & Misra, 2003). As Browne and Misra (2003:495) explain, intersectional approaches provide a powerful tool with which to understand the position of these women in the labour market primarily because of their challenge to neoclassical economic theory, which identifies race and gender as obstructions to efficient market transactions and therefore likely to be overridden in the long run by the need to generate profit. With reference to research on labour market inequalities, sociologists seeking to explain market inequality have concentrated heavily on wage gaps between groups. For instance in the case of studies of the determinants of individual earnings, the focus has either been on racial differences or on gender differences but not on both (Brewer et al., 2002). Researchers conducting studies to determine the effects of race have compared

the wages of Black men to those of white men and the wages of Black women to those of white women. Similarly, Brewer et al. (2002) state that research conducted on the effects of gender have compared the wages of Black women to those of Black men and the wages of white men to those of white women with the combined effects of race and gender rarely contemplated in the same paper (Brewer et al., 2002:7). This is also interestingly the case in a historically racially divided country like South Africa where research documenting gender differences in pay and the effects of gender-based labour market discrimination is also limited, with much of the literature focusing more on racial wage gaps particularly between whites and Black Africans, rather than on the combined effects of gender and race (Grun, 2004; Hinks, 2002; Muller, 2008).

The abovementioned research has nonetheless provided some useful insight into the complexity of race and gender interactions as it has revealed that earnings are consistently larger for men than for women – even when adjusted for educational qualifications and work experience (Brewer et al., 2002). For instance, research conducted by Higginbotham and Weber (1999:327) on professional and managerial African Americans' earnings indicate that they also earn far less than white men and remain segregated in segments of the labour force with restricted advancement opportunities and “*glass ceilings*” (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; McGuire & Reskin, 1993). Furthermore, professional and managerial Black women were found to earn less than professional and managerial white women (Higginbotham, 1987, 1994; Barbara Reskin & Roos, 1990). In the UK, Ryan and Haslam's (2007) research on women in senior positions also remarked on how women continued to be markedly under-represented in leadership positions in organisations (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Similarly, in countries such as South Africa, despite the fact that organisations which previously excluded women and more specifically Black women, have opened up positions to include all women, some employees find themselves viewed either as tokens or excluded from senior positions all together (SA Department of Labour, 2001-2003).

Higginbotham and Weber (1999:326) stress that it is imperative that we understand the ways in which women perceive race and gender-based equality in the workplace for various reasons. One most important aspect needs to be the creation of a common ground on which to forge collective action to redress inequality. According to Higginbotham and Weber (1999), efforts to build multiracial coalitions amongst women

have often been unsuccessful when women of color have been expected to acknowledge a woman's political agenda that does not replicate their sense of the problem (Baca & Thornton, 1996; Higginbotham & Weber, 1999; Spelman, 1990). So for this reason, having an understanding of the nuances of the ways that white and Black women recognise and react to racial and gender inequality, particularly in the case of structural organisations and workplaces, is central in any research that aims to achieve social change (Higginbotham & Weber, 1999).

While researchers have now established that employees' gender, race/ethnicity and class affect virtually all labour market outcomes, more needs to be done to illuminate social and economic inequalities posed by the interconnection of these social categories (Barbara Reskin & Charles, 1999:380). As Acker (2006) points out, all organisations have inequality regimes embedded within them. Acker (2006) conceptualises inequality in organisations as "systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organise; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment as benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; pleasures in work and work relations . Defining inequality regimes as "loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organisations" Acker (2006:443) views inequality as being built into organisational dynamics at all levels in the organisation albeit with varying degrees of disparities. To further argue this point, Bradley, Healey and Forson (2007) add that due to the specific and the imperceptible, fluid and changeable nature of inequality regimes, investigating them poses particular challenges (Bradley and Healy, 2008:58) . In line with this argument Acker (2006) breaks these complex and multifaceted regimes into six interconnected components. These components which I explore in detail in subsequent chapters are as follows:

- the bases of inequality;
- the shape and degree of inequality;
- organising processes that produce inequality;
- the invisibility of inequalities;
- the legitimacy of inequality; and

- the controls that prevent protest against inequality (Acker, 2006b:444).

Bradley and Healey (2008:58) view these components as interacting and operating at different levels, with “*the bases of inequality*” and “*shape and degree of inequality*” regimes particularly operating at what they view as the macro-social and institutional level of the organisation.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class remain key to understanding the bases of inequality in organisations. Although I have already spent some time defining gender, race/ethnicity and class, I highlight these definitions once again in the context of the labour market and women’s agency. Class, according to Acker (2006, 2008), refers to “*enduring and systematic differences in access to and control over resources for provisioning and survival*”. Unlike the situation in some developing countries whereby an individual’s class is indistinctly dependent on their political connections and family lineage more than finances, Acker (2006) defines class in wealthy industrialised countries as being primarily linked with monetary gain with some class practices taking place as employment occurs and wages are paid. In the case of large organisations, Acker (2006) views hierarchical positions as being harmonious with class progressions in the wider society.

Gender, which Acker (2006:444) defines as “*socially constructed differences between men and women as the beliefs and identities that support difference and inequality*”, remains present in all organisations. Until very recently, preference was given to men to work in managerial positions while women were concentrated in lower-level white collar jobs with minimal supervisory roles and lower wages. Gender, according to Acker, was not so long ago almost wholly integrated with class in many organisations: the men predominantly held most managerial positions while women held the lower-level white collar jobs. Both gender and class relations in the workplace, states Acker (2006:444), continue to be fashioned by gendered and sexualised attitudes and assumptions. With an increase in the number of women acquiring higher educational qualifications and entering professional and managerial jobs over the past three decades, many more women now find themselves in these professional and management positions. However, occupations such as personal assistants, clerks, servers and care providers remain primarily filled by women. Although this remains the case for most,

argues Acker (2006:444) women are beginning to be dispersed in organisational class structures in ways that men have been traditionally distributed adding, “gender and class are no longer so perfectly integrated, but gendered and sexualized assumptions still shape the class situations of women and men in different ways” (ibid).³⁹ How these assumptions play out is what I discuss in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

Finally race, as discussed earlier in the chapter, is viewed by Acker (2006) as referring to “socially defined differences based on physical characteristics, culture and historical domination and oppression”, with ethnicity accompanying race, or “stand alone, as a basis for inequality” (ibid). Acker (2006) sees race/ethnicity as being more integrated into class hierarchies than gender. An example of this is the situation of male and female people of color in the United States who have historically been confined to the lowest-level jobs and/or total exclusion from the most powerful (white male) organisations (also perceived as being central to moulding the racialised and gendered class).⁴⁰

The remaining five components of inequality regimes will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter where I review the degree and reasons behind job segregation, corporate culture and inclusion/exclusion, stereotypical images of Black and minority ethnic (BME) women, government legislation addressing inequality in the workplace and how they influence the women in my study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined why there remains a need to acknowledge the challenges that are brought about by the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class. I argue that it is important to recognise the relevance of the intersectionality of gender, race/ethnicity and class and particularly McCall’s intracategorical approach if we are to effectively analyse the lives of a particular group of people perceived to be historically marginalised and /or oppressed. On the whole, Black and multicultural feminists have

³⁹ I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 3.

⁴⁰ I must emphasise here though that there were, and continue to be, some exceptions in cases of Black elites.

reached near unanimity in agreeing that race, rather than gender has been the primary source of Black women's oppression. However, finding an answer for the underlying causes of economic inequality still remains debatable as sociologists, Black and multicultural feminists who advocate an intersectional approach still differ in their answers to how and why gender and race operate in the workplace. The extent to which the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity and class affect and shape Black women's progress within formal employment is highly dependent on a number of factors with inequality differences between high-skilled and low-skilled workers being one of the many key variables.

By recognising that not all women are the same and that, in this instance, differences exist amongst Black women - be it through their personal histories or by their physical (skin colour) appearance, - only then can there be an understanding of the way differences operate to limit or constrain opportunities for women of different races, ethnic groups and classes. Valentine (2007) sees intersectionality as a concept that captures the recognition that difference amongst individuals located not only within the spaces between identities but within those spaces as well (Fuss, 1990). Furthermore, with regard to researching intersectionality, McCall (2005:1781) identifies case studies as being the most representative and effective way of empirically researching the complexity of the ways that the intersection of categories are lived and experienced in research participants' day to day lives. In order to achieve the desired results within the research process, McCall (2005) suggests that the research begin with an individual, group, event or context, then work outwards to disentangle the way in which categories are lived and experienced. By doing this, the researcher is able to look at, for instance, accounts of the multiple, shifting and at times, simultaneous ways that self and other are represented, the way that research participants associate and disassociate with other groups, how one category is used to separate another in specific contexts, and how particular identities become prominent or foregrounded at particular moments (Valentine, 2007:15). In the case of my own research as an example, I chose to conduct in-depth interviews using the Life History approach to gather my narratives. As I explain in greater detail in my methodology chapter, I feel this mode of enquiry puts me in a better position to reveal my participants' individual views and interpretation of their own work and family life experiences in that they "*tell it as it is*" (Letherby,

2003:89).⁴¹By using an analysis that asks questions about what identities are being “done”, when and how, I aim to reveal diversity, variation and differences not only from other groups but within the group that my participants belong to (McCall, 2005:1781) as I discuss in more detail in my empirical chapters.

⁴¹ Also see Gerger 1989; Scott 1998

Chapter Three

Women in Professional and Managerial Occupations: An Overview

The rule of thumb is still: the higher up the organisation's hierarchy, the fewer the women (ILO, 2004:13).

In spite of the last decade having witnessed a marginal decline in the global employment-to-population ratio⁴², the number of women in paid employment has continued to increase worldwide (Beneria, 2003; Davidson & Burke, 2004; ILO, 2009; UNIFEM et al., 2005:13). Of the three billion people employed worldwide in 2008, 1.2 billion, or 40 percent, were women (ILO, 2009). However, as the recent 2009 ILO *Global Employment Trends for Women Report* reconfirms, gender inequality remains persistent within labour markets globally with women suffering numerous disadvantages in labour market access (ILO, 2009). According to the report, women “are too often trapped in insecure employment situations with low productivity and low earnings” (ILO, 2009:6). This employment trend, also referred to as *feminisation*, has seen the developed world in particular witness a gradual increase in the number of women entering formal paid work relative to men (Bradley & Healy, 2008). Compared to the 1970s, the number of working women with children and those opting to work full-time has increased. However, this increase in the number of women entering paid work does not necessarily translate into an equal proportion of the number of women entering professional jobs and managerial positions, nor has it paved the way for their entry into more senior executive positions.

In this chapter, I address some of the primary macro (labour market) and micro (organisational) level issues in relation to women's current employment within the formal sector. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, my focus in this thesis is to examine the lives of professional and managerial Black African women's work and family lives. Hence, my discussion aims to bridge the macro and the micro levels, i.e., the idea that while more women are gaining higher qualifications and professional qualifications, they continue to face gender segregation and pay gaps; the fact that in

⁴² i.e., the proportion of the world's working-age population that is in work.

spite of organisations actively addressing gender equality issues by adopting and implementing policies that address barriers created by corporate practices and behavioural and cultural attitudes, women continue to experience levels of discrimination and choice constraints (Glover & Kirton, 2006:2).. I begin the chapter with an outline of women in professional and managerial occupations. Section 2 gives a brief contextual overview of women working in the United States, the UK and South Africa. Although my study does not specifically look at women living and working in the United States, I have chosen to include this section because I draw quite heavily on literature and research that was conducted in this country with particular reference made to African American women's work lives.⁴³ Furthermore, it is one of the few bodies of literature that pays attention to questions of race and gender. In this section, I also look at Black women's subjectivity within the management literature and their location within the workplace. I conclude the chapter by addressing some of the key internal and external barriers I have identified as being major contributors to Black women's uneven and slow progress within professional and managerial careers.

3.1 Women in Professional Occupations

The definition of the term "profession" remains deeply contested in some circles. According to Glover and Kirton (2006), the term is traditionally used to cover occupations that have controlled entry - typically through a professional body that oversees the attainment of a high level of qualification such as university level. Glover and Kirton (2006) further state that the term "profession" can to some extent also control occupational activities through a "moral code of practice" (p.79). Divided into two distinct groups, Glover and Kirton (2006) describe professions such as Law and Medicine as the classic 'elite professions' while occupations such as teaching and nursing (which are dominated by the state) as more 'semi or quasi-professions'⁴⁴ (Etzioni, 1969). It is important to note though that these latter professions have historically also been viewed as female-dominated professions, indicating the gendered nature of constructions of the classification of professions (Glover & Kirton, 2006:79).

⁴³ I refer to literature on African American women with specific attention given to issues relating to Employment Equity and Affirmative Action policies. In Chapters 5 and 6 I discuss in detail how these policies are implemented and impact on my research participants in Johannesburg and London.

⁴⁴ i.e., fields that are state dominated or controlled.

Holding a qualification should technically give individuals certain advantages within the workplace. As Glover and Kirton (2006) explain, these advantages include having the opportunity to climb the job ladder i.e., access to specialist knowledge, a degree of autonomy and financial rewards, planning, managing and monitoring the work of non-profession workers (Sokoloff, 1992). However, as Crompton (1999:181) argues, merely being a ‘professional’ does not guarantee automatic job ladder benefits. Crompton argues that over the past number of years, attempts to identify universal definitions of “profession” has been abandoned owing to the new types of work and some merging of boundaries between established professions. The end result of all these changes is a blurring of the boundaries between professional and managerial work (Glover & Kirton, 2006). Crompton (1993:123) does however, make a distinction between the two by arguing that professional knowledge and expertise are regulated by an external standard while managerial expertise is regulated by the employing organisation. As such, the UK Standard Occupational Classification’s (ONS, 2000) categorisation of occupations makes a distinction between the two, where professional and managerial occupations are classified as separate major groups (Glover & Kirton, 2006:80).

The continued growth in women’s entry into a variety of professional services reflects the ongoing progress of gender equality in the labour market (ILO, 2004:5; Wirth, 2001:29). Yet in spite of tremendous strides in entering the professions due to their qualifications, acquiring the necessary ‘*qualifications level*’ (Crompton & Sanderson, 1990) appears to be insufficient to enable women to make progress in a similar pattern as men with similar qualifications. This situation occurs even more so in management where women find it harder to enter managerial work where expertise is regulated by the employing organisation rather than by formal external standards (Crompton, 2003).

So what needs to be done to address the problem? Firstly, more needs to be done to encourage greater numbers of women to pursue these careers and progress to senior levels on an equal footing with men. According to the 2000 ILO *Decent Work for Women*,⁴⁵ the overall quantity of women’s employment has not been matched by an improvement in the quality of their employment. While there have been some positive

⁴⁵http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/documents/event/wcms_080274.pdf

developments, women's overall progress remains patchy and limited (ILO, 2004:3). Furthermore, although better job opportunities have been created within the labour market for highly qualified women worldwide, only a small minority of female workers have benefitted, with the majority remaining at a disadvantage. According to the report, women continue to be disadvantaged relative to men in terms of the quality of their labour supply and in their preparedness for the job market (ibid.). On the demand side of the labour market, gender segregation by occupation continues to represent a major labour market rigidity and source of labour market inequalities, with women still facing discrimination in recruitment for employment and barriers to occupational mobility. Many women remain concentrated in jobs traditionally perceived as female such as nursing, teaching and administration - professions for which pay rates are relatively low compared to male dominated professions such as finance (ILO, 2000; Wirth, 2001).

3.2 Women in Managerial Jobs

“Think manager, think male.”(Schein, 1973)

Famously coined by American academic Victoria Schein in 1973, the above phrase continues to be almost as relevant today as it was then. This idiom not only echoed the reality of women's under-representation in management, but also captured a growing conviction amongst researchers that the desired characteristics associated with management had to be similar to those associated with men (Glover & Kirton, 2006). In her study of managerial women and men in corporate America, Kanter (1977) comments on the masculinist construction of management:

A 'masculine ethic' can be identified as part of the early image of managers. This 'masculine ethic' elevates the traits assumed to belong to some men to necessities for effective management: a tough-minded approach to problems; analytic abilities to abstract and plan; a capacity to set aside personal, emotional considerations in the interests of task accomplishment; and a cognitive superiority in problem solving and decision-making. These characteristics supposedly belonged to men; but then, practically all managers were men from the beginning. However, when women tried to enter management jobs, the 'masculine ethic' was invoked as an exclusionary principle (Kanter, 1977:22-23).

Like Schein, Kanter also recognised that the masculinist construction of management did not work in women's favour. According to Glover and Kirton (2006), this had implications for the selection of both managers and women who might find it difficult to think of themselves as management material.

While it remains true to say that management positions within the workforce today only represent a small proportion of the overall workforce, the job category of 'manager' has grown over the past few decades⁴⁶. In general, however, women in management continue to be fewer in numbers when compared to the number of those working in professions. Their increased participation in this sector has been greater than increases in their labour force participation as a whole but women continue to be under-represented in management (ILO, 2004:13). While global statistics show an overall growth in the number of women entering managerial and professional jobs - a factor enabled by women's higher educational attainment and an overall increase in careers open to them - many studies conducted in the UK and the United States with an explicitly gender and organisational perspective still show women lagging behind men. These studies demonstrate that, unlike managerial and professional men, women's career advancement in senior corporate positions remains slower and uneven, with men remaining the majority amongst managers, top executives, and higher levels of professional work (Bhavnani & Coyle, 2000; ILO, 2004; Omar & Davidson, 2001; Wajcman, 1998; Wirth, 2001). Many women face internal and external barriers leaving a disproportionate number of women concentrated in lower levels of management. At junior management levels, women often find themselves in roles perceived as 'non-strategic,' such as Human Resources and Administration, rather than areas with career paths that would lead them to higher levels within the organisation (ILO, 2004). In some instances, when women in management positions are well or over-represented, they too are in feminised niche jobs such as equality and diversity management positions (Kirton et al., 2005).

While I have been able to source some statistics on women professionals and managers, it is worth noting that obtaining accurate global statistics on the number of women working as managers is a complex, if not impossible, task. This is primarily due to the

⁴⁶ This is certainly the case for many living and working in industrialised countries.

variety of definitions used for the term ‘manager’ and differing data collection techniques used from one country to another⁴⁷ (Omar & Davidson, 2001:36).. I emphasise, however, that the proportion of women in managerial positions varies from one country to the next. ILO findings show that, for the most part, countries in North America, South America and Eastern Europe continue to have a higher share of women in managerial jobs than countries in East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa (ILO, 2004:13; 2010).

3.3 Black African Professional and Managerial Women

The number of women entering professional and managerial jobs globally has increased over the past thirty years. However, as I discussed in Chapter 1, only a small percentage of texts within feminist and organisational theory specifically address the lives and experiences of professional and Black African women within the workplace and family life. As a minority group, I find that Black professional and managerial women’s subjectivity continues to be buried in literature that highlights the experiences and challenges of all career women. Little or no attention is given to the possibility that many may experience additional or different barriers and constraints within the workplace. In addition, while there is an extensive and growing conflict between balancing family, community and work obligations in feminist and mainstream analysis of women and employment, the experiences of Black women are rarely highlighted in feminist and organisational theory. This absence continues in spite of a rise in the number of Black women working in management and professional jobs in the past two decades and despite the increase in the number of publications specifically addressing the challenges faced by women in management entering jobs traditionally perceived to be male (Burke & Nelson, 2001; Davidson & Burke, 2004; Itzin & Newman, 1996; Wilson, 2000).

Research on women in management has highlighted the plight of managerial women as they negotiate the pressures of juggling their careers and the demands of family life but

⁴⁷ Even data collected by the ILO is not always perceived to be reliable as administrative workers are sometimes defined as managers in some countries. ILO data is regarded as giving the impression that more women are in management positions than is actually the case (ILO 2006).

tended to represent only the white middle class woman's experience. Apart from a few extensive studies conducted by African American scholars Ella Edmonton Bell (1990, 1993 and 2001) and Stella Nkomo (1988, 1990 and 2001)⁴⁸ and African academics such as Okeke-Ihejirika (2004) and Forson (2007), only fleeting references have been made to the experience of Black women. Nkomo (1988) speaks very candidly about this lack of literature on Black women managers in her chapter '*Race and Sex: The Forgotten Case of the Black Female Manager*,' where she states:

Every time I came across a book or article on women in management, I would hurriedly scan the book hoping to find some mention or discussion of the unique experience of Black women managers. More often than not I found nothing ... The overwhelming implication is that the same sex-role constraints operating as boundaries for white managers influence the experience of Black female managers also. To understand the experience of Black female managers, one merely extrapolates findings from the woman in management research to Black female managers. (Nkomo, 1988:133).

Although this comment was made by Nkomo almost three decades ago, additional research findings within the past five years reveal that the instances where Black women have been included, their numbers remain small. In other cases, racial identity has not been included as a variable in the study. However, in defence of this statement, Higginbotham and Weber (1997) draw attention to McGuire and Reskin's (1993) research in cases where Black women and other minority ethnic (people of colour in the case of the US) experiences have been studied and been compared to equally qualified white women. While results have indeed shown that many Black women experience greater disadvantages compared to white women, McGuire and Reskin (1993) add that many feminist scholars have in the past been reluctant to compare the status of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) women directly with that of white women as they view this comparison as diversionary and divisive, given that the gap between either group and that of white men⁴⁹ is considerably bigger and more significant (McGuire & Reskin, 1993; Weber & Higginbotham, 1997:155).

In the next section, I review the current situation in the United States, the United Kingdom and South Africa. I include a brief discussion on the United States in an effort

⁴⁹ This can also be said about the differences that exist between BME men when compared to BME women.

to highlight bodies of literatures that address questions of race and gender with a primary focus on African American women's work lives. In subsequent chapters, I refer to the literature on Colonialism, Settler Rule and Apartheid that more directly influence the experiences of professional and managerial Black African women professionals and managers in contemporary Johannesburg and London.

3.4 An Overview of Professional and Managerial Women in the United States, the United Kingdom and South Africa

The United States

In the United States, the gap between the number of women in employment and those in management has narrowed substantially over the years (Powell, 1999). According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2006:31), women have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by the country's dynamic labour market over the past half century. Records indicate that women's labour force participation rate grew from 32.7 percent in 1948 to 46.3 percent in 1975, peaking to 60 percent in 2000 (ibid.). Of the 121 million women aged 16 and over in the United States, a total of 72 million, or 59.5 percent were employed or looking for work in 2008 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). In 2008, women accounted for 51 percent of all those working in management, professional, and related occupations, somewhat more than their share of total employment (47 percent). This current occupational profile is similar to the results taken from a study conducted by the United States General Accounting Office⁵⁰ published in 2002 which also found that women managers tended to be concentrated in specific sectors and jobs, with 60 percent of women managers working in professional medical services, hospitals, and education (ILO, 2004:17). As is the case with women professionals, women managers also tended to cluster in certain specialities namely human resources and management-related occupations such as underwriting and accounting (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000).

⁵⁰ United States General Accounting Office (2002), A New Look Through the Glass Ceiling: Where are the Women? The Status of Women in Management in Ten Selected Industries. <http://www.equality2020.org/glass.pdf>

With regard to women's occupations by race, the largest percentage of women employed in management, professional and related jobs were Asian (46.0 percent) and white (40.6 percent). The largest percentage of employed African American women was split with 31.3 percent working in management, professional, and related occupations and 33 percent of sales and office jobs (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). Although ethnic minorities have entered the workforce in record numbers in the United States, their attempt to reach the top of the corporate ladder remains disappointingly low when compared to both men and white women. In 2003, African American women held less than 1 percent of the senior-level positions in America's 1,000 largest companies. This is despite Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action programmes having been in place since the early 1960s(U.S. Department of Labor, 2000). In Chapters 5 and 6 I explore how such policies are implemented and impact in the lives of my research participants in Johannesburg and London.

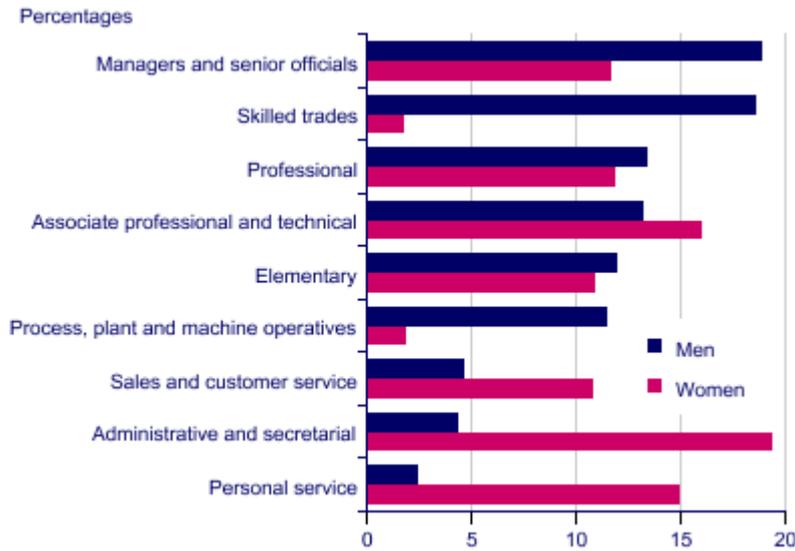
The United Kingdom

The UK workforce profile has also undergone tremendous changes over the past half-century. More women are staying in the workforce for all of their adult lives – be it in full-time or part-time employment. According to the Government Equality Office (2009), the number of women in employment over the past 25 years has increased by almost one third, with women now representing almost 46 percent (12.5 million) of the total economically active population in the country (Government Equality Office, 2009:3). However, ONS statistics indicate that while the rates of employment amongst women of working age⁵¹ have continued to grow, many continue to work part-time when compared to men. This trend is primarily linked to women's caring commitments which find many following very different career paths when compared to men. As Figure 3.1 below indicates, women continue to be segregated into specific jobs namely Sales and Customer Service, Administrative, Secretarial and Personal Service work. Women continue to lag behind men in Managerial and Professional occupations.

⁵¹ The working age in the UK is 16 to 64 for men, 16-59 for women (ONS, 2010)

Figure 3.1

Employment Rates by Gender and Sector



All in employment: by sex and occupation, 2008

Source: ONS (2010), Working Lives: Employment rates higher for men

As I indicated earlier in the chapter, with regard to women’s segregation into specific jobs, research on women managers in the UK confirms that the overall profile of the British female manager compared to her male counterpart has not changed much over the past decade. Women have found it difficult to progress to the more senior positions in both private and public sector management, the legal profession, teaching, medicine and other professions (Bhavnani & Coyle, 2000; ILO, 2004). According to the ONS (2005) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2005 figures, managerial segregation by gender in the workplace continues with the most popular jobs for women managers being in Human Resources and Personnel (EOC, 2006:24).⁵² The vast majority of general managers (i.e., Managing Directors, Chief Executives and other senior managers) are still men, making the boardroom still the preserve of males. According to *The Female FTSE Report 2008*, there was an increase in women CEOs to five in the FTSE 100 with an additional three divisional or regional CEO posts held by women. This increase brought the total number of female executive directors in 2008 to an all

⁵² The Female FTSE report 2008 survey conducted on the spread of roles that women were attaining on their Executive Committees seems to be broadening with other roles now being company secretary roles, general counsel and/or legal affairs responsibilities. Others include directors of communications or external/corporate affairs, marketing, finance directors and business development (Sealy, R, Vinnicombe, S and Singh, V 2008:24).

time high of 17. One year later, the number of directorships held by women on the FTSE 100 corporate boards remained at the same level at 12 percent, with 113 women holding 131 FTSE 100 directorships compared to 834 men holding 947 directorships (Sealy et al., 2009). Unfortunately, due primarily to the impact of the recession, the number of companies with female executive directors fell in 2009 to 15 as did the number of boards with multiple women directors to 37 (from 39) (ibid). Furthermore, there has been a decrease in key positions occupied by women in FTSE 100 companies – four female CEOs compared to the 2008 figure of five female CEOs and three regional CEOs (Sealy et al., 2008). Commenting on this development was the then Minister for Equality and Women, Harriet Harman who stated:

This report shows that we are moving in the right direction and there is still much more that needs to be done. Businesses that run on the basis of an old boy network and do not draw on the talents of all the population will not be the ones that flourish and prosper in the 21st century (Harman, 2009:3).

Latest UK population figures indicate that the population of Britain has risen to 61.4 million people, an increase of 23.2 million since the start of the 20th century (Office for National Statistics, 2010).⁵³ Contributing to this UK population growth is the ever-growing BME population⁵⁴. With regard to drawing on the talents of the entire population, more BME employees are joining the workforce and making some progress in earnings and career profiles. However, from the limited research available in the UK on BME female managers and professional positions, the results indicate that additional studies need to be conducted on the unique challenges experienced by these women in the new 'global' economy, particularly if their issues are to be addressed appropriately (Bhavnani, 1994; Bhavnani & Coyle, 2000; Davidson, 1997; Wajcman, 1998; Weber & Higginbotham, 1997). For instance, obtaining detailed statistics specifically on Black African women in employment in the UK is particularly difficult. There is limited data

⁵³ I am unable to obtain current BME population figures as these will only be updated in 2011. However, figures based on the April 2001 Census indicate the BME population to have been 4.6 million (8.1 percent).

⁵⁴ However, from the limited information available, UK population indicate that the non-white population grew from 3.1 million (5.5 percent of the total population) to 4.6 million (7.9 percent of the total population) between 1991 and 2001 (ONS, 2010). Of this number, Black Africans totalled 485,277 (0.8 percent of the total population). Indians were the largest minority group, followed by Pakistanis, then Mixed Ethnic backgrounds, Black Caribbean, Black Africans and Bangladeshis. The remaining BME groups each account for less than .5 percent but together accounted for a further 1.4 percent of the UK population. Sources: Census April 2001 and April 1999 (Office for National Statistics www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=273).

available from public bodies and as such disaggregation is necessary in order to identify and address the key factors that influence their progression into or barriers encountered in relation to managerial, professional and directorship positions. As is the case for those ethnic minority populations with a more recent history of migration to the UK⁵⁵, the proportion of Black Africans working age grew significantly over this same period. Census (1991 and 2001) figures indicate that the Black African working age population increased from 145,987 to 323,593 over a ten-year period (ibid.).

Statistics on the employment of BMEs living and working in the UK do not present an even picture. There is a 17.3 percent employment gap between BME women and white women (Government Equality Office, 2009). This finding is in line with past analyses of ethnic minority labour circumstances conducted by the Cabinet Office (2003) and Department of Work and Pensions (2006) which indicated that many BMEs continue to face disproportionate barriers to accessing and realising opportunities for achievement in the labour market. These barriers or “ethnic penalties”⁵⁶(Berthoud, 2000) persistently work against BMEs even after taking account of characteristics that affect unemployment such as educational achievement (L. Simpson et al., 2006). Research findings further indicate that, on the whole, BME populations experience longer periods of unemployment than white people and their employment is more sensitive to changes in the economy and therefore more affected by economic recession (Jones, 1993; Modood & Berthoud, 1997; L. Simpson et al., 2006). According to Kofman et al., (2009:9) study on UK migrants, many national groups tend to be clustered in certain occupations. The study found further evidence of segregation and concentration of migrants in low-wage and less skilled sectors - despite some being highly skilled and educated. These findings which reflect discriminatory practices within the labour market are supported by Li et al., (2008:iii) study on the relationship between education, employment, income, social class and group-based inequalities relating to gender,

⁵⁵ Black African migration to the UK has mostly been in the 1980s and 1990s (See 2001 and 2001 Censuses).

⁵⁶ It appears that people from BME population experience ‘ethnic penalties’ in the labour market, that is, they are more likely to be unemployed and to receive lower wages. These differences, as per the EHRC, are not fully explained by differences in individual characteristics and educational attainment. In spite of the numerous studies that have been conducted on ethnic penalties, there is not any concrete evidence linking these penalties to differences in experiences in early years. I do, however, try to interrogate this conundrum in my discussions in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/7_earlyyears_lifechances.pdf

ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. According to this study, numerous people from BME groups with higher levels of education do not enjoy the returns to education that might be expected from their investment. Instead, many continue to experience poorer employment rates and lower incomes when compared to their white counterparts.

With respect to management, like all females in the UK workforce, BME females are under-represented amongst FTSE 100 directors. There are currently only eight (or 7 percent) women directors on the FTSE 100. A case in point is that of research findings on the situation of Black Africans who have shown to have some of the highest education qualification rates amongst the BME population in the UK yet continue to experience high levels of unemployment. A Cranfield School of Management report addressing issues on managing diversity in the UK workplace (Singh, 2002) also highlights the progress that women and BMEs have made stating that while great progress has been achieved at junior and middle management levels, numbers remain low at senior levels in the public sector. The report states,

Few ethnic minority managers are to be found in senior positions in the private sector. Diversity is still often seen as a compliance issue by managers, who reactively ensure that their organisational practices are in line with current equal opportunity legislation. Often feeling undervalued, uncomfortable with the organisational value of their employer, or seeing their aspired career paths blocked, many women and ethnic minority individuals turn to employment in smaller firms, or move to self-employment to set up the kinds of organisations that reflect their own values (Singh, 2002:4).

There are many factors relating to why BMEs continue to experience difficulties in progressing to more senior position – all of which I expand on in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 where I discuss the findings from my interviews.

South Africa

As in the UK, the South African professional and managerial workforce profile has changed tremendously over the past two decades. With the end of Apartheid some 16 years ago, the democratically elected government has ushered in numerous changes in legislation to address all forms of inequalities. South Africa has made significant steps toward gender equity over these years and the Government has put considerable

emphasis on promoting gender equality (Booyesen, 2005; Littrell & Nkomo, 2005; Mathur-Helm, 2004a). These changes have been important particularly to the status of all women in that South African woman - irrespective of racial identity - have always stood in the secondary stratum of their society. A long history of policies and socio-cultural norms that worked in favour of men defined women as inferior to them and, as such, assigned women the position of “*minors*” (Mathur-Helm, 2004a:56) in both the public and private spheres of life – a situation that created inequality of power between women and men. This, explains Mathur-Helm (2004), subsequently led to the unequal sharing of resources such as time, information and income. The issue of race, in particular, had an overwhelming influence on the career progression (or rather lack of it, in many instances) and on the position of professional and managerial Black African women in society.⁵⁷

South Africa today is a country that is working hard to gain full entry back into the global community and economy and as such promotes the rights of all citizens as equals irrespective of race, gender, class, age and disability (Edwards, 1996) (1996). With new policies and strategies aimed at implementing equal and inalienable rights of all women and men, the country is also working hard at improving the status of women in the workplace.⁵⁸ However, while women make up 52 percent⁵⁹ of the adult population in South Africa, only 43.9 percent⁶⁰ of working South Africans are women. This disproportionate ratio of women in employment becomes even more marked as you move up the ranks of the working population. Research on women’s entry into professional and managerial jobs in 2004 showed a slight increase in the number of female executives in management and leadership positions (Catalyst, 2004), lagging behind countries such as the United States and the UK⁶¹. In 2009, a Census carried out on 365 Johannesburg-listed companies and 17 state-owned enterprises (SOEs) revealed

⁵⁷ Details of how Black African women and all women in South Africa were marginalised will be discussed at length in Chapter 5.

⁵⁸ Further details on initiatives and documents illustrating this point in more detail can be found in Women’s Charter for Effective Equality (1993); the Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1993); the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994); the National Report of the Status of Women in South Africa prepared for the World Conference on Women held in Beijing (1995); South Africa Women on the Road to Development; Equality and Peace (Beijing Plan for Action, 1995 (Mathur-Helm 2004; Acker, Barry and Esseveld 1996).

⁵⁹ Mid-year Population Estimates 2008 (StatsSA) Total South African population is 48.7 million.

⁶⁰ Aged between 16 and 65.

⁶¹ I do want to point out here that as figures relate to slightly different entities; this makes it hard to compare South Africa and the UK. However, what is clear in both is that women are underrepresented.

that South Africa has 2761 (18.6 percent) female executive managers compared to 12,078 men. (Census 2009:23). When compared to the 2004 Census results, the number of women in directorship positions increased from 7.1 percent to 14.6 percent in 2009, while the number of executive management positions held by women increased from 14.7 percent to 18.6 percent in 2009 (Census, 2009). However, when compared to 2008 results, the number of women in directorship positions shows little change and remains stable at 14.6 percent. According to the Census (2009) report, executive manager positions dropped from 25.3 percent in 2008 to 18.6⁶² percent while the number of women CEOs/MDs remained constant at 3.6 percent (Census, 2009).

Today, the South African economy is still dominated by white English-speaking conglomerates while the labour force is predominantly Black African (A. Thomas & Bendixen, 2000)⁶³. During Apartheid, South African organisations, for the most part, excluded women and more particularly Black African women,⁶⁴ but they now have to open up positions to meet government employment equity quotas. However, because most Black African women remained locked out of the formal sector of paid employment for so many years, the vast majority have very little experience that could enable them to compete for jobs in established businesses, post-Apartheid.⁶⁵

Commission for Employment Equity research findings for 2001 (Department of Labour South Africa 2003), as indicated below, show that women of all races occupied 11.3 percent of top management jobs and 17 percent of senior jobs, with white males predominate in all managerial positions.⁶⁶

⁶² The report cautions that the numbers must be viewed against the backdrop of the inclusion in the Census report, for the first time, of subsidiaries and companies listed on the Alternative Exchange (AltX).

⁶³ It is worth noting here though that there is now a growth in Black African owned businesses following government's implementation of Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment strategies aimed at eliminating past racial inequalities in the country. I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter 5.

⁶⁴ In this instance I refer to the ANC definition of Black women which includes Black African, mixed race and Indian.

⁶⁵ Details of how other non-white women (i.e., Indian, Coloured) in South Africa were located is discussed in Chapter 5.

⁶⁶ Unfortunately, I have not yet found official statistics broken down by ethnicity, occupational distribution and pay – data which, if available, would be useful in giving me a better indication of current high paid jobs as illustrated in my section on the UK.

Table 3.1

**Managerial and Professional Employees by Race and Gender:
Percentage Representations 1999 / 2001 and 2008 / 2009**

Population Group	1999-2001					2008-2009				
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	TOTAL	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
Share of Total Population by Race	77.90%	9.20%	2.80%	9.90%	99.8%	79%	8.90%	2.50%	9.60%	100%
Economically Active Population										
Male	37.70%	4.30%	1.20%	4.60%	47.8%	39.40%	5.90%	1.90%	6.80%	54%
Female	41.30%	4.60%	1.30%	5.00%	52.2%	34.70%	4.90%	1.10%	5.30%	46%
TOTAL	79.00%	8.90%	2.50%	9.60%	100.0%	74.10%	10.80%	3.00%	12.10%	100%
Professional and Middle Management										
Male	16.0%	3.0%	3.0%	28.0%	50.0%	16.5%	4.9%	5.6%	33.2%	60.2%
Female	26.0%	4.0%	3.0%	17.0%	50.0%	11.5%	4.5%	3.3%	18.4%	37.7%
TOTAL	42.0%	7.0%	6.0%	45.0%	100.0%	28.0%	9.4%	8.9%	51.6%	98%
Top Management										
Male	5.4%	2.2%	3.1%	78.0%	88.7%	9.8%	3.5%	4.8%	61.1%	79.2%
Female	1.5%	0.3%	0.3%	9.2%	11.3%	3.8%	1.2%	1.1%	11.7%	17.8%
TOTAL	6.9%	2.5%	3.4%	87.2%	100.0%	13.6%	4.7%	5.9%	72.8%	97%
Senior Management										
Male	6.9%	3.0%	2.9%	69.5%	82.3%	11.9%	4.6%	6.0%	47.4%	69.9%
Female	2.1%	0.9%	0.6%	14.1%	17.7%	5.4%	2.3%	2.3%	17.8%	27.8%
TOTAL	9.0%	3.9%	3.5%	83.6%	100.0%	17.3%	6.9%	8.3%	65.2%	98%

Source: Department of Labour, Republic of South Africa 2003 Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2000-2001; 2008-2009

When a comparison is made between the Commission for Employment Equity’s 1999-2001 and 2009-2010 reports, it is evident that the implementation of Employment Equity policies is not progressing at the speed at which the South African government would have hope to (South Africa Department of Labour, 2008-2009). In Chapter 5, I discuss some of my findings that support this argument. For now, I argue this point by looking at managerial and professional employee figures by race and gender. In 2008-2009, there were 11.5 percent Black Africans employed in the professional and middle management level compared to 26 percent in 1999-2001 (Table 3.1). With the exception of white women whose figures increased from 17 percent in 1999-2001 to 18.4 percent in 2008-2009, there has been a drop in representation of Black, Indian and Coloured females employed at professional and middle management level. This is a cause for concern as this level provides a ‘feeder’ to senior and top management positions (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005).⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Without having conducted further research to demonstrate why this is happening, I can only speculate that perhaps people from these groups have been promoted and not enough are coming through the ranks. Another reason for this drop could be related to current South African equality legislation’s inability to impact on HDSA professionals who would rather be self employed.

When I compare figures of top and senior management employee representation between 2000-2001 and 2008-2009 in Table 3.2 below, Blacks and females continue to be underrepresented. Black African females continue to be poorly represented in top management (3.8 percent in 2008-2009 from 1.5 percent in 1999-2001) and in senior management (5.4 percent in 2008-2009 from 2.1 percent in 1999-2001). However, there has been considerable change in levels of representation by race and gender in both top management and senior management positions. As I highlight in Table 3.2, for top management level, between 1999/2000 and 2008/2008, white men have declined by a fifth or -21.6 percent while white women numbers have increased by just over a quarter. Black African men have increased their share by about four fifths while Black African women numbers have increased by just over 150 percent. For senior management level, there has also been a considerable decline in the proportion of white men falling from 69.5 percent to 47.4 percent. This is a decline of one third while the proportion of white women has increased by just over one fifth. Black African men have increased their share by nearly three quarters or 72 percent and Black African women by just over 150 percent.

Table 3.2

**Managerial and Professional Employment by Race and Gender
Percentage Change in Representation of 1999/2001 and 2008/2009**

	1999/2001 (%)	2008/2009 (%)	Change (%)
Top Management			
Black African Men	5.4	9.8	81.48
Black African Women	1.5	3.8	153.33
White Men	78	61.1	-21.67
White Women	9.2	11.7	27.17
Senior Management			
Black African Men	6.9	11.9	72.46
Black African Women	2.1	5.4	157.14
White Men	69.5	47.4	-31.8
White Women	14.1	17.8	26.24

It is however important to point out that, though the proportion of Black African women has doubled, it still remains very low at 5.4 percent compared to 11.9 percent for Black men (the comparative numbers for white men being 47.4 percent i.e., men and women at 17.8 percent). Similar to the case of Black African women at top management level mentioned earlier, their increases are from a very low base which does mean there has been some change – which looking at the decline of white men suggests that the policies may have played a role.

From these statistics it also seems evident that, while change is taking place, Black African men, and women (though especially women) are still underrepresented. These statistics further emphasise the continuing existence of the gender and race gap at the decision making level despite women making up 43.9 percent of South Africa's economically active population. As Booysen (2005) and Littrell & Nkomo (2005) concur, the changes that are brought about by the Employment Equity and Affirmative Action policies challenge the existing race and gender composition of the labour force in the country and pose new leadership challenges for individuals expected to implement them.

Having documented the uneven ratio of women's employment in professional and managerial occupations in this section, I examine women's position within the workplace by addressing some of the key internal and external barriers that potentially contribute to their uneven and slow progress within professional and managerial careers despite their educational achievements.

3.5 Why Slow Progress?

Over the past three decades, a combination of improvements in the educational qualifications of women and increases in the number of women delaying marriage and starting a family have produced a pool of women worldwide who are not only qualified but available for professional and managerial jobs. These improvements in the educational qualifications of women have, on the whole, also played a crucial role toward gender equality, women's advancement and social development. However as Beneria (2003:121) points out, a correlation exists between education and labour force

participation, and while this correlation tends to be higher for women than for men, women's academic achievements have not necessarily translated into labour market gains. Instead, obstacles to women's advancement such as those resulting from occupational segregation and gender-based discrimination practices continue to reduce these possibilities. This is also in spite of the introduction in many countries of equality laws and policies making it illegal to overtly discriminate against employees based on race, gender, sexuality, religion and disability.⁶⁸

So why such slow progress? In theory, the increase in women with higher educational qualifications and the growth in public sector and service sector job opportunities for women should effectively pave the way for women aspiring to more senior management positions. However, as highly qualified women continue to struggle to advance into more senior management positions at the same rate as men, one can safely argue that there must be additional invisible barriers that are persistently hindering women's progress.. These barriers that limit women's access to senior management and the concomitant increased responsibilities and higher pay have often been described by the metaphor "the Glass Ceiling" (Burke & Mattis, 2005:165).

Coined in the 1970s in the United States, the Glass Ceiling is a term that has since become a renowned phrase within managerial and feminist literature. Referring to an invisible but impenetrable barrier that limits the career advancement of women, the Glass Ceiling today describes the similar and/or related obstacles and difficulties experienced by talented women in advancing their careers in both medium and large corporations. Many women often find themselves excluded from both formal and informal networks that are a necessity for their career advancement within the workplace (Glover & Kirton, 2006; ILO, 2004; Liff, 1996). With Black women's position in professional and managerial roles perceived as even more precarious than white women's location within the workplace, the term "Concrete Walls or ceilings" has been used by Black and ethnic minority women to describe their experiences (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005; Davidson, 1997). According to Davidson (2002), the limited research studies available on BME female managers in the United

⁶⁸ I want to emphasise here that factors such as disability, sexuality and religion can also play a part in hindering one's progress within the workplace and should not in any way be disregarded when addressing issues of inequality and discrimination. However, disability and religion, in particular, remain outside the scope for this research.

States and the UK indicate that the Glass Ceiling for them is even harder to shatter. As she explains,

What is clear is that compared to their white managerial female counterparts, rather than a 'Glass Ceiling,' Black and ethnic minority women managers are much more likely to encounter a ceiling made of concrete. (Davidson, 1997:18)

Other researchers have also identified another barrier which they call the "Glass Cliff" (Ryan et al., 2007a; Ryan et al., 2007b) . The Glass Cliff refers to the phenomenon whereby women are overrepresented in leadership positions or roles associated with high risk and an increased chance of failure (Ryan et al., 2007a). According to research findings by Ryan and Haslam (2007), once women have penetrated through the glass, they are more likely to confront a Glass Cliff or a situation where their leadership positions are more precarious than those of their male counterparts. As a consequence, these women are associated with greater risk of failure and criticism because they are more likely to be involved in management of organisational units that are in crisis (Ryan et al., 2007a). In short, these walls keep professional and managerial women in traditional feminised sectors or ghettos with fewer opportunities for higher pay, upward mobility and/or the desire to continue working in a large organisation.

However, there are instances where women do break through the Glass Ceiling, scale the Glass Cliff and smash the Concrete Wall to rise to high level senior management and leadership positions. Once in these positions, Rostollan and Levene (2006) argue, some women encounter a "Glass Wall". The Glass Wall theory is

the reality beyond the imposing ceiling – the disillusioning discovery that breaking through the Glass Ceiling neither affords nor guarantees women access to professional equality and acceptance. Instead, after brushing away the shards of the broken Glass Ceiling, executive women metaphorically crash into a new obstacle – a Glass Wall (Rostollan & Levene, 2006:2).

This Glass Wall works as invisible barrier, successfully excluding women from what Rostollan and Levene (2006:3) describe as an inner circle of the Patriarchs, the empowered males and their chosen associates who dominate the organisation. As a result, these senior executives find themselves frustrated, doubly isolated and denied the chance to experience workplace peer camaraderie (ibid).

In addition to all the above mentioned barriers that women experience primarily because of their gender, further evidence from Davidson's (1997, 2002) study of BME women in the UK indicates that their race/ethnicity can create even more of a barrier to their career progress than their gender. She further adds that the difficulties experienced by the women in her study were related primarily to their role as token Black women. Davidson also noted that not only did the women encounter stereotyping and ghettoization, they also felt compelled to prove themselves by performing and delivering work of a higher standard than other women. This was all done while working in an environment that was without same colour role models, mentors or peers. With all these issues to contend with, Bell and Nkomo (2001) view Black professional and managerial women as individuals for whom sexism is entwined with racism. They therefore suggest that we must conceive of a two-dimensional structure to explain some Black women's experiences – a Concrete Wall topped by a Glass Ceiling. Glover and Kilton (2006:90) concur with this argument adding that the Concrete Wall faced by some Black women manifests itself through experiences such as daily exposure to racism; being held by senior managers to a higher standard; being invisible to senior management; being excluded from informal networks and receiving challenges to authority by subordinates.

Mentoring women has been identified as one of the formal ways in which women's management careers can be developed and be of assistance once they are in senior positions. Mentors, it is thought, can provide legitimacy to their female *protégés* in that they challenge gender-based stereotypes. According to Blake-Beard (2001), mentors offer reflected power and share information that would otherwise only be available if one is on the inside of a particular informal network. But, as they point out, many senior white women managers have traditionally had easier access to these informal networks and benefited from such relationships in a way that perhaps BME women have not and, as such, remain less likely to be mentored in the same way (Blake-Beard, 2001).

The ways in which my research participants as Black African women living and working in London and Johannesburg experience and overcome some of these barriers is what I explore in Chapters 5 and 6. In the next section I examine some of the barriers

I have identified in my literature review as key to hindering the careers of all professional and managerial women.⁶⁹

3.5.1 Gender and Impact on Educational Barriers and Choices

UK reports on students' educational achievements indicate that females continue to outperform males in schools giving us no reason to believe that barriers exist within the educational sector. According to the EOC "*Then and Now: 30 Years of the Sex Discrimination Act*" (2005), between 1970/71 and 2002/03, the number of female students increased by a factor of nearly four to 2.8 million whilst the number of male students almost doubled to a total of 1.9 million (Bill et al., 1998; EOC, 2005). In 2003/04, the overall number of students in higher education increased four times with respect to the 1970s level, with female students outnumbering male students (1.4 million: 1.1 million) (Bill et al., 1998). The Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA) report on the destination of leavers from higher education in the UK for the academic year 2003/04 revealed that females obtained 17,000 degrees in Business and Administrative studies while males obtained 14,700. In 2004, 13,500 females compared to 12,500 males obtained first degrees in the UK (HESA 2005).⁷⁰

Unfortunately for many women, these tremendous educational achievements do not place them ahead of males when it comes to launching their careers. It seems clear that opportunities for graduate careers are very dependent on the specific subjects chosen earlier in school. In the UK, for instance, once that choice is made, it can prove very difficult to change as most students begin their subject selections as early as 16 years of age. Research indicates (Aston et al., 2004; Department for Education and Skills, 2003; HESA, 2003) that girls generally tend to opt out of single science subjects and instead choose subjects within the humanities and arts curriculum. By dropping science, degrees such as engineering, physics and chemistry are ruled out early on, providing some explanation as to why women remain segregated into certain jobs. According to

⁶⁹ Again, as there seems to be more literature and data available on both ethnic and Black women collectively, I will on occasion give reference to ethnic minorities in my discussions where I believe it to be relevant to my discussion.

⁷⁰ Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Institutes 2008/2009 will be made available August 2010.

Singh (2002), teachers and parents have a role to play in encouraging girls and making them aware of future career opportunities available to them in technology and engineering. She adds,

Teachers and parents have an important role to play in opening up career horizons for girls and children from ethnic minorities, so that they grow up with high self-esteem, take pleasure in their academic achievements, and have confidence that they can achieve the best of their abilities in whatever career they choose. Too often girls are channelled into lower status careers because of gendered expectations in society that careers still do not matter so much for girls, and that women's careers are the assisting roles for men in organisations. (Singh, 2002:14)

Research conducted both in the United States and in the United Kingdom on education in BME families has emphasised the importance placed on it as a means of scaling the class and race ladder (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992; Mirza, 1992; G. Simpson, 1984). However, Black Africans, particularly those coming from a lower social class, are often disadvantaged within the UK schooling system. Like many ethnic minorities, Black students tend not to gain places in old universities at the same rate as white student. Instead, many enrol in the "new" universities where they earn degrees that often cannot compete with those earned from the more established universities, placing them at a disadvantage when it comes to recruitment for the most prestigious firms (Ahman et al., 2003:4; Modood, 1993; Singh, 2002:15). According to a Women's National Commission 2000 report, Black African women were reported to be twice as likely to have postgraduate level qualifications as white women. These qualifications do not, however, seem to translate into employment within the formal sector (Ahman et al., 2003; L. Simpson et al., 2006). Several explanations have been given to explain women's under-representation in management and educational attainment. Apart from the ones I have touched on earlier, the one argument I want to highlight here is that of women not having invested enough in relevant (vocational) education as compared to men. The jury is still out on this as the situation at present is that women are equally represented in areas such as business study degrees and law degree programmes in the UK. Therefore, while improving women's educational attainment remains key to increasing their representation in management, other factors still need to be taken into consideration.

In the case of Black African women living in Sub-Saharan Africa, education for many continues to be characterised by low enrolment, inconsistent quality, and limited economic returns⁷¹. Furthermore, Black African women are seldom as well educated as men. The reasons for this originate mainly from both colonialist and indigenous influence (which I expand on in Chapters 5 and 6). There are several stages in the development of formal education for African women. Referring back to the colonial era, studies on colonial educational systems in many Southern African countries indicate that they were designed to prepare women as housewives⁷² and subsistence farmers - a situation that created great disparity between boys' and girls' literacy levels. In the 1970s, following the independence of many African countries, there was a push for education in most of the newly independent countries and primary schools and/or middle school education was often made compulsory. With sweeping plans to expand facilities and accommodate the influx of both female and male students, the access of boys and girls to primary school was equalised in some cases. Unfortunately, the equality for many girls ends at this level. While governments have built more schools to accommodate students in middle and upper secondary school, not enough schools were built to accommodate all the students. Instead, preference is given to boys over girls for the limited available places. Reasons for this preference are influenced by both socioeconomic and cultural factors. According to Martineau (1997), the expectations of parents for their daughters are more often not as high as those for their sons. Parents view their sons as the upholder of the family name and future "breadwinner" - not only of his own nuclear family, but also to some extent of the extended family. Daughters, on the other hand, are expected to marry into another family that would eventually reap the benefits of her education, hence the view that education of a woman is not 'value for money' and a less worthwhile investment. Issues relating to this subject are explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

⁷¹ This is perhaps an exception for South Africa which is generally considered to offer the best quality education on the African continent, ranking favourably internationally as well (Martineau, 1997). Martineau is, however, careful to mention that the benefactors of this quality education have not been the majority of the South Africa population in the past – a subject that is explored in more detail by Molteno, 1984; Unterhalter, Wolpe & Botha, 1992; Gewel, 1992; Macgregor, 1996; Subotzky, 1996).

⁷² There were some exceptions, though, as I discuss in Chapters 5 and 7 where I look at the lives of Black African elite families during the colonial period.

3.5.2 Choices and Constraints Between Careers and Family Life

Women's domestic regimes and commitments to caring responsibilities remain deeply intertwined with their paid work commitments resulting in women and men entering the labour market on different terms (Bradley & Healy, 2008). For some researchers focused on women pursuing professional and managerial careers, there is some suggestion that women do not have the essential dedication required to pursue high-level management careers (Glover & Kirton, 2006). Hakim (2000), for example, argues that even when women are highly educated, this does not change their basic pattern of sex-role preferences. A minority of women will choose to be career-oriented and work committed while others will prefer to be home-centred and family-oriented. A large majority, however, will hope to combine work and family lives. According to Hakim (2000), the family-oriented group of women will not be committed to paid work in a wholehearted manner but will instead attempt to search for tradeoffs, i.e., have fewer development and promotional opportunities in return for more flexibility and family friendly arrangements. However, Hakim's (1996) argument that part-time work represents a qualitative difference in terms of commitment as well as a qualitative difference in terms of hours, is seen as flawed. As Glover and Kirton (2006) explain, Hakim does not deal with the more contentious question of where sex-role preferences come from. The impression that some women naturally choose to combine work and family could perhaps be true in some cases but should not be assumed to be the natural norm for all. As I explore later in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, several factors, namely socio-cultural practices, family-friendly policies and the type of organisation and profession also influence the choices that women make with regard to this issue.

3.6 Barriers Created by Corporate Practices and Behavioural and Cultural Attitudes

Corporate Practices

According to Judith Oakley (2000), barriers blocking women from more senior management positions fall into two distinct categories. In the first category, the barriers are created by corporate practices with obstacles stemming "from objective and

therefore easier to change causes of gender imbalance that often tend to favour the recruitment, retention and promotion of males over females” (Oakley, 2000:322). Very few women are given the line experience often deemed as a prerequisite for the more senior management or CEO positions. Without this necessary line experience in areas such as marketing or operations – which typically should be offered to them by mid-career – many women do not stand a chance of ever being considered for top positions. For instance, when women in the United States were first given positions as managers in the corporate world in the late 1960s and 1970s, it was not assumed that this career move would lead to the more senior management and CEO positions (Oakley, 2000:323).

With policies such as Affirmative Action programmes (designed, amongst other things, to promote women and minorities to senior management positions)⁷³ not yet in place, women stood little chance of competing with men (Morrison, 1992). Catalyst research results from a 1990 human resource managers’ survey showed that corporations were still not creating diversity initiatives or policies that effectively lessened the obstacles for women wishing to ascend through the ranks to senior management. Instead, a mere four percent of the companies interviewed attempted to promote women into line positions, concluding that not enough was being done by organisations to promote women into more senior ranks (Catalyst, 1990).

Although programmes such as Equal Opportunity in the UK and Affirmative Action in the United States have now been in place for a number of decades, more still needs to be done to promote diversity awareness and leadership training for women in the corporate environment if women are to compete with men for the more senior positions in the workplace. In the case of Black and ethnic minorities in the UK, for instance, there remain very few management job opportunities within the occupational areas in which they tend to work. Like most women, Black and ethnic minority women are found in careers that have been feminised and have lower pay than the average professional jobs. Often channelled into “ghetto” jobs, namely the health services and social work, many find themselves clustered in the marginal areas of their profession with relatively fewer career prospects (Bhavnani & Coyle, 2000:229; Singh, 2002:20). In Chapters 5 and 6, I

⁷³ I discuss this in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

discuss in more detail how the current UK and South African governments' legislated strategies, policies and programmes aimed at promoting equality and diversity impact specifically on my research participants' lives.

Racism can also rear its ugly head with the most often cited aspect found in Bhavnani and Coyle's (2000) study of white managers' failure to recognise or acknowledge the capabilities of BME women managers. The reasons for this vary, with explanations given relating to the accepted wisdom of managerial competence being based on white and male models and hence the fear or resistance to the Black female manager whose image does not 'fit.' As a Bhavnani and Coyle (2000) research subject laments,

White managers are still of the opinion that we cannot manage and do not recognise our potential. A number of white people resent being managed by Black and ethnic minority women. There is a lack of respect for Black women as managers. Either we are not taken seriously or our 'power' presence and effectiveness is seen as a threat. Our faces will never 'fit in' to the corporate whole or the images of those in positions of power. Being 'different' is viewed negatively instead of positively.⁷⁴

Employers' ratings of employees' '*potential*' can also be as prejudiced as evaluation of '*fit*.' This phenomenon was identified by Kanter (1977) as a "bureaucratic kinship system"⁷⁵ based on "homosexual reproduction," i.e., men reproduce themselves in their own image and, most inevitably, choose those who are similar to themselves for promotion (Kanter, 1993:48). This practice not only discriminates against women but non-white minorities and individuals from difference class backgrounds as well.

Behavioural and Cultural Practices

In the case of those women who see themselves as being well-positioned and qualified for executive positions, other invisible barriers exist preventing them from progressing in their careers at the same pace as their male colleagues. Oakley describes the second category of barriers as "behavioural and cultural causes, rooted in explanations that revolve around issues of stereotyping; tokenism; power; preferred leadership styles; the

⁷⁴ Cited by Bhavnani and Coyle (2000), in *Occupational Stress and Ethnic Minority Issues: Ethnic Minority Women Managers in the UK*.

⁷⁵ Wilbert Moore (1962), *The Conduct of the Corporation*, New York, Random House, Vintage edition, p109.

psychodynamics of male/female relations”(Oakley, 2000) . According to Oakley (2000), women executives are more likely to identify these subjective reasons – i.e., the interaction between organisation and individuals as significant barriers to top positions (p324). As I explain below, they consider their experiences at work to be significantly different from men’s experiences because they are not represented at higher levels of the organisation in the same way as men as I explain below.

Women and Tokenism in Top Management Circles

Research evidence shows that at the top level in private sector firms, women are still not breaking through the Glass Ceiling in record-breaking proportions (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Burke & Davidson, 2004; Singh, 2002). Even when they finally break into the top echelon of the corporate world, many are still faced with barriers in terms of acceptance and voice. Kanter (1977; 1993), viewed by many as a highly influential and important researcher of gender in organisations, identified that when minority groups comprised less than 15 percent of a total category in an organisation, they would be labelled as ‘tokens,’ and, as such, would be viewed as symbols of their group rather than as individuals (Davidson & Cooper, 1992:38; Kanter, 1977).

Studies conducted on professional and managerial white women in token positions have found them to experience additional stress not felt by dominant members of the same status within an organisation (Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Higginbotham & Weber, 1992; Still Leonie, 1993). This can subsequently create a situation whereby women working alone in a department can find themselves highly visible for the wrong reasons. Furthermore, token positions can add to women’s job performance being scrutinised more, a situation that can lead to women encountering unfounded hostility from male colleagues (Bell and Nkomo 2001; Kanter 1977). Although it remains unclear whether Kanter’s framework on the consequences of tokenism can be applied directly to BME women, Bell and Nkomo (2001) state that it nonetheless remains useful simply because they introduce the idea that as the number of minorities (tokens) increase, chances of them being stereotyped and levels of hostility toward them lessen. Having said that, it remains a point of debate amongst theorists as to whether this theory holds true, as American studies have revealed that white colleagues tend to show greater

psychological discomfort as the number of African-Americans increase in work settings. (Bell and Nkomo 2001:12; Tsui et al 1992:549-579).⁷⁶

Corporate Culture, Power and Female Employees

‘Organisational culture’ can be viewed as the interaction amongst individuals and groups in an organisation, or the values of individuals about their organisations and their interactions within the social settings which structure the organisation (Singh, 2002; Thompson & Luthans, 1990). More often than not, it is defined in terms of shared symbols, language, practices and deeply embedded beliefs and values (Newman, 1995:11). According to Newman (1995:11), within this organisational culture exist other sub-cultures that are understood to be gendered - together constituting an important field in which gendered “meanings, identities, practices and power relations are sustained”.

Women working and rising up the corporate ladder have to learn how to interact, communicate and operate effectively and appropriately within this culture. This can be extremely challenging for women especially since many organisations undoubtedly still exhibit strong patriarchal styles of management typically associated with male competency-related traits such as being aggressive, unemotional, objective, dominant, self-confident and worldly (McDowell, 2001:237; Wajcman, 1998). All these traits are not traditionally perceived as female traits. Subsequently, women find themselves having to deal with a double bind in that they have to be authoritative like a man if they are to be taken seriously, but at the same time, not act too aggressively for fear of being perceived as an ‘ice queen’ or “aggressive Black female mama” (Davidson, 1997). They have to manage their language: speak assertively but not aggressively as well as manage their mode of dress, physical appearance and social interaction with male colleagues and clients. Where the organisational culture is all male, women find themselves expending energy on needless self-monitoring and self-consciousness tasks – all of which could be spent on the more important task of doing their job and building their career. How some of these issues are experienced and endorsed by my research participants is what I explore in Chapters 5 and 6.

⁷⁶ I look at this more closely in later chapters.

Old Boy Network and Cultural Exclusion from the Corridors of Power

One final barrier that I want to touch on is the “old boy network.” The old boy network is an informal male social system that stretches within and across organisations limiting access to those who are similar to themselves either by background, position or personal characteristics, and excludes less powerful males and all women from membership” (Oakley, 2000; Singh, 2002). As it functions quite well in preserving and enhancing rewards for males at the top, senior women are left in the cold with no social support, information and opportunities. One white woman in Bell and Nkomo’s (2001) study of the difference in the experiences of Black and white women in corporate America simply describe the old boy network as the armpit phenomenon:

They put you under their armpit and say come fly with me up to the executive suite. They (the men) are earmarked from day one. I truly believe that unless you have been lucky enough to get into the ‘armpit’ track, your chances of advancement may still be real but it’s going to take a lot longer (Bell & Nkomo, 2001:153).

As discussed earlier in the chapter, this social closure has the potential to impact rather negatively on professional and managerial BMEs who already have a limited number of mentors in more senior positions to learn from. How this impacts on the Black African women in my study will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Conclusion

This chapter addresses issues within feminist and organisational theory literature that are relevant to the key issues affecting professional and managerial women’s progress in the workplace. It is clear from my discussion that the number of women entering professional and managerial occupations is on the increase in spite of all the obstacles in their way. However, the pace of change is a slow ‘snail’s pace’ relative to the magnitude of change that would be required to secure equality (ILO, 2010).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Report on equality between women and men – 2007, European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, February 2007. Also see http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/publications/2007/keaj070001_en.pdf

As I have highlighted in this chapter, key factors, namely masculinist constructions of management; under-investment in human capital (i.e., school subject choices and vocational training); preferences and prejudices; socialisation and stereotypes; entry barriers and organisational practices all work toward enforcing women's unequal position within professional and managerial occupations. Other than governments, organisations have, over the years, also worked toward addressing this issue by implementing equality legislation. In South Africa, government strategies/policies, namely the Broad-Based Economic Empowerment (B-BEE), Affirmative Action (AA) and the Skills Development Act (SDA) have been implemented with their aim being to tackle old and current gender, racial/ethnic and class inequalities that re-enforce barriers within the workplace. Similarly, in the UK, policies including Employment Equity, Diversity Management and the upcoming Equality Bill address some of these gender inequalities. How the women in my study deal with these policies and strategies aimed at addressing inequality in the workplace, and workplace barriers brought about by past government policies, corporate practices and cultural attitudes will be addressed in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four

Feminist Research and Representing the Other

Within feminist writings, the issue of identity and difference in the analysis of women's lives has received significant attention from both western and non-western feminists (Anzaldúa, 1990; Hartsock, 1998; Hill Collins, 1990, 2000; hooks, 2000; Imam et al., 1997; Mama, 1996; C. T. Mohanty, 1991; Narayan, 1997; Oyewemi, 1997). In the past, a homogenised notion of "woman" often remained unquestioned within feminist literature, with the experiences of white middle-class women often universalised to Other categories of women irrespective of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, nationality and socio-cultural differences.⁷⁸ According to African feminist scholars Beoku-Betts and Njambi (2005:113), this homogenisation in effect ignored or ultimately dismissed the agency of historically marginalised groups of women whose modes of identity and self-definition did not fit into traditional discourses on gender.

Over the past two decades, feminist scholarship (Hill Collins, 2000; Mama, 1995; Mirza, 1997; C. T. Mohanty, 2003a; Narayan, 1997) has made a conscious effort to address and rethink this homogenisation of women and move significantly toward a more complex analysis of women's differentiated lives. Therefore, my aim in this chapter is to bring attention to some of the reasons I feel more needs to be done within feminist and organisational research when addressing the careers and family lives of professional and managerial Black African women. While I acknowledge that many professional and managerial women of all races face personal challenges within the workplace and family life, Black African women, as discussed in previous chapters, face unique challenges brought about mainly by the dynamics of changing cultures, structures and practices within organisations, family and community life. I begin by addressing the issues that concern my research participants whom as transnational and emerging elite Black African women continue to deal with ever-changing economic, social and cultural formations within both their work and family lives. I do this primarily by addressing the problems I feel continue to exist within research,

⁷⁸ See Mirza (1997), in *Black British Feminism*.

particularly when researching and representing the lives of women considered within western theory and research as non-western, “third-world” or as the Other. I aim to achieve this by making reference to the concept of the “Other” and by reflecting on Patricia Hill Collins’ *Outsider-Within* theory which I feel captures the essence of how Black women within my research manage both their professional and personal life spheres. I argue that it is important to acknowledge the differences that exist between Black women’s experiences as a racial group, their white counterparts and other non-white women. Furthermore, these different experiences should be reflected within feminist and organisational research.

I also address the epistemological and methodological concerns relating to the research/researched experiences and the importance of recognising the relevance of wisdom within knowledge production when representing the Other in one’s research (C. T. Mohanty, 2003b; J. Mohanty, 2002; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996). As a researcher whose aim is to know ‘why,’ ‘how,’ ‘what’s it like’ and ‘what does it mean to you’ (Goodson & Sikes, 2001), I use the Life History approach to gather narratives. I do this by conducting semi-structured interviews as a means of collecting their ‘life-stories’ which reflect my participants’ views of reality.

I conclude the chapter by reflecting on my insider/outsider location as a Black African female researcher conducting research on people I identify as having lives similar to my own. I also discuss my personal experience with putting the Life History approach into practice and how this method assisted and/or hindered me in yielding meaningful and impartial data.

4.1 Obstacles and Experiences

As I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, few texts within feminist or organisational theory specifically address professional and managerial Black African women’s work and family life experiences. Although not explicitly acknowledged, research on women in the literature about careers tends to address the experiences of white women more than

Black women.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Black African professional and managerial women working in the corporate world – be it in their country of origin or the western world – are minorities in terms of both race and gender in what is still a predominantly white and male corporate environment. Hence, while most women commonly experience barriers in the entry and advancement of their careers, the combined disadvantages brought about by gender, race/ethnicity and class create additional feelings of isolation for some Black African women. As discussed in previous chapters, this negative experience can be further identified as stemming from inequality and status degradation fostered by negative and stereotypical images attached to Black women’s work⁸⁰ (S. Aryee, 2005; Booysen, 1999; Carby, 1997; Davidson, 1997; Mama, 1996).

As African American academics Bell and Nkomo (2001) state, one becomes curious about the career experiences of Black women executives, who, like themselves in academia, remain few in numbers. In many instances, colleagues know little about who they are, where they come from or how their life and career experiences set them apart (Bell & Nkomo, 2001:4). As they go through the twists and turns in their careers, what are the obstacles they experience? Despite more Black people making inroads into Corporate America, Bell and Nkomo (2001:4) observe that some people continue to assume Black women and white women share similar personal and professional histories simply because they share the same gender. Others⁸¹ perceive race as the key variable and assume the experiences of all Black professional women – African, African American and African Caribbean – are the same and mirror those of their Black male colleagues. Others wonder whether Black women have their own leadership style and whether this helps them navigate corporate hierarchies. As Bell and Nkomo (2001:5) observed in their US research study “Our Separate Ways: Black and White Women and the Struggle for Professional Identity”, when Chief Executive Officers and Chairmen of

⁷⁹ See Hennig, M & Jardim, A (1978), “*The Managerial Woman: The Survival Manual for Women in Business*,” one of the first books written about women managers in the US. Cited by Bell & Nkomo (2001:284). Marilyn Hennig and Ann Jardim also founded the first MBA programme at Simmonds College in the US that was exclusively aimed at women managers. However, while this was a ground breaking achievement, their book did not include one Black woman manager in the sample (Bell & Nkomo, 2001:11). Similarly, Bell & Nkomo cite Morrison, A et al., (1987), “*Breaking the Glass Ceiling*” as another important book on women managers that only contained three Black women in its sample, “*effectively precluding any meaningful study of both race and gender*”.

⁸⁰ More details on this in Chapter 3.

⁸¹ See Spelman, E (1988).

organisations confess that they know very little about their Black female managers, they are revealing a dearth of understanding that is perhaps shared by many others.

So should Black African professional and managerial women's experiences be likened to fellow Black African men, who in theory are more preferred and have had a presence within the corporate sphere longer than Black women? Or should they be categorised and identified together with white women whose status and numbers in management have grown significantly over the past thirty years (Burke, 2000; Davidson & Burke, 2000; Wajcman, 1998; Wirth, 2001)? More specifically, in the case of the two groups of women in my study who live and work in London and Johannesburg, how and in what ways have the intersection of gender, race, class, culture and history influenced their own life histories with respect to employment and family life?

In an effort to address these questions, the method I used to gather data was the Life History approach. I did this by conducting semi-structured interviews as a means of collecting their 'life-stories.' As I explain in more detail in the next section, this approach allowed me to reveal my participants' individual views and interpretations of their own work and family life experiences.

4.2 Research Methods

The life narratives of African women are not the "true" stories of these women, but the unfolding history of the relationship between Africans and Westerners, and of the relationship between the West and its own identity. (Kirk Hoppe, 1993)⁸²

In order to allow me, the researcher, to gain an understanding of the family life and career experiences of my research participants and how they locate themselves socially, I chose to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews as a means of collecting their 'life-stories.' These life histories or life-stories as narrated by my participants in their capacities as professional and managerial Black African women living and working in Johannesburg and London, reflect their views of reality. As Letherby (2003) explains:

Life Histories 'tell it as it is' from the lived experience of the narrator and ... as a feminist method they are invaluable because they do not fracture life

⁸² Kirk Hoppe, (1993:636) *Whose Life Is It, Anyway?: Issues of Representation in the Life Narrative Texts of African Women*, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, 3 (1993) 636.

experiences but provide a means of evaluating the present, re-evaluating the past and anticipating the future and offer a challenge to other partial accounts. (Letherby, 2003:89)

As such, the Life History approach focuses on the way in which individuals account for and theorise about their social world over time. Musson (2004) describes it as an approach that provides a fundamental source of knowledge about how people experience and make sense of themselves and their environments by allowing the participants to speak for themselves. In some circumstances, the voices may then be interpreted, but the process of interpretation will always attempt to reflect the participant's perspective rather than simply that of the researcher (Musson, 2004:35). This, according to Musson (2004), is not to say that the approach accepts the account of the individual as some type of problematic version of an objective 'truth.' Instead, it is predicated on the assumption that "all perspectives dangle from some person's problematic. Views, truths and conceptions of the real can never be wholly ripped away from the people who experience them." (Plummer, 1983:57)⁸³ But neither does the method seek to deny that people exist within particular structural and institutional constraints. Instead, it specifically locates itself in the nexus between deterministic structures and individual agency, between those factors that might be described as relatively objective and the subjective interpretation of the individual (Musson, 2004:35).

Therefore, by using an approach that asks in-depth questions about what identities are being "done," when and how, I attempt to reveal diversity, variation and differences not only from other groups but within the group that my research participants belong to. Furthermore, in an effort to gain as much insight into the life experiences that have helped shape their social and career development, I conducted semi-structured interviews using an interview guide consisting of probing structured and open-ended questions that guided the participants through key themes while allowing for elaboration.⁸⁴ Bell and Nkomo (2001) describe this approach as one that allows the researcher to disclose how an individual views and interprets his or her life course by referring specifically to life experiences and identity development. The Life History approach's ability to 'humanise' the research participant (McKeown et al., 2006)

⁸³ Cited by Musson (2004:35).

⁸⁴ I elaborate more on the format later in the chapter.

subsequently provides an understanding that extends beyond the individual and into the wider context of organisations, institutions, cultures and societies.

On the whole, being able to talk about their own life, in their own words, to the researcher is beneficial to both the researcher and the researched, particularly as the approach gives additional meaning to life events such as birth, marriage, academic and professional achievements and so on. As Musson (2004) further points out, the Life History approach recognises the collusion of the researcher in the research process. It does so by not assuming that the researcher is some impartial, value-free entity, unproblematically engaging in the research process to produce objective accounts of a reified truth. Rather, Musson (2004:35) understands the method as recognising that the researcher also brings implicit and explicit theories to the research situation and that the task of the researcher includes surfacing these in the struggle for balance between preconceived theory in the researcher and theory employed by the people in the research situation.

Goodson and Sikes (2001) do, however, caution that there is no ‘proper’ way of using the Life History approach to gather research participants’ narratives. It is highly dependant on the research project, its features and requirements and, more importantly, the researcher’s personal style and unique emotional engagement with the project (Coffey, 1999).⁸⁵ As it is a methodology that is highly individualistic and personal, one defining characteristic of the approach is that of relying on “intensely idiosyncratic personal dynamics” (Sikes et al., 1996:43), making it a methodology that cannot easily be taught “because ... personal dynamics are themselves unpackagable” (ibid., p. 44)⁸⁶.

My aim in this section was to explain why I chose to use the Life History approach to gather my narratives, giving my research participants the opportunity to speak to me about their own lives and in their own words. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, as Black African women with careers in major cities on opposite sides of the globe, these emerging and transnational elite Black African women remain a rarity and hidden gem to most, making them unique both in the workplace and communities. In London, they are not only minorities within the UK population but are also minorities in their roles as

⁸⁵ Cited by (Goodson & Sikes, 2001)

⁸⁶ Cited by Goodson and Sikes (2001)

professional and managerial women within the corporate private sector. In Johannesburg, although part of the majority population of the country, they are minorities within the professional and managerial circles of that country's corporate private sector. The Life History approach gives them the opportunity to represent themselves through their own narratives.

Later in the chapter, I discuss the way in which I implemented this method and analysed my data. I also discuss some of the reliability and validity concerns I have with this approach. I first focus my attention on some of the key theories I feel illuminate the contextual and subjective research process from which to understand the world of the transnational and emerging elite Black African interviewed for this study.

4.2.1 Feminist Research and Representation

“ ... to know us better than we know ourselves can be a problem in terms of “defining the other.” (hooks, 1990:151)

The Concept of Other

The concept of Other draws on many definitions with a general description being “... anyone who is separate from one's self” (Bill et al., 1998). The existence of others, according to Bill et al., (1998), is crucial in defining what is ‘normal’ and in locating one's own place in the world. However, for the purpose of the discussion in this chapter and addressing issues of representing the other, I draw on the definition as used in current post-colonial theory. Bill et al., (1998) describe it as the colonised subject who is characterised as the ‘other’ through discourses such as ‘primitivism’ and ‘cannibalism’ (Said, 1978), as a means of establishing the binary separation of the coloniser and colonised while simultaneously asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonising culture and world view.

Within current post-colonial theory, the term is rooted in the Freudian and post-Freudian analysis of the formation of subjectivity, notably in the work of psychoanalyst and cultural theorist Jacque Lacan. Lacan (2004) uses the term to distinguish between the

‘Other’⁸⁷ and the ‘other.’ The ‘other’ with the small ‘o’ designates the other who resembles the self (i.e., **that** which the child discovers when it sees its reflection in the mirror – a fiction of mastery that will eventually become the basis of the ego) (Bill et al., 1998; Hill & Leach, 1997). The Other remains important in defining the identity of the subject as he or she is perceived in post-colonial theory – describing the Other as:

the colonised others who are marginalised by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the centre and, perhaps, crucially, become the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial ego. (Bill et al., 1998:10)

Although many non-white, non-western feminist researchers note that it was precisely because of the universalising of white, middle-class women’s lives as ‘representatives’ of the female experience that made it possible for modern Western feminism to gather momentum and become such an important social movement (Ang, 2001:395), problems continue to exist in feminist theory literature. For instance, research methodology studies conducted by the dominant (western) researchers studying the marginalised other have in the past been criticised for not paying enough attention to the concerns of non-western, non-white cultural practices and life experiences. Many researchers (Hill Collins, 2000; Mama, 1995; Mirza, 1997) describe it as still being dominated more by the concerns of white middle-class western women, while universalising and stereotyping the images and identity of the other.

Within feminist studies, an analysis of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’ has been difficult mainly due to the ways in which studies of gender are organised around ‘male’ and ‘female,’ ‘woman’ and ‘man’ as binary categories rather than aspects of real and complex identities (Johnson, 2005). This difficulty in the analysis of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’, states Johnson (2005), comes partly from the fact that much of the analysis of where women are positioned derives from an understanding of identity based on ‘essential’ or ‘fixed’ categories constructed from given attributes. Based on this analysis, one can therefore assume all conditions – a situation which is clearly not the case. According to Johnson (2005), an analysis of women and gender relations needs to be built on a methodology which allows women to construct themselves as well as recognise that their social identities and lives are constructed by the cultural and social

⁸⁷ As defined earlier in the section.

conditions around them (Johnson, 2005; Newman and Williams, 1995:119). Taking time to understand that there are differences, whether in women's experience of oppression or their social or professional identity, remains critical.

Reflecting on the *Outsider Within Construct*

Drawing further on the concept of the Other and its theoretical underpinnings, other non-white, western theorists such as Hill Collins also challenged feminism's universalism and imperialism by insisting that specific considerations be taken into account when representing the lives of Black women, Third World women, or any group of women considered to be the Other (Edwards, 1996). Frustrated with the lack of literature and appropriate language that analysed her personal alienation in school and in the workplace settings, Hill Collins (1999) chose the term outside-within to describe individuals like her who found themselves caught between groups of unequal power. According to Hill Collins (1999), whether unequal power stemmed from hierarchies of race, class or gender, (or in her case, the intersection of all three variables as discussed in Chapter 2), the social location of being on the edge mattered. While the term has been embraced by standpoint theorists⁸⁸ and other groups outside its initial meaning over time, Hill Collins uses the term *outsider-within* today to describe what she refers to as "social locations or border spaces occupied by groups of unequal power" (Collins, 2000) adding:

Individuals claim identities as "outsiders-within" by their placement in these social locations. Thus, outsider-within identities are situational identities that are attached to specific histories of social justice – they are not a decontextualised identity category divorced from historical social inequalities that can be assumed by anyone at will. (Collins, 2000:56)

Hill Collins adds that while questions of how individuals experience social inequality is an important topic for investigation, it remains imperative not to lose sight of the social structures that create these locations. Referring again to the power relations that create *outsider-within* locations, Hill Collins discusses several themes she finds troublesome.

⁸⁸ Standpoint theorists anchor their methodology in *outsider-within* positions – positions inhabited by groups who are included in dominant cultural practices but are nevertheless, for various reasons, unable to fully participate in them. See Lenz, B, (2004:99) for more details.

With reference to the location of the Other in the workplace, she describes people in *outsider-within* locations as not arriving there through the same mechanisms. Hill Collins argues that African American women, Asian Indian women, Japanese women, African women and White women may all be considered *outsiders-within* in a given corporation even though quite different histories got them there. She adds that when looking at *outsiders-within* whose statuses derive from cross-cutting systems of power, some *outsiders-within* are clearly better off than others (Bell et al., 1993; K. M. Thomas et al., 1999:52). This theme is particularly visible in the career paths travelled by the Black African transnational and emerging elite women in my research in that they further highlight the differences that also exist within one racial group. As I discuss in more detail in subsequent chapters, these women may share the same gender and race but their personal histories - i.e., whether they were educated in their country of origin or at a renowned American or European university or academic institution and whether they were working as nationals of their countries, as in the case of the women in Johannesburg where they are part of the majority population, or as minorities in London – all influence the level at which their “outsider-within” status makes one group of Black African women more acceptable (successful) than another. This positioning inadvertently impacts on some of the women’s career progression and experiences within the workplace as I discuss in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

In the next section, I address the issue of representation with my primary focus being the relationship between the researcher and the researched.

4.3 Feminist Research: Who Can Speak for Whom?

Recognising and taking account of the privileges and power of the feminist researcher and acknowledging difficulties of the issue of representation (of who can speak on behalf of, for, or to the Other) continues to dominate many feminist discussions. Traditionally, anthropological studies have largely been the only means of obtaining information relating to unexplored territories within societies. Their ability to ‘speak for others’ has been challenged by feminists such as Trinh T. Minh-ha who views it as

maintaining a conversation of ‘us’ with ‘us’ about ‘them’ of the white man with the white man about the primitive-nature man ... in which ‘them’ is silenced. ‘Them’ always stands on the other side of the hill, naked and speechless... ‘them’ is only admitted amongst ‘us’ ... discussing subjects when accompanied or introduced by an ‘us.’ (Minh-ha, 1989:65)⁸⁹

Mama (1996) agrees with Minh-ha, reiterating that this construction of Otherness in non-western peoples can also be evidenced in studies of African women within feminism. She observes that even though studies conducted by western feminists focus more on the concerns of all women, some studies continue to be perceived as studies of ‘Other’ women or ‘women as Other’ when reading about the “the African” (Beauvoir, 1908/86; Mama, 1996:160). As Mohanty also points out, this ‘Othering’ of non-western women continues to exist within feminist theory because the speaking subject of feminist theory is more often than not a western woman. Third world women, Mohanty states, “... *never rise above the debilitating generality of the ‘object’ status.*” (C. T. Mohanty, 2003a:39) By treating women as a homogenous group, Mohanty further views this discourse of representing other women as confused, with the end result being the construction of

...monolithic images of ‘Third World women’ by ignoring the complex and mobile relationships between their historical materiality on the level of specific oppressions and political choices on the one hand and their general discursive representations on the other. (C. T. Mohanty, 2003b:37)

Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1996) note that it remains difficult for those who are privileged – be it by social class, wealth or race – to recognise their own contributions to the maintenance and reproduction of relevant discourses and institutionalised power relations in their day-to-day activities (Edwards, 1996). For instance, in representing African women,⁹⁰ Zimbabwean-born author Nzenza (1995:101) points out in her article “Who Should Speak for Whom? African Women and Western Feminism” that it is frequently forgotten that, historically, there has been very little communication between the traditional ‘native’ African and their ‘white colonial oppressor’ (whether male or female). It is for this reason that African women’s accounts of their daily lives, i.e., their histories, myths, reflections on their daily work and family lives, should be studied or researched from their own perspective to counter minimal under-representation of

⁸⁹ Cited by Alcoff, L (1995).

⁹⁰ I want to point out that Nzenza’s account of the African woman is that of the Black African woman as opposed to other non-white people living, in this instance, in Zimbabwe.

local knowledge. This, as stated earlier, can be achieved by using the Life History approach.

I now address some of the issues that concern me as a non-western 'Other' located in the West researching lives similar to my own.

Researcher and Researched Location

The definition and category of 'Other' is not a fixed category but one that is bound in limitations (Thapar-Bjorkert, 1999). In her article, "Negotiating Otherness: Dilemmas for a Non-Western Researcher in the Indian Sub-Continent," Indian-born researcher Thapar-Bjorkert found that her nationality, religion, class and caste status did not necessarily bolster her interviewing process nor dissolve power hierarchies.

It became apparent to me that there were bound to be limitations in writing about 'third world women' from a location in a western country. As a non-western researcher, I could identify 'otherness' at different levels. As I was born and brought up in India, I could accept that in the process of conducting my interviews I would be subjected to the same social constraints as any Indian woman. However, there were times when I was faced with the problem of being positioned as 'other' by my respondents because I was a researcher based in Britain and had what was perceived as the advantage of being able to return (to Britain) to write about my investigations. My nationality was subordinate to my social position. (Thapar-Bjorkert, 1999:65)

As a Black African woman attempting to research the lives of other Black African women, I soon understood what Thapar-Bjorkert (1999) refers to when she states that the category of 'Other' is not fixed but one that is bound in limitations. I faced the same mixed response of hostility and acceptance that Thapar-Bjorkert (1999) experienced while conducting her research. As a non-westerner researcher, born in Zambia, educated in Jordan, Cyprus, the US, and the UK and who had worked in Jordan, Zambia and South Africa, I have spent more than half my life outside Africa. I would like to think that by virtue of being a Black African woman, my position would be that of "racial insider status." I soon found that my location, i.e., in reference to my prospective research participants living in Johannesburg and London, was still that of 'Other.' My "racial-insiderness" did not guarantee me instant insider status particularly to my research participants in Johannesburg where I was perceived as a Zambian national

(read foreign), educated in the West, resident in the UK, speaking with a displaced accent and so forth. However, having lived in Johannesburg from 1995 to 2000 gave me an advantage in that I was familiar with and prepared for the potential mistrust between me and my research participants. In an effort to deal with the pitfalls that come with claiming “insider-status” (Beoku-Betts, 1994), I found myself breaking the ‘rule’ of not giving an interviewee personal views when asked to comment or when my line of questioning became too personal. While I only spoke about my personal circumstances within reason, I was again very aware that I needed to give a bit of myself in order to establish a rapport and gain the trust of my participants when conducting in-depth interviews with a Life History approach. This was also bearing in mind that as professional women, some occupying very senior positions, they had a strong desire or need to protect their privacy. As such, I reframed some of my questions in several interviews to respect this.

Regarding my claiming “insider-status” and my attempt to further illustrate the pitfalls associated with this claim, I want to highlight academic and fellow Black African researcher Beoku-Betts’ (1994) experience while conducting research in the United States on African American women in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia. Originally from Sierra Leone, West Africa, Beoku-Betts soon discovered that although claiming “insider status” on the basis of her African heritage, her relationship as an insider was based more on a “process of negotiation rather than granted immediately on the basis of ascribed status.” (Beoku-Betts, 1994:417)⁹¹ Her social characteristics (British accent, African origins, single marital status and professional status as a university researcher), in her view, generated particular forms of social distance that she supposed required mediation despite her “racial insiderness.” She adds:

In my research I found that while I shared “insider status” with my research participants in ways similar to other Black scholars conducting research in communities with which they had shared racial membership that status was not enough to preclude other challenges I faced which were based on my nationality, gender, profession and status as an unmarried woman. (Beoku-Betts, 1994:414)

⁹¹ Cited by (Twine & Warren, 2000:11)

Beoku-Betts' experience again bears testament to why it is important to recognise that one's "racial-insiderness" does not guarantee instant insider status. Reflecting on this and my own personal experience, I am drawn to Hill Collins' argument on the subject. According to Hill Collins (1991), Black feminist thought consists of ideas produced by Black women that clarify a standpoint of and for Black women. Amongst the various assumptions that underlie this working definition, I focus on one definition which suggests that, while living life as Black women may produce certain commonalities of outlook, the diversity of variables including class, religion, age and sexual orientation that shape individual Black women's lives subsequently result in different expressions of these common themes. Hence, certain themes that define Black women's standpoints may be experienced and expressed differently by distinct groups of Black women (Hill-Collins, 1991). If one considers Black women's cultures and histories for instance, while common themes will link their lives, these themes will no doubt be experienced differently, reinforcing the notion that "there is no monolithic Black women's culture" (Hill-Collins, 1991). Not all Black women share the same experiences of sisterhood or womanhood. Rather, as Hill Collins states, there are socially constructed Black women's cultures that collectively form respective Black women's culture, all of which I have discussed at length in Chapter 2. In the next section, I discuss in more detail my personal experience with putting the Life History approach into practice.

4.4 The Life History Approach in Practice

Research Participants

As I had to interview women in two cities in two different countries, I found I needed to split my time between the two in a rather unconventional manner. Because I have family commitments in the UK, it was impossible for me to spend more than one month at a time in Johannesburg. In order to complete my interviews, I travelled to Johannesburg five or six times over a period of approximately 18 months. During this period, I also conducted my London interviews. While I realise this is not the most conventional way of conducting fieldwork (especially given that my two children accompanied me on several trips to Johannesburg), I found a way of making the arrangement work in that I was able to identify some of the major differences between the two groups of women right from the outset.

My goal was to interview between 40 and 45 women – 20 to 25 in Johannesburg and 20 to 25 in London. I eventually reached saturation point after 26 interviews in Johannesburg and 22 interviews in London. I chose women between the ages of 29 and 55 as I wanted to ensure they had sufficient career and leadership experience following graduate/postgraduate and professional qualifications. Given their educational and career experience, I identify these women as being part of the most privileged group within African society. They are highly educated and in most instances have attended some of America, Europe and Africa's most renowned universities and academic institutions. My preference was for all the women in my study to be employed in middle and senior management positions within the transnational or tertiary sector of private business institutions or organisations in London and Johannesburg perceived to be white - and male dominated.

The women in my study fall within the *ISCO-88 Major Group 2*⁹² classification namely engineers, business professionals (i.e. bankers, accountants, financial analysts), professional healthcare, academics and legal professionals. Within *ISCO-1968* Group my participants are mainly economists, media specialists, recruitment practitioners and accountants⁹³. I chose this preference of profile was because I wanted to have a more uniform approach to issues concerning the impact of organisational culture, employment equity policies, and other work-life balance strategies. On one occasion, however, I did interview a woman who works as an Executive Director for a company she co-owns and which is listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. In addition, I interviewed key

⁹² With regard to professional and its classification, I refer to the ILO ISCO-88 Major Groups 2 definition which include the following: 'Physical, mathematical and engineering science professional (i.e. physicists, chemists and related professionals; mathematicians, statisticians and related professionals); life science and health professionals...; health professionals (except nursing); nursing and midwifery professionals); teaching professionals (college, university and higher education teaching professionals; secondary education; primary and pre-primary education teaching; special needs teaching and other teaching professionals); other professionals (i.e., business professionals; legal professionals; archivists, librarians and related information professionals; social science and related professionals; writers and creative or performing artists; religious professionals).

The ISCO-1968 Group 0/1: professional, technical and related workers comprises Physical Scientists and related technicians; architects, engineers and related technicians; aircraft and ship's officers; life scientists and related technicians, systems analysts and related technicians; economists; accountants; jurists; teachers; workers in religion; authors; journalists and related writers; sculptors, painters photographers and related creative artists; composers and performing artists; athletes, sportspersons and related workers; professional, technical and related workers not elsewhere classified (ILO, 2004:61)

⁹³ In some instances where labour statistics are given, I have also referred to International Standard Classification of Occupations -88 (*ISCO-88*) classifications using *ISCO-1968*.

informants from major MBA institutions and university lecturers of one of South Africa's Gender Institutes.

The Interview Process

Once I had decided to use the Life History approach, I set out to ensure I had an interview guide which included probing semi-structured and open-ended questions that guided my participants through key themes I had identified as relevant to my study. In an effort to encourage my participants to elaborate more on 'life-stories' that related to my study, I used a modified version of Bell and Nkomo's (2001)⁹⁴ interview guide which included probing questions relating to life experiences and identity development events, namely:

- education, motivation and aspirations,
- early adult experiences – career choices, entry and socialisation,
- public world – career development, etc., and
- private world – family and other relationships with others (and as the 'Other') (Bell and Nkomo, 2001).

Setting up appointments with prospective research participants presented some unexpected challenges with the main one being a lack of women willing to participate in the research. When I initially attempted to secure interviews in both London and Johannesburg, I quickly became aware of how sensitive my topic is for some women.

The first issue I was confronted with was that of a lack of trust. For some women, the notion of being asked personal questions about their relationships within both the public and private sphere made them uneasy. This issue persisted even after I assured them the interview would be completely confidential. This mistrust naturally presented challenges in securing interviews especially as the women only knew me as a PhD researcher from the London School of Economics. They knew nothing else about me and what I might do with the information in addition to using it for my research. In order to secure interviews in both cities, I used more than one type of sampling to identify my participants. I wrote to women I had initially identified through the top 250

⁹⁴ I e-mailed Professor Stella Nkomo who sent me a copy of the original interview guide.

companies list in the UK and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) company list. I also used the internet to identify unlisted companies.

I then worked closely with two gatekeepers in London and Johannesburg, both of whom worked in the private sector. The women, both of Black African origin, verified and confirmed who I was to some of the women I had already contacted. My London gatekeeper is a qualified accountant. Born in Zimbabwe, Temba grew up and studied in Harare where she obtained her undergraduate degree in accounting. In the late 1990s, she moved to the UK where she has worked for several international and UK investment banks. Temba is involved in a number of informal and formal professional women's networks and as such was able to introduce me to a number of professional Black African women working in London. Towela, my gatekeeper in Johannesburg was born in Soweto and has lived in South Africa most of her life. She studied in the United States where she obtained an MBA before returning to South Africa to work in finance. Having a combination of business and political contacts in the country, Towela's assistance in securing interviews with research participants proved invaluable.

From there, I used the *Snowball Sampling* technique. I also used *Opportunistic Sampling*, speaking to some of my husband's business contacts to assist me in identifying potential research participants. These contacts proved very useful as they were primarily individuals who work for organisations on the FTSE 100⁹⁵ and companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE).

I also joined the *Businesswomen's Association* (BWA), a non-profit voluntary organisation aimed at, amongst other things, supporting and connecting businesswomen in South Africa.⁹⁶ Having worked for the Financial Times Newspaper in Johannesburg for six years from 1995 to 2000 as their International Business Representative, I also used a number of my own business contacts. In addition to these networks, I also relied

⁹⁵ My husband works for a FTSE 100 company.

⁹⁶ It also acts as a lobby group on women's business issues, highlighting and publicizing not only the barriers to success that currently exist in the country but also the many opportunities that continue to arise for professional and managerial women in the country today. Through strategic partnerships with sponsors, other non-profit organisations, leading companies and business schools, it provides ongoing events and opportunities to advance the interests and needs of women in business. (See www.bwasa.co.za for more details.)

on friends and family to pass on names of their friends and colleagues who fit my research participant profile.

While it was convenient for me, as the researcher, to use my personal contacts to identify participants for my study, I remained cautious about involving friends, acquaintances or relatives as research participants. As Goodson and Sikes (2001:25) caution, “doing research ‘in your own backyard’ can have unintended consequences with implications going far beyond the data that are collected.” This can be a significant problem when soliciting personal information as the potential ‘power’ that such knowledge gives the researcher can be considerable (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:25). As Madeleine Grummet notes, “telling a story to a friend is a risky business; the better the friend, the riskier the business.” (Grummet, 1991:69)⁹⁷

Of the various questions and issues that can arise after the researcher identifies potential participants and invites them to participate, Goodson and Sikes (2001) consider the research bargain to be the most significant. This, they explain, “is the understanding between the researcher and the informant about what the nature of their relationship is and what each can expect from their mutual participation.” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:26) Therefore, once the women had agreed to participate in my study, it became important that I indicate the length of time I anticipated each interview to last and to be as accurate about it as possible. Based on the number of questions on my interview schedule, I initially estimated the interviews would take between 1 ½ to 2 hours. However, I found that some interviews took longer than others depending upon the issues the participants elaborated on. While some research participants initially resisted giving more than an hour of their time, I found that once we got going, they were willing to speak for longer than the allocated time. With regard to location of interviews, I conducted interviews in my participants’ offices, homes, restaurants and lounge bars. In Johannesburg, most of my research participants tended to live in Sandton, the northern suburb of Johannesburg as highlighted in Chapter 1. In London, my research participants’ homes were more scattered with some living in London boroughs while the vast majority lived on the outskirts in greater London. As a whole, I felt my participants were much more relaxed

⁹⁷ Cited by Goodson & Sikes 2001:25.

and forthcoming with information when I conducted the interview with just them and myself in the privacy of their own home.

While it was helpful to have an interview guide that I could also share with the participants, I did not always follow it. My initial intention was to ask set questions based on an interview guide that followed the following domains: family and early childhood experiences; education; career choices; gender, race, class and culture identities; organisational experiences; and personal life. However, after conducting five or six interviews both in London and Johannesburg, I found that there were cases where I was not able to adhere to the schedule. At times, I found I needed to allow my informants time to elaborate more on a topic that they found affected them most. In one case, I was particularly taken aback at how honest one London research participant was about the events in her life that gave her the impetus to have a career and succeed at it. Born in South London in 1966, Itunde had been taken back to Nigeria by her parents at the age of four. Her story below illustrates just how the Life History approach can allow participants to elaborate on life events they view as having given additional meaning to other events/achievements in their lives.

ITUNDE: ... when I was going I didn't like the fact that I was going. I felt as if I was being wrenched away from my roots. But moving to Africa, I discovered that indeed that was where my roots actually were in terms of the culture, in terms of the discipline, in terms of the respect that was instilled in us so I actually enjoyed it eventually. I learnt to enjoy that time of my life..... . We all went back there as a family for those nine years. I think the education there – you were expected to achieve there, so the education in Nigeria at that time, you were really expected and driven to achieve...erm, one thing that I've found is that even though I was not a clever child, the expectation was still that you are going to achieve something come hook or crook You are going to achieve something. That was why I enjoyed being in Nigeria. The expectation that was actually driven into me at that young age.

DIANE: What age were you when you came back to England?

ITUNDE: Nearly twenty.... I did my primary and secondary school there and then I did a Diploma of Mass Communications there as well. Most of my educational years really were spent there. I came back pregnant with my first daughter.

DIANE: So you got married there?

ITUNDE: No. I didn't marry my children's father. I came back to England and then sent for him.

DIANE: Right. Can you tell me a bit about that transition, coming back to England?

ITUNDE: The first job that I came back to was a cleaning job, early morning cleaning and then full time cleaning because that was all I could get because I was obviously pregnant ... I did that for about five months or so and then had my daughter. It wasn't easy coming back. I came back and I was expected to pay my dues for all the years that I had been away. Cleaning or else go on the dole. So I cleaned, had my daughter and then looked for a decent job. I had my son a year after that. So I had two children within...I had a child in 1986 and then another child in 1987.

DIANE: Right. Can you tell me a bit about your role now and your career progression?

ITUNDE: whilst I was cleaning, I also studied journalism. I studied journalism and then I did a bit of song writing as well but in terms of my career in IT; my career in IT didn't take off until about eight years ago. ... I then got married and in the time that I'd...say in twelve years, I actually left my man, the man that I had two children by - whom I didn't marry, left him...I was a single parent for six years with two children; got married to the Pastor, realised that he was married to somebody else and in the meantime I was pregnant with his child, a third child, so I had to leave him again, get our marriage annulled and so then I was a single parent with three children for another six years. Then in 2000 I met the bone of my bones, the man of my dreams and married him. The reason why I've brought that in here is because in terms of my career progression and where I am today, it's been a lot of what I've done but mostly him actually coming into my life and saying 'You can't stay where you are'.... My career, up until the time I met him eight years ago, was a mess. It was a muddle.

This interview clearly illustrates to me what Goodson and Sikes (2001) state about using the life history as a mode of enquiry. They explain that when conducting Life History interviews, it is their preference for the researcher to have relatively unstructured, informal, conversation-type encounters when necessary, adding:

A researcher can never know for certain which experiences have been influential and relevant in a particular sphere of life, for sometimes connections are apparent only to the individual concerned. ... it may be that events, experiences or personal characteristics, which the researcher expects to have been important, are not seen in the same way by the informant. (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:28)

It was clear to me upon reflection that this was precisely what Itunde was doing. By allowing this emotive story telling process, I allowed Itunde to communicate significant points and explanations of events and/or behaviour. She introduces several less obvious themes that surface throughout her work history: - she describes herself as confident about her competence and her pursuit of opportunities for further self-development, and

she unabashedly pursued her career and cultivated support from influential people around her. Each of these themes support the primary message that she conveys as she narrates her work history: her career and drive to succeed is just as important to her as family relationships.

In another interview I asked a South African woman based in London about her relationship with her parents. After listening to her talk for more than 20 minutes, I realised her answer revealed to me not only an individual who was devoted to her parents but one who was in a lot of pain. I felt that my line of questioning became more of an emotional outlet for her as she revealed her feelings of frustration, sorrow and anxiety over the death of her father who had died on 6 July 2005 – the day before the London bombings. As she burst into tears, she explained that up until that moment she had not deeply reflected on what had happened that week as it had also been a busy period for her at work. My sense was that she had not had a chance to mourn her father's death properly and this only came to light during the interview. To compound this, while living in London she learned her mother had contracted HIV/AIDS in South Africa, making it difficult for her to care for her mother as she would have liked.

This was probably both my most difficult and most memorable interview. As a researcher, I again became aware of the importance of establishing and maintaining a positive and trusting relationship between interviewer and informant (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:26). I was also reminded how important it is to understand that I am not a trained counsellor. Like counsellors, researchers “listen, reflect back, ask questions which encourage further reflection and are non-judgemental” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:26), but unlike counsellors, researchers are not practising therapy. Having said that, this experience also made me aware of the responsibility I have in ensuring I stay on after the interview to ensure that my participant had recovered before I left. On a more humorous note, after one of my interviews in London I got in my car and switched on my mobile phone. I found a message from the police asking if I was safe. I had left home on Sunday evening and driven into London without leaving an address or contact details. My husband became concerned about my safety and, after trying in vain to contact me for five hours, he contacted the police! On reflection, what this experience made me realise was that following my initial interviews, I became very confident that the research locus was a safe one and that the people I was interviewing were not a

threat to me in any way. I subsequently became meticulous about letting someone know where I was going, which I now realise, should not have happened. Thankfully I was safe not only on this occasion but throughout the duration of my fieldwork. While in South Africa, I was fortunate enough to have enough money to rent a car to drive myself to interviews. This was a much safer arrangement for me as public transport in Johannesburg can be expensive, unreliable and at times unsafe.

On the whole, I was extremely pleased with the way in which all the women welcomed me and their genuine need to have their voices heard, even though I did get off to a slow start. To ease suspicions of what I would do with the information I had gathered, I offered to send a transcript of our interview to my research participants. On reflection, I am aware of why some women were initially apprehensive or even refused to speak to me. Thinking once again about their identity, many of these transnational and emerging elite Black African women are a combination of the continent's economically, politically and socially mobile group. My asking to reveal their intimate thoughts about their work and family lives may have left them feeling vulnerable. I was therefore pleasantly surprised by some of the positive e-mails I received after the interviews. As one woman who spoke at length about her commitment to continue mentoring young South African girls and ensuring that she remains a positive role model wrote: "It was an absolute pleasure..... Thinking about it afterwards gave me a chance to reflect on things ... I actually felt reaffirmed and clear in my mission after the interview." (Thamela, SA Banker, aged 35)

Thamela demonstrates one of the effects of the Life History approach which is the self-reflection it triggers in participants. In another instance, a research participant was grateful I had interviewed her as she planned to use her transcript for an autobiography she had been planning to write.

4.5 Analysing Data and Assessing Power Dynamics

Analysing my data was a long and painstaking process. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 1, I did not begin my research with a hypothesis to be empirically tested and proven but rather with three big questions based on a discursive theoretical framework

that examined the intersection of gender, race and class. But as I researched further and began reviewing some of my initial life history narratives, it became clear to me that more concepts, namely ethnicity and culture identities and history, were just as important. With this in mind, I used a grounded theory approach in my analysis of initial interviews. As Strauss and Corbin (1990:23) state, a grounded theory is one that “is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents.” If research is approached from this perspective, the researcher does not begin with a theory and then prove it but instead allows the relevant theory to emerge from the data. Following this, I incorporated a number of factors which I felt were important to interpreting the work and family lives of my research participants. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I felt it important to also acknowledge the women’s voices and understand how they make sense of their experiences as narrated to me in their own socio-cultural context. I also found this approach useful in making connections not only amongst the various stories that the women shared with me but also between constructions of self (i.e., as competent leader, professional, victim, fighter, care giver) (Chase, 1995)

All my interviews were recorded over a period of one or two appointments and transcribed by professional transcribers whom I sent my files to electronically. Due to the large volume of pages of the transcripts, I attended a number of courses to learn how to use Atlas ti. This programme assisted me with the initial coding of themes reflected in the narratives. Following this exercise, I again read through the transcripts to try and redefine the codes. Unfortunately, as I was not working with a team to check my coded data, I had to rely on my own content analysis. In an effort to check the reliability of my work, I went back on several occasions to meet with my gatekeepers both in London and Johannesburg to discuss some of my findings. On another occasion, I attended a seminar in London in July 2008 where results from a study of Black and minority ethnic women in leadership positions in the UK and Europe were presented. The study “Different Women Different Places”⁹⁸ afforded me an opportunity to assess my own findings through discussions with some of the team leaders of this project. In all, this exercise allowed me to check the reliability and validity of my own findings. The end result of my findings and themes that I discuss in the next three chapters represent what

⁹⁸ Research conducted in 2006 / 2007 by The Diversity Practice in partnership with Katalytik and sponsored by Booz Allen Hamilton, the Learning and Skills Council, Credit Suisse and the UK Resource Centre for Women in SET.

I identified as dominant and significant patterns in the data. By integrating across identified themes, I relate these to one another and ultimately to my three key questions.

Finally, as much as I am aware of the advantages of interviewing women of my own gender, race and to a lesser extent class, I am also aware of the limitations of the Life History approach. Firstly, as a Black African woman interviewing other Black African women, I very quickly realised that my identity instantly played down any simplistic notions of the privileged and powerful western researcher. These power dynamics between researcher and the research participants were particularly evident when interviewing women who were older than me. The presence of these gendered and socio-cultural dynamics where, traditionally, elders are expected to be given more respect, made me very aware of the importance of acknowledging the gender and socio-cultural intersections. One way of dealing with this situation was to remind myself that having such busy and senior women agreeing to meet with me and entrust me with their private thoughts on work and family life was a privilege and not a right. I do acknowledge, however, that as the researcher I am more powerful than my informants in that the final decision on how I gathered, selected and analysed data to include in my research was mine.

With regard to the challenges of being neutral when relating to my research participants, I found that as a Black African woman I was treated either as a 'sister'⁹⁹ or daughter by some participants. In such instances, I became aware of the importance of keeping a neutral stance. Over the period between conducting my fieldwork and completing it, I was asked by one participant who had recently moved to Johannesburg from London to lend her daughter £300 which she would repay on my next trip to Johannesburg. I did give her daughter the money which was sadly never repaid. On another occasion, I was asked to enquire about scholarships at the LSE and to send the relevant information to Johannesburg. I was also sent shopping - to buy shoes from Clarks for a participant's six year old son because there are no Clarks stores in South Africa. Needless to say I bought the shoes but was never refunded. On a lighter note, I was asked if I knew any eligible professional men and, if so, was I willing to introduce my London research participant to him. I found such instances both challenging and humorous in that as

⁹⁹ Here I use the term '*sister*' as a form of address which most Black women and men use to address one another symbolising a racial bond.

much as I would have liked to remain neutral, I found myself succumbing to socio-cultural pressures and obligations placed upon me by my research participants¹⁰⁰. This, I feel, was mainly due to my not being certain of how to respond to some of the unexpected and unreasonably demands interviewees made on me.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed the problems I feel continue to exist within research, particularly when researching and representing the lives of women considered within western feminist theory and research as non-western, “third-world” or as the Other. Through an assessment of my own location as the Other living in the North, I have discussed the importance of acknowledging the differences that exist within groups of people who identified themselves as the Other. The Life History approach has also given me a number of advantages. As I have illustrated, it has allowed me, the researcher, to reveal my participants’ individual views and interpretation of their own work and family life experiences. Although there were times I wanted to probe the women’s stories of their lives further, I was acutely aware of the importance of allowing my research participants to speak more about the issues they felt best described their own reality. The women’s stories were recollections filled with flashbacks and significant memories – a combination of both happy and sad memories. By placing their narratives within a broader historical and socio-cultural framework, I elaborate on the unique methodological and contextual experiences in the next three chapters.

¹⁰⁰ I discuss issues regarding culture and family obligations in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Five

South African Employment Equity Policies: Success or Failure?

The sad thing about South Africa is that you cannot divorce yourself from race; you can't, you know ...um it's impossible. It's Blacks and whites ... and it's everywhere you go. Whether it's kids' schools; whether it's your work place; whether it's shopping ... it's a fact that we can't divorce.
(Ghonsie, aged 40, Marketing Manager, Motor Industry)

Following the first democratic general elections in South Africa in 1994 which saw the Africa National Congress (ANC) come into power, the government inherited an Apartheid economy with massive inequalities along gender, race/ethnicity and class lines (Orr 2007). Since then, the government has worked toward transforming a country that once systematically and purposefully restricted the majority of the population from meaningfully participating in the economy to building one that gives opportunities to all citizens across the length and breadth of the country (Department of Trade and Industry, 2003; Orr, 2007; Orr et al., 1998). With its aim being to overcome its Apartheid and colonial legacy, the government embarked on a comprehensive programme to provide a legislative framework for the transformation of the country's overall economic, political and social structure. Various strategies, policies and programmes, all aimed at addressing the economic, political and social inequalities of the past, have now been put in place by Government to ensure that all South African citizens have equal access to and control of the economy (Department of Trade and Industry, 2003, 2006).

My aim in this chapter is to address the impact that some of these strategies and policies have had on their intended beneficiaries. I focus primarily on the Broad-Based Black¹⁰¹ Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) strategy and its direct empowerment policies – namely the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Transformation Charters, Employment Equity Act (EEA), Affirmative Action (AA) and the Skills Development

¹⁰¹ As mentioned in Chapter 1, a Black person as defined in the South African Codes of Good Practice includes Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Chinese. However, my focus and discussion in this chapter is on the impact that B-BBEE and other policies have on Black Africans and more specifically, Black African women.

Act (SDA) - particularly their success and/or failures in tackling past inequalities. Because my research focuses on professional and managerial Black African women, I look at how these policies affect this cohort of women who, though part of the majority population, remain minorities in the country's corporate labour market. In addition to this, my discussion takes into consideration corporate governance obligations which require all organisations competing nationally and transnationally to introduce equity in their recruitment and employment practices without undermining their employee qualification standards.

I begin the chapter with a brief overview of how colonialism, settler rule and the Apartheid system influenced and shaped the gendered, raced and classed nature of the South African labour market and, more specifically, the position held by women within the Apartheid labour market. This discussion provides insights into how the settler state and Apartheid system built upon colonial practices which ultimately intensified race and gender divisions in the country. As Dupper (2005) reiterates, it is important to make reference to past unjust actions if we are to successfully come up with solutions for the future. For instance, if we look at AA, the term (which I define in more detail later in the chapter) refers to a range of programmes directed toward targeted groups in an attempt to redress inequalities brought about by discrimination (Dupper, 2005). So if one is to argue that it is a form of compensatory action against past discriminatory practices, it is necessary to make reference to unjust actions in the past (i.e., backward-thinking)¹⁰² to justify the argument (ibid.).

Section two of this chapter focuses on government legislation in the new South Africa and the ambivalent relationship that the women they are intended to empower have with these policies. By discussing the aims and objectives of current policies and legislation, I query the ways in which these policies and Acts aim to remedy past inequalities created by settler rule, colonialism and Apartheid. Unlike the UK, which has a

¹⁰² As my discussion in this chapter is on the current situation of Black African women in South Africa, I also embrace Dupper's (2005) view on having a forward-looking approach to justify these policies. According to Dupper (2005), a more forward-thinking approach in which less emphasis is placed on the past injustices and more attention given to a vision of the society ultimately provides "*a society in which people are treated as civic equals...*" (p91). My reasons for embracing Dupper's (2005) backward-thinking and forward-thinking approach is to link it with my research methodology where I have conducted in-depth interviews using the Life History approach to gather my narratives. See Sher, G (1971), 'Reverse Discrimination, the Future, and the Past', Ethics No 90, p81.

voluntarist approach to the implementation of legislation aimed at addressing workplace inequalities within the private sector, South Africa's current approach is more politically driven.¹⁰³ These policies are designed not only to promote equality in education and employment job opportunities but also to ensure the redistribution of wealth where all citizens benefit from the end goal of political stability in the country as a whole. By drawing on interview narratives from my research participants, I take both a backward-looking and forward-looking approach when analysing this data.

In the final section of the chapter, I highlight the South African government's response to recognising employment, occupational and income disparities in the national labour market brought about by past Apartheid and other discriminatory laws and practices. While these laws are positive and in line with Government's determination to promote economic development and efficiency in the workplace, more attention needs to be given to the way in which these laws impact on the people they aim to assist. As Bell and Nkomo (2001) comment on some of the gaps in managerial literature, past research on women in management tended to focus strictly on the careers of female managers, often dismissing other dimensions of their lives.

As I illustrate later in the chapter, while these policies are aimed at protecting Historically Disadvantaged South Africans (HDSA)¹⁰⁴, it seems to me that only scant attention is given to the end result of these policies, i.e., how they actually affect the people they are meant to be helping. With regard to other challenges associated with EEA and AA, racial discrimination in South Africa has overshadowed other forms of discrimination and as such marginalised the gender issue. According to Mathur-Helm (2005:63), because gender issues have been overlooked, AA is subsequently primarily used to redress racial inconsistencies in the workplace. As such, AA in South Africa is at times seen as a policy which excludes white females and only benefits the more advanced Black African woman and men followed by Indians and 'Coloureds'

¹⁰³ There were 683,257 (55.45 percent) women in government positions compared with 548,945 (44.55 percent) men in 2009. The South African government's commitment to the advancement of women remains evident within their own party where the country has had women appointed to senior ministerial positions, namely Directors General and Deputy President.

¹⁰⁴ As per South African government legislation, HDSA refers to any person, category of persons or community, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination prior to the country's 1993 constitution Act No. 200. For more information on this, you can see www.thedti.gov.za

(Mathur-Helm, 2005). I examine the extent to which these policies have impacted on professional Black African women in this final section of the chapter.

With this in mind, I once again ask the question: to what extent has this new legislation succeeded or failed to remove labour market inequity primarily against Black African women who are perceived as having been at a greater disadvantage than all South Africa women? In what way have these new policies empowered them and placed them on a more equal footing with equally qualified individuals of all races? As discussed in Chapter 3, the South African Commission on Employment Equity shows and documents the slow progress of gender equity in middle professional and managerial positions. Furthermore, South Africa also has a long history of patriarchal authority in all groups. Has this continued and, if so, how has this affected the way Black African women experience corporate life? Through the analysis of the narratives of my research participants, I use life stories to illuminate some of these questions, with particular attention to some of the more common themes raised in their responses such as: barriers (concrete ceiling); stereotypes; visibility and scrutiny; questioning of authority and credibility; lack of “fit” in the workplace; insider-within status and exclusion from in/formal networks; and ways of coping.

Finally, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, my decision to focus on the lives of educated Black African women rather than the much researched poor rural or urban women is based on a number of reasons, one being that I identify with this group of women and thus have easier access to both understanding and investigating their lives. In addition, the privileged position of the educated Black African woman puts them in the forefront to make a difference in so many ways. As Okeke-Ihejika (2004:25) argues, in spite of all the obstacles that stand in their way, elite women are still in a better position to beat the odds and create a better life for themselves and their families. Having been best positioned to fully benefit from formal education, they have managed to avoid and overcome the dysfunctional image associated with low-level and poor quality female education that seems so commonplace in Sub-Saharan Africa. Given the havoc wrought by the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s¹⁰⁵ and the subsequent decline of employment within the formal sector in many African countries, highly educated

¹⁰⁵ I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6.

women are one of the few groups who have been left to reap the benefits associated with schooling (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004). Moreover, professional and managerial Black African women in South Africa are under more pressure now not only to succeed but also act as role models and mentors for aspiring young women in the region.

5.1 Colonialism, Settler Rule, Apartheid and Gender Relations: An Historical Overview

Colonialism and Capitalism

Black African women for the most part have always worked – be it in the formal or informal sector - and analysing their labour history remains crucial to understanding their contemporary location. According to Baden et al. (1998), the contemporary location of Black African women in South Africa and the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be fully appreciated without a discussion of the ways in which colonialism, capitalism, settler rule and Apartheid have organised social relations and fractured society along gender, racial/ethnic and class lines (Baden et al., 1998). But as Loomba (2005) points out, there have been two broad tendencies in the analysis of race and ethnicity with the first stemming from Marxist analysis. This analysis is also considered the ‘economic’ approach because of its belief that social groupings, namely racial ones, were largely determined and explained by economic structures and processes.¹⁰⁶ Colonialism, states Loomba (2005),

... was the means through which capitalism achieved its global expansion. Racism simply facilitated this process, and was the conduit through which the labour of colonised people was appropriated. (Loomba, 2005a:107)

The second, or sociological, approach to analysing the intersection of race, ethnicity and class in the colonial context, according to Loomba (2005), derives partly from the work of Max Weber who states that economic explanations are insufficient for understanding the racial make-up of colonial societies. Loomba (2005) further argues that while the first approach can be viewed as functionalist in its justification of race, the latter

¹⁰⁶ See Stuart Hall (1980); John Rex (1980) and Robert Miles (1989).

approach inadvertently fails to address issues relating to economics. So while these two approaches cannot be treated as firm and separate tools to fully address and define colonialism, they nonetheless work well together to provide an understanding of colonial societies, as the former approach privileges class while the latter race and ethnicity (Loomba, 2005a:108). The differences between them, states Loomba (2005), are not merely theoretical but have direct consequences for political struggles, arguing that,

If racial relations are largely the offshoot of economic structures, then clearly the effort should be to transform the latter; on the other hand, if this is not the case, racial oppression needs to be accorded a different political weightage and specificity. (Loomba, 2005a:108)

As such, South African born sociologist John Rex (1980) exemplifies and develops a more functional and realistic approach to these two schools of thought. Giving the South African colonial and later its Apartheid system as an example, Rex (1980) suggests that capitalism in this country was set up through the enforced labour of a Black (Bantu) workforce.¹⁰⁷ With reference to Marx's views in '*Capital*' (1961)¹⁰⁸ where he suggested that capitalism depends upon "the free labourer selling his labour power" (1961:170) to the owner of the means of production, Rex (1980) describes the situation in South Africa and indeed other Sub-Saharan African countries as somewhat different. The workforces of colonised individuals in this part of the world, according to Rex (1980), were commissioned through a variety of coercive measures and not free labour at all.¹⁰⁹ He further illustrates this point by quoting an East African settler who stated: 'We have stolen his land. Now we must steal his limbs ... Compulsory labour is the corollary of our occupation of the country' (Rex 1980:129). So while classical Marxism characterises capitalism's efficiency as its answer to replacing slavery and other crude forms of coercion with the 'free' labour market in which the force is wielded through economic demands, this clearly was not the case in these countries (Loomba, 2005a). Instead, under colonialism, these other supposedly outdated features of control

¹⁰⁷ Coloured, Indians and Chinese (and some Afrikaners who considered themselves coerced by the colonial state in 1910) were also part of this forced labour force. I do not discuss this, however, as my research focuses on the lives of Black Africans.

¹⁰⁸ Vol 1. , Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, p170.

¹⁰⁹ I want to point out that, even in capitalist countries today labour is largely constrained by the need to sell one's labour for wages. However, the difference with the colonial system is that it was much more coercive.

continued to be utilised “not as remnants of the past but as integral features of the present” (Loomba, 2005a:108), making race and racism the basis upon which unfree labour is pressed into colonialist service.¹¹⁰

According to Loomba (2005), racist ideologies by the colonisers identified different sections of people as “intrinsically and biologically” (p108) suited for particular tasks, i.e., Chinese race wonderful manual dexterity; Negroes as the race of tillers of the soil ... Europeans as a race of masters and soldiers and so forth.¹¹¹ In the case of the white race in South Africa, it is worth giving a brief mention of the relationship between the English and Afrikaners. Afrikaner people had lost independence in the Anglo-Boer War, which ended in 1902, and although the South African constitution stated that both white groups, the English and the Afrikaners, had equal rights, in actuality the Afrikaners were treated as inferior. Treating them as lesser citizens and/or poor white Europeans, the tensions that grew out of this are what can perhaps be blamed for the Afrikaner’s need to take over the state and use the state to assert their own superiority, i.e., over the Blacks, Indians, Coloureds, Malay and English.

This ideology of racial superiority translated into class terms with the white race perceived as more superior and working class and Black men relegated to “forever remain cheap labour and slaves” (Loomba, 2005a:109). As a way of putting this belief into practice, colonialists began to structure African societies in line with their capitalist objectives – a move that reshaped the gender, race and class divisions in the region. In the next section, I expand on the ways in which these identity divisions were reshaped in the region, with a specific reference to gender issues which have not been given considerable attention in this section

¹¹⁰ I would like to note here though that in addition to Loomba’s discussion, some Africans were also able to produce goods that could be sold in the market and so were able to pay their taxes. Furthermore, some Africans in South Africa for instance became lawyers and doctors and other professions which enabled them to sell their labour for survival.

¹¹¹ For more on the social history of the English and Afrikaners, see Aimee Cesaire (1972:16) and Marx, Christian (2008), *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*, University of South Africa Press/LIT.

Colonialism and Gender Divisions in the Labour Market

With regard to gender relations under colonialism and settler rule, particularly Apartheid, historical records of African communities indicate that African women's participation in economic life was deeply rooted everywhere on the continent. They participated in the top echelon of political, legal, religious, medicinal and educational institutions. In addition, they also represented and continue to represent a significant portion of the labour force in most of Sub-Saharan Africa's agricultural economies.

While it is important not to treat these women as one homogenous group, all doing the same thing, it is safe to say that in a large number of African societies the gender division of labour allocated responsibility for cultivation to women, who would barter or sell their excess produce, while men engaged in hunting and other activities (Snyder & Tadesse, 1997). However, instead of recognising their actual functions as major contributors to the labour force, the colonial system only engaged men in political and economic activity. This creation of the male "breadwinner"¹¹² became even more pronounced as more technologies were introduced to men who were subsequently recruited for paying jobs which often took them off the farms¹¹³ (Snyder & Tadesse, 1997:76).

In all, colonialism's introduction of new mechanisms for systematically extracting wealth had a drastic and long-lasting effect on the continent including the introduction of many aspects of western culture such as Christianity, formal education and Western technology. These changes contributed tremendously to the formation of an African elite¹¹⁴ with improved living standards and new forms of patriarchal ideology. As a consequence of these changes, gender roles inadvertently continued to change within communities as European sexism combined with patriarchal elements of indigenous cultures. Furthermore, the intensification of urbanisation brought about by migrant labour movements of men, the introduction of cash crops and other waged employment, brought most people of all racial groups directly or indirectly into the nexus of a

¹¹² I expand on this further on in the chapter.

¹¹³ I would like to point out here that recruitment for paid employment was not only restricted to Black African men as Black African women also began to leave rural areas in search of paid work. A point I discuss in more detail later in the chapter.

¹¹⁴ I discuss the formation of the African elite in more detail in Chapter 7 where I analyse the impact of missionary and colonial influences on the formation of the Black African elites and their family lives.

commercial economy. The ways in which these colonial practices¹¹⁵ were adopted and refined to suit the needs of the South African Apartheid government are discussed in the next section.

Settler Rule, Apartheid and Gender Relations

Prior to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, Black African's political repression was very similar to that of other Africans living under British colonial rule on the African continent. Following the abolition of slavery by the British in 1833, a 'Master and Servant Ordinance' was introduced in 1841 in British-ruled states in Southern Africa as a means of controlling the labour force of former slaver owners. The aim was to create and enforce contracts of subordination i.e., making desertion, neglect, insubordination and 'use of insulting language' a criminal offence. These power relations between the coloniser and the colonised reflected and stabilised the white authority that was already a feature of both English and Afrikaner society (Davenport & Saunders, 2000; Luhabe, 2002:13). However, tensions and a struggle for political control between the two white groups eventually culminated in the formation of the first National Party in 1924.¹¹⁶ In spite of the many liberal forces which fought against the racist system of governing that followed over the next two decades,¹¹⁷ the National Party won the whites' only elections in 1948. This win was followed by a series of Acts which further formalised and institutionalised racial discrimination in the country (Davenport & Saunders, 2000).

Reflecting on the situation of women living in the settler state and under Apartheid South Africa at the time, the oppressive legislation aimed at controlling the movements of both male and female Black people ultimately locked Black African women into positions of formal inferiority to men (Baden et al., 1998; Robinson, 1996). This control

¹¹⁵ I realise that this section on British colonial practices is written in a somewhat generalised nature. This is because my intention is to only give an overview of colonialism's impact on communities in Sub-Saharan Africa and focus in the remainder of this section on the South African Apartheid system and its impact on gender and current employment policies.

¹¹⁶ See Davenport and Saunders (2000) for more details.

¹¹⁷ One such movement was The National Liberation League for Equality. Land and Freedom. Headed by Zaibunnissa (Cissy) Gool, the movement aimed to "unite all individuals, organisations and other bodies in agreement with the programme of the League to struggle for complete social, political and economic equality for non-Europeans in South Africa" (South Africa History Online <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/chronology/general/1930s.htm#1936>).

of movement did not, however, apply to White, Indian or 'Coloured' women who were not part of this legal system as they were governed by the 'western' legal system (Baden et al., 1998).¹¹⁸ During the late 1940s and 1950s, the Apartheid government began to regulate the movement of all Black Africans (Coloureds and Indians) in a more systematic manner.¹¹⁹ This move was in line with the Natives' Land Act of 1913 and the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936 which effectively banned Black Africans from purchasing or otherwise acquiring land¹²⁰ (Cock, 1980, 1989; Lee, 2009). By denying Black Africans access to 87 percent of the territory of South Africa defined as 'white areas,' the settler state reinforced this race division by effectively depriving non-whites of arable land and instead forcing many Black people in the rural areas to work as cheap labour for the white owners who now controlled the land. This labour force, according to Cock (1980, 1989), was in turn controlled by a migrant labour system or 'pass laws' (system of influx control) and other Apartheid laws including the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts, The Trespass Act and the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, all aimed at severely restricting the movement of the Black Africans. Therefore, the end result of these restrictions was such that the Black African had to be granted permission to be in a 'white' industrial, commercial or residential urban area or farm (where a relatively decent wage could be made).¹²¹

These oppressive Apartheid laws were introduced to the detriment of women. For instance, all domestic workers had to be registered. As migrant workers, the women's one year contracts had to be renewed each year and only on the condition that they remain with the same employee. In instances where they wished to change jobs or employers, permission had to be granted through a special application to a local administration board that required proof that no local Black African worker was available. The end result of this legislation was to impose an embargo on the entry of

¹¹⁸ Housing restrictions were also imposed on Indians and Coloureds. (See Lee, R (2009)

¹¹⁹ I have to once again point out that I do not in any way wish to treat Black South African women as one homogenous group in my discussion. I remain aware of the tremendous differences that exist amongst them as discussed in previous chapters. My aim here is merely to give an overview of the situation of women in Apartheid South Africa. I also want to point out here that although the race based system of Apartheid did differentiate between groups – i.e., Black African, Coloured and Indian. All were hemmed in by Apartheid laws and generalised under the label of non-whites when it came to enforcing discriminatory Apartheid laws.

¹²⁰ The Land Act set up 'Reserves' (later called 'Bantustans' and 'homelands') and effectively zoned Black Africans to 13 percent of the total land area of South Africa. This was in spite of the fact that Black Africans formed 80 percent of the country's total population. (<http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/chronology/general/1930s.htm#1936>)

¹²¹ In relation to white people's earnings.

unskilled Black African women into the 'white' urban areas¹²² and to attach domestic workers to their present employers. In the event that they lost their jobs, the women had no choice but to return to the rural areas or 'homelands' where the majority (some 57 percent) of the population were unemployed and trapped by laws that prohibited them from travelling into the urban areas (ibid.). The implications of these discriminatory laws and restrictions to areas deemed as the "*capitalist core*" (Cock 1980:5) was the ability to control movement (and therefore wealth distribution), making the homelands or 'Bantustans' where Black Africans lived function as "labour reservoirs for the centres of capital accumulation and as 'dumping grounds' for surplus labour (ibid)."

Apart from being denied jobs, Black Africans also experienced restricted educational opportunities. According to Dube (1985), racism was so entrenched in the educational system during this period that schooling was segregated along racial lines with the main aim being to fortify the privilege of the minority white population at the expense of the majority Black African population (Dovey & Mason, 1984). As Hoernle (1938) wrote in his report in support of the Union of South Bantu education system,

The aim of Native Education must differ from the aim of White Education ... because the two social orders for which education is preparing White and Black are not identical and will for a long time to come remain essentially different. . . . The education of the White child prepares him for a life in a dominant society and the education of the Black child for a subordinate society. There are for the White child no limits, in or out of school, other perhaps than poverty, to his development through education as far as he desires and in whatever direction he likes, if he has the necessary capacity. For the Black child there are limits which affect him chiefly out of school (Hoernle, 1938:398-399).¹²³

This blatant form of discrimination directed at Black Africans was in 1953 legislated by the Apartheid state to create The Bantu Education Act (Christopher, 1994:150). This act further segregated the already segregated educational system in the country. Attempts were however made by missionaries to continue educating Black African men and

¹²² There were a few exceptions, e.g., the wives of urbanised Black Africans could come to these areas. However, this group was also increasingly restricted after the introduction of Apartheid in 1948.

¹²³ Also see Union of South Africa (1936), *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education*, (p457-8).

women. Of the 5,000 or so mission schools set up, the famous Lovedale mission¹²⁴ whose emphasis was to establish Christian communities and provide education for Black Africans, became renowned for its training in practical skills including agriculture and technical subjects. Seen as schools which placed too much emphasis on academic training, the English language and “dangerous liberal ideas ... all of which encouraged the foundation of an African elite” (Beinart, 1994:153), the Apartheid government legislated another act as part of its on going efforts to limit non-whites’ access to quality education. This 1959 Extension of University Education Act aimed to ultimately curb Black Africans in particular from having any prospects of advancement into careers of their choice. It aimed to achieve this by establishing a series of new ethnically-based institutions for Black Africans together with separate universities for Coloured and Indians¹²⁵ (Christopher 1994:152).

Although Apartheid’s introduction of the Bantu Education Act in 1955 placed the Black African educational system under an entirely separate and inferior system to the whites, it still remains an important part of Black African’s educational history in that a minority of Black African men and women during this period were able to train and work as lawyers, doctors and teachers within the Bantustans (De Kock, 1996). However, this lack of access to decent educational standards- particularly technical and science skills - meant that a large section of the country’s population was ‘functionally illiterate’ (Moleke, 2003:206) (as was evidenced by the 1996 census which estimated that some 36 percent of the country’s population aged 20 years and above were illiterate (SAIRR 2000)). Furthermore, this lack of adequate education and job training subsequently denied the vast majority of Black Africans adequate housing, health services, transport and economic opportunities. As Kongole and Bojuwaye (2006:364)

¹²⁴ Lovedale was destined to become the pre-eminent missionary education centre in South Africa. Its first headmaster Rev Govan regarded education as the means by which Black Africans could be elevated to exactly the same level as Europeans (De Kock, L 1996).

¹²⁵ These separate universities comprised of The Afrikaans-medium universities – Potchesfroom, Pretoria, Orange Free State and Stellenbosch – all of which were restricted to whites only from their inception. The English-medium universities included Rhodes which was all-white and Fort Hare (formerly Lovedale Mission College) which in practice was non-white. The remaining three universities – Natal, Cape Town and Witwatersrand were more open but by no means fully multi-racial as students’ movements were regulated. Although Natal admitted non-white, classes were kept racially segregated. Cape Town and Witwatersrand admitted students to courses without regard to race but applied a strict colour-bar in social and sporting events (Lapping, 1986:183). New universities were established in other parts of the country which admitted Black Africans, Coloureds and Indians namely Bellville in the western Cape for Coloureds, Ngoye in Zululand for Zulus, Durban in Natal for Indians, Turfloop in Transvaal for the Sotho-Tswana and Fort Hare for Xhosas (Lapping, 1986:184; Davenport, 1989:380).

explain, the Apartheid system ultimately curbed their participation and involvement in all facets of their lives. While it is fair to say that not all women – white, Indian, and ‘Coloured’ - were affected in the same way or left at an economic and political disadvantage due to these Apartheid laws, it was undoubtedly the Black African women who bore the brunt of it. Government’s determination to go to such great lengths to curb the development of a large urbanised Black African population (Hindson, 1987) ultimately resulted in the laws having a profound effect on both their public and private lives¹²⁶ (Msimang, 2000:2).

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the migration of men in search of jobs left Black women in the rural areas with very little due to poor economic prospects, making them one of the most impoverished groups in the society (Dubourdieu, 1999). Life in the urban areas had its own challenges as well. In addition to the challenges I have touched on earlier in the chapter, women on the whole faced tremendous discrimination, bound in a culture of patriarchal conservatism that systematically encouraged the violence, conservatism and rigidity of the Apartheid state (Msimang, 2001:2). Influenced by the patriarchal conservative ideas of the Afrikaner and English communities, women found themselves oppressed both by gender and race. White women also found themselves excluded from most types of formal employment (with the exception of clerical and secretarial work). For those with access to finances, the Apartheid system had laws which ensured that white woman’s aspirations and opportunities were limited. For example, employers could fire women when they fell pregnant and women wanting to take out loans or open bank accounts required their husbands’ consent. With regard to educational aspirations, although not as bad as the inferior education provided to the Black population, white women were often encouraged to study and train for professions such as nursing or teaching rather than, say, dentistry or higher education (Msimang, 2000).

On the whole, all women suffered under both Apartheid and the ensuing patriarchal practices of South African men. However, as Msimang (2001) points out, South African Black women suffered unequivocally in different ways. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the

¹²⁶ One example of this is the establishment of educational institutions such as Lovedale as discussed earlier which aimed to educate Black Africans – all of which had an impact on the formation of African political parties and other non-white activist movements.

intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class ultimately categorised which women suffered more than others. As Msimang (2001) explains, “although apartheid was primarily a racial ideology, it intersected with conservative class and gender ideologies in ways that made life much easier for white women than for Black women” (Msimang 2001:3). For instance, with regard to employment, Black African women’s participation in the labour force was indicative of the gender division of labour within the home in that race was so entwined with poverty. To combat this, Black women inadvertently found themselves part of paid employment in significantly higher numbers than white women purely out of necessity. But to their detriment, the most common employment for Black African women was within the domestic sphere – as maid to white women, forging the ‘maid-madam’ relationship (Baden et al., 1998; Cock, 1980, 1989; Msimang, 2000) and ‘tea-lady’ in the office environment. While a few Black women managed to gain employment in the professional sector as social workers, nurses and teachers, and in the clerical and service sectors, the racial inequality and ambiguous relationships surrounding Black women’s’ experiences still left them with very little room to progress within these professions.

The introduction of new legislation to address these past inequalities and subsequent opportunities that have now been created for all South African Black women within the current workplace will be explored further in the next section. While the current government has made tremendous progress in tackling these issues, more still needs to be done.

5.2 Government Legislation in the New South Africa

As mentioned earlier, following the 1994 election, the first democratically elected government inherited an Apartheid economy with massive inequalities along gender, race/ethnic and class lines (Orr, 2007). Through its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the ANC government aimed, amongst other things, to address employment inequality and to support job creation for all. In line with this, in 1996 Government adopted a neoliberal macroeconomic framework known as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR). As Orr (2007) states, the main thrust of GEAR was to expand the South African economy. However, GEAR’s lack of

attention to gender specific policies meant the policy viewed gender as merely an afterthought (Orr et al., 1998). Hence, to remedy this situation and address issues pertaining to women's rights, empowerment and welfare, the South African government responded by signing the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and to pass the Gender Policy Framework (GPF) in 1996 (Mathur-Helm, 2004a). The GPF's primary endeavour was to integrate gender policies by ensuring that:

- Women's rights are perceived as human rights;
- They have equality as active citizens; their economic empowerment is promoted;
- Their social upliftment is given priority;
- They are included in decision-making;
- They are beneficiaries in political, economic, social, and cultural areas; and
- Affirmative action programmes targeting women are implemented (Mathur-Helm, 2004b:57; The Office on the Status of Women, 1996).

It was thus the intention of the GPF that laws be developed to ensure equal rights and opportunities for South African women in all areas of government, private and public sector jobs, community and family. By having such policies in place, i.e., "equality of opportunity, access to resource sharing, control and decision making in the economy, provision of services, and access to fair treatment (Mathur-Helms 2004:57), the GPF intended to provide the framework for women to progress in the new South Africa.

Of the numerous laws that had to be redefined and rewritten in line with the new South African constitution¹²⁷ and international human rights agreements, the legislation I focus on in this chapter pertains to labour relations and its impact on all Black South African women. As discussed in Chapter 3, while women make up 52 percent of the adult population of South Africa, only 43.9 percent of working South Africans are women (Stats SA 2008). Of the various facets of the labour legislation, I focus in the next section on The Employment Equity Act (EEA) of 1998,¹²⁸ a South African legislation which places an obligation on certain employers to implement Affirmative Action measures. Before I do that, I briefly look at the government's empowerment strategy,

¹²⁷ www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/index.htm

¹²⁸ It is worth noting here that government acts such as The Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1995 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) of 1997, both of which precede the Employment Equity Act, were very instrumental in setting out the parameters under which employees could be employed and organised. The BCEA established rules pertaining to overtime, working hours and remuneration while the LRA focused on the role of unions, i.e., allowing legal strikes and industrial action for all workers. (Msimang 2001:3). These laws are outlined clearly in the legislation www.labour.gov.za/legislation

i.e., the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) as it is currently referred to.

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE)

Policies for Black empowerment have passed through a number of stages. Although Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) in South Africa has come to be known as the transfer of ownership of business from white to Black hands (and in this case a niche group of Black men and women), the idea itself was born out of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (Department of Trade and Industry, 2003).¹²⁹ However, though aimed at addressing the situation of previously disadvantaged citizens through the creation of business opportunities, BEE successfully empowered only a handful of the majority population. As a consequence of this, BEE was soon superseded by a new strategy aimed at being more inclusive. This new government-led strategy - Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment¹³⁰ (B-BBEE) - was legislated under Act no 53 of 2003. However, the definition of B-BBEE continues to be a challenge. As such, for the sake of my discussion in this chapter, I define B-BBEE as an act and government's economic empowerment strategy that is aimed at "addressing inequalities resulting from the systematic exclusion of the majority of South Africans from meaningful participation in the economy, i.e., much more broadly than the more narrow ownership contemplated by BEE (South Africa DTI 2004)." In February 2007, the DTI gazetted the BEE Codes of Good Practice resulting in the introduction of Transformation Sector Charters¹³¹ (or Sector Charters as they are commonly referred

¹²⁹ Elaborated more in section 4.4.6.3 of the legislation which states that ... "The domination of the business by white business and the exclusion of Black people and women from the mainstream of economic activity are causes for great concern for the reconstruction and development process. A central objective of the RDP is to de-racialise business ownership and control completely, through focused policies of Black Economic Empowerment. These policies must aim to make it easier for Black people to gain access to capital for business development (DTI (2003). www.thedti.gov.za/bee

¹³⁰ I do not want to elaborate too much on this as my focus is more on B-BBEE rather than BEE objectives. For the moment I highlight the definition of BEE which, according to the RDP strategy document, states that ... The challenge in defining black economic empowerment is to find the appropriate balance between a very broad definition and an overly narrow one. To define BEE too broadly equates BEE with economic development and transformation in general. The strategy is then commensurate with the totality of government's programme of reconstruction and development. To define BEE too narrowly limits it to a set of transactions transferring corporate assets from white to black ownership. The Strategy Document, <http://www.thedti.gov.za/bee/bee.htm> Cited January 2009. Also see Moonda, L (2008), Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment, Financial Mail, Friday March 14, 2008 www.empowerment.co.za cited 13 January 2009.

¹³¹ Industry sectors include mining, the petroleum and maritime sectors, tourism and financial services, transport, construction, ICT, marketing, advertising and communication.

to). Amongst other things, these sector charters prescribe empowerment expectations for increasing the number of professional and managerial women in the various industries (South Africa DTI, 2007).

Although the B-BBEE Act is also criticised as not being inclusive enough in its strategy to empower all that it is aimed at, I feel the need to give it a mention here as its direct empowerment strategy, amongst other things, is to push for develop human resources and skills development¹³² and to push for equitable representation in all categories and levels of employment (Employment Equity Act).¹³³

5.2.1 Affirmative Action and Employment Equity Act: Practice versus Reality

“The primary aims of affirmative action must be to redress the imbalances created by apartheid. We are not ... asking for hand-outs for anyone nor are we saying that just as white skin was a passport for privilege in the past, so a black skin should be the basis of privilege in the future. Nor ... is it our aim to do away with qualifications. What we are against is not the upholding of standards as such but the sustaining of barriers to the attainment of standards; the special measures that we envisage to overcome the legacy of past discrimination are not intended to ensure the advancement of unqualified persons, but to see to it that those who have been denied access to qualifications in the past can become qualified now, and those who have been qualified all along but overlooked because of past discrimination, are at least given their due. The first point to be made is that affirmative action must be rooted in principles of justice and equality.” (Nelson Mandela, October 1991)

¹³² More detailed information on this is available on www.dti.gov.za Department of Trade and Industry, SA 2004.

¹³³ In addition to this, the strategy also gave rise to The Code of Good Practice: Preparation, Implementation and Monitoring of Employment Equity Plans, 23 Nov 1999 (as published on Government Notice R1394 (*Government Gazette 20626*)). The Codes insist that all current and future employers have transparent recruitment strategies, targeted advertising campaigns, increase the pool of available candidates by investing in the community and running bridging programmes and train and develop people from designated groups (para 8.). Further to this, the Employment and Occupational Equity Green Paper (the precursor of the EEA that I discuss in the next section) gives reference to the notion that all advertising procedures have a systematic mechanism in the way they are conducted, i.e., the development of advertising mechanisms reach all candidates for new opportunities, including previously disadvantaged groups (4.5.2.1) and ending processes that neglect historically disadvantaged groups, such as advertising through newspapers or institutions with limited audiences (4.5.2.2).

Affirmative Action

In view of Apartheid's divide and rule policy, I find it understandable that equality legislation remains on the top of both government and the Black African majority population's agenda. It is worth mentioning here that although there was talk of including Affirmative Action into a new South African Bill of Rights which would permit temporary advances to groups which were discriminated against as far back as 1984, it was only in 1993 that more attention was given to this during the constitutional negotiations (van Jaarsveld, 2000). Although it was necessitated by past policies of discrimination which created legacies of unequal racial representation in employment spheres, AA is described by some as "hiring by numbers" because of its focus on increasing the numbers of designated groups through targeted hiring and, in some instances, the training and promotion of these individuals (Dupper, 2005; Howitz et al., 1996; Jain et al., 2003; Moleke, 2003; van Jaarsveld, 2000). Initially coined in the United States in response to segregation and the disadvantage of African Americans in employment (Jain et al., 2003), AA in the South African context is defined by the Department of Labour as,

...measures designed to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace of a designated employer ... (South Africa Department of Labour, 2004) .

These measures that must be taken include:

- Identification and elimination of barriers with an adverse impact on designated groups;
- Measures which promote diversity;
- Making reasonable accommodation for people from designated groups;
- Retention, development and training of designated groups (including skills development); and
- Preferential treatment and numerical goals to ensure equitable representation (South Africa Department of Labour, 2004).

Jain et al.(2003), however, query the ambiguity of the term 'suitably qualified people' arguing that persons deemed suitably qualified for a particular job, job category, or competence level is very much a personal decision of the employer. Hence, as I have already touched on earlier, in order to offer justifications for AA, it is imperative that

one takes both the backward-looking and forward-looking approach. One of the reasons for this is that unlike the United States where AA beneficiaries are minority populations, the beneficiaries of AA in South Africa are a statistical majority (Dupper, 2005) and Historically Disadvantaged South Africans (HDSAs). As Kongole and Bojuwoye (2006:362) explain, whereas the United States' Affirmative Action was meant to ensure that Black people and other minority groups enjoyed the same benefits and opportunities similar to the minority white South African population, Affirmative Action in South Africa was adopted to ensure that HDSAs¹³⁴ enjoy similar benefits and opportunities as white minorities. Because of the ambiguity and controversy surrounding AA policies,¹³⁵ I want to take time here to highlight the reason why there remains a need to make a distinction between the two ways in which Affirmative Action can be defined and applied. As Dupper (2005) explains, there are two possible reactions to the ways in which certain groups are underrepresented. For instance, in an employer's workforce, Dupper (2005) identifies this as *strong affirmative action* in that,

Either the preference given to members of a certain group can be allowed to influence decisions between candidates who are otherwise equally qualified, or it might go beyond this and involve the selection of a member of the targeted group over other candidates who are in fact better qualified for the position (p93).

The other type of Affirmative Action which he terms *weak affirmative action* is seen as merely involving efforts to ensure equal opportunity for members of groups that have previously been subjected to discriminatory practices. This can occur in instances such as active recruitment of qualified applicants from previously excluded groups, special training programmes set up to assist targeted individuals to ensure they meet the standards for appointment, and measures to ensure that disadvantaged individuals are fairly considered in the selection process¹³⁶ (Dupper, 2005). It is clear from my discussion on AA so far and the Employment Equity Act below, that South Africa leans more toward the more controversial strong affirmative action. By insisting that employers meet quotas, AA in South Africa is seen to incite a charge of unfairness in

¹³⁴ As at mid-2008 South Africa's Black population totalled 79.2 percent with other population figures as follows: 9.2 percent White, 9 percent Coloured and 2.6 percent Indian/Asian. Cited on 23/01/09 from Statistics South Africa, *Mid-year population estimates 2008*. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022008.pdf>

¹³⁵ i.e., charges of it being a form of reserve discrimination.

¹³⁶ Also see Nagel, T (1988), A Defence of Affirmative Action, in T, L Beauchamp and N.E. Bowie (eds.), *Ethical Theory and Business*, p345

that it is perceived as departing from the notion that individuals ought to invariably be judged on the basis of individual characteristics that are applicable to the circumstances, rather than “*involuntary group membership*” (Dupper, 2005:94) especially in the case of South Africa where race and gender become a subjective decisive factor. Later in this chapter I explore this charge of “unfairness” and how it impacts on my research participants.

Employment Equity Act

Enacted by South Africa’s Parliament in 1998, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) only came into effect in 1999 with its main aim being to address the “ghettoization” of South African Blacks, whom in this context includes Black Africans, ‘Coloureds’, Indian women and disabled individuals in the workplace¹³⁷ (Jain et al., 2003:34). According to Mathur-Helm (2004; 2005), when the EEA was implemented it was aimed at providing preferential treatment and encouragement to women and other members of certain ‘designated groups’¹³⁸ who are ‘suitably qualified’ into employment. This would be done by addressing and eliminating unfair discrimination and promoting equal opportunity through the creation of positive and proactive, or Affirmative Action (AA), measures that would ultimately press forward the intended recipients’ location (Jain et al., 2003; Mathur-Helm, 2005).

The EEA, like many policies put in place by governments, does have its critics. Although it places an obligation on certain employers¹³⁹ (as per elements defined in *stronger affirmative action* practices) to implement Affirmative Action measures (Dupper, 2005), it also includes facets of the weaker affirmative action. As Jain et al. (2003) explain, the EEA requires that employers with a total of fifty employees or more embark on AA measures. However, in cases where employers employ fewer than 50

¹³⁷ See section 1 EEA

¹³⁸ ‘Designated groups’ are defined here as people with disabilities and Black women and men who in the South African context as noted earlier in the thesis include Africans, Coloured and Indians.

¹³⁹ Also see section 1 and section 20 EEA which identifies a ‘suitably qualified person’ as a person who may be qualified for a job through any one of, or any combination of, that person’s formal qualifications, prior learning, relevant experience, or capacity to acquire, within a reasonable time, the ability to do the job. The employer in turn must review all the factors listed and determine whether that person has the ability to do the job in terms of any one of, or any combination of factors.

Republic of South Africa, Department of Labour (2004), *Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998*, p11 <http://www.labour.gov.za>

people, they may still find themselves bound by the provision of the Act if their turnover is equal to or above the applicable annual turnover of a small business as per Schedule 4 of the Act¹⁴⁰ (Dupper, 2005:94). The reason for this is to ensure that all previously disadvantaged groups remain equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.

In an effort to further clarify the intentions of EEA, the Employment Act No. 55 bill was put in place to promote fair treatment by making it illegal to discriminate “directly or indirectly, against an employee, in any employment policy or practice, on one or more grounds, including ... gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility...” (ILO 2008:1). This Act further recommended the practices of evaluating and rewarding work performance on the essential job functions (Department of Department of Labour, 2004). As Kongole and Bojuwoye (2006) explain, in practice this is achieved by identifying the key performance indicators collaboratively between the employers and employees prior to employment – an act necessary to ensure that all stakeholders gain skills necessary to facilitate this new workplace relationship (Dekker 2004). In the event that an employer is accused of not complying with EEA, the onus is on the employer to clear their position – a task which at times is not straightforward. This practice can be particularly tricky when applied to individuals who are ‘suitably qualified.’ Suitably qualified individuals may include those who do not have the experience or formal qualifications required for the position (as already noted earlier in the chapter), but merely the competence to acquire the ability to do the work in question within a reasonable period of time.

Skills Development Act

Unfortunately, the Employment Equity Act and Affirmative Action cannot be successfully implemented in a country with a skills shortage. As I discussed earlier in the chapter, although some Black Africans did train and work as professionals within the Bantustans, the Apartheid system of education made available to the Black African population was inferior when compared to that of the white population. This remains a

¹⁴⁰ Dupper (2005) does however caution that the figure does vary from one sector to the next For this reason the provisions of the Act dealing with AA also bind municipalities, agencies working on behalf of the government, and any other employer bound by a collective agreement that declares them to be designated employers.

sensitive topic for most South Africans even in this post-Apartheid era.’ The long-term effects of decades of unequal access to quality education and training, the subsequent general lack of formal qualifications, disparities in ownership of assets, and other disadvantages have all impacted upon HDSAs in different ways. How individuals’ specific social positioning with respect to the intersections of gender, race and class have been affected by these uneven levels of provision and financing is what I explore further in the next section .

5.3 Listening to the Women’s Voices

As I stated in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of this chapter, B-BBEE strategies and EEA and AA policies in South Africa were implemented as part of the current government’s aim to give previously disadvantaged groups the opportunity to positively contribute to and benefit from the development of South Africa. However, while these strategies and policies are meant to benefit Black African, Coloured and Indian men and women, Black African women professionals have been identified as one group that has benefited most from this new legislation. In this section I explore and discuss the ways in which these policies are received and experienced by my intended beneficiaries – professional and managerial Black African women.

Bantu “Education?”

I begin this section with a discussion of the role of education and its relevance to my research participants. The educational system in any society is arguably the most effective means of exercising social control and, amongst other things, a means of shaping the citizens as the system wishes them to be. As noted in the previous section, both colonial and settler/Apartheid governments were only prepared to offer to the Black Africans the minimum amount of education necessary to develop the kind of subject they believed could function in the systems they presided over. But as Cromwell (1986) states, in most of the English and French-speaking colonies, some exceptionally ambitious and industrious Black Africans set out on their own to seek the education they wanted either in other parts of Africa, the UK, the United States or elsewhere. As I illustrate below, my research participants had parents with a passion and determination to ensure their children’s access to some of the best schools worldwide. This

commitment transcended all traditional notions of privileging the male gender over the female. As a result, my research participants today, as discussed previously, belong to a privileged group within African society. They are educated, part of the political and social elite and hold jobs in organisations that offer them the possibility to realise their full potential.

However, in view of their identity as Black African women, McDowell (2008:491) states that it is now broadly recognised within feminist literature that identities are complex, multiple and fluid, continuously (re)produced and performed in different arenas of everyday life. In this section I examine the extent to which these Black African women have benefited from their educational achievements and the ways in which government policies contribute to their success and/or failure in achieving their goals and addressing their needs as they navigate their way through private sector employment. I ask: how, and in what ways is their positionality influenced by the ways in which gender, race/ethnicity and class intersect?

Fridah, Lesego, Khosi and Ntando were all born in rural South Africa. Fridah, aged 48, currently works for one of the largest South African banks as the Director of Trade, Finance and Services. She holds an MBA from a top university in the United States where she studied on a scholarship. Fridah had agreed to meet me in one of her office's private meeting rooms and was very pleased to take part in this research. Brought up in rural KwaZulu Natal Province, Fridah described her parents as not highly educated people but fortunate in that they were "*far-sighted*" for having encouraged her brothers and sisters in the same way when it came to getting an education or performing domestic chores.

...they always encouraged both boys and girls. So we'd go to school and get as much education and er... stuff like that. ... My brothers used to wash the dishes, scrub the floors.... My mother said, 'you know, I don't care whether you're a boy or a girl, this is how it's going to be in this house.' And you know, they didn't like it but... that's how she raised us. She did not prefer boys to girls and vice versa. (Fridah , 48)¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ I make reference here to the age of the participant as I want to put their comments into context with their age and work experience.

As is a widely held belief about Black African society, gender in traditional African culture is regarded as the primary determinant of the role expectations and behaviour in individuals. These expectations, based mainly on stereotypical sex roles which essentially place women in a subordinate position to men, are what I expected to hear particularly from women I interviewed who grew up in rural areas. But as Fridah clearly stipulates, this was not necessarily the case. The primary focus of her parents was to ensure that their children received a decent education regardless of gender.

Lesego, aged 40, is Group Executive Public Affairs Officer for a Life Assurance Company. Though born in Johannesburg, Lesego spent most of her childhood in Ciskei – a Bantustan homeland,¹⁴² where she was brought up by her grandmother. Speaking softly as she recollects her childhood memories, Lesego refers to her grandmother as “the first feminist I came across who was completely fearless and ahead of her time” – who married at the age of 30, a thing unthinkable in her time. A political activist and self-styled entrepreneur, Lesego’s grandmother is the person whom she identifies as having given her the drive to study further and acquire a Psychology and English degree from what she only refers to as a “Black” university. Amongst the various responsibilities that Lesego has had while working for her current organisation has been to negotiate retirement funds with unions on behalf of Black African mine workers. Throughout the interview, I was struck by the way Lesego continually referred to her grandmother as the force behind her strength and ambition to strive for more challenging roles within the workforce, making no reference whatsoever to any male role models.

Like Lesego, Khosi, aged 43, grew up in a small town in Northwest Province which had also been designated an independent state by the Apartheid government. The youngest of nine children (four boys and five girls), Khosi’s parents both worked in educational institutions. As members of a South African Royal Family, Khosi was very keen to let me know of her privileged upper class background. For instance, when Khosi narrates her time at school, she makes a point of mentioning her parent’s professional qualifications which again re-affirms her class position within her community, distinguishing herself from the inferior image attached to Bantu education:

¹⁴² Ciskei was part of the former Black National State within South Africa. Granted independence by the then Apartheid South African government, Ciskei was one of ten homelands which were created by the government. As it was not recognised by the United Nations or any other country in the world, Ciskei became part of South Africa in 1994. See www.ciskei.com for more details.

... a bit more privileged because one had professional parents and also a little bit more privileged than most so-called privileged children because of ... of my birthright... I'm not saying that from a financial side but from an education point of view. Yes, I went to a government school, a typical South African Black Bantu education school and then in Grade 11 and 12 to a Catholic School. (Khosi, 43)

Khosi later studied Journalism and then obtained a Masters Degree in Psychology from a multi-racial university – an experience she now refers to as eye opening. A qualified Clinical Psychologist today, Khosi credits her determination to achieve academically to the influence of both her parents and siblings adding, "... because my older siblings already have two degrees ...it was taken for granted that I too would get a second degree." (Khosi, 43)

Ntando, aged 45, is a Human Resource Director, Government Relations and Transformation for a top petrochemical company. Describing her up bringing as one of "*having to do a lot of work*," Ntando credits her mother for making her the person that she is today. Born in Transkei in the Eastern Cape¹⁴³, Ntando attended the University of Transkei where she graduated with an Honours Degree in Psychology. Following the death of her father, Ntando's mother simultaneously raised her and her two brothers and sister single handed while juggling three jobs - as a teacher and owner of two businesses. Ntando describes her life as the eldest child in the family as one where going off to play after school as a child was not an option stating,

. . . .being the first born, I ended up having to do a lot of work. I had to open the shop in the mornings before going to school... After school, I knew I couldn't play, I had to relieve my mother. (Ntando, 45)

Ntando refers to her role as the eldest sibling as being more of a "*kind of leader of the pack*" especially as her mother took on the care of other extended family member's children who also lived in their house.

Bambi, Vanessa, Thamele and Petunia all grew up in exile. When I met Bambi I was immediately struck at how welcoming she was and eager to share her life story with me.

¹⁴³ Another homeland as discussed above.

Her parents who were both teachers left South Africa in 1957 to avoid the Bantu Administration Act which changed the education system. Living in Ghana, Nigeria and the UK, her family finally settled in Zambia after a last ditch attempt to try to return back to South Africa. Aged 47, Bambi is Corporate Affairs Director, General Business for a large brewing company after spending a number of years working as Director General of a government ministry. When Bambi looks back on her academic years – having attended secondary school and university in Bulgaria – she identifies her father as having had a great impact on her current drive to succeed adding, “*my parents were both teachers you know. My dad used to say to me, ‘You must aspire to be a principal at least, not a teacher’*”. Because she spent so much time outside the country Bambi has had to work hard to be perceived as ‘South African’ and not just a privileged child who grew up in exile stating,

I grew up knowing I was South African Yes; I did not run around the Bantu Administration Schools burning tyres and things. I didn’t do that but I am equally connected with the struggle. My parents left for very valid personal reasons. I happen to be one of those people who had the benefit of a good education which I need to plough back into the country... (Bambi, 47)

Similar to Bambi, Vanessa aged 51, was born in Durban but left South Africa at the age of six to move to the United States with her family. Her father, now a retired professor, taught at an Ivy League university in the United States while her mother worked as an operating room nurse. When I ask Vanessa who of her parents influenced her the most, she has to stop and think about this:

Gosh! In different ways ... I think on the work ethic, my father; one of those people who never take a day off even when they’re sick. [Laughter] and then my mother – obviously if you’re a daughter – that mother influence ... but in terms of growing up, there was no limit that my parents put in front of what we could do. (Vanessa, 51)

Vanessa, who also has an MSc in Journalism from an Ivy League university, considers herself to come from a family of accomplished individuals with all her sisters being graduates of major US universities with Masters and PhD qualifications. She has been living in South Africa since 1995 after having spent part of her formative years living in Zambia. Since returning to South Africa she has worked as a journalist for an international news service, a South African mining house as Director of Corporate

Communications and currently as Corporate Affairs Director for a South African-based British bank.

Thamela was born in Zambia in 1970 while her parents were living there in exile. Both trained teachers, her parents later became full-time ANC political activists. Like the other women I have spoken with, Thamela views her parents as having treated both her and her three brothers and two sisters equally adding,

My dad made a commitment to send us too, give us all the same quality of education through high school. ..we started off being in different schools but all ended up going to the same high school and that was as he said, 'I'm going to equalise the opportunity for you and what you do with it after that is up to you.' (Thamela, 39)

Holder of a MSc in Economics from a top US university, Thamela has worked both in the USA and South Africa where she now works for a large private bank.

Petunia's situation is rather different from the rest of the women referred to in this section in that she was not raised by either one of her parents or relatives. Born in exile to parents heavily involved in the ANC struggle, Petunia was raised for the most part in Tanzania. Her mother, a medical doctor, and her father, a Doctor of Physics, divorced not long after she was born. As an active member of the ANC and its struggle against the Apartheid movement, Petunia's mother sent her to boarding school for her secondary education. When not in boarding school, Petunia spent her school holidays amongst other ANC members whom she refers to as "*one big family*." However, as most of her time was spent at school, Petunia views her boarding master and mistress as the two people who actually brought her up and influenced the person she has become today. On a professional level, her mother's absence while she was growing up and her commitment to the South African political struggle as an ANC Party member have jointly had a tremendous impact on how she chose which subjects to study at university. Petunia explains this to me stating,

I always understood ... that whatever it is that we did from a career point of view was driven by one day coming back to South Africa and ensuring that erm... we find ourselves in careers ... skills that would be required when we came back to South Africa (Petunia, 45).

As a qualified lawyer with degrees from Wales and England, Petunia tells me that while she was aware that there were many Black lawyers in South Africa, her aim was to become a commercial lawyer adding,

So yes, a lot of the decisions that I made around my career had more to do with what South Africa would need as opposed to what I felt like doing. I think if I had a choice, I probably would have gone into the fashion industry but that was just not an option [laughter] (Petunia, 44).

In this section, I have highlighted the links between education, career choice and giving back to South Africa. The idea that one educates one's children to ensure a better future for them is what I feel drives most parents to give their children the best educational opportunities possible. However, in the case of South Africa, the added dimension of political unrest and an inferior education system consciously designed to trap Black Africans into a life of subservience to the white minority had an impact on traditional gender roles. In the case of my research participants, it is clear that traditional gender roles favouring the male's position over women's were not practiced by their parents. Not only did they give them access to a decent education, but also they pushed their children to study subjects that would ultimately work for the greater good of their country post-Apartheid. One of the things that struck me as I reflected on the issues discussed by these research participants was the way they had come to value the opportunities they had been given. This is a theme that runs through all my interviews. The ways in which these career choices ultimately impacted on their personal relationships and lifestyles is what I explore in Chapter 7.

In the next section, I look at the ways in which the women's careers have or have not progressed, and the ways in which the current government's policies have hindered or assisted them. One of the aims of the AA is to ensure that "*suitably qualified people*" from previously disadvantaged groups are given an equal opportunity at gaining employment. For a number of professional Black African women in South Africa, once educated and armed with a professional qualification, finding employment within corporate South Africa and earning a good salary is the least challenging aspect of their career path, or so it would seem. Challenges seem to manifest at entry level for some while for others the challenges only appear once they are in employment and attempt to climb the corporate ladder. In the next section I discuss these challenges, or barriers

brought about by a combination of racial and gender stereotype, class, tokenism, power and preferred leadership styles.

5.4 Ambiguous Empowerment

You may be qualified but they still find you too 'Other'

Once I had started my interviews in Johannesburg, I was struck by the noticeable difference in the command of the English language between women educated in exile or in predominately white schools compared to the women raised and educated in township or rural Black South African schools. There are several explanations for this disparity with the main one being the Apartheid government's emphasis on making regional or mother tongues the main language in Bantu schools alongside Afrikaans and the other being class. Today, English is the dominant business language of South Africa's private sector. The use of English and the accent with which one speaks in South Africa is a major signifier of one's racial/ethnic and class background and possible quality of education obtained.¹⁴⁴ For example, people educated in Black rural or township schools or previous 'Bantu Education' schools will speak English, in most instances, with a much stronger African regional or 'Black African' accent compared to those educated either in exile or in private local white schools. Having most likely attended schools with mostly white students, their accents tend to be more 'white' and, as such, more fitting to the South African corporate culture.¹⁴⁵

Evelyn, aged 35, is a law graduate and heads up a recruitment agency in Johannesburg. Born to Ghanaian parents in Swaziland, Evelyn was raised in a number of university

¹⁴⁴ Under Apartheid the policy regarding the Black African population and language was such that the government encouraged ethnic identity at the expense of proficiency in the official languages. This was aimed at limiting access to employment (Desei & Taylor 1997:169). But as Heugh (1995:42) also explains, the principle of the mother tongue education was conveniently applied to further the political interests of division amongst all communities. Consequently, owing to the change in the educational system, there was a sudden change from mother tongue instruction to the double medium or 50/50 policy (English/Afrikaans), resulting in a tremendous educational backlog among Black African students primarily attributable to the fact that the students did not have adequate proficiency in these two languages to meet the requirements of the syllabus. Details on the subsequent Soweto Uprising that occurred on June 6th 1976 can be found in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Vol 2 (1970-1980) South African Democracy Trust, Unisa Press.*

¹⁴⁵ I will come back to this point in Chapter 6 where I discuss the situation of similar Black African women working in London.

towns in South Africa. Her father, a university professor, and her mother, a teacher by training, sent her to predominantly white South African schools (which had recently started allowing Black students) before finally sending her to an international boarding school in Bophuthatswana. Although Evelyn has spent her entire life in South Africa, she still feels that her Ghanaian heritage or ethnic identity, her exposure to white students growing up and the way she speaks English have worked to her advantage when applying for jobs. Making reference to a job she once had with a large IT company that had recruited Black graduates from University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) which she had attended, Evelyn states,

...the way that I was recruited at IT Company ... I remember there were three Black women and two Black males, from the entire WITS which were supposed to be one of the best institutions in the country. It was a case of, 'You speak like us; we're comfortable with you. You can be in the inner circle.' They were not going to hire someone from Limpopo that had gone to a rural school that spoke with a particular accent. (Evelyn, 35)

Today, in her professional capacity as the head of a recruitment agency, Evelyn sees this practice repeated time and time again, with her ethnicity and middle class background working more to her advantage than her race in terms of how she is accepted within the white business community.

... there is a definite sense of 'You're one of us' when you've gone to certain schools; certain universities and quite frankly I think the fact that I'm ultimately foreign. I say ultimately because I'm born and raised in South Africa; does give people a sense of comfort and It's case of, 'Oh God! Thank God you don't come with all that baggage. You're not going to tell us about what we did to your ancestors'... (Evelyn, 35)

With regard to her contemporaries who either grew up in exile or attended predominantly white schools, Evelyn views them as also having more advantage over their locally educated peers whose threatening 'Other' location works against them compared to the location of the more exotic 'Other.' She explains,

I think people that went to private schools and the predominantly then white universities would be lying if they didn't acknowledge that. There is definitely a sense of, 'we are comfortable around you.' That's why it's so much harder for people from historically Black universities.... It's just a question of, 'You speak with the wrong accent. You're too 'Other,' you

know... Being in the recruitment business.... I can sit around a table from someone and say eyes closed, 'if I listen to this person, they are really intelligent; they know what they're doing but they're not going to get this job because they just don't fit in culturally with my client,' you know? (Evelyn, 35)

What Evelyn has tried to demonstrate here is that one of the factors that EEA and AA do not take into account is the hidden individual preferences, assumptions and biases embedded in notions of ethnicity, race and class that employers have and will ultimately exercise at their own discretion to suit their personal needs. While employers will adhere to government requirements to implement measures within their recruitment processes that promote diversity by ensuring equitable representation through hiring of individuals from previously disadvantaged groups, what government cannot control is who they do or do not hire from the Black African population.

Breaking these aforementioned barriers will not happen overnight. Being familiar with a person's background also helps break down barriers associated with 'othering.' As Rhonda, a 40-year-old qualified accountant explained to me, Black African women accountants at the moment are first generation of African women in the country to get qualified. This has meant dealing with other professionals in the field who have not worked with women like them, therefore leaving both parties without a point of reference.

... for many of the jobs that I have done, I found that I was the first Black person or first Black woman... While I'm not really bothered by that ... I sometimes feel that I don't particularly fit in with the others... (Rhonda, 40)

The issue of trust is something else that Rhonda identifies as a compounding gender and race-based barrier. She feels this is very much linked to family ties and connections, where one studied and qualified, and the relationships that were formed during this period. Because Black African women are coming into the profession as first generation, they lack the added advantage of input or advice from family and/or professional contacts that their white colleagues tend to have. As I elaborate further in the next section, this lack of "historical" contacts ultimately works against some of these women when it comes to the pace at which they progress along the corporate ladder mainly because building trust and contacts invariably takes just that bit longer.

Old Boy New Boy Network

In Chapter 3, I identified the Old Boy Network as another major barrier that women of all races experience particularly at senior management level. The old boy network is an informal male social system that stretches within and across organisations limiting access to those who are similar to themselves either by background, position or personal characteristics, and excludes less powerful males and all women from membership (Oakley, 2000; Singh, 2002). In South Africa today, the Old Boy Network spans across three types of men – the English, Afrikaans and African males¹⁴⁶ who collectively control big business in the country. As such, Black women working alongside these men find themselves experiencing not only gender and race-based marginalisation, but cultural exclusion. In the Afrikaans context, for instance, the use of the Afrikaans language in meetings or circulated emails intended for all concerned employees can leave some Black women feeling excluded and isolated. Thabela explains,

Yeah, language is powerful, very powerful. I think there is a tendency for us as Black people not to use our mother tongue in a professional setting. You'll hear people speaking amongst themselves... but I think when you go into meetings, we tend not to use our languages because it's isolating. This is not just from my own experience because I hear this complaint from friends as well. (Thabela, 38)

Different styles of management grounded in race and culture can also be an issue for powerful women coming into this male dominated environment. Black African men in particular have a way of excluding not only women but other men as well in the way they conduct business. Ntando refers to it as more personality driven, a trait that overshadows her ability to lead. As she explains, the Black business culture leans more to an English style of management in that it is emotionally, mentally and physically draining. That, combined with the socio-cultural outlook that views women as subordinate to men, means many women find themselves working with Black South African men who remain strongly averse to having Black women either working alongside them as their equals or as their superiors – believing that they can never be

¹⁴⁶ It is worth mentioning here that Indian and Coloured men are also part of the group albeit to a lesser extent as they remain marginalised within the pecking order. Having said that, the Indians, in particular, have positioned themselves quite favourably within government with some holding very senior positions. This is similarly the case in business where some own and run very successful companies

controlled by women. Ntando, an executive, refers to her experience in this environment as “tough and *painful*” where she has to work ten times harder to get her point across during Board meetings adding,

I've found that in Black organisations you spend more time lobbying almost informally outside of meetings. You find yourself spending more energy on relationships and trying to make sure that people not only buy into what you're talking about but in building those relationships. It's very emotionally draining. You're spending more time on the lobbying and talking to people, trying to make people see the issue even though it's on the table, very clear and makes business sense. (Ntando, 45)

This idea of 'lobbying informally and spending a great deal of time building relationships' is in line with what Booysen (2001:566) refers to as a Afro-centric approach to leadership. This model is centred in the concept of Ubuntu – a philosophy of African humanism which values collectivism and group-centeredness in contrast to individualism (Booyesen, 2001; Khoza, 1994).

As is the case in other situations I discussed in Chapter 3, after hours socialising can be a problem for most women who would rather not go out drinking with the men. This is particularly the case with Ntando who finds that going out to bars with the men, particularly as a single African woman, can be frowned upon socially and culturally. Common tactics employed include undermining one's achievements by accusing women of having low moral values, i.e., sleeping their way to the top, all of which can have negative consequences in the long-run.

But as I learned from Thamela, the social and cultural stigma associated with after hours drinking with men is not the only thing that stops her from going (on the few occasions that she has been invited to join the team). While she recognises that business discussed in these after hours drinking and dining sessions can give her an insight on upcoming promotions, etc., Thamela often finds that she does not want to subject herself to spending more time with people she feels she has nothing culturally or socially in common with.

What are you losing out by not being invited especially when it is clear that you're not part of the core click? I think that what is deeply rooted in all this is people hang out with individuals that they're comfortable with. So

I'm not necessarily in favour of it. Personally, I actually would rather go for a drink with my social friends. (Thamela, 38)

So while both Thamela and Ntando recognise the value in socialising with co-workers outside hours, that feeling of exclusion overrides their need to conform to a traditional pastime that is so favoured by most within corporate life.

Black Females and Scoring High

In compliance with the Employment Equity Scoreboard,¹⁴⁷ private companies stand to gain more weighting points from employing female Black employees in senior management positions than any other individuals. While this can be perceived as a triumph for Black African women, not all concerned parties are in favour of this legislation. The pressure to fill quotas creates a high level of disillusionment for both employers and employees creating tensions that at times benefit neither management nor the new recruits.

Bambi explains this predicament to me. Having previously worked in government as part of a team that ensured private companies comply with government legislation, Bambi now works for a company in the private sector. Although she chooses to believe she got her current job on merit, Bambi nonetheless feels her race and gender were also taken into consideration when hiring her, a situation that at times irritates her. She fits neatly into what she refers to as a “*quota package*” that suits the company in terms of its B-BBEE compliance and as such risks being treated as a token employee. Expressing her frustration with the ambiguous nature of her situation Bambi adds,

BEE¹⁴⁸ compliance is important because our licence depends upon the level of compliance. So Black women ... in my view ... become commoditised through quotas. Although I understand why this has to be done, I find myself feeling

¹⁴⁷ The Management Control Scoreboard defines Top Management as Senior Chief Executive Officers, Chief Operating Officers, Chief Financial Officers, and heads of marketing, sales, public relations transformation, human resources and people holding similar positions. Key measurement principles: a measured entity receives points by meeting the targets for participation of black people and black women at Board and Top Management level. For more details see Government Gazette, Republic of South Africa, Vol 518 Pretoria, and 29 August 2008. www.thedti.gov.za/bee/beecharter/31371.pdf and www.thedti.gov.za/bee/beecodes.htm

¹⁴⁸ Bambi, as I find in other instances with other research participants, uses this acronym generically to mean Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE).

frustrated with the situation. While I had more power in government, I now find that I have different challenges in that I have to influence my current institution to accept African women as capable and able to deliver. It's quite complicated. (Bambi, 47)

Other tensions that filling these quotas creates is the perception that the AA compliance measure which stipulates that companies "...make reasonable accommodation for people from designated groups" and work toward the "retention, development and training of designated groups (including skills development)" (South Africa Department of Labour 2004) only make current white management resistant to change. By asking white management to effectively train themselves out of a job, Evelyn views these challenges as a situation where nobody wins.

There is a huge resistance ... middle class management just does not want to hire black people full stop. Not only is there still racial prejudice that they're incompetent ...but it's more like if you hire someone Black under you, it means that ... at some point, once targets have been made, your job as the white manager is on the line. (Evelyn, 35)

The dilemma is how to find a solution around this issue as it creates problems for all parties concerned. This is a point I look at more closely in my concluding chapter.

Bitter Black Woman with a Chip on Your Shoulder

As with most individuals in positions of power, the pressure to perform and do well is immense. But as Thamele reminds me once again, the pressure is even greater when you are the only Black woman in a team. She states,

.... the truth is these environments are still not as diverse as they should be, racially....Some of the perceptions are you're here because you're Black and so you've got to peddle twice as hard to earn merit ... to break the perception that you are just here to boost Employment Equity numbers but that you actually do have a lot of value to add to the environment. It can be very challenging. (Thamele, 39)

This resistance to quotas by the women and their need to feel appreciated and accepted (i.e., seeking affirmation) within the management team as an equal is expressed further by Vanessa. As she explains, the problem with such legislation is that Black women are treated like objects rather than individuals who genuinely want to forge a career.

You know how white men sometimes just tend to ignore, or don't see you, if you are a Black person. If they come into the room and I'm sitting there, they'll talk to the other person. I'll say 'Hello', ... you know. (Vanessa, 51)

By saying 'Hello,' Vanessa indicates her willingness to try to be part of the team. However, as she continues to recount her experience and the reasons she joined the mining company that she worked for as the only Black women at executive level, Vanessa reveals why this experience was so painful for her adding,

...the reason why I joined was because someone encouraged me, 'listen its part of the transformation of South Africa. It's a tough company, in terms of transformation; in terms of being black and in terms of being female and it's also mining.' It's one place where I felt ... I'll never put myself in that place again ... total alienation with your environment. (Vanessa, 51)

Vanessa's experience once again reflects some of the underlying problems that come about when decisions to hire individuals from a particular gender and racial group are taken in order to meet government requirements and their own economic interests rather than hiring an individual because you want them there. Listening to Vanessa, I sensed her deep disappointment in a system she felt she needed to be a part of (especially as she had spent most of her adult life outside South Africa and came back with a vision to contribute to her country) and yet made her feel unwelcome. Not only did she feel that she was imposing, Vanessa also felt ignored and invisible, leaving her feeling isolated and disillusioned about her decision to be part of the country's transformation. Speaking with and listening to Vanessa, I felt confident that the distancing by her work colleagues did not come from her "incompetence" but rather from her gender and racial differences from the rest of the team and what these signified in relation to employment equity policies. Determined not to be a victim of the system, Vanessa, who now looks at her experience at Mining Company X as a time when she learnt to either "sink or swim" because "*nobody gives you anything*" when you work in corporate adding,

I've got staying power. I don't know where it's come from but in these environments ... I've had to fight. They don't give you anything. If you are female and if you are Black I think people tend to look at you differently ... (Vanessa, 51)

The importance of fighting for recognition of one's abilities is what Vanessa tries to emphasise here. This is particularly important especially as South Africa still remains a country that practices hiring individuals who merely fit a racial and gender profile rather than a combination of the two plus experience and qualifications. Another way of dealing with this issue, as Thamela enlightened me, is to be aware of the fact that as a woman you are working in an environment where the organisational culture is predominantly male. It therefore becomes important to adapt and behave in a professional manner, even if it makes one feel uncomfortable at times.

There's very little room for mistakes... You've just got to stand out sometimes as an individual and make your mark....You've got to get beyond, you know, things like you go into a meeting and you're the only woman there... Men don't wait, they talk and they get deals across very forcefully so they talk over each other. They push in and if you're like me, you wait and try and be heard; you've got to adapt in a way which I think sometimes goes against...not just my gender but my personality. (Thamela, 39)

Thamela's survival instinct seems grounded in the identification of male stereotypes – dominant, aggressive, motivated by self-interest – and standing up against it. By being mindful of these male characteristics, all associated with strong male leadership qualities, Thamela admits the importance of recognising and embracing some of these traits if she is to perform effectively, even though they go against her “personality.” At the same time, though, she is firmly aware of the dangers of reinforcing preconceived constructed negative stereotypical racial and gender images of Black women, namely the “*aggressive black female mama*” (Davidson, 1997). As Thamela cautions, these forms of discrimination or prejudice should be dealt with cautiously even when you feel you have been treated unjustly. If not, it becomes an ongoing battle that ultimately achieves nothing. The way in which Thamela deals with this situation is to choose her battles adding,

...it's taken a long time to learn that because instinctively you want to react and respond and shout and yell; and some people think well, you've got to keep shouting, you've got to keep yelling, we've got to change South Africa, we've got to change perception but to a certain extent, I don't really want to spend all my energies there. It's exhausting, yeah. You become an angry person and the perception is that you're a bitter, black person with a chip on your shoulder. (Thamela, 39)

Thamela's idea of choosing her battles falls very much in line with my analysis that in attempting to remove unnecessary attention from themselves as victims of a situation and focusing on getting the job done that they have been hired to do, the women I have interviewed remove the risk of overshadowing another problem which lies not only with the employers but also with the way in which the legislation is currently being implemented.

Biting Off More Than They Can Chew

So what else is hindering the situation of professional and managerial Black women in South Africa in their quest to advance their careers on an equal playing field? According to Bambi, society itself also creates expectations of Black women resulting in some women taking on positions they are not qualified or ready for.

There's a lot of pressure to be seen to be aspirational So you have some people under pressure but others actually believing that it is their right to be there. They will compete in the job process with an underlying sense of entitlement because they are female and not because they bring something unique to the job ... (Bambi, 45)

This pressure to be placed in top jobs can result in both organisations and individuals being victims of a system that was put in place to assist both the empowered and disempowered. Faced with a situation where demand outstrips the supply of suitably qualified Black candidates, some organisations are struggling to keep up.¹⁴⁹ In some instances where they find themselves under pressure to be seen to be complying with B-BBEE, EEA and AA, Black candidates have been hired and promoted rapidly only to fail. As Bambi explains,

You get varying degrees Some walk in with a sense of entitlement and unfortunately some companies do take people who don't have the

¹⁴⁹ The accounting profession is a good example of this. According to the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants, South Africa is facing a shortage of accounting skills. With the ongoing shortage of trainee accountants, the SAICA see no real growth in the pipeline of students, coupled with inadequate throughput pass percentage rates (www.saica.co.za). Cited 10 May 2009.

appropriate work experience or capacity. This is all done to fill up the numbers. (Bambi, 45)

This sense of entitlement combined with the country's skills shortage has also created a culture of job-hopping (i.e., qualified individuals moving on in search of a better working environment) amongst qualified individuals over the past number of years. But as Human Resources Manager Dimpo, aged 47, laments, all this has done is slow down the career progress of some.

I find this happening a lot with young Black professional women who are qualified and do not yet have experience ... mostly in their late twenties, early thirties.... I think they come with the attitude that South Africa is now free and that these guys better get on with the programme. I find some of them have been over promoted, you know, because of the lack of skills in South Africa.... (Dimpo, 47)

Other women admit to falling victim to EE and AA policies. As a "*suitably qualified*" woman, Manyani, aged 35, was recruited as part of a management trainee programme.

MANAYANI: I moved from Corporate Investment to Market Sector Manager as it was part of my development plan. It meant that I was moved from being Corporate Social Investment Manager to become a Market Sector Manager and into an industry that I had never been a part of. I literally had to learn from scratch, so found that I needed to rely on my team for help me get through.... I didn't get that support. Why? Because 1) they knew where I was coming from, I was prominent, I was the Corporate Investment Manager and there were expectations to say 'Wow, she's at that level.' People within this organisation, they will know how much you are earning, you know and you come into this environment where you find people who've been working for twenty years in the organisation and they haven't moved anywhere and you come above them and you rely on them to learn because it's part of developing black people within the organisation. But I didn't get it both from either the female and males... and blacks as well. It was not given to me because I came there to take that position that they all had been waiting to get for twenty years, fifteen years, ten years.

DIANE: Right and how did that make you feel?

MANAYANI: It made me feel angry in the sense that they didn't even hide it.

Although Manyani was finally able to find her feet she still recalls how this experience left her feeling overwhelmed, uncomfortable and insecure.

I felt like an outsider for two years, and there was no one who I could talk to within that environment. I felt alone and I didn't fit in. I still feel I did my

part in the sense that I did deliver. No I didn't fail it's just that it took me three times longer to deliver, to achieve what I wanted to achieve because of all those constraints. It also affected my confidence because I know what I am capable of doing; I know I moved up the company ladder faster than quite a lot of people but I know it took me longer because it was difficult to get information and **they** had that information. You come into a position that's existed since the company started and yet there are no policies; there's nothing to take over from; you have to start from scratch; you have to do the researches, get into the markets that you still don't understand. You can read and read and read but it's easier if somebody takes you through other things, so it was quite a challenge where I think that was the biggest challenge I've faced (Manyani, 35)

Manyani's experience is not unique as it once again illustrates some of the obstacles that need to be addressed in tackling the Glass Cliff if more Black women are to succeed in ultimately breaking through the Concrete Ceiling.

One of the issues that also needs to be addressed is the way in which individuals are recruited. Telling someone what is expected of them (i.e., job mentors, autonomy in decision making where situations allow for it, etc.) and then not honouring it can also have an influence on why women move around. As Evelyn recounts, a common scenario that occurs in her recruitment agency,

They're going to sell you heaven and earth because they want to be able to report that they've got a Black woman at a certain level. Quite frankly, theywill ... pay you to do very little and you end up getting frustrated. And the game starts all over again and in eighteen months – if they stay that long – they're back in this office saying that didn't work. (Evelyn, 35)

According to Evelyn, the overall solution to this problem if everyone is to benefit is for women to stay in their jobs and “chip away” at that concrete ceiling as this is not going to be solved in one generation.

Unfortunately they need to stay and chip. However, these people are like, “But the battle is too hard here” And I'm like, You forget the battle for you to be sitting across from here was harder... I'm sorry but that's our generation's cross. We've been brought this far and unfortunately many of us are not going to get to that level in our life time. The point is ... we stay and fight ... that battle.... (Evelyn, 35)

However, reasons for job-hopping are not always brought about by failure or lack of patience. Some women, when given their rightful job title, find that their decisions are not taken very seriously. This ambiguous empowerment – big job title in a spacious corner office but with no real power to make decisions – is what Dimpo describes as being no different to the level of responsibility given to a maid. She adds,

...when you work for a BEE company particularly, if people don't look at you as a professional that they have hired to run a company... you're a bit like a maid to them. As far as they are concerned, you're running that little shop, and from time to time they need to come and tell you what to do. (Dimpo, 47)

This level of marginalisation where there is little regard for expertise or expectation of performance creates a battle over the feeling of never-ending lack of recognition and appreciation amongst many Black employees.

As a consequence, some women move to other jobs purely for career progression and mental stimulus. Nthambi, aged 44, who now works for an international financial institution in Johannesburg, feels differently from my other research participants. Having grown up in exile and educated in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Switzerland and France, Nthambi has worked as a diplomat for the South African government in Paris for seven years and a local Afrikaans bank in Johannesburg for three years before joining her current organisation. Although she does not represent your classic job-hopper who only manages a year or two in any job, Nthambi blames her lack of belief in the institution which left her feeling isolated and uninspired by the people around her.

When I was in Bank XY, I used to sometimes look around me and think that it was a shame that not just Black women but even Black men were very much disempowered...they had this kind of diversity forum which was very weak. (Nthambi, 44)

This feeling of isolation was in great contrast to her experience in the foreign service where she described the discourse there as one of encouraging employees to be agents of change with their main aim being to promote and encourage junior officers. After spending seven years working in an environment where she played a role in driving transformation, Nthambi says her drive when she moved to the private sector was one of building a career, but instead she found herself in an indeterminate state.

I remember when I gave in my resignation the HR Officer was a Black guy who said to me, “you know there’s so much”You’re the only Black woman in your department doing this kind of work and you’ve learnt a lot. How can you go?” And I said to him, “well show me a role model that would want to make me stay. Show me someone who’s a Black man or woman who would make me want to stay, who could talk to me and walk into the room and say, this is why you should stay.” (Nthambi, 44)

These feelings of despondency and the need to find an environment that works for an individual also need to be given some consideration when trying to explain this job-hopping trend. Although Nthambi does not explicitly state this, a lot of the feelings of isolation and a lack of commitment by management to address diversity issues can also be interpreted as an attitude embedded in racial and gender based discrimination. As Evelyn explains to me, there are also other ways of restricting the racial category of people you employ by making employment requirements untenable. When a client comes to her and says they only want her to find a Black Chartered accountant with twenty years experience, Evelyn’s immediate thought is that they are only going through the motions as the first Black person in this country to qualify as a CA was only in 1992. These small pockets of people who are unwilling to transform are in the minority, though, as bigger companies that do not comply run the risk of being fined by Government.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how the current South African government has worked toward overcoming past colonial and Apartheid economic, political and social injustices. By focusing primarily on the B-BBEE strategy and its direct employment policies - namely the BEE Transformation Charters, EEA, AA and SDA, I highlight the ways in which these policies currently impact on my research participants. While it is true that Black African women working in professional and managerial jobs have gained tremendously from these new policies by opening doors that would otherwise have been closed to them, more still needs to be done. As indicated in the women’s narratives, gendered, raced and classed performances of these identities continue to influence the pace at which the women progress in their careers once employed. This is in spite of

their being talented, educated and committed to their careers. Misconceptions and stereotypes grounded in these identity categories continue to create barriers for some.

As illustrated earlier in the chapter, these women come from varied backgrounds and appear to have made it into corporate South Africa via different routes. As a consequence, the way they experience and deal with the barriers they perceive and encounter is also varied. As Acker (2006) has pointed out, inequalities in organisations are systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals; resources and outcome; workplace decisions regarding opportunities for promotion, interesting work and financial rewards. So while implementing employment equity policies is a positive development, more attention and consideration needs to be given to the complexities of Black African women's identities if any real progress is to be made in combating economic and social inequalities in the long-run.

Chapter Six

UK Employment Equity Policies and Their Transnational Recipients

“... you’re a personality, rather than a colour, and you’re a qualified person, rather than a Black woman.” Pam 44, London Lawyer

Over the past 40 years, the British government has introduced laws aimed at creating and responding to change in society. From the first Race Relations Act (RRA) back in the 1960s to the vital steps toward equality for women in the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Act in the 1970s, Britain today can justifiably be identified as a nation with aspirations and policies to promote equality and civil rights for all. However, while all these laws remain at the heart of public policy, unfair practices, prejudices and discrimination sadly continue to persist. Critics further argue that these policies, though aimed at eliminating patterns of inequalities, can also act as a smokescreen behind which discriminatory and unfair practices thrive (Ahmed, 2007; Bradley & Healy, 2008; Hoque & Noon, 1999; Liff & Dale, 1994). Others have gone so far as to refer to these policies as ‘empty shells’ which “contain nothing of substance or value to the victims of discrimination” (Hoque & Noon, 2004:482).

In opposition to this argument is the view that because the UK has witnessed a growth in the number of formal policies and equality initiatives, that in itself should suggest that this matter remains of serious consideration to government. Furthermore, the fact that this issue is not only being addressed by the public sector but has also been by private sector organisations for the past few decades should indicate the high level of commitment that both government and private organisations have in addressing discriminatory practices (Jewson & Mason, ; Kersley et al., 2005). The issue of managing a diverse workforce has gained recognition over the last couple of years as an important topic of research and theorising, giving impetus to practitioners’ and policy-makers’ awareness of the importance of equality and managing diversity in the workplace (Ben-Galim et al., 2007; Hoque & Noon, 1999; Liff & Wajcman, 1996; Ogbonna & Harris, 2006). As Hoque and Noon (2004) observe, the fact that senior

managers in private sector organisations in the UK are willing to adopt equal opportunity policies and are willing to demonstrate their organisations' commitment to equality by signing up to Equality and Managing Diversity initiatives indicate that they are taking equal opportunities seriously adding "the policies are indeed shells, but they are not empty – within them, equal initiatives and practices are being developed" (Hoque & Noon, 2004:482).

The extent to which these policies promote equality and assist my research participants as Black women working within the UK private sector will be discussed in this chapter. The chapter begins with an overview of the UK Equality agenda and highlights some of the debates and compromises that have led to the legal framework being revised and strengthened since the early Race Relations Act in the 1960s, the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 and the Equality Act of 2006. It is also worth mentioning that, with the UK being part of the European Union, these laws have developed not only in a UK context but also within the framework of the Treaties and Directives of the European Union (Ben-Galim et al., 2007).

The second section of this chapter sheds light on the ways in which the women in my research experience equality gaps. As Moosa and Rake (2008) point out following their quantitative study on ethnic minorities in the workplace, statistics provided from the study highlight significant inequality gaps in access to power, employment, financial security and well-being. However, the statistics still fail to tell the full story. As Moosa and Rake (2008) reiterate, workplace cultures are veiled with exclusive traditions that remain invisible to the majority population until someone different brushes against them (Moosa and Rake 2008). It is with this in mind that I tell part of this story through the analysis of the women's narratives.

The Black African women in London that I interviewed and refer to in this chapter originate from a number of Sub-Saharan African countries namely Zimbabwe, Zambia, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and South Africa. They were perceptive, witty, diverse and remarkable in the way they narrated their private thoughts on their journeys to becoming the professional women they are today. UK and/or foreign-born, educated in Sub-Saharan Africa, the United Kingdom and/or abroad, these women represent a growing number of first, second and third generation professional Black African British

residents living and working in the UK. However, unlike the women I interviewed in South Africa who were incredibly eager to discuss how their government's employment equity policies impact on them as professional Black African women, my participants in the UK seemed to view the policies more as a backdrop – taken as a given, and were not too eager to discuss how the policies have affected their career progression. Instead, what seems to concern them most as I illustrate and focus on in this chapter, are the more subtle everyday practices that continue to construct them as different from the majority population.

6.1 Employment Equity Legislation in Britain

As I mentioned in the last chapter, while these policies have been successful in creating opportunities for many Black women in post-Apartheid corporate South Africa, much still needs to be done to ensure that all parties benefit from the preferential treatment given to previously disadvantaged individuals. This chapter also focuses on anti-discrimination legislation on employment in Britain. Bradley and Healy (2008:62) deem it safe to state that the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in employment in the UK was forced upon government rather than principally stimulated by commitment to equality.

As highlighted in Figure 6.1 below, legislation against race and sex discrimination in Britain dates back to the 1960s and 1970s. Motivated by panic over immigration and a need to control entry into Britain of non-white people as well as the race riots in 1958 between white and Black communities, the government introduced the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 (Bradley & Healy, 2008:63). This was soon followed by the Race Relations Acts (RRA) of 1965 and 1968 with the latter Act aimed at addressing employment and housing (ibid.). This legislation and other influences, namely labour market changes over the years, stimulated the development of Equal Opportunity (EO) policies at the organisational level (Liff & Wajcman, 1996:81).

Figure 6.1
Summary of Race Relations and Equal Opportunity Legislation

	RACE RELATIONS LEGISLATION	EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES LEGISLATION
1962	The Commonwealth Immigration Act	
1965	The Race Relations Act (RRA)	
1968	The Race Relations Act Amendment (RRA)	
1970		Equal Pay Act (EPA)
1975		Sex Discrimination Act (SDA)
1976	The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) formed	Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) formed to implement SDA and EPA
1995		EPA and SDA - implemented
2000	Race Relations (Amendment) Act	Disability Discrimination Commission (DDC)
2003		Disability Rights Commission (DRC) formed
2003		Disability Discrimination Act
2003		The Employment Equity (Sexual Orientation) Regulation
2003		The Employment Equity (Religious and Belief) Regulation
2004		Gender Recognition Act
2005		Gender Recognition Act - implemented
2006	Gender Equality Duty (GED)	to mirror The Race Relations (Amendment) Act
2006		Employment Equity (AGE) Regulations
2007		1 October CRE, EOC and DRC dissolved
2007		Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) formed to replace CRE, EOC and DRC
2010		Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) renamed CEHR
2010		Single Equality Bill

In more recent years, crucial events, such as the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and Macpherson Report, which found the Police Service guilty of institutional racism in handling the murder of teenager Stephen Lawrence, led the Race Relations Act to be amended once again in 2000.¹⁵⁰ The report defined institutional racism as

“the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes or behaviour which

¹⁵⁰ For a copy of the amended Race Relations Act see Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000034_en.pdf

amounts to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.” (Macpherson, 1999)¹⁵¹

In bringing attention to the concept of institutional racism and the unintentional and unwitting discriminatory practices that can operate in an organisation, this act now meant that public authorities¹⁵² (in this instance, the police) were required to not only address unlawful discrimination where it occurs, but also become more pro-active in preventing its occurrence. In other words, the RRAA now placed a positive duty on public sector organisations to be seen to be actively promoting racial equality – transferring the responsibility from individual victims to the organisation (Bradley & Healy, 2008).¹⁵³ In 2003, another amendment was made to the 1976 Race Relations Act. Aimed at employers once again, this new amendment shifted the onus onto employers to prove that different treatment was not on racial grounds (i.e., if the employer cannot demonstrate or give sufficient elucidation for the treatment in question, the tribunal must decide that racial discrimination has taken place (Brown et al., 2006)). This shift in the burden of proof, according to Bradley and Healy (2008:66), is expected to make it less straightforward for employers to practice evasive strategies.

In addition to the RRAA, another Act that I discuss in this section is the government’s Equality Act of 2006 which introduced the Gender Equality Duty. Introduced for the public sector in April 2007 with its aim being to mirror the RRAA by requiring public authorities to eliminate unlawful discrimination and instead promote equality of opportunity between men and women, the Gender Equality Duty also amended the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 (Commission for Equality & Human Rights). The Act stipulates that rather than simply avoiding discrimination, organisations must develop a gender equality plan which promotes gender equity. As Healy and Bradley (2008) explain, this Act requires them to review their provisions and make action plans for promoting opportunities for women. These plans, which should be developed in

¹⁵¹ A detailed analysis on the Macpherson Report and its impact on government’s decision to amend the RRA can be found in John, Lea (2000), *The Macpherson Report and the Question of Institutional Racism*, *The Howard Journal*, Vol 39, No 3 Aug 2000 p216-233.

¹⁵² I am assuming this also meant private sector organisations.

¹⁵³ But as we all know tackling and attempting to eradicate institutional racism remains a challenge. Puwar (2004:9) reiterates how institutional racism operates in extremely subtle ways – which I attempt to demonstrate later on in the chapter.

consultation with stakeholders, ought to define goals to be implemented within a three-year period.

In an effort to bring together the different equality acts that have been introduced over the years and to accommodate the ever-changing make up of the British population, the government introduced a new Single Equalities body in 2007. Aimed at bringing together the existing equality Commissions dealing with gender, disability and race and ethnicity and age, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) was formed. Amongst its many obligations, the EHRC aims to promote and enforce Equality and Diversity. More recently, in April 2009, government introduced the Equality Bill aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and fighting discrimination in all its forms. This bill is currently undergoing amendments in the House of Lords. If passed, this bill will also aim to modernise and strengthen current British employment policies by acknowledging the subtle but nonetheless very real difficulties arising from the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity and class (Government Equality Office, 2009).

6.2 Policies: Substantive or Merely Empty Shells

Equal Opportunity (EO) Advances

From my discussion above it is clear that equality, diversity and work-life balance continue to be at the forefront of employment policy formulation in Britain today (Walsh, 2007). As Walsh (2007) points out, the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WER) is of great benefit in that its reporting on subjects such as equal treatment at work and work-life balance is significantly expanded¹⁵⁴ (Walsh, 2007). By 2004 almost three-quarters (73 percent) of workplaces with ten or more employees had a formal written EO policy compared with just less than two-thirds (64 percent) in 1998 (Walsh, 2007:237). The figures from the private sector indicate an increase in the

¹⁵⁴ Amended against the background of the country's changing population profile, the WER (2004) follows earlier national surveys of workplaces conducted in 1980, 1984, 1990 and 1998 (Bradley and Healy, 2008:81). This recent survey is particularly relevant to my discussion as, unlike past surveys, it highlights some of the changes in the definition of EO policies and practices in British workplaces since 1998. As Walsh (2007:304) states, EO policies objectives aim to ensure that all individuals in Britain have equal access to job opportunities by elimination of differential treatment based on one's social group identity, namely gender, race, age or disability.

prevalence of EO policies at 55 percent in 1998 to 68 percent in 2004. However, as Bradley and Healy (2008:84) indicate, it is still quite disturbing to note that after forty years of equality legislation, there are at least a quarter of British organisations that may be classified as ‘negative’ EO organisations as they see no point in adopting EO policies as part of their corporate strategy.

Of the various reasons behind why this is happening, it seems clear that while EO policies are ultimately meant to promote the equal treatment of employees, there remains a considerable disparity in their nature and capacity as I illustrate later in the chapter. Similarly, as Walsh (2007) and Bradley, Healy et al. (2007) concur, policies take many shapes and forms: appearing as either highly sophisticated and detailed or simple statements of intent. Furthermore, Bradley and Healy caution that there may not always prove to be a correlation between the intricacy and complexity of the policy and the fairness of the workplace practices (Bradley & Healy, 2008:82).¹⁵⁵

Managing Diversity Approaches

Unlike EO approaches which aim for workplaces where a person’s gender and race play no greater significance than other physical characteristics in determining the treatment they receive, the core idea behind managing diversity appears to be to encourage organisations to identify differences (Liff, 1996). Emerging in the 1990s, the term ‘diversity’ has been disputed in both the United States and the UK (Liff, 1999). Kandola and Fullerton (1994), seen as the duo responsible for popularising the term in Britain, argue that managing diversity is radically different from equal opportunities stating that “managing diversity is about the realisation of the potential of all employees” ... and that “certain group-based equal opportunities need to be seriously questioned, in particular positive action and targets” (p47).

For Kandola and Fullerton (1999), the key element to managing diversity is that people must be understood as individuals rather than social group members - the reason for this being that equality comes from recognising and concentrating on the requirements and potential of individuals rather than making assumptions about what their needs are (Liff,

¹⁵⁵ Also see Ahmed (2007) who discusses the politics of documentation at length.

1999). With respect to the women in my study, I want to explore Liff's argument a bit further. As Liff (1999) explains, the above quotation does not lead to a uniform approach. Instead she questions whether one instead sees difference as more or less unsystematically dispersed between individuals or as the characteristics assumed on the basis of a particular group of people (e.g., ethnic or racial group). By so doing, Liff (1999) identifies two distinct objectives for equality policies:

The first approach would not see gender or ethnic equality as a specific goal since inequality is not a feature of members of particular groups. Rather than equality as bland uniformity or treatment, the objective here is equality as the opportunity to be acknowledged for the person one is and is to be helped to make of one's talents and reach one's own goals. The second approach is closer to existing EO approaches in that it sees inequality as experienced by members of particular groups. It is distinctive in that it argues that such differences should be acknowledged, and responded to, rather than ignored. (Liff, 1996:2)

Based upon this observation, I feel confident in stating that while EO policies are ultimately meant to promote the equal treatment of employees, there still remains a considerable disparity in their nature and capacity.

In this section, I have highlighted government's role in seeking to eliminate discrimination through the implementation of equality legislation. Government and private sector employers' intentions to implement policies are one thing, putting them into practice and achieving their intended goals is another. As I now turn to the situation of my research participants and analyse their narratives, I ask the questions: in what ways should equal opportunity and managing diversity approaches be seen as positive or negative tools in combating internal organisational barriers? Secondly, in what ways do they assist in creating a working culture that promotes trust, respect, diversity, inclusion and integrity to such an extent that individuals are made to feel valued and utilised to their full potential and not forced to exit from their chosen careers?

Like other similar studies which analyse employer action on equality and diversity and the experiences of Black and ethnic minorities in Britain (see Bradley et al., 2007; Hoque & Noon, 2004; Ogbonna & Harris, 2006), there seems to be a number of issues that cannot be rectified by policy alone. As McDowell (2008:495) argues, labour or employees are differentiated by age, skills, skin colour and gender and, as such, selected

and directed into particular slots in the labour markets of receiving countries. To illustrate this point more specifically to individuals such as my research participants who work in established white- and male-dominated professions, Puwar (2004) refers to Black women's presence in these organisations as "space invaders" who occupy spaces from which they have historically and conceptually been excluded. As Puwar (2004:8) reminds us, the presence of women and racialised minorities continues to locate what are now insiders as outsiders (as I have also discussed in Chapter 4). As I illustrate in the next section, being both insiders and outsiders at times makes these women's "intruder" location questionable, ambiguous and altogether complex.

6.3 Black African Professional and Managerial Women in Britain

With government and organisations' collective efforts to promote equal opportunities for all, past studies in professional occupations consistently demonstrate biases against Black and ethnic minorities (Bell and Nkomo 2001; Bhavnani and Coyle 2000; Davidson 1997). As I mentioned in Chapter 3, Davidson (1997) describes professional and managerial Black women as women who face a double jeopardy of gender and racial discrimination which she says "secures their position at the very bottom of the managerial pyramid" (Davidson 1997). Their experiences stem from inequality and status degradation fostered by negative stereotypical images attached to Black women's work. To paraphrase Nkomo (2001:2) once again, the Black professional and managerial woman remains a mystery to others in the workplace. Her journey is one that is distinct and created out of an individual juncture of family background, educational experience and community values. As for the African woman, she remains persistently portrayed as a poor, powerless and ignorant person whose life is vastly different from that of fellow western women (Bloch, Beoku-Betts and Tabachnick 1998:3).

However, as discussed in previous chapters, the women in my study belong to a privileged group within African society – they are highly educated, in most cases at renowned universities and academic institutions in the United States and Europe. They are employed in middle and senior management positions within transnational or tertiary sector of private business institutions or organisations in London and Johannesburg.

They are also part of the political elite and an economically and socially mobile group. The identities of these women do not in any way resemble the more popular stereotypical negative image often portrayed of Black women's identity. Having said that, it remains important for me to acknowledge that some of the women in my study have not come from privileged backgrounds. I raise this point again because I feel it would be naive and factually incorrect of me to assume that none of the women in my study have family backgrounds that mirror this stereotypical image of Black African women that is often portrayed in the media and literature.

A typical example of such an individual is my London-based research participant Zelelapi whose life story comes to mind when I think of how stereotypes, defined here as a set of assumptions made about a person or situation based on previous experiences or cultural norms (Rake & Lewis, 2009), run the risk of compromising individual talents and achievements if left unchallenged. A qualified Economist (MSc) who now works for an international financial institution as an Asset Management Analyst, 34 year old Zelelapi was born in a little town in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa to a single mother employed as a domestic worker to a rural Afrikaner family. As Zelelapi recounts her childhood days growing up in Apartheid South Africa, her story bears all the hallmarks of your stereotypical Black African child.

I was brought up by a single parent mom who worked as a domestic worker on a farm...since the age of 14.... I think life was very hard for my mother who lost both her parents at a very young age. It was hard for her but I think at the same time, that experience has probably moulded me into the type of person that I have grown up to become today.... I am immensely grateful to my mother who endured and persevered so much and gave so much of herself for me to get the opportunities that have come my way. (Zelelapi, 34)

For Zelelapi, confronting prejudices and overcoming stereotypical images grounded in race and gender has been a big part of her life. As a 'Coloured' girl raised partly by her white Afrikaner grandmother and with a Black African mother, Zelelapi was a true victim of South Africa's fraught race segregation Apartheid laws which finally led to her being sent to a coloured boarding school. At the age of 16, Zelelapi, who prefers to be identified as Black African, was confronted with a common problem experienced by many African children – a lack of financial resources to continue higher education.

Fortunate enough to be given permission by her mother's white 'Madam,' Zelelapi moved in with her mother. As she recounts, "I still did not possess any professional qualifications, so found myself forced into following my mother's foot steps." Feeling obligated to help her mother, Zelelapi reluctantly found herself falling into the stereotypical raced and gendered image of Black South African women's work.

I kept thinking to myself, "I can't repeat what my mum is doing; I cannot remain a domestic worker.... I have some education, it just can't happen. (Zelelapi, 34)

Determined to do more for herself, Zelelapi tried to convince her then 'Madam' to pay her college fees in exchange for domestic work to which she refused.

Mrs DuPlessis came up to me one morning and said that my mother had been talking to me about my plans and said, "I'm afraid I can't help you. I just don't see anything wrong with both of you working as maids." And I just thought that she can't be serious, she really cannot be serious, but to my bemusement she was very serious.... She just thought that having two maids in her house to help her was brilliant! It went on for years before she deployed me to go and work for her grandmother who lived in some stupid flat in eastern Johannesburg and I promise you, it was the most frustrating time in my life. I worked as a domestic worker for two years and I remember turning to my mother and saying, "you know, I'm tired. I can't do this anymore and I'm going to find a job in town," and my mom said, "oh no!" I think people will never understand the effects of Apartheid, what sort of mindset it embedded in the African people of South Africa. I speak here having first hand experience ... where my mum thought that Mrs DuPlessis was the all-powerful – someone you could not go against for fear of never gaining employment in the suburbs again . (Zelelapi, 34)

I have chosen to use Zelelapi's narrative here to highlight the powerful and damaging discrimination based on gendered and racial hierarchies established by Apartheid. Mrs Du Plessis, as a white woman, enjoyed a certain privilege in spite of her gender. While all South African women during the Apartheid era faced tremendous discrimination bound in a culture of patriarchal conservatism, Mrs Du Plessis' racial identity placed her in a more privileged position of power. This situation, according to Crenshaw (1991), is what happens when different forms of oppression interact adding,

Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group tries to navigate the main crossing in the city. ... The main highway is 'racism

road.’ One cross street can be Colonialism, the Patriarchy Street. ... She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression. (Crenshaw, 1991:1245)

According to Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality not only shapes the experiences of Black women but that of many women of marginalised race and ethnic groups. The location of these women at the intersection of gender and race makes their experiences structurally and ‘qualitatively’ different from that of white women (ibid.).

Recognising these pitfalls and having the ambition to do more with her life, Zelelapi took control of her life by entering a local beauty pageant which she won. Using money that she had won in the pageant and contacts made over this period, Zelelapi moved to Johannesburg where she worked for a while before entering a national beauty pageant which she also won. Following her reign, the then President of South Africa, whom she had met on several occasions, secured her a scholarship which enabled her to attend university and earn a BSc and an MSc in the UK - where she has since been working.

In contrast to Zelelapi’s life experiences as a Black African girl growing up in South Africa, I focus my attention on the narrative life stories of my research participants who were born and grew up in Sub-Saharan Africa between the late 1950s and early 1970s and 1980s – a period when African nations were breaking away from British colonial power and entering an era of newly formed independent African nations. Unlike their South African contemporaries who grew up in a country whose racist laws ensured they remain disenfranchised, the lives of these women growing up in newly independent countries – Zimbabwe, Zambia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Sierra-Leone – were characterised by education of the masses and developing their countries. Below are some of their stories that give a brief picture of what life was like from their own perspectives as African women growing up in Africa - not as victims but as equal citizens unaffected by the controls of raced or gendered based inequalities.

The “Lucky” Generation

Bubu views her years as a student growing up in Nigeria, where she attended a top girls’ school, as very productive and fulfilling.

I call my generation the lucky generation because everything was conceivably free. I went to Royal College in Lagos where I was exposed to quite a diverse range of people because the college was owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It was very well resourced and ... even now when you say you went to Royal College, people look at you and say, “Gosh you were privileged then.”.... We had a wonderful time. Nigeria was affluent. Crime rates were low. There were jobs ... you were guaranteed jobs when you graduated. (Bubu, 51)

For Iona, who grew up in Cameroon, life for her was unequivocally satisfying.

I remember my early years and think I had a very, very fortunate upbringing. We were exposed to so much at the time, even though we were living back in Africa. When I think back I think in relation to children growing up here who have so much at their disposal, I think we had a better quality of life because a lot of things were relaxed, the atmosphere was pleasant, there was a nice family life, nice community life.... We didn't have televisions and things like that so all our entertainment was either outdoors or prepared for us: a lot of games and educational things which at the time we didn't realise were educational but were fun to do. (Iona, 49)

I find Bubu's reference to her generation as the “lucky generation” and her being perceived to be “privileged” as quite an important point here in that she immediately distinguishes herself from the masses, placing herself in a more elite position. I feel this is important as this is her way of emphasising the distinction made between women like herself and Iona from ordinary Black African women. Bubu's references to the ‘Royal College’ that she attended and Iona's ‘exposure to so many things’ all inform me of their middle class/elite backgrounds.¹⁵⁶ In the same way Emily, who spent her childhood divided between Africa and London, describes her early childhood ambitions in a way that any child would – regardless of their gender and race.

Before I left here, I'd always wanted to be a doctor because my dad was a doctor so that was just a bog standard answer from the age of four, “what do you want to be?” “A doctor,” type of thing and I had really good teachers here. I was the only Black child in the school when I was in primary school but it didn't seem to be a problem. I didn't experience racism and got pushed.... (Emily, 38)

As these African women demonstrate, their lives in Africa as Black African school children and what was expected from them as students by both parents and teachers does

¹⁵⁶ I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 7.

not seem that different from what one would expect or hear from parents of the same social class in the UK. Unlike Zelelapi who described her exposure to overtly racist behaviour from a very young age, the other women I quote do not seem to have viewed racism as a barrier in their younger days. This lack of exposure perhaps explains why it has been so astonishing and incredibly disconcerting for many of my informants as they have attempted to come to terms with some of the formal and informal barriers they later encountered in their work lives as adults. As children from middle class/elite African families, understanding the complexities associated with gender and racialised identity is what they suddenly had to deal with.

These formal and informal barriers or organising processes that produce inequalities (Acker 2006), which I discuss in more detail in this section, are the forces behind the systemic absence of Black and ethnic minority women in managerial and leadership positions in the UK workforce. This pattern is contrary to previous public policy initiatives which unequivocally and unreservedly operate from a deficiency model which assumes that the reason for this gap is because of supply side characteristics namely BME women's own lack of ambition, skills and talent. New evidence from recent studies (Moosa 2009) and my own findings illustrate that this is rarely the case. Rather, their lack of representation has more to do with a lack of demand rather than supply. Furthermore, this lack of demand, as discussed briefly earlier in the chapter, can also be fuelled by the embodied labour image of the transnational migrants (McDowell 2008:495). As women originating from developing or Third World countries, although well-educated, highly-skilled elite women, many still find themselves constructed through the colonial gaze of Other, possibly backward and non-modern when compared to subject of western modernity (Bhabba 1994; Spivak 1999; McClintock 1995), leaving them at a disadvantage in access to opportunities such as access to power and control over goals, promotions, interesting work, pay and monetary rewards and other non-discriminatory practices within the workplace (Acker 2006:443). With some of these inequalities identified as potential sources for discrimination at all levels of organisational dynamics, it therefore remains unclear as to whether and how legislation is sufficiently able to respond to all of these disparities.

In the next section, I want to explore some of these inequalities as experienced by my research participants. Furthermore, as I am specifically interested in the experiences of

Black African women who have made a decision to forge a career in the UK and not their countries of origin, I was particularly interested to find out how women who had left their country of origin to stay and settle in the UK after obtaining professional/postgraduate qualifications rated their career progression. I asked them whether they felt their career progression was ahead, behind or on track. I was also especially curious to uncover how they viewed their current status - owing to the fact that unlike their peers in Johannesburg who are part of the majority population and have Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity policies and the B-BBEE scoreboard working in their favour in terms of opening doors, the situation in the UK for Black African women working within the private sector is somewhat more precarious, to say the least. As part of a minority group living and working in a country which does not promote positive discrimination, these women find themselves competing on an equal footing with all qualified and suitable job applicants regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity or class. All these sub-questions I raise are in relation to my first key thesis question which asks to what extent women perceive internal organisations and socio-economic barriers as contributors to the slow progress of their careers. In the next section, some of the themes that came through when I asked the women about the reasons they felt they suffered setbacks in their careers in spite of equality legislation are discussed.

6.4 Organising Procedures that Construct Inequalities

Recruitment and Selection Procedures

The process of recruiting and hiring is one that entails finding the most suitable candidate for a particular position. But according to Wrench and Modood's (2001) study on labour market practices which looked at employment agencies, results showed that the agencies themselves perpetuated exclusion of minority ethnic candidates. This was done by their anticipating the rejection of minority ethnic candidates by their client employers. Therefore, in an attempt to avoid this, the agencies would simply not submit the job applications to employers, and in so doing, perpetuate the process of exclusion. Although my study did not specifically look at employment agencies and their day-to-

day recruitment practices,¹⁵⁷ it is clear from previous studies conducted on women and management that the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity and class play a clear and distinct role in the inclusion and/or exclusion of Black women in management and leadership positions. This behaviour by employment agencies emulates what Emerson (1984) views as the perspective of existing employers/employees whose gender and race partially influence this recruitment process by defining who is deemed suitable or not. Images of appropriate gendered and racialised bodies sway perceptions and recruitment. Research studies conducted in the United States, UK and elsewhere in Europe indicate that white bodies are often preferred, with female bodies deemed appropriate for some jobs and male bodies for other jobs (Acker, 2006b; Royster, 2003). With such findings in mind, I was therefore interested in finding out how such recruitment discriminatory practices affected my research participants as professional Black African women working as minorities in London.

Emily and Iddy's Stories

Thirty-eight year old Emily was born in England to a Nigerian father and West Indian mother. Though Black African, her family name Bailey is European. Emily firmly believes that her European name - Emily Bailey - definitely worked to her advantage when studying at university and in later years when she applied for jobs. Recalling her university days, Emily states,

... my name is Emily Louise Bailey and most people don't associate me with being African or Black...At university, there were people who were Nigerian or from Zambia and it was obvious they were African from their names ...there were a couple of instances that they did get victimised and accused of stuff and I thought it was purely because they were African and they were picked on in that sense.... it was stupid things like, we did all our labs together and we did virtually the same work, I knew what they wrote and they knew what I wrote and we wrote basically the same thing and I'd get 70% and they would get 50% and ...they would come and check with me, 'What did you write that you got 70%? ...I don't know why but ...I always associated it with the names and being African and stuff like that.... I thought that was a bit weird. (Emily, 38)

¹⁵⁷ This, of course, is with the exception of two women that I interviewed who both head up recruitment agencies. As with all my research participants, my interest in these interviews were based on finding out more about their own personal experiences as professional women rather than the operations of their companies.

In the same way, Emily believes her English name was an advantage to her when it came to applying for jobs. Her certainty in the presence of such discriminatory practices was usually confirmed to her once she arrived at the interview adding,

...like going for interviews ... you walk in and they're shocked and people actually say, 'Oh where did you get your name from?' It's obvious they're quite shocked because...they've made up a perception that it's going to be some white person that's going to walk in and this Black woman walks in, with a name that they've made that perception and the background and everything ...It's happened to me so many times... I know it's just because I've sent in applications with my name. if I ever experimented and tried it with another name, I know that I wouldn't even get called for the interview because they would just always...the first five minutes is always, 'Where does your name come from and how come you have an English name?' (Emily, 38)

These scenes can make one feel like a fraud or "space invader" (Puwar 2004:8) and were visibly upsetting to Emily. She clearly demonstrates here how covert racial prejudices are played out when she is quizzed about her name, an issue that can perhaps be deemed as irrelevant in the interview process.

An African name can also be used to overcome gender and racial biases as Iddy explains. Born in Hackney to Nigerian parents, Iddy, aged 50, who works for an academic institution and holds a number of non-executive positions, feels that her African name works in her favour when it comes to making grant applications. Iddy states that unlike being in Nigeria where her name would instantly be recognised as a female name, she feels her gender is masked in the UK where it cannot be easily identified as a male or female name.

When I write my grant applications nobody knows I'm a woman. I often get referees' comments referring to me as a 'he' and that's quite nice actually because then you feel that they're really looking at the work and if you have appreciative comments back it actually makes you feel, "Well you are making a reasonable contribution" for example. Whereas in Nigeria most people would know that my name, first name, is a female name and I wouldn't get that kind of anonymity I think. I would say it was harder for me in Nigeria. (Iddy, 50)

As a woman working in the sciences and in a profession dominated by men,¹⁵⁸ Iddy illustrates how she is able to progress at a pace faster than she would otherwise perhaps simply because her gender is masked.

With reference to the concerns raised in this section, it seems clear to me that in spite of current equality legislation which stipulates that organisations have open advertising for positions and selection based on gender and race- neutral criteria competence, rather than the more favoured male – and old boy (white) network, the women themselves view their racial identities and, in Iddy’s case, nationality, as issues that get in the way of their career progression. Furthermore, Iddy benefits because her gender is assumed to be male and thus male trumps race for her in the UK. This would clearly not be the case in Nigeria where she believes her being female and working in a predominantly male profession would most likely work to her disadvantage. In all, this situation once again demonstrates the complexities of multiple identities that Black African women experience at unique intersectional points.

In an effort to explore this point further, I discuss how the black/female body is at times gendered and racialised within the workplace when placed in a space ordinarily occupied by white and, more often than not, male employees.

Visibility and Legitimacy of Inequalities

Both Emily and Iddy’s stories remind me of my own misgivings about the ways in which an ethnic minority’s name, gender and race impact upon organising procedures that bring into being inequalities within the workplace. When I was married approximately fifteen years ago, I explained to my husband that I planned to have a double-barrelled surname in all formal communication. Surprisingly, he looked at me quizzically as he pondered why on earth I would want to do that.¹⁵⁹ As a Black African woman living in Zambia at the time and working for a British organisation – which meant I was dealing with clients both in Southern Africa and the UK - I wanted to ensure that when I dealt with clients who did not know me, they knew exactly whom

¹⁵⁸ I discuss this issue in more detail later on in the chapter.

¹⁵⁹ I emphasise ‘surprisingly’ as I did not expect him, as an Anglo Saxon man, to question me. African men traditionally would react in this manner. We eventually settled on dropping the hyphen between the two surnames.

they were dealing with. A Black African woman - Diane Chilangwa Farmer - and not Diane Farmer (English (white?) woman). Looking back now, I realise that more than anything else I was subconsciously trying to protect myself from that look that says, “oh, I was expecting” a feeling that can often leave all concerned feeling rather uncomfortable.

Bodies, according to Boris (2003:10), create a realm upon which racialised gender as well as class is inscribed, constructed, made and remade. They stand as both physical and symbolic sites serving as a central arena for the playing out of racialised gender in class society. With reference to Black women’s presence within higher echelons of the workplace, “*The Look*” (Puwar, 2004) given to Black women as they enter a realm ordinarily reserved for white, masculine bodies triggers into place a particular reading of the black/female body (domestic labour, illiterate, forms of property,¹⁶⁰ etc.). Designated a position out there somewhere, in the hidden labour of public domestic work, outside of the seat of power, Puwar (2004:40) views the unexpected presence of a Black female body in this otherwise white male preserve as prompting a racialised “shameful livery put together by centuries of incomprehension” (Fanon, 1986:14). Making reference to Franz Fanon’s *Look, a Negro* (Fanon, 1986) gives us an understanding of institutional racism and how it operates. The unexpected arrival of a black body in an institution that is more accustomed to either white male figures or white women can be a bit unsettling for some.

This “*pre-judging*” of your identity, abilities, location, etc. is what Emily, in the previous section, tries to illustrate. In a similar case, Iona describes her experiences in the past when entering a room for the first time for an interview.

It’s extremely uncomfortable when people pre-judge you when they see you. For example when the door opens and you walk in and the first thing they see is a Black woman ... I don’t know, people just have their preconceived views, whether that translates later into what you get, or what you achieve with them, I don’t know. (Iona, 49)

¹⁶⁰ From a slavery and colonial law point of view.

While I empathise with my research participants' comments on how they view this "pre-judging" behaviour, I also feel it necessary to pick up on Acker's (2006) view on why this type of behaviour occurs. Acker (2006) understands these actions as the failure of people in management (i.e., majority population and in this case white males) to be aware of, or take for granted, inequalities that subordinates (i.e., BMEs) find oppressive (or intimidating). This view is also highlighted by Smith (1991) in her research on how the complex and divisive hierarchy of privilege and oppression in the United States is engendered by the intersection of gender, race and class. Making reference to the situation of Black and white employees in the workplace and how issues of race and gender were viewed in her own study, Smith (1991) identified white skin privilege as having a tendency to mask its own reality adding,

For many Blacks in the South (of the United States) race is not only associated with horrific social humiliation, physical violence, economic disadvantage, and other instances of overt oppression perpetrated by White, but is also a central element in personal identity, community life, cultural heritage. Whites, however, tend not to experience their own race as a symmetrical form of privilege and elite cultural identity, but as something "normal," "generic," "Brand X." Whiteness is not distinctive, remarkable, or even interesting. It becomes a conscious element of experience only in the presence of those who are racially different (from the norm). (Smith, 1995:683)

In other words, while it can be an unpleasant experience when on the receiving end of "*The Look*," one needs to be conscious of the lack of awareness (as noted above) by the people giving this look as being offensive. And as such, in situations where Black women are mindful of negative stereotypical images that could potentially hinder their career progression, they themselves at times admit to playing some manipulative games in an attempt to countermand "*The Look*" and the negative images that it signifies. Pam, a 44 year old lawyer from Zimbabwe, did just that when she was confronted with the issue of questioning one's abilities and qualifications once in employment. After finishing her law degree in Zimbabwe in 1994, Pam moved to London to join her husband, a qualified doctor who had moved to London a few months earlier to specialise. In an effort to improve her options of being employed in the financial sector where she intended to practice corporate law, Pam enrolled for a master's degree in International Finance at one of the Russell Group universities in London. Upon

graduating, she applied for a job in a bank which hired her to work as a financial advisor and not in anything linked to law or international banking as hoped.

I had done International Finance so I applied for a job in a bank and they wouldn't accept my qualifications from abroad, or my experience.... So I had to apply to the Law Society to recognise my qualifications, which they had to because there were already procedures in place that lawyers from certain countries could do the transfer exam. But the bank wouldn't accept that. So I had to go in as a financial advisor, which is basically like a glorified cashier in a bank....So I was just biding my time and hoping that once I'd got my foot *in* the door, something would come up in a legal department, and if they made the mistake of giving me an interview, then I would try and convince them that I was fit to take on a job as a lawyer in the bank. And that's what happened. (Pam, 44)

In recognising and accepting that her gender, race and, in this instance nationality and foreign education, are what contribute to the barriers that she is experiencing in ensuring she gets the job that she is trained to do, Pam succeeded in overcoming this disadvantage purely because of her confidence in her abilities. By not allowing herself to validate some of the common reasons given to justify why so few BME women are represented in management (i.e., lack of ambition, skill or talent (Moosa, 2009:5), Pam's sheer determination to succeed held her in good stead. Some three years later, Pam went on to hire another Black woman in her department.¹⁶¹

Stereotypical Images about Race, Ethnicity and Gender

Challenging stereotypical images of themselves as discussed earlier is an ongoing struggle for many Black women in formal employment. This experience is part of what Acker (2006) identifies as being part of the interconnected dimensions of inequality regimes. Senior corporate managers in organisations are typically portrayed as rational, competent, aggressive, unemotional, objective, white and masculine (Acker, 2006a; Kanter, 1977). Women working and rising up the corporate ladder, as discussed in Chapter 3, have to learn to interact, communicate and operate effectively and appropriately within this culture. As my research participants in Johannesburg have already illustrated, this can be extremely challenging for Black women in particular. Apart from having to deal with the strongly exhibited patriarchal styles of management

¹⁶¹ The importance to mentor younger Black African women is an issue I discuss further in Chapter 8.

typically associated with these male competence-related traits, Black women have to deal with a double bind in that they have to be authoritative like a man if they are to be taken seriously but at the same time not act too aggressively for fear of being perceived as the “*aggressive black female mama*” (Davidson, 1997; Wajcman, 1998). For fear of re-enforcing this well-known stereotype, I found that some of the women in my study consciously fought against this image that has been bestowed on them. Emily 38, who was frequently the only Black woman in her department, strongly believes in picking her fights, adding,

I pick my fights when I want to, but on certain things I don't pick my fights because you don't want to be the one that's always fighting. If you're the one always fighting, you're the one, “oh it's because she's Black and they're aggressive,” and you then think, “okay, you don't want to fit that stereotype of the one that's always kicking up a fuss and stuff like that. (Emily, 38)

Another common racial stereotype associated with Black women is the image of mothering and nurturing – traits which again are not viewed as good leadership qualities. I was therefore surprised to hear Itunde, aged 40, admit to being a nurturing person. A Director of IT in the company she works for, Itunde truly believes that this approach works in her favour adding,

My style is more interpersonal as in, ‘Let's work together,’ rather than, ‘you work for me.’... It's been voted as the most inclusive department, three years in a row. That's because I communicate with them. I talk to them.... I've had a member of staff who's been off long-term...it's a genuine illness and ...erm I was talking to his wife, it was a mental health issue, supporting her really because it was...newly wed and things like that.... The wife felt that she could ring, she could cry, she could talk, she could say this is how he's getting on. The husband felt that he could ring me outside the office and say, ‘Look I'm depressed, I'm suicidal, what can I do?’ The fact that they are also team members doesn't make any difference to me at all and ...erm whatever the race I find that it works all the time. I know some black women who think that their job is to order people and tell people what to do. I'm definitely not like that...I don't conform to that. (Itunde, 40)

I find Itunde's self-effacing management style fascinating particularly as she does not seem bothered by being viewed as the nurturing “Black mama” rather than the more acceptable **Think-manager-think male** (Booyesen & Nkomo, 2006; Wajcman, 1998) .

Isolated and Ignored: Practices and Structures that Serve to Exclude

For Iddy, aged 50, working as a senior executive in pharmaceuticals presents its own challenges. Although she is currently Chairperson of an organisation in her industry, this position has not protected her from being ignored or undermined in the past. Often the only Black female woman in the room, Iddy has this to say;

IDDY: The regular one I face is when people walk into a room and they assume you cannot be... (i.e., Chairperson) sometimes people walk into the room and go around looking for the Chair. They don't realise it could be me.... the only black person in the room and they just assume it can't be. I've had colleagues actually introduce me to people who have walked in a room and ignored me only to be told who the Chair is. Then it's, 'Oh!' and they get more deferential. I have that ... you walk into a room, people haven't been introduced to you, and they just assume you're there to carry the bag or worse.

DIANE: How does that make you feel?

IDDY: It used to annoy me very, very much when I was younger, really, really used to annoy me but now because I know that once they realise who I am, they go into overdrive to compensate for it. It's actually quite pleasant to watch them try and compensate for their original faux pas and try and correct themselves.

What Iddy illustrates here once again is how her race and gender do not immediately conform to the gendered and raced stereotyped image of what a chairperson should look like: masculine and white. The way Iddy is initially ignored demonstrates yet again how in spite of her having assumed legitimate power within this organisation as Chairperson, she still remains an outsider. According to Acker (2006), men habitually struggle to see evidence of gender-differencing practices that result in inequalities that more often than not are plain to women. This, states Acker (2006:119), results in a form of "*hegemonic gender regulation*" (Benschop & Hans, 1998; Gottfried, 1998) - i.e., inequality being taken for granted, as commonsense understanding of the way things are becomes more invisible.

In the same way, when women work in professions that are perceived to be male-dominated because of the physical demands that come with the job, they can find this type of career choice challenging for the most part. While gender differences can present a whole host of challenges, the intersection of both gender and race can prove to

be even more taxing. Lily, aged 41, is a qualified electrical engineer. Born in Nigeria and educated both in Nigeria and the UK, Lily has spent most of her working life in the oil and gas industries in Nigeria, Gabon, the United States and UK. Having lived the UK since 1996, Lily has worked in various managerial roles over the last couple of years. I was particularly interested to hear how her role as electrical engineer is gendered and racialised.

When I was working in the States because in the field as Engineer, Head of Crew..... We used to work in trucks and all the equipment would be inside the truck so I spent most of my time checking all the data and all that. These situations happened more than once when a company Well Side Manager would come in and ask, 'Look, who's the person in charge?', or they would start asking questions and they would just ignore me and they would start talking to the others, mainly white (men). In fact they were always white and they would just start talking to the other guys who were the Operators. 'So what's happening in this well? What depth are you?,' and just ask questions. And sometimes when they'd get to a point where they can't answer the question because they have to refer to the engineer, they would then be like, 'Oh sorry can you actually talk to the engineer?' 'Who's the engineer?' and then they're now forced to talk to me but initially they would have come in and I might have said, 'Hello,' and they would just totally ignore me like, 'Who are you?' and just start talking to other people (Lily, 41).

The points that I raised earlier in the chapter regarding pre-judging one's identity based on a particular reading of the Black/female body (labourer as opposed to being part of the seat of power) are once again displayed here by the way Lily is ignored and undermined in her position as Head of Crew Engineer. Her gendered and racialised image does not seem to fit the assumed masculine image and hence explains why she is not perceived as the person in charge. What Lily clearly represents here is the new image of the manager – challenging both gender and racialised definitions of jobs and hierarchies. In so doing, Lily demonstrates that policies such as employment equity and Diversity management can at times not be effective in preventing Black women in this instance from being undermined and overlooked. Such discriminatory practices also tend to work against Black African women in their bid to climb up the corporate ladder as I elaborate in more detail below.

Career Progression and Setbacks

Getting that job as I explained in Chapter 5 can be only one of the many hurdles that need to be overcome to stay employed in one's chosen profession for many Black women. As Bradley and Healy (2008) found in their study on Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women *Double Disadvantage* (Bradley et al., 2002), BME women tend to be crowded into particular locales in the organisation and concentrated in the lowest levels in organisational hierarchies (Bradley & Healy, 2008:138). As I discussed in Chapter 3, Black women working as managers or middle managers tend to be found in the more feminised areas of employment namely social work, education or as heads of Human Resources. As a consequence, the Black women who do find themselves in senior positions in jobs not traditionally viewed as feminine often complain of having their skills and knowledge challenged, as well as feeling isolated and ignored by colleagues.

Fitting In

Most people want to feel part of a community - be it their place of work or neighbourhood. For some Black African women joining an organisation as a minority, fitting in can be a challenge. One common activity that has been identified as an easy way of becoming more in tune with one's colleagues is joining informal social activities. But as Lindi aged 43 explains, this is not always straightforward. She has a very militant approach to dealing with her feelings of isolation in the workplace. A Zimbabwean by birth, Lindi has been working as an expatriate in the UK for an oil and gas company for a couple of years. When not in the UK, Lindi, an MBA graduate, is based in Johannesburg. When I asked her whether she has felt isolated within the workplace, Lindi recounts how being excluded – a practice tantamount to discrimination – is something she has experienced both in her South African and London offices, leaving her feeling quite resentful.

...Oil and Gas Company has this policy that we must be diverse,¹⁶² so I've been in teams where they'll just arrange for a golf day ... and that actually drove me to

¹⁶² Her company website states, "We believe in creating a working culture that promotes trust, respect, diversity, inclusion and integrity – one in which each individual is valued and given every opportunity to fulfil his or her full potential." (Company name withheld for confidentiality reasons)

learn how to play golf because I thought, “I don’t want them to have an excuse for not including me.” But at that stage, back in the late nineties, not many of us had ever been on a driving range, let alone even held a golf club. But they would have those kinds of functions to exclude us from participating, from socialising with them. (Lindi, 43)

Lindi’s interpretation of her company’s choosing golf as a social event aimed at excluding her and women like herself (as playing golf – albeit a white and male, elitist sport - remains a popular corporate event worldwide) is unquestionably a real issue for her. I view her sense of exclusion as being more deeply rooted in her own racial, gender and class identity - based on historical South African Apartheid practices of discrimination. Also as Lindi further talks about this issue, I come to understand that her feelings of exclusion are more entrenched in the company having taken away her right to choose, adding,

... I just resent it because I should have a choice to say, “I don’t want to socialise with you,” or “I will socialise with you.” I don’t want you to actively exclude me, so that I don’t have a choice. (Lindi, 43)

Since moving to her London office, Lindi’s sense of exclusion has not abated. As an expatriate, her sense is that her team resent her as they feel her job should have gone to a local person.

I’ve felt excluded in my current team. They just hate my guts and I’m really battling because I’ve got that role that they felt should have gone to a Brit and not an expat. And I think a lot of expatriates experience this...the team does really hate me. And that makes it very difficult because one’s got to work with these people, you know, have lunch together which is what we can do in our company canteen. (Lindi, 43)

At this stage in the interview I am curious to find out from Lindi what she, in turn, has done to make her experience more tenable. I ask her whether she has perhaps made an effort to ask her colleagues to have lunch with her as a way of counteracting their resentment of her to which she responds,

I suppose I can. But pride gets in the way. For me, it certainly does. I don’t want to be running around after people, wanting them to accept me. In fact I go into the totally opposite mode, which is wrong. I become very defensive and aggressive, and when they eventually ask me to join them for

lunch, I'm like, no thanks.... which is wrong? But they push me too far.
(Lindi, 43)

Clearly there are many issues that Lindi is grappling with here. In most cases when the women in this study recount their stories of isolation, I find myself empathising with them (which I realise I should not, as researchers should stay neutral). However in the case of Lindi, I was left feeling quite disturbed at how much anger she had in her. I felt this anger did not help her situation in combating her problems of isolation. If anything, I felt as if her attitude fuelled the often assumed stereotypical images of Black women - i.e., aggressive, chip on her shoulder, etc. – all of which will not work in her favour in the long-term.

On the other hand, Iona, who has lived in the UK since she was 16, has a more pragmatic approach to the way she tackles the feelings of isolation she experiences on occasion. Citing the after hours drinking culture (that most of the women in my study appear to have a problem with), Iona refers to this “English habit” as one that makes her feel cut off mainly because of her lack of interest. However, because she feels it is important to be seen to be part of a team Iona adds, “... that’s one scene I’ve never liked. I do it though sometimes, just because you need to be seen to be doing things like that.”
(Iona, 49)

Pam shares similar views to Iona but expands even further on why it remains imperative for women like herself to toe the line if they are to work successfully in the country they have chosen to have a career and call home. It is important for individuals like herself to adopt some aspects of British culture as a means of breaking down informal and formal barriers. As a foreign person who has come to work in the UK, having a well paid job in a transnational company or the like not only creates an opportunity to develop one’s career but also presents a situation where one can grow as an individual. As Pam narrates,

I think, wherever you go to a new environment, you just have to take it as it is, and make your way! If there are challenges that come up, you meet them, you fight them, or you leave them be, as you choose. But I think Black women have ... it’s almost like a handicap that is imposed on them, by people’s perceptions. Because, whether we like it or not, the environment is very British and ... geared towards its own people, like any other country! In Zimbabwe, Zimbabweans will be in the top roles in most

industries. In Zambia it's the same, in America it's the same. So here, if you're a foreigner, you have to show **why** they've got to employ **you**, as a foreigner, rather than one of their own. It means you have to adapt, certain mannerisms, or ways of speaking, that make you more acceptable to them. It means you have to work in the way that they would work, tell the jokes that they would tell, and have the manner that they would have. That might be easy enough to do, but you also have to work harder, when you **are** in the job, to put away their views that maybe you're not as clever as a white woman would be if she was doing this job. Or they might even have a few hang-ups about how Black women are. They might stereotype Black women, to think they're this way or that way. And you just have to show that you're a personality, rather than a colour, and you're a qualified person, rather than a Black woman from so and so.... And once you've proved yourself, everyone relaxes into a mode of, well, we're just working together, and then you become accepted that way. But it sometimes means you have to do things that go against your natural inclinations. For instance... I'd never been to a pub! I didn't **want** to go to pubs ... I didn't see the need. But that was part of how everyone socialised. And after about six months, someone came to me and said, "you know it would be very useful if you joined us after work for a drink or two." And I said, "well I don't drink." And they said, "well, promotions and things are discussed there." And I said, "really! The boss actually tells you who he's going to promote in the pub!" And he said, "no, no. It doesn't happen that way, but the conversations that people base their decisions on, and it would probably be a good idea for you to just hang out with us." And so from time to time I would, I made sure that, once a week, once every other week, I'd go (Pam, 44).

Pam raises some interesting points here with the main one being the need for Black African women to take on some aspects of the British culture as a way of breaking down some of these informal barriers embedded in race, gender and culture. Having legislation that merely dictates how people should behave toward one another in a diverse workforce can only be effective, according to Pam, if the Black women themselves are also willing to adapt proving that "*you are a personality, rather than just a colour.*"

Being Perceived as not Qualified Enough

The issue of being viewed as a "Third World person" (Beoku-Betts, 2006) and the negative stereotyping and low expectations that are embedded in such an identity was also something that a number of the women in my study identified as a barrier they had to deal with. Over the years, African countries have grappled with problems of economic recession and structural adjustment programmes – all of which have had a

negative impact on education standards. So while the women in my study have had a relatively privileged educational background, it still remains difficult for them to be seen as equally qualified. They expressed their annoyance at having to constantly prove that they are intelligent and qualified enough to do the job at hand. Bradley and Healy (2008:149) refer to this behaviour as “the old imperialist views of racial inferiority which stereotypes black people as intellectually weaker than white” and therefore not suitable for higher level jobs. This gendered and raced form of discrimination can prove to be rather frustrating as Lily, a qualified electrical engineer, recounts an incident while working as Head of Crew on a project on an oil rig.

LILY: They would listen to another guy who was white but they wouldn't want to listen to me and tell me that I don't know what I'm doing. I ended up in a situation where I actually had to overrule one of my operators and say, 'Look, I'm the one in charge on this job, I'm the one responsible for whatever goes right or wrong; so if you're not willing to do what I tell you to do then you need to move away and I'll get on with it.' In that case I had to actually do his job just to get the job done at the well side and then when we got to the base he got told off by the manager because he was doing something wrong. I've had situations from sub-ordinates as well as from other people like that.

DIANE: How do you cope with that, situations like that?

LILY: Well. I think for the most part of it I've just had to put my foot down and say look...because in that particular case...because I was the one ultimately in charge, that was easy to do because I could put my foot down and say 'Look can you just move and I'll get it done?' but it would have been more difficult if it was amongst colleagues because okay if all your colleagues decide to go, 'you're just in the wrong and we're not going to listen to you' that's more difficult to fight because most times people would go with the majority so – and there have been cases like that. I would just say, 'Well this is my position, take it or leave it. Just remember I told you so.' That's another thing. With a superior it's more difficult because then you have to now use diplomacy and say, 'Look here, this is what I think, how about that?' and sometimes I've had to actually go above my managers to go and make a point. I have had to do that in the past. If the organisation allows it then its fine but I've known cases where that's not always the case.

As a Black African female scientist, Lily also appears to be experiencing racial and gender biases and marginality as a Third World scientist. According to Beoku-Betts' (2006) findings in her study of African women pursuing graduate studies in the sciences in the United States, African women face struggles for legitimacy in the scientific community as a result of the particular material and political conditions of their societies (Beoku-Betts, 2006:143). In addition to this, as a Black woman working in what is

clearly a masculine macho environment, Lily not only has to behave like a man, but a white man, if she is to be taken seriously. So even though Lily has been educated both in Nigeria and the UK, her credentials and ability to perform are questioned most likely due to her identity.

For Mary, being perceived as a Third World woman with limited experience has been quite frustrating. A confident 39 year-old Zambian woman who has lived and worked for television broadcasting companies in Zambia, South Africa, The Netherlands and UK, Mary was educated at international schools in Kenya and Zambia and universities in India and Wales. Speaking of her experience in the organisation she works for in London, Mary remarks at how colleagues in her company appear surprised when she makes a contribution to news ideas relating to continents other than Africa.

When you sit in editorial meetings and you're having discussions you can make an analysis of the Russian political situation owing to your background and what you've learnt and so on. Some people would think, 'You lived in Zambia, what you could know about Chechnya or Russia or Latvia or whatever? My brief explanation would be, 'Well I've studied it at school. My country's political alliance with Russia was this, that and the other.' You have to find a nice, middle ground of letting people understand. (Mary, 39)

Again what Mary illustrates here is the inability of her colleagues to view her as an individual who has knowledge outside her own continent of origin. Another bias that Mary identifies is her colleagues' inability to view her as a middle class, educated, knowledgeable person owing to her African identity.

When I joined the London office, I noticed that there was a certain type of African person in my department who just appeared to be grateful to be in London because they had not seen anything like this.... a flat in Peckham or whatever. Whereas when I moved here, London was just part of my career progression plan. So even though Broadcasting Company is a good place to work and I am grateful to be working here as it's good for my profile it's not absolutely earth shattering for me... People cannot fathom in Broadcasting Company that you want to get out, you want to go back home at some stage... (Mary, 39).

As an African woman, Mary discusses how colleagues often pigeon holed her and criticised her for not appearing grateful enough to be living and working in London.

Describing her organisation as traditionally having hired Black Africans who either came into the country as students or political refugees, she is part of a new transnational middle class and/or elite group of Black African professionals that have been hired from Africa to come and work here as expatriates. Because of this background she sees her middle class identity as being a burden for her at times.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I highlighted the various steps that both the UK government and private sector organisations have taken to implement policies that aim to promote equality and diversity policies for all. I also presented some of the arguments that have been made regarding the ineffectiveness of some of these policies (Ahmed 2007; Bradley and Healy 2008; Hogue and Noon 1999; Liff and Dale 1994). With this focus mainly on the policies that promote women's equality within the workplace, my aim in this chapter was also to discuss the extent to which these policies impact upon my research participants working in London. As I mention above, unlike their South African counterparts who openly discuss the impact their policies have had on their career progression (or lack of it), my UK participants view equality policies as a backdrop, merely affecting them in more subtle ways.

While actions by colleagues and business associates can contribute to discriminatory environments (Bell and Nkomo 2001; Weber and Higginbotham 1997), feminist intersectional approaches assume that discrimination is operating in the workplace based on a combination of an employee's gender and race (Weber 2001). But as transnational migrant professionals, or first, second or third generation foreign or locally-educated Black African women, it is important to also highlight the intersection of different processes that operate across spatial scales (McDowell 2008:495). These go beyond just gender, race, ethnic and class intersections. As McDowell (2008) points out, immigration policies also subtly impact on the ways in which women like my research participants are valued and awarded social rights and career advancement opportunities (ibid.). As illustrated in the women's narratives, some refer to themselves as part of Sub-Saharan Africa's lucky generation – growing up in their respective countries of origin as privileged children of middle-class and elite parents. But upon moving to the

UK and employed in mainly white and male dominated professions, their position within the workplace became that of “space invader” (Puwar 2004:8). This has been part of their journey as professional Black African women in London as they attempt to come to terms with the formal and informal barriers that they directly and indirectly experience. Finally, I find it interesting to also note that while in some instances, their accents, skin colour and other bodily presentations have worked to confirm their social construction as “less legitimate” (Bauder 2006; Young 1990), there have also been instances when the women use these same social constructions (i.e., dress in national clothing, nurturing stereotypical image of Black Mama, gender-neutral African names, etc.) as a means of promoting and boosting their career prospects. In other instances, they have attempted to resolve their predicament by acknowledging their bi-cultural identity as transnational Black African women. As Pam states in her narrative on breaking down informal and formal barriers, while it is important not to lose one’s national and racial identity, it remains equally important to embrace local at least some of the cultures of one’s adopted country as we well. After all, as transnational professional women, most will continue to move between their country of origin and the UK (McDowell 2008) and thus continue to maintain connections between the two.

Chapter Seven

Career Woman, Mother, Wife or Daughter: Untangling the Web and Finding a Balance

...Both in the Black world and the white world, I'm at the bottom of the pile, and as a daughter-in-law it's even worse. (Cathy 37)

Over the past three decades, feminist and other related research and studies of women's employment have established the fact that work within the family and employment cannot be fully understood in isolation from each other (Bradley & Healy, 2008; Burke, 2001; Burke & Davidson, 2004; Cooper & Davidson, 1984). Professional women's domestic regime (Walby 1997) and commitments to caring responsibilities remain deeply intertwined with their paid work commitments resulting in women and men entering the labour market on different terms (Bradley & Healy, 2008). In the case of Black African women, while a growing number of women across the continent continue to gain higher educational qualifications and acquire professional jobs alongside men in the formal sector, they also continue to have a complex relationship between work and family life (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Furthermore, studies of the lives of women who do qualify and embark on their respective career paths fail to acknowledge the challenges and limitations placed upon their mobility primarily by their unique cultural histories and defined gender roles (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005:563).

In this chapter I focus on the role of the Black African family and how the women in my study deal with their hybridised social positioning. I begin the chapter with a brief historical discussion on the formation of the African family. As in all other societies the world over, the family has been central to the well-being of African societies for centuries. According to Ohereba-Saki and Takyi (2006), as with all institutions, African families have undergone major transformations brought about mainly by the interplay of indigenous, Arabic/Islamic, and European/Christian cultures over the years.¹⁶³ The amalgamation of these three cultures in the lives of African people captures the “triple-

¹⁶³ I do, however, want to clarify that as my research has focused primarily on participants from English-speaking, ex-British colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa, I place more emphasis here on the influences of British colonialism and the Christian faith.

heritage” image of the continent (ibid. 2006:18). This, combined with the influences of modernisation, urbanisation and migration, has influenced modern day Black African families’ ever-changing economic, social and cultural formations. These historical and socio-cultural influences and the ways they intersect racial, gender, and class divisions to impact on the experiences of these transnational and emerging elite Black African women’s family, domestic roles and interpersonal relationships is highlighted in this section. Furthermore, I discuss how these factors in turn influence my informants’ experiences and positioning within the workplace.

The second and main section of the chapter focuses on how the two groups of Black African women in my study – from London and Johannesburg – organise their domestic and work lives. As professional and managerial women working in jobs that require a great deal of time away from their home lives, many of these women have to work hard at balancing their commitment to work and family lives. Working within a framework of intersectionality, I ask: to what extent does their culture influence the way they balance their commitment to work and family life? In what ways are there similarities or differences in the ways the women in London and Johannesburg address socio-cultural and gendered expectations of their domestic, social and caring commitments? These diverse patterns and formations of household organisation, family distribution of power, decision making and communication relationships – all influenced by historical and socio-cultural expectations - are discussed in this section. Having asked my research participants to narrate their ‘life-stories,’ I explore the deeply embedded gender, race and class-based identity formations within the context of transformative social change in the case of South Africa and gender, race, ethnicity and class in the case of the UK.

7.1 Analysing Black African Families from a Historical Framework

Over the past century to date, the African family has witnessed a rapid change in the make up and identity of the family unit. These changes have been stimulated and directed by a multifaceted interaction of both external and internal forces. As Oheneba-Sakyi and Takyi (2006) remind us, if one is to study how African families have been shaped historically, one needs to recognise the amalgamation of the African indigenous, the Arabic/Islamic and European/Christian cultures within the larger global framework

of constantly changing economic, social and cultural forces (Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi, 2006:2).¹⁶⁴ Although religion or spirituality is not a subject I have addressed in any detail in this thesis,¹⁶⁵ it has emerged as an important factor influencing contemporary Black family structures. As I reviewed and analysed the lives of these transnational and emerging elite African families, I realised that religion is very much a part of the traditional face of African culture. According to Skinner (1986), the traditional face of Africa responds to queries related to the basic principles of human life, human existence and coping with everyday problems of life through the power of God. Most Africans, adds Skinner (1986), appeal to the power of God through mediators such as lesser gods, various types of spirits, sacred objects and ancestors alleged to hold supernatural powers, to assist the living with economic success, good health, childbearing and protection against evil.

A second influence is the importance of family relations. While variations exist amongst African societies as they adjust to different environments and socio-cultural realities, African indigenous cultures place great importance on the pre-eminence of the group (i.e., family as well as clan and community) (Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi, 2006). This concept, as I illustrate here and in more detail later on in the chapter, often manifests itself in institutions such as the clan. It is through the clan that family events such as marriage and childbirth are organised, as well as family and social relations (Nkurumah, 1970; Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi, 2006). One theme that runs through a number of my London and Johannesburg research participants' narratives is how Christianity and their indigenous culture continue to influence the way they live their lives. For instance, the need for my UK participants to belong to a church makes the church more than just a place of worship but also a vehicle for establishing extended family support networks.¹⁶⁶ Unlike my research participants in South Africa (who are nationals of that country and did not speak much about their religious convictions),

¹⁶⁴ For more details on this see W.E.B. Du Bois (1915) *The Negro* where he draws attention to this multiple heritage of Africa by recognising the combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro-Christian Africa by tracing the earlier settlements in Africa. These included settlements across the Red Sea thousands of years BC by the Semites and across the Mediterranean Sea by the Greeks, Phoenicians and Romans to be followed by the Spanish, French, Dutch and English in the 15th century (Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi (2006).

¹⁶⁵ This is besides the reference I make in Chapter 2 to Christianity and its impact on Africans during the colonial period.

¹⁶⁶ Regular churchgoing among adult Black people in the UK is three times higher at 48 per cent when compared to white adults. See Ashworth, (2007:15).

many of my UK participants still think of themselves as ‘foreigners.’ As a case in point, Viola, aged 48, who has worked and lived in the UK for a number of years after moving to London from Nigeria, speaks about the differences in the ways friends interact in the UK compared to her native Nigeria where there seems to be a stronger sense of community.

... We always look after our own back home ... you always look out for somebody. Here it’s different. Before you go to someone’s house you call here but back home you can just drop by and when you arrive it’s natural for people to say, “oh, are you hungry?” You know... My culture is such that we help the next person... the person that doesn’t have enough you try and help, and you do what you can; if it’s just talking or just being there for them.... My Christianity,... my faith, also plays a huge part in that so I think they’re kind of meshed together because the way I look at it is that I’m my brother’s keeper. I have to look after my brother and if my brother is down it’s my duty if I’m in a position to help him to do so; so that drives me as well. It’s almost like second nature to me. I want to help. (Viola 48)

Viola reveals some of the frustrations that come with the modern day fusion of culture and religion for Africans like herself who now live in an urban and western setting. The church for her is not just a place of worship but one that signifies a home that has been left behind in her country of origin. Her comments demonstrate the importance she places on her gendered role and her longing for the support network created by the presence of a clan or group of family members – something that is not as visible in a foreign environment such as her neighbourhood in North London. When I question some of my research participants about how they cope with life in Britain as minority Black professionals and family women, I am enthralled at how open they are about their faith, particularly after all the controversy surrounding the Tony Blair/Alistair Campbell “*We don’t do God*” saga and the British Airways employee suspended for wearing a cross to work.¹⁶⁷ As Bubu, a pharmacist, opens up to me, “*because I am a Christian ... I pray to God as if everything depends on him and work as if everything depends on him ... that’s what I try to do.*” When she talks about how she deals with some of the trials and tribulations that come with being a minority in the workplace and being undermined at times because of what she views as racial injustices to her and others that she mentors, her approach is rather pragmatic, adding:

¹⁶⁷ See Tony Blair story on www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2007/jun/22/uk.religion1 and news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6051486.stm on story about British Airways employee who was suspended for wearing Christian cross with her uniform

Not that I am trying to be some hero but I just think that the Lord has given me this position and I've got to where I am despite my negative qualities, for want for a better word, how can I help people achieve their potential? That's what I try to do (Bubu 51).

Bubu's outlook is not unique as I discuss further. In the next section, I expand on how the Black African family structure has been influenced by Christianity and Colonialism.

7.2 European Christianity, Colonialism and the African Family

Even though Christianity had been introduced to Africans centuries before, it was only when European educators and colonial administrators re-introduced this religion to Africans that the religion became accepted and a part of the indigenous people's lives. As discussed in Chapter 5, the missionaries and colonial administrators introduced European education, all of which was designed to expose a core group of Africans to European ideals and socio-cultural values, deemed acceptable for African societies. One major objective of European Christianity and colonialism was to instil a "conjugal"¹⁶⁸ family model with a neolocal residence and a sense of individualism typical to Western Europe at the time (Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi, 2006). This was a problem from the outset primarily because African family structures differed from European family structures. As discussed in great detail in Chapters 2 and 5, most of Sub-Saharan Africa's economy was based on agriculture with women representing a significant portion of the labour force (as is still the case in certain parts of the continent today). Rather than observing African women's actual function as major contributors to the labour force, the colonial system engaged men in political and economic activity. The male became equated to the 'breadwinner' particularly as more technologies were introduced to men who were subsequently recruited for paying jobs such as in mining, the railways and other urban jobs (Snyder & Tadesse, 1997). With women subsequently finding themselves running their family farms in addition to their reproductive responsibilities, family structures began to be affected. As also discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, in instances where women also left the rural areas in search of employment in the urban areas (as often happened in

¹⁶⁸ Ralph Linton (1936) has been identified as the person to have come up with the most useful approaches to understanding family systems. Linton (1936) differentiated *conjugal families* (i.e., nuclear family held together by marriage (consisting of parents and their children and grandparents of the marital partner) from *consanguineal families* (i.e., relationships by blood or common ancestor) (Potash 1995).

South Africa, for example), family structures were, in some instances, affected negatively, particularly when young mothers were forced to leave their children behind in the care of relatives.¹⁶⁹

In the elite African families, a change in family structure and organisation was also beginning to take shape. For instance, the way in which the colonial rulers visualised women in terms of a Victorian image of a woman (lady), i.e., nurturing and conserving society, completely destabilised African women's position within society. In societies such as Nigeria where there is a long history of western educated women and men, missionaries ensured that there was a supply of elite African women for the educated African men – all shaped by Victorian middle-class ideology. According to Parpart (1990:163), these women were expected to replicate the culture and the lifestyle of the elite colonisers. Devoting their lives to their elite husbands and children, these elite women successfully ran their households in a similar fashion to white middle class Victorian Christian women.¹⁷⁰

Although some Black African families benefitted socially and economically from this newly formed African elite structure (particularly from the education and training that saw many become doctors, teachers and politicians (Killingray, 1994)), colonial, missionary and Apartheid influences greatly destabilised Black family structures and their way of life. By not placing more emphasis on old traditions, the lived intersections of gender and culture were disrupted within societies. These disruptions can be seen in modern family formations. For instance, while modern day African families (particularly those living in urban areas as is the case for my research participants) marry and live as conjugal families, old traditional practices continue to be a source of conflict for many as they attempt to go about their lives as educated and financially independent women. While they may have certain social advantages, many are still constrained by the gendered character of colonial and missionary influences which clash with certain parts of African traditions. The complexity and multilayered intersections of gender, race and class become clear through some of the women's narratives when I enquire about the roles they play when organising their domestic caring responsibilities

¹⁶⁹ This practice of women leaving their children behind in the care of relatives or friends to work abroad still continues in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa. How this has impacted on the wellbeing of some of my research participants is discussed later on in the chapter.

¹⁷⁰ Also see Echeruo (1977:31) for more details.

and paid work commitments and how they go about negotiating their gender roles, intergenerational relationships and challenges within the nuclear family.

7.3 Marriage and Intergenerational Family Relationships

The expectation of every African individual to marry and have children remains one key finding not only in my research but other studies conducted on African societies (Bledsoe, 1990; Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987; Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1984). Historically, parents and extended kin have greatly influenced the selection process for marriages in Sub-Saharan Africa. As Caldwell et al. (1987) add, the participation of extended kin in partner selection remains consistent with what has been recounted in the literature regarding the central role of kin and lineage in the African family (Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi, 2006). As for the vast majority of Black African men and women today, choosing a partner to marry is largely a decision that is made between the two individuals. Studies indicate that due in large part to structural changes, namely urbanisation, an increase in educational attainment and economic independence of young adults, the role of the kin in spouse selection, child betrothal incidences, and arranged marriages have all reduced significantly (F. Aryee, 1985; Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi, 2006). This modern day practice of choosing one's future spouse appears to have been the norm for most of my research participants that are now married or in a relationship. As I listened to the women recount their 'life stories,' it soon became clear to me that not a single one mentioned family involvement in their choice of partner. However, once the women had indicated to their families that they wanted to get married, their families became more involved in the process leading up to the marriage ceremony. The geographical location, i.e., participants residing in Johannesburg versus those living in London, did not seem to impact too greatly on their respective kin's involvement in the marriage process. If anything, a number chose to return to their home countries or villages with their new partners either to get married or conduct their traditional marriage ceremony. This, in itself, and the way the women spoke about the importance of family, symbolised to me the importance that is still placed not only on retaining certain socio-cultural traditions but also the value placed on the role of kin.

Depending on where you are in Africa, marriage ceremonies vary with the common element in most still being the payment of bride wealth or lobola.¹⁷¹ Also depending on how traditional the families are, this process can involve complex negotiations, particularly if the woman is highly educated¹⁷². Apart from the exchange of money, goods such as jewellery and livestock are also expected to be provided by the groom's family. Seen as a legal bond uniting two families, the act provides protection and gives recognition to the marriage while also guaranteeing productive and reproductive services for the couple. While many view this as an important and valued part of 'African culture,' others see it as a financial transaction which more often than not disadvantages women (Ansell, 2001). In addition, the implied social control functions that are created once lobola has been paid are more often than not perceived to be more beneficial to certain actors, namely the in-laws.

Because these intergenerational relationships of African families are taken so very seriously, it is not uncommon to find more than one generation living in one house. Aside from the importance that is placed upon them, these relationships must be maintained particularly given that current African government systems in most of Sub-Saharan Africa do little, if anything, to assist the elderly with social security benefits. In the more recent past, maids, family members, particularly grandparents and other non-working female relations and kin (sisters, mothers, aunts, co-wives and sometimes daughters), have co-assisted their grown-up children by continuing to play a key role in providing childcare support to their children both in the developing world and industrialised countries. This support structure, however, can no longer be relied upon by many career women today (UNIFEM et al., 2005). In the context of my research, many of the women in both London and Johannesburg no longer live near their parents or kin. Urbanisation, the increased labour force participation of women in male dominated professions that demand long working hours and migration (both international and internal) have made it difficult to arrange traditional family support for caring roles and domestic tasks previously undertaken by relatives and kin. Where

¹⁷¹ This is the term used in a number of Southern African countries. Other words include roora, bohali. While my emphasis here is on lobola, it should be recognised that this cannot be fully understood independently of other aspects of marriage within African society which can also include polygamy, child-pledging, etc.

¹⁷² In more educated families, lobola is in many cases, a symbolic gesture rather than an exchange of large amounts of money or goods.

possible, full-time domestic workers are hired to assist but even this arrangement can be unreliable when compared to traditional family support.

It is against this background that I analyse how my research participants negotiate intergenerational family structures and manage their childcare and domestic work responsibilities. Their collective response to this question was very dependent on their life priorities, life-stage and age. Their geographical location also influenced the importance of these roles and the time spent on it.

Negotiating Intergenerational Family Structures

As previously discussed, family involvement in marriages linked to bride worth or lobola can also influence the way in which women view their roles. Thirty-eight year old Manyani is a Human Resources manager for a petrochemical company in Johannesburg. She belongs to one of South Africa's Eastern Cape dominant tribes which she describes as being "*very strong in terms of following their culture.*" Manyani explained how she feels compelled to behave in a traditional (subservient) manner when she is in the presence of her in-laws purely out of respect for them. I was particularly fascinated to hear how she has to change her style of dress when she visits her in-laws. This is in spite of the fact that she is a professional woman, working in a cosmopolitan city and, more importantly, in a marriage that she considers to be based on an equal playing field.

I can wear my jeans, do my hairstyles and everything and speak the language that we are comfortable with (when at home) but when I go the Eastern Cape I can't wear my jeans... We stop at the last filling station where I change my clothes.... I have to wear long skirts, put a blanket around myself and I have to wear a traditional headdress to cover my head and can't show my arms; I have to be covered... I get hot, so it's quite a challenge for me...I don't look forward to going there because of those restrictions but I do it out of respect for them and because it is expected of me.... (Manyani, 38)

It is clear from what Manyani describes here that her gendered and socio-cultural identity as an Eastern Cape wife and daughter-in-law precedes all other identities when in the presence of her in-laws. Rather than fight centuries of traditional family practices, Manyani would rather negotiate her way around the problem of family in-law demands

and constraints by adopting a dual identity rather than challenge them as such an act will not win her any favours in the long run. By referring to “*wearing jeans when I am home,*” Manyani also emphasises her separation from rural life, another indication of her fluid and ever-shifting identity.

To further illustrate the importance of negotiating one’s way around family in-laws’ demands and constraints, I use the example of the time expected for one to spend at a family funeral. In Sub-Saharan Africa, funeral rites are lengthy affairs which are observed with numerous ancient traditions. Because it is a time for the community, family and friends to come together in solidarity and to regain their identity, days leading up to the actual burial date can take anything from a few to ten days.¹⁷³ Of the numerous traditional customs and religious rites that are performed on these occasions, my interest in this discussion is once again on the role of the daughter-in-law. Often expected to be at the funeral home and performing all the menial female gendered chores such as cooking, serving food and cleaning, daughters-in-law in many traditional families endure this oppressive ritual of social and gender inequality instigated by female in-laws. As professional women often working under immense pressure to deliver, taking unnecessarily long and unplanned periods off work is simply not acceptable. This can unfortunately be a cause of tremendous friction between family members if not negotiated properly. As Gladys states,

Your mother-in-law is your biggest ally so make sure you communicate with her: “I’m travelling; I’m closing a deal with a company in London”.... As the daughter-in-law her peers are expecting you to be at the funeral home from Sunday to Saturday and if you are not there you are embarrassing her. (Gladys, 48)

Merely excusing oneself with work commitments is not enough. In such instances, the women sort out these intersecting gender and socio-cultural negotiations by offering monetary donations which can go toward transporting family members and/or feeding mourners who sleep at the funeral house for the entire duration of the time leading up to the burial.

In situations where a woman’s husband attempts to defend his wife from the pressure and demands imposed by his family, Cathy, aged 37, tells me that one still has to be

¹⁷³ See <http://www.deathreference.com/A-Bi/African-Religions.html> for more details.

very careful in the way one negotiates one's female gendered position within the family. Cathy's father-in-law had just passed away a week before our meeting. She described him as a man who did not believe in oppressing his daughters-in-law and as such had taken steps to ensure that she was protected.

...He was very modern. While there are certain things about our culture and tradition that he respected, he decided to settle in Swaziland and not in South Africa after his wife went through some really nasty things. That's why he insisted that, as a daughter-in-law, they pay costs for me; they slaughtered a sheep when I crossed the threshold which was to say that they accepted me into their family as one of his daughters,... meaning if something isn't good enough for his daughter to do, it shouldn't be good enough for me. (Cathy, 37)

But as Cathy soon learned, her father-in-law's protection does not change her gendered and social location within the family structure in spite of all the symbolic rituals performed by him to protect her from the oppressive daughter-in-law identity. After his passing, the living relatives did nothing to protect her from the harsh treatment that she was subjected to following her father-in-law's funeral in the family's village. As is tradition, Cathy was expected to perform all the subservient duties that are assigned to daughters-in-law at funerals adding,

.... Now that my father-in-law has passed away, he's not there to protect me. His sisters and his other brothers would say to me, "Actually, as a daughter-in-law, your hair should be covered. You should have a scarf on your shoulders." ... "You shouldn't just be sitting down, you should be cooking. Wake up at the crack of dawn to cook breakfast for the relatives that are here". "Wake us up to say that the food is ready, and then prepare lunch, prepare dinner." All I could think of was, "But when am I going to rest? I'm also human." This is exactly the kind of stuff that my father-in-law didn't want. (Cathy, 37)

In spite of her misgivings about the subordinate treatment and what she refers to as ultimately not men but other women who are in the forefront at oppressing other women in traditional settings, Cathy is still keen on maintaining a non-confrontational relationship with her mother-in-law. Cathy believes that the only way she can maintain her career and also have the support of her husband and mother-in-law is to negotiate her position as wife, mother and daughter-in-law. It is in her interest to manage her multiple identities – albeit with their conflicting pressures and potentially oppressive traditional gendered roles. Hence treating her relationship with her husband as one

would in a nuclear family where decisions are made between husband and wife alone does not seem to be the proper way of navigating her way through this situation or other areas in her marriage. As she explains,

When my husband sees how unfair some of these traditional practices are, he tries to stand up for me, which is dangerous when dealing with rural people. My mother-in-law actually had to say to me, "You know what, when it comes to some of these traditional things, don't listen to your husband, listen to what I tell you. Your husband is going to get you into trouble." (Cathy, 37)

In cautioning Cathy not to listen to her husband as he "*is going to get you into trouble,*" Cathy's mother-in-law highlights the complex ways in which gender relations intersect with culture and age.

Wives, Girlfriends and Mistresses

How far one goes in making compromises for the sake of maintaining a harmonious relationship with the extended family is still questionable for my informants, as I have illustrated. It becomes particularly tricky when the women are expected to turn a blind eye to the wondering eyes of their husbands – an act, in some quarters, not perceived as serious enough to walk away from a marriage.

Khomotso, aged 35, is currently married to her second husband and has three children in total from both marriages. Although she feels she is in a modern relationship conducted on an equal playing field, Khomotso's relationship with her first husband displayed some of the characteristics viewed by many men in Africa as their prerogative – i.e., their right to have relationships with more than one woman at a time.

When I met my husband in Mafikeng, he had just moved there from Johannesburg where he had spent most of his life. After getting married, we moved back to Joburg and it was then that I realised that I didn't know the man that I had married. I thought I knew him but quite a lot of things came up and infidelity, the relationships that he left here in Johannesburg and it was really, really difficult...For three years I tried to make it work...we tried to make it work but unfortunately it didn't work. (Khomotso, 38)

Listening to Khomotso speak so despondently about the breakdown of her first marriage, I had the sense that she felt as if she had failed not only herself but her kin as well. Because African families tend to be involved in the entire marriage process, there is a great sense of responsibility that comes with these unions. The breakdown of a marriage not only affects the nuclear family but the extended family as well who more often than not feel they have a say in the matter. In addition to this, the pressure for women to be seen as ‘complete’ women is also there, particularly in instances where having a successful career is not enough in the eyes of the family and community. Although Khomotso has since remarried and settled with her new partner, the issue of infidelity is one that still concerns professional women like her. She adds,

You know... every time when I am out with other women, we talk about this and I have now realised that it’s not only my age group because just two weeks ago I was at a funeral... As we were preparing food, there were some elderly women standing near me discussing the same issues that I discuss with my friends. It’s across generations It’s there, it’s real. Are we trying to make men what they are not? Maybe men are built to be like that and we expect too much from them? For the first time I thought to myself, ‘Are we expecting something that they can’t deliver?’ (Khomotso, 38)

As Khomotso demonstrates here, infidelity in African marriages is not a new practice but one that has been going on for a long time. Historically, Black African women have tended to marry at quite a young age.¹⁷⁴ This practice was quite evident to me when I conducted my interviews. Of the 48 women I interviewed in Johannesburg and London, 25 were married (5 for the second time); 15 were divorced and 9 were single. While the women cited various reasons for divorcing their husbands, one common theme that emerged was infidelity. Unlike many rural women who traditionally marry young and usually have no financial recourse if they opt to leave the marriage, urban, educated women, including my research participants, now have more options (relatively speaking) to fight long-standing patriarchal controls.¹⁷⁵ Khomotso identifies women’s

¹⁷⁴ Suffice to say, in most instances where the women have divorced their husbands, they had married in their early twenties (and prior to forging their careers). This is typical of Black African marriages as has been reported by the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) which shows that compared to the OECD average of 27.4 years, girls in Africa get married at 21.3 years. Furthermore, 28 percent of all girls before the age of 20 have been married at least once in their lives (www.oecd.org; Nkomo & Ngambi (2009)).

¹⁷⁵ I feel it important to mention here that it was difficult to establish whether all the women in my study who are married stay because they are happy or because of the status that comes with being married to the men they are with. As Parpart (1990:176) found in her study on elite Nigerian women, marriage for a

new-found economic empowerment as a key reason for the increase in divorces amongst the emerging middle-class and elite Black South African nuclear families adding,

These women are more educated than before; financially stable and as career women know that they can achieve a lot more without such man. ... The issue of AIDS is also another reason. We need to have that peace of mind. (Khomotso, 38)

Khomotso raises an interesting point here when she talks about the threat of HIV/AIDS infection. As other studies relating to women's health in Africa indicate, specific gendered traditions within African marriage institutions and other socio-cultural practices (i.e., marriage, polygamy, wife inheritance, female genital cutting) have all been of major concern and debate with both African and Western scholars. While these issues were not directly mentioned by my research participants, the issue of AIDS transmission seemed to be a real threat, particularly for participants from Johannesburg where HIV/AIDS infections have been on the increase over the past decade. My reading of this is that while an education and money can buy these women out of certain gendered traditional practices, their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection has no class boundaries. Traditional gender roles and the construction of femininity and masculinity, which sanction behaviour such as polygamy, extramarital relationships and multiple partners for men, make these women particularly vulnerable to infection. As Khomotso and others pointed out to me, past relationships came to an end primarily because they considered it hopeless to expect fidelity from their partners. In cases where the women consider turning a blind eye to their partner's infidelity, many are left feeling vulnerable if unable to refuse to have sex with their non-monogamous spouse. These findings are supported by past research on this topic which identify many women's inability to insist on or negotiate condom use, their lack of control over their sexuality and male dominance in sexual matters as leading causes of women's increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS (Adomako Ampofo, 1995, 1999).

In other cases, the reason for failed marriage is linked with the women's desire to have a career in a country that does not necessarily suit their partners. This desire to pursue career opportunities and advancement can also disrupt gendered expectations. South

number of these women is still desired as it provides both social status and at times access to male prestige and resources.

African Ntambi, aged 42 at the time of interview, grew up in exile. Having lived in various African and European countries over the years, she met her then husband in Paris where she was working. After getting married they both moved to Johannesburg where they lived for two years before he decided he wanted to go back to Angola where his family was from. Hoping that she would follow him in due course, Ntambi's husband moved to Angola, leaving her and their daughter in Johannesburg. But as Ntambi explains,

He got a job offer here (Johannesburg) and then got a better job offer in Angola and so he decided to move to Angola temporarily. But after three years of a long distance relationship I realised that it wasn't going to be temporary and during those three years I knew I didn't want to move to Angola partly because, you know, having grown up out of South Africa I really need to put down roots now. I had come back and then a few years later I left for Paris and then I came back, my daughter was born and I said I wanted to stay in one place with her grandparents around her and so I just dug my heels in and I wouldn't move to Angola. I even got offered a job there when I was at XYZ Bank and I didn't take it, much to his horror. And so he didn't want to come back here either because his family was in Angola. Because he had lived in Europe for 13 years, all he wanted to do as well was to live in Angola. So it was like a deadlock and in the end our relationship suffered and broke down. (Ntambi, 42)

Ntambi's need to cement her roots back in Johannesburg clearly comes into conflict with her role as a professional woman and wife. Paradoxically, a number of years after her marriage broke down, Ntambi is in yet another transnational relationship. When she told me she was prepared to move to New York if her new husband could not find a job in South Africa, I was not sure whether her reasons for giving up her career to move countries this time had anything to do with socio-cultural expectations of being seen to be complete or purely because she wanted to ensure the success of this marriage at all costs.

London-based Lily's story also illustrates some of the conflicts that come with managing long distance relations. Although originally from West Africa, Lily, a qualified engineer, quit her job to follow her husband to the United States where he had found work. During that five year period, she obtained another Master's degree and had another child. However, due to the nature of her immigration visa which only allowed her husband to work, Lily found herself unemployed with no immediate prospects of

gaining employment. For this reason, she decided to take their children and move to the UK where she could find work in her field.

I couldn't work in the US because he had gone over strictly on a visa work permit that's for him; I couldn't go...I couldn't work unless I got someone to give me that exact same type of visa and because my expertise was a lot in the oil and gas industry and because by American law they... have to provide jobs to Americans first before they can offer them to foreigners. So I found it very difficult to get a job while I was there.... And so instead of having my career at a complete standstill I decided I would come back here and since I could work without any legal constraints here, which is basically why I'm here. Do I think about going back? That, we're still working on. (Lily, 40)

Although Lily is not divorced from her husband, she sees her transatlantic relationship coming to an end as she is not prepared to move back to the US because it would mean sacrificing her career – which she also feels has already been delayed. What I see Lily demonstrating here is the way in which professional or elite professional women have moved on from the situation I described earlier regarding the formation of elite wives for elite men in Nigeria during the colonial period. I especially thought about this period in Black African women's lives when Lily described her time at home with the children as a period she felt like a part of her had “died.” While I am not denying that there are educated Black African women in contemporary society who are willing to remain full time housewives while their husbands assume the breadwinner role, Lily's determination to not only have a career but also to progress reflected a more preferred response to this conundrum by a large number of women in this study. These modern day transnational and elite Black African women not only want to remain in employment and climb the corporate ladder but also have an autonomous role in the public sphere. The question that Lily has me asking again is whether women like her ultimately get punished for choosing their careers as a primary role over motherhood and wife?

In the next section I discuss how the women manage role conflicts, role overload and expectations as career women, wives, partners and mothers.

7.4 Managing Role Conflicts and Role Overload

Having “*more time*” available in the day was the one thing that all my participants wished for. With the vast majority in dual-career households, the women constantly suffer from the role conflicts and role overload created by the demands of work and home life. According to O’Leary (1997), role overload is the inability to satisfy all role expectations in the time available, despite recognising the legitimacy of all the demands (Naidoo & Jano, 2002). This lack of time to perform all tasks expected of them results in a compromise to some degree in one or more roles.

Childcare

Raising well-rounded children is a difficult task at the best of times. As professional and managerial Black African women working in a pressurised environment, the women in my study, like all other women working in the same capacity, constantly find themselves racing against time. For my research participants in London, government and organisational family-friendly initiatives introduced in the UK in an effort to aid women have worked positively in assisting some women to cope with the demands of work and family life. But as with most Black African family relationships, caring responsibilities fall solely on women, with husbands or partners playing a secondary role. Work demands and domestic responsibilities seemed to be especially tough on my research participants in London. As one woman said to me, life was a lot easier in that respect when she lived in Africa because of the ease of access to extended family members and accessibility of relatively affordable domestic helpers and drivers. Unless she is able to send for a domestic worker from her home country to live in and combine housework and childcare, these are things that she can only dream of having here in the UK.

However, I would like to highlight the situation of single mothers. As to be expected when living alone and apart from family and kin, finding reliable childcare after hours is something that some of the single mothers in particular complained about. Iona, aged 49, reflects on her situation when she got divorced several years ago and identifies childcare as one of her biggest issues when her children were younger. This was particularly the case when trying to go out on dates.

It's hard to meet people because even when you meet people and they say, "Oh why don't you come out for a drink or a meal ...?" The first thing you think about is, "Who is going to look after the kids?" ... and you can never give a direct answer. You always have to say, "I need to see if I can arrange childcare. (Iona, 49)

Although Iona's experience is not unique to her gendered and raced identity, I feel her location here in London exacerbates some of the problems that arise from living away from a reliable family support structure. When I compare her story to some of the issues raised by similar women in Johannesburg who have one or two live-in maids, the problem of having access to reliable childcare does not seem to be of major concern to them.

Having said that, government supported family-friendly initiatives do not appear to be a priority in South Africa. Unlike the situation in Britain, the women in Johannesburg gave me the sense that the onus was on them to find their own solution to childcare and domestic demands without outside intervention mainly due to the low cost and abundance of affordable domestic workers in the country. This nonchalant attitude by government and organisations to implement family-friendly policies was recently backed up by an on-line study on work-family arrangements amongst JSE-listed companies in South Africa conducted by Dancaster (2006). According to her initial findings, Dancaster (2006) found a variable spread of work-family provisioning by South African employers with provisions of care facilities ranking particularly low. She further points out that the Basic Conditions of Employment Act recognises only one type of leave in its "pure" form: maternity leave.¹⁷⁶ (Dancaster, 2006).

In instances where some women have opted to work part-time, it is not uncommon for them to endure heavy criticism from their colleagues. Petunia, a South African citizen, grew up in Tanzania where she attended boarding school. As a little girl growing up in exile, Petunia did not see much of her parents as a child. Today, as co-founder of the organisation that she works for in Johannesburg, Petunia is determined to spend more time with her children and has therefore opted for flexi-hours, working mornings only and occasionally evenings after her children have gone to bed. But much to her surprise

¹⁷⁶ Findings also presented at the 2009 South African Work-Family Symposium.

and disdain, her male colleagues, in particular, have made it known to her that they are not in favour of this arrangement.

... the company ... it was my brainchild, I decided to set up this company. However, I didn't want to be the Chief Executive Officer because I had children and that was my primary focus. It is very difficult though when you work with people who may be bright and technically astute but do not have families of their own or children of their own, to actually appreciate and respect the fact that if you need to leave and you simply cannot make a meeting. And, erm, I suppose this year will be a turning year because my colleagues have certainly not taken my decision to step back a little very well. In fact, the relationship has broken down substantially....I think that it is only because we have a woman chairperson and female non-executive directors that it's been made easier for me to carry on going into work. When I made the decision initially, my colleagues basically stopped speaking to me because they felt that I had let the side down. ... I suppose they felt that my sole focus should be on building the company rather than trying to divide the time between my work life and my home life. (Petunia, 41)

Black South African women, as I mentioned in Chapter 5, are under immense pressure to perform and be seen to be successful. Although Petunia cites the men in her organisation as her biggest critics, Gladys, another Black South African woman that I interviewed in Johannesburg, was just as critical of professional women like Petunia who opt to divide their time between work and family roles. Gladys goes so far as to call this kind of choice cruel and having no place in South Africa which still needs qualified people.

We are transforming a country. We are fixing a whole lot of things. We lack the skills and some of the skills we need are the hard technical skills of Black South Africans who also understand the social environment we are fixing. We are now free. ... this freedom actually means that South African women, especially those who've got the skills, ... have to assist the young South African women who finds herself swimming in this amalgamation of the Apartheid system, the social system and the patriarchal system – the system is very much a part of our lives and so we've got to use every possible opportunity at our disposal.... (Gladys, 48)

Gladys speaks very passionately about her reasons why formal work-life balance initiatives are not appropriate for Black South African women, reinforcing not only a male gendered notion of the 'ideal worker' who is essentially male and free of domestic responsibilities, but one who puts their national needs ahead of their own personal

commitments. As she explicitly points out, the country is still in transition and as such the emerging professional elite have a duty not only to themselves and their immediate families but to future generations and the nation as a whole. This sentiment is in contrast to my London participants who are largely working to fulfil their personal career goals, family and financial commitments rather than national obligations. Paradoxically, it is precisely because of this emphasis and past commitments of her parents to national needs over personal wishes that has driven Petunia to opt to work part-time.

... my parents were ANC leaders. If I look at my contemporaries, I can almost count on one hand from the ANC leadership's children, children who aren't drug addicts, who aren't alcoholics, who don't live in shrink's offices, who don't take antidepressants, who are not complete failures in life. And if I pin it down to anything - and I've spoken to a lot of the parents who've had to take their children to rehab - it has to do with the fact that our parents simply decided that there was an organisation that was more important than their children. That there was a greater good. And my mother has told me point blank that the key was to eradicate Apartheid! I keep saying, 'well why did you have children,' because ultimately we grew up not feeling loved. This is the feeling of most 4 years olds, 4 ½ year olds who are sent to boarding school and never see their parents. So that experience for me made be realise that if I ever had children they would certainly come first. (Petunia, 41)

What Petunia clearly shows here is that there is no clear cut answer or solution to this dilemma. While Petunia acknowledges that her parents' political connections and sacrifices gave her opportunities that were denied other Black South African children, she feels quite strongly about the need to have the choice to either work full-time or spend some of that time with her young children. Gladys's mother worked long hours as well but the difference for her was that she helped her mother run the shop when she was not in school, thereby spending time with her. Gladys also talks about the relationship she had with her grandfather, again a close family relationship that women like Petunia feel they missed out on.

Finally, a section on children and parenting is not complete without a discussion on family safety. One of the points raised by my research participants in London was the constant fear they have of someone harming their sons, in particular. Many of these children use public transport as a means of getting to and from school within London.

Although crime is not as big an issue in the UK as compared to South Africa, Black-on-Black knife and gun crime, especially amongst Black teen-age boys, is something that concerns my participants. As there has been some debate on whether this is aggravated by the number of absent Black fathers in the community, the single Black women, in particular, complained to me about the negative stereotypical image associated with lone-parent women in the UK (lifestyle choice relying on benefits, etc) and how important it is for them to disassociate themselves from this image (Blake, 2010). Furthermore, this stereotypical image created by the general public and the media about single parenting, I feel, is once again a prime example of the problems that arise when exploring the relevance of the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class and culture. This is particularly relevant when examining the lives of the Black African population in the UK vis-à-vis African Caribbean socio-economic differences.

London-based single mother Mary has a thirteen year old boy who attends a local grammar school and is one such parent who shared her story.

My son is...he is not street wise, he's so mild-mannered and a lot of the time I think he daydreams. He's in his own little world. He's very polite and ...He came home one day and he said 'Oh Mum, I changed my bus route because the 51 didn't come and I took the other one that came around the back,... and I was walking past the shops coming down home and this boy....' ...because he goes to a Grammar School, this boy started insulting him about his school and calling him fat, because he's chubby 'You fat, black whatever...' that kind of thing and I said, 'So, what did you do?' and he said, 'Well, I crossed the road and I walked into a shop for a while and waited until he had gone and then I continued', and I said, 'Well, that's a good thing because maybe had you kept walking, you would have irritated him and he would have done something to you....I was happy he had done that because I've always told him that if there is any problem, just go into a shop or knock on a door though he says nobody will open the door for himbecause they are afraid for themselves. So it's just every day as it comes. (Mary, 41)

These sorts of issues are especially difficult for women like Mary who do not have a choice to either work part-time or stay at home altogether to care for their families or have regular child support from their children's fathers.¹⁷⁷ I found this particularly insightful especially as the single women in Johannesburg did not seem to identify the

¹⁷⁷ Trying to enforce child support orders on men such as Mary's ex-partner is particularly difficult as he no longer lives in the UK. Sadly, Mary's case is not unique.

issue of crime and the impact it had on their children as their main concern. However, upon reflection, many of my participants' children live a more protected lifestyle in Johannesburg. They live in the affluent northern suburbs where the children are usually driven to school either by their parents or drivers. The majority attend private schools previously reserved for South Africa's white population and a very small minority of the non-white population. As a researcher, I found this lack of discussion of the impact of crime on my participants' lives rather strange in that it is a known fact that crime levels in South Africa remain one of the key challenges facing the country (with Johannesburg rated as "*Critical*" by the South African Police Service (SAPS)).¹⁷⁸ Perhaps this had to do with a lack of trust on their part in divulging information that they felt was too sensitive or personal.

Organising Domestic Responsibilities

One thing that all my research participants agreed on was their need to have another woman within the household to assist them with their domestic responsibilities. According to Okeke-Ihejirika ((2004), the way in which Black African women negotiate their paid work and the way they care for their husbands remains a careful balance that portrays the patriarchal contract to which they must adhere in return for their participation in paid work. For instance, Gladys, a resident of Johannesburg and mother of two children, refers to herself as a "*traditionalist*." Aged 48, Gladys was one of the older women I interviewed in Johannesburg. I was looking forward to our meeting because up until that moment, I had only heard about her in the media where she continues to be regarded as a prominent figure within Johannesburg's B-BBEE circles. We were meeting in one of Johannesburg's five star hotels. I got there early and found a quiet table in the corner of the hotel's bar. Gladys walked in some ten minutes later, sat down and suggested we each have a glass of champagne. After declining politely (as I knew I would have to pay for it and more importantly did not think it was a good idea to be drinking alcohol at 11:00 am in the morning while conducting an interview), I hastily began the interview in the hope that she would not reprimand me for opting to drink a

¹⁷⁸ More significantly, though, crime is not unique to this country. What sets South Africa apart from other countries is the level of violence associated with crime. Globally, South Africa is ranked fourth for robbery, second for murder and number one for rape per capita. SAPS statistics indicate that there are 51 murders per day in South Africa and a staggering 100 rapes per day. See www.saps.gov.za for a breakdown of statistics.

cup of tea instead. I learned quite quickly that due to the nature of her job which involves long hours at the office and several days per month travelling, Gladys finds that she spends very little time at home during the week. However, in spite of the demands that her high powered job has on her time and the higher profile and income that she has (as compared with her husband), being a wife is something she tells me she takes very seriously, adding

...being a woman and being financially independent should have no bearing on how I treat my husband and relationship.... the best time for me is when I cook for him I don't feel like a slave when I am doing that because I know he is doing other things for me in the relationship. (Gladys, 48)

Gladys rebukes what she refers to as “western” feminist thinking which she says views this kind of behaviour as subservient particularly as she sees herself as the breadwinner – a role typically and socio-culturally assigned to the man of the house. While she recognises the need to employ a domestic worker to assist her with childcare responsibilities and other household chores, there are certain household tasks she is not keen to delegate to the housekeeper. She is eager to demonstrate to her husband that she still values her traditional role as his carer and in charge of all domestic arrangements within the home. Being seen to be taking care of her man, so to speak, is also what Thamela strives to do in her relationship with her partner to whom she is not yet married. Employed in Johannesburg's financial sector, Thamela feels quite strongly about her role as an African woman first and foremost when home.

You can be (the professional) in the boardroom in your suit... you know. At the same time, I can come home and take all of that off, cook the meal and just give myself to serving him, you know ... giving him a great evening with a nice meal, great conversation and just letting him talk, let him off-load about his day and the things he's going through and where necessary advise because his world is not so removed from mine because I'm also professional. But at the same time humbling myself.... Sometimes the beauty of a woman is in her ability to kind of be the silent strength to her partner ... I don't think those things are disempowering...I mean I'm not saying I want to be walked all over... I just think humbling yourself is also okay. (Thamela, 37)

The one thing I feel these women illustrate here is their determination to be perceived as professional women who can hold their own when in a work environment and equally demonstrate the importance of their identity as wives or partners without fear of being perceived as subservient and dominated housewives. In some way, the approach to

which they perform their roles in the domestic sphere has more to do with controlling their relationships. Furthermore, their approach to their roles as career and family women is one that emphasises a need for the two roles to complement one another rather than be in conflict. There are several reasons for this, particularly in the context of South Africa.

Lindi, for instance, illustrates another coping strategy that she has adopted as a professional woman living and working in London. When her company transferred her to London, Lindi's husband resigned from his job in Johannesburg and decided to give her the support she needed by agreeing to become a house husband. While she is grateful that he made this sacrifice, things have not run as smoothly as she had hoped. Reflecting on the differing gender roles and socio-cultural expectations within the domestic sphere, Lindi states,

For most African men, the expectation is that the woman will do XYZ (within the household). This is regardless of their level of education or exposure to western culture. I'll give you an example of my brothers: they grew up in a very liberal environment but turned out to be ogres!... Their wives are always complaining telling me things like, "he expects me to do the things that a woman should do ... if there's no maid, well tough. I'm the husband here, you can't expect me to wash the dishes." (Lindi, 43).

Although Lindi regards her husband as having "mellowed quite a bit" since moving to the UK – in that he now helps out with some chores around the house in a way that he did not when they lived in Johannesburg - her current situation is still not ideal.

He made a conscious decision to resign from his job and come and support me and while he will bath the kids in the morning, dress them and take them to school, it's still hard for me. ... When I wake up in the morning, I have to wash last night's dishes, I have to make sure that I leave the house in a spic and span condition, regardless of the fact that I m leaving the house at six o'clock in the morning. I get to work and have a really stressful dayIt's really hardI can't come home, after I've had a really rotten day and just say, "honey, I just want to have a bath, light a few candles and relax. I can't. He's ultra-sensitive at the moment because he's not working, and his house-husband role. So when you are in that scenario, you have to come home and be normal. Come home, start dinner, do laundry, listen to what happened at the golf club and the game he had with whoever, listen to the kids whine and whinge about whatever.... Regardless of what a shitty

day you've had, you've got to be just the mother, and the wife, and the lover, and all the rest. (Lindi, 43)

This situation has naturally made Lindi start to feel resentful toward her husband as she believes had he been the one with the job, she would have been expected to perform her role effectively as wife, mother and carer. I sense that her “breadwinner” role is not being appreciated primarily due to her gender which culturally and traditionally defines her role to be more associated with domestic responsibilities rather than the professional that she is. But as she illustrates here, she copes with her current situation by performing all the traditional and socio-cultural roles that she is expected to perform.

Money Matters

A discussion on the career and domestic lives of emerging and transnational elite professional and managerial women could not be complete without examining money matters. As I have already highlighted in this chapter, the role of kin in African family structures is very important. With this in mind, I was very keen to find out how my research participants handled money matters as (a) individuals living in their country of birth but with more wealth than their siblings and parents; and (b) individuals living and working as transnational elites in the UK away from their parents and/or country of birth.

Bambi has been back in South Africa for over two decades now. Of the women I interviewed who had come home after living in exile during the Apartheid period, her story for me epitomises what I see as a common theme amongst the women's stories. Although she had only agreed to meet with me for an hour in her office, she asked if we could meet again that evening in a local restaurant to finish the interview. Currently employed as Corporate Affairs Director in a large multinational organisation, Bambi blames her in-laws for the breakup of her relationship with her then fiancé following their return to Johannesburg after having met in exile. While she felt they had a connection and worked as a team while living abroad, everything changed when they came home.

We were activists: we were very clear in what we were doing. Come 1990, we came home... Whereas I come from an established exiled family ... he came home and was expected to be a breadwinner.... Exile is supposed to bring wealth! So here I was aged 30 ... it was perfect timing... we were home, we were going to get married now and have children; and then he got caught up in his own family issues. With his eldest brother dead, he was now the eldest son in the family and there was pressure for him to deliver as a male to his family of about twelve kids and a single mother. ... We eventually grew apart . (Bambi, 45)

At the age of 30, Bambi saw her situation as perfect in that she could fulfil all the socio-cultural expectations of an African woman – a good career, marriage to a man from her own country,¹⁷⁹ and children to follow. Although neither she nor her fiancé had much money, Bambi was confident that her approach to their relationship – i.e., giving more priority to the financial needs of their nuclear family as is commonly done in the west - was what was required to build their future together. Instead she was confronted with what she regards as the downside of being part of the growing middle and elite classes of her country. Unlike her contemporaries in western society, many of whom came from middle class or wealthy backgrounds which helped them finance their educations and gave them access to some of the top universities in the world, neither she nor her fiancé come from wealthy backgrounds. Although she came from a family of professionals who can support themselves financially, many people like her fiancé find themselves under immense pressure to give financial support to their siblings and parents giving rise to what Potash (1995:55) describes as traditional men's primary loyalties and responsibilities to their mothers and siblings and other kin rather than to their wives and children. Reflecting on her own situation, Bambi further articulates,

Our wealth challenge is the fact that we have not accumulated wealth and because we're first generation or second generation... we don't even have the luxury of inheriting an old car from our parents.... We don't benefit from having inherited property; we don't inherit anything. We start our whole life from scratch. In addition to that we have the burden of caring, the responsibility of caring for our parents and our family members because they don't have any money away or have a reasonable pension and the affluence to support them.... There are a whole lot of issues around that. (Bambi, 45)

Issues relating to money are a source of conflict for many of these women. Although they may not be first generation professionals in their families, many of these women

¹⁷⁹ This can be a real challenge for those growing up abroad.

represent the new breed of up and coming affluent Black Africans. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the role of family and kin continues to play a very important part in the majority of these people's lives. Amongst the various responsibilities that come with this relationship are the financial obligations. I was therefore interested in finding out whether my research participants felt any guilt from the fact that they were more successful than other members of their families and if they felt any obligation to give back. Interestingly the vast majority said that they did not, citing the fact that what they have today was earned through sheer hard work and commitment. Nothing was handed to them on a platter. Apart from helping family and kin financially (i.e., paying school fees, subsidising incomes, buying properties and financing start-up businesses) a few of the women in London have also set up informal charities which work toward helping HIV/AIDS orphans and the underprivileged in Africa. While some of the women in South Africa also support local charities, the bulk of their financial contributions seem to go toward assisting relatives' children living in less fortunate circumstances. Apart from financial assistance, these very busy women also set time aside to meet with young Black women whom they mentor both formally and informally.

On the whole, making a lot of money seems to be what drives a number of my Johannesburg participants with a number wishing they could make even more money than they are currently earning. Money clearly symbolises a better way of life for the entire family – albeit the different pressures on Black African women about sharing that wealth..

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how important it is to acknowledge the ways in which career women's domestic regimes and commitments to caring responsibilities are intertwined with paid work commitments. In the case of Black African women it is also important to highlight how African families have, over the past number of years, undergone considerable transformation brought about by historical colonial and religious influences, modernisation, urbanisation and migration. All of these factors continue to influence the ever-changing Black African family's economic, social and socio-cultural formation.

Reflecting on what I have discussed in this chapter, my employing the Life History mode of enquiry to collect my research participants' 'life-stories' has uncovered both positive and negative aspects of this method. On the one hand, I was able to gather data that helped reveal what the participants wanted to talk about as opposed to what I had hoped to hear. It is clear to me that the multilayered and interconnected relationships around race, gender, class and culture and how they are lived by the women in my study require deconstructing and critical examination if we are to fully understand the ever-changing Black African family's economic, social and cultural formation. For instance, while issues such as infidelity play a major role in marital breakdowns in some women's lives, other pressures brought about by migration patterns impact on the way that family structures are formulated and gender roles are lived. Not much has changed regarding male infidelity but women's economic empowerment through paid employment at a high level in the public sphere combined with governments' Gender Equality bills, Employment Equity, Affirmative Action and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment legislation has given women more options in terms of pursuing more independent life styles. However, as women remain responsible for children, and at times find themselves relying on kinship for childcare support, traditional expectations at times come into conflict with some women's choices.

With reference to taking care of their men, I continue to be fascinated at how the women I have referenced in this chapter do not see their role as subservient when they kneel down to serve their spouses but instead view it as a sign of respect embedded in socio-cultural and gendered expectations. Perhaps what this illustrates is the deep symbolic importance of holding on to certain socio-cultural traditions which again highlight the complex web of negotiating one's identity as career and family woman. Also, this may point to the importance of multiple identities and playing acceptable gender roles in different conditions. Some would say this is a common requirement in a globalising world, especially amongst cosmopolitans (Parpart, 2010).¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Personal comment

Chapter 8

Where to From Here

This thesis examines the factors which affect the career and family lives of professional and managerial Black African women originating from Sub-Saharan Africa, and living and working in London and Johannesburg. I set out to explore how such women, with relatively similar colonial histories, cultures, career and professional backgrounds, handle their complex positioning. There has been a significant increase in the number of women entering formal paid employment in most parts of the world and making inroads into middle management positions, but only a few of these women continue to advance and remain in top managerial and professional positions. As Black African women with careers in major cities on opposite side of the globe, the women in my study are unique in the workplace as they still remain minorities by both gender and race.. This, as I have indicated in this thesis, is despite Black African having significant rates of higher education amongst the country's BME population (Platt, 2007).

Although all women are affected by barriers to entry and advancement within managerial and professional occupations as addressed in current literature, their experiences cannot be universalised. Only a small percentage of texts within feminist and organisational theory address the lives and experiences of professional and managerial Black African women within the workplace and family life specifically (Bell and Nkomo, 2001; Misra, 2003). Studies also suggest that professional and managerial Black women experience greater gender role conflicts within the workplace and their communities owing to complexities relating to their bi-cultural life structure and social positioning (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004; Bell and Nkomo, 2001). The extent to which women perceive internal organisational, socio-economic and political barriers as contributing to their slow progress within or exit from their chosen careers is what I have addressed in this research. Through this case study, I aimed to identify, extend and contribute toward a more holistic understanding of feminist and organisational discourse as well as to the methodological and epistemological literature in feminist/gender studies and organisational studies on Women in Management. I argue that it is only by

identifying the barriers professional and managerial Black African women specifically experience that we can begin to have a better understanding of their subjectivity and location.

Using the Life History mode of enquiry to gather 'life-stories' through semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore and comment on research participants' individual views and interpretations of their own work and family life experiences. By so doing, I shed light on the importance of recognising the relations between gender, race, ethnicity, class, national, socio-cultural and historical differences by examining how these issues intersect in the life history data of my informants. This mode of enquiry has countered the tendency to homogenise notions of "woman" within feminist social science research and challenged past research methods which in effectively ignored or ultimately dismissed the agency of historically marginalised women whose modes of identity and self-definition did not fit into traditional discourses on gender (Mirza, 1997; Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 1997; Hill Collins, 2000; Mama, 1995). Furthermore, this approach highlights the importance of acknowledging difference when implementing government and organisational policies that seek to combat barriers brought about by corporate practices and socio-cultural attitudes within the workplace and society as a whole.

8.1 Embracing Difference and Intersectionality in Research Methodology

As I outlined in Chapter 2, all women's lives are shaped by race, ethnicity, class and, indeed, gender, so it is crucial to recognise how these different dimensions of identity influence one another in order to capture the reality of women's everyday experiences as well as the varied and structural realities of inequality (Brewer et al., 2002). This argument is particularly relevant to the study of women's employment patterns because although all women have less chance of obtaining top positions when compared to men, women from most minority ethnic groups, when compared to white women, have even less chance of successfully gaining and keeping employment in professional jobs (Bradley et al., 2007). These research findings are indicated clearly in patterns of Black professional and managerial women working in the corporate world which show that, whether in their country of origin or in the Western world, this group of women are still

minorities in terms of both race and gender in what is still a predominately male corporate environment.

While I deem it essential to examine professional and managerial women's lives from a holistic perspective (i.e., taking both the workplace and the family into consideration), my study of Black African women highlights the importance of examining socially constructed identity categories such as gender, race, ethnicity and class in an intersectional way in order to investigate how these complex inequalities that are experienced. The concept of intersectionality, as described in this thesis, acknowledges the importance of examining the connection between multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations (McCall, 2005) and using this perspective as an analytic tool to describe the interaction between different systems of oppression. At the same time, while it is important to recognise the interconnections of gender with race and class, race with gender and class, and class with race and gender (Brewer et al., 2002), it is equally important to recognise the differences that exist within groups. By recognising the importance of differences within groups, my study comparing the work and family lives of Black African women in two distinct cities has enabled me to illustrate the importance of acknowledging specific problems experienced by Black African women in particular contexts.

As highlighted by McCall (2005) in Chapter 3, the intracategorical approach is useful in order to focus on social differences that cut across one particular category of interest - in this case to analyse the experiences of Black African women. By noting the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and class and the impact that these social dimensions of difference have when combined with socio-cultural and historical influences, I have provided a way of investigating how complex inequalities affect the lives of Black African professional and managerial women in both South Africa and the UK. Furthermore, the intersectional approach enabled me to draw attention to the ways in which my research participants' specific geographical, cultural and institutional locations enabled them to experience privilege and/or disadvantages simultaneously through the combined statuses of gender, race, ethnicity and class. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 5, although some Black Africans did train and work as professionals within the Bantustans, the Apartheid system of education made available to the Black population was inferior when compared to that of the white population.

With this in mind, my research participants from Johannesburg form part of a relatively privileged Black African group in terms of their educational backgrounds, middle/upper-class status and access to job opportunities. However, as I demonstrate in Chapter 5, the women still experience gender- and race-based barriers within the workplace despite their privileged position within their society. Their privileged position can at times also bring about additional strain for those who are expected to be successful both within the workplace and society. Unlike my London research participants who express more of a need to succeed in their careers for their own personal achievement, my Johannesburg research participants not only have this issue to contend with, but the additional social pressure of being seen to be role models and mentors for aspiring young Black African women in their country. As Gladys reiterates in Chapter 5, “we are transforming a country ... fixing a whole lot of things ... we lack the skills {i.e. South Africa} and ... have to assist young South African women....” While my London participants are also keen to be viewed as role models and mentors, their location as transnational migrants makes them less geographically bound to one country and the need to give back to *their* country. Instead, as transnational migrants, they occupy different spatial scales which go beyond race, gender and class which forces them to engage in a more transnational or global approach to their work life.

8.2 Levels of Patriarchal Practices in Corporate and Social Life

For any economy to grow within the global marketplace, management must draw on the talents of all individuals. According to Harriet Harman, at the time UK Minister for Women and Equality, equality matters for the economy “*because the economy that will succeed in the future is one that draws on the talents of all. We cannot afford to be blinkered by prejudice and discrimination*” (Government Equalities Office, 2010). Researching and attempting to recognise and understand how these prejudices are manifested and practiced has been a key question for this thesis. As Black African women with careers in major cities on opposite side of the globe, the emerging and transnational elite Black African women in my research remain a rarity and hidden gems to most – making them unique both in the workplace and in their communities. Furthermore, as highly educated Black African women, these women not only form part of the African Diaspora and Sub-Saharan Africa’s growing transnational and emerging

elite population, but also form part of the last three decades' ever-increasing number of women entering professional and managerial jobs globally. In Johannesburg, although part of the majority population in the country, Black African women still remain a minority within the professional and managerial circles in the corporate private sector. In London, Black African women are a minority within the UK population not only by race and gender but also in their role as professional and managerial women within the workplace.

In both countries my research participants are protected by law from discrimination within the workplace. My findings in both Chapters 5 and 6 clearly demonstrate the many ways in which discriminatory practices remain and are played out in both subtle and more blatant ways. As my research participants' narratives reveal, within this largely white- and male-dominated corporate environment, patriarchal styles of management typically associated with male competence-traits are played out in various ways creating formal and informal barriers to the detriment of women and BME groups.

As discussed in Chapter 5, prior to South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, previous Settler, Colonial and Apartheid policies systematically and purposefully restricted the majority of the population from participating meaningfully in the economy. The current government has introduced and legislated various strategies, policies and programmes – all aimed at remedying past economic, political and social inequalities – and protecting previously disadvantaged individuals. Having focussed on examining the lives of professional and managerial Black African women, I scrutinised the ways in which the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) strategy and its direct empowerment policies are succeeding and/or failing in tackling past inequalities.

One of the aims of South Africa's Affirmative Action (AA) policy is to “ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace of a designated employer” (South African Department of Labour, 2004). The Employment Equity Act (EEA) aims to provide preferential treatment and encourage women and other members of certain ‘designated groups’ who are ‘suitably qualified’ into employment (Jain et al., 2003; Mathur-Helm, 2005). But as my research findings

indicate, one of the factors that neither the AA nor EEA quotas take into account are the hidden individual preferences, assumptions and biases embedded in notions of ethnicity, race and class that employers have and ultimately exercise at their own discretion to suit these preferences. For instance, as my South African research participant Evelyn highlights, Black African women who grew up in exile where they were exposed to western attitudes and/or privileges and those educated in predominantly white institutions have more of an advantage in breaking through some of these ethnic- and class-based prejudices. As she states in Chapter 5, “there is definitely a sense of ‘we are comfortable around you’ {But for other people} It’s just a question of, ‘You speak with the wrong accent. You’re too ‘Other.’” Consequently, while employers will adhere to government requirements to implement measures within their recruitment processes that promote diversity by ensuring equitable representation through hiring of HDSAs, what government cannot control is who they do or do not hire within the Black African population.

The situation in the UK is rather different. Unlike the South African government which embarked on a comprehensive programme to provide a legislative framework to transform the country’s overall economic, political and social structure, the implementation of UK anti-discriminatory legislation in employment is deemed to have been forced upon government rather than principally stimulated by commitment to equality (Bradley and Healy, 2008:62). With no prescribed employment quotas for organisations to meet in the UK, I argue that the challenge for many of my research participants to gain employment in this white- and male-dominated work environment is even greater in comparison with their South African counterparts. Similarly, their challenge begins at the interview stage or even before as they have to not only prove themselves on merit but also overcome prejudices based on for example name or even anticipated prejudices as recruitment agencies increasingly operate as gatekeepers in the UK by carrying out pre-selection procedures for firms. In this respect Wrench and Modood’s (2001) study found that employment agencies perpetuate exclusion of minority ethnic candidates by anticipating the prejudices of their clients, something my research participants could not know directly. Nonetheless, as shown in Chapter 6, my research participants showed how signifiers such as foreign sounding names and accents, visa status/nationality, and gender, race and class status influenced the recruitment process by defining who is suitable or not.

Consequently, for Black African women working as professionals in the UK, being recruited into a predominantly white- and male-dominated organisation is an important milestone. But having passed the “supplicant” test (Jenkins 2009:1)¹⁸¹ which at the time is deemed to transcend all gender, racial and class prejudices, my evidence demonstrates that the women’s mission then becomes that of proving they can do the job. Even though given to them on merit (i.e., educational qualifications and training), they still have to overcome potential prejudices in colleagues and show they have the capability and competence to perform and fit into the corporate culture. Pam, a 44-year old lawyer originally from Zimbabwe, demonstrates how she avoided the formal recruitment process into the organisation’s legal division where she feared she would be rejected by applying for a lower position as financial adviser. By accepting this position (a role she describes as a glorified cashier), Pam was able to get her ‘foot in the door’ and demonstrate her skills and competence thereby improving her chances of being considered when something came up in the organisation’s legal department. In recognising and accepting that her gender, race, and in this instance, her Zimbabwean nationality and foreign education¹⁸² were contributors to the barriers that she was experiencing in getting the job that she was trained to do, Pam’s confidence in her abilities eventually helped her secure the job she wanted in the legal department.

Thus behaviour by employment agencies and their day-to-day recruitment practices, as discussed in Chapter 6, define who is deemed suitable or not (Emerson (1984). Images of appropriate gendered and racialised bodies sway perceptions and recruitment. Emily Bailey illustrates this point, when she recounts her experience with recruiters when arriving for job interviews. As a Black African woman born to a Nigerian father and West Indian mother, Emily firmly believes that in addition to her qualifications, her European name has been an advantage for her in securing job interviews. “The Look” (Puwar, 2004:8) given to her upon arriving at an interview usually confirmed her suspicions, an act that would leave her feeling like a fraud or “space invader”. Emily’s experience, similar to other research participants I refer to in the chapter, clearly demonstrates that more often than not, white male bodies are preferred, with female (preferably white) bodies deemed appropriate for some jobs and male bodies for others.

¹⁸¹ Jenkins (2009:1) refers to job applicants as “supplicants” – individuals who are dissected by people who possess the power to hire new workers, a process which he views as often being discriminatory as discussed above.

¹⁸² Pam had also done her law conversion exams so was eligible to practice law in the UK.

Puwar (2004) refers to Black women's presence in white- and male-dominated professions as "space invaders" who occupy spaces from which they have historically and conceptually been excluded. Such experiences cannot be addressed by policy alone. As long as barriers created by corporate practices and behavioural and socio-cultural attitudes persist, Black African women will have to find ways of coping to avoid feeling isolated and undermined. For Vanessa, who is a South African working in her own country, fighting to be seen and heard by her fellow Executive Directors from Mining Company X is something that she has also had to cope with as she illustrated in Chapter 5. As a Black African woman working within a predominately male team, her experience reflects some of the underlying problems that come about when a company decides to hire individuals from a particular gender and racial group in order to meet government quota requirements rather than hiring an individual because they like them and want them to be part of their team.

In London, Lily's "space invader" location is triggered by stereotypical assumptions of 'fit.' As Head of Crew Engineer, her gendered and racialised image does not seem to fit the assumed masculine image associated with oil rig engineers. What she clearly represents is the new image of manager, as discussed in Chapter 3. Her role challenges both gender and racialised definitions of jobs and hierarchies. In so doing, Lily demonstrates that policies such as Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management can help to secure jobs but not be effective in preventing Black women from being undermined and/or overlooked within the workplace.

These narratives and issues raised by my research participants emphasise how workplace cultures are veiled with extensive traditions that remain invisible to the majority population until someone different brushes against them (Chapter 5 and 6: Moosa and Rake, 2008). These findings highlight the need for inequality policies to address these more subtle discriminatory practices. In addition, they need to reflect complexities brought about by the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and class issues in policy formulation and implementation by differently positioned individuals. Furthermore, in the case of my research participants and other BME groups, additional consideration needs to be given to historical, socio-cultural and political context and the complexities that impact on their life course (Bradley & Healy, 2008:62).

8.3 Changes in African Family Formations

While a growing number of women across Sub-Saharan Africa gain higher educational qualifications and acquire professional jobs alongside men in the formal sector, they continue to have a complex relationship between work and family life (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). However, as discussed in Chapter 7, the significance of these complexities, which arise from their unique cultural histories and defined gender roles (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005) and limit their mobility, are not always recognised. As I have discussed in the thesis, family and married life - which remain central to African social organisations - have experienced considerable change since the beginning of the post-colonial period (Takyi & Oheneba-Sakyi, 2006). In Chapters 5 and 7, I draw attention to some of the main sources of transformation in African families, namely Colonialism, Settler and Apartheid rule, and their impact on gender relations and gender divisions within the economy (Loomba, 2005a; Rex, 1980; Snyder & Tadesse, 1997), marital patterns (Ansell, 2001; Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987), intergenerational family relationships (F. Aryee, 1985; Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi, 2006) and managing role conflicts and role overload (Dancaster, 2006; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004). Findings from my qualitative study (48 interviews) are not necessarily representative of the experiences of all professional and managerial women working and living in Sub-Saharan Africa, and indeed other parts of the English speaking Diaspora, but nonetheless support the view that the traditional African family on the whole continues to change. As argued in great detail in Chapter 7, this is a particularly important point to consider when implementing policies that deal with the work-family interface as I highlight below.

To reiterate on the matter of my research participants and the nature of their intergenerational relationships, relatives/kin are a plus as much as a drain on African family formations. Amongst the various issues I discussed in Chapter 7 relating to my research participants' negotiation of the demands and expectations associated with the work-family interface, the subject of funerals and how Black Africans conduct them (i.e., length of time) is a concern I have going forward particularly in view of their increased frequency associated with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Time taken off work for funerals by my UK participants does not appear to impact on their paid work schedule in the way that it does for my South African participants. Due to their geographical proximity to family members, South African research participants appear to bear more

strain because of family expectations for them to spend the entire six or seven day mourning period at the funeral home. Gladys, for example, emphasised that such delicate matters require careful negotiation particularly in the way that gendered expectations are played out. As daughters-in-law, my research participants – irrespective of their paid work obligations and demands - are expected to perform a complex and time consuming role that demands their presence. As Gladys explains, merely excusing oneself with work commitments is not acceptable. Communicating with one's mother-in-law is key to maintaining a non-confrontational and respectful relationship with the rest of the family.

I do, however, want to highlight that there are also some positive elements to the way in which families come together and support one another during periods of bereavement. As discussed earlier, migration patterns of Sub-Saharan Black Africans continue to have an impact on the economic, social and cultural formation of family structures. With many families now living in different villages, cities and across the African Diaspora as transnational migrants, funeral gatherings continue to play an important role in bringing family members and communities together. This is due in part to the way in which funeral rites are viewed as a time for families or communities to come together in solidarity and to regain their identity through the observation and performance of traditional customs and religious rites.

Apart from the demands around time spent on family matters, my research participants also deal with financial expectations from family and kin. Compared to their Western counterparts, Black African family members can be expected to finance siblings' school fees, purchase properties, subsidise incomes and finance start-up businesses of family and kin. Although I have only briefly discussed the issue of HIV/AIDS and its effect on my research participants' family lives, the overall impact that this pandemic has had on African traditional social obligations of sharing, caring and child fostering cannot be underestimated. As part of the Black African elite and growing middle class, my research participants are generally financially better off than most Black Africans. When they are not dealing with the major threat of HIV/AIDS in their own relationships as wives, partners and mistresses, there is the ongoing financial and emotional challenge of caring and supporting family relations. These financial obligations have the potential

to not only alter intra-household and kin relationships but my research participants' ability to progress both financially and career-wise.

While I am not able to measure whether my research participants living in London endure more financial and physical demands from family members than their Johannesburg counterparts (owing to the geographical distance between themselves and their relatives living elsewhere), these socio-cultural obligations and intergenerational relationships have a clear impact on their working lives. The ways in which gender relations are negotiated as the women attempted to deal with the shifting tides of power (Mohammed, 2002) in their relationships with their husbands and both male and female in-laws combined with the demands of work can have as much of a positive as a negative influence on their ability to perform effectively as professional women. I tried to demonstrate this in Chapter 7 by illustrating ways in which a number of the women including Khomotso 'bargained with patriarchy' (Kandiyoti, 1988) in their attempt to meet socio-cultural expectations. The women negotiate their position by confronting gender and socio-cultural belief systems by acknowledging the ever-changing nature of family expectations and what is expected of them by society. As Kandiyoti (1998) argues, when women are under conditions of apparent patriarchal control, they may not openly confront the accepted norms, but rather continuously bargain for change within (Mohammed, 2002:13). Khomotso demonstrates this when she stops at the filling station to change into traditional attire before arriving at her husband's village. Other women like Gladys and Thamela willingly embrace certain aspects of their culture in ways that would appear subservient to other women. But as Okeke-Ihejirika (2004) states, the way in which Black African women balance their paid work and the way they care for their husbands remains a careful balance that portrays the patriarchal contract to which they must adhere to (at least for the time being) in return for their participation in paid work.

8.4 Moving Forward

When compared with the UK, South African equal opportunity policies are much stronger owing to government's legislative framework making implementation compulsory for both private and public sector organisations. While this is a positive

development for South African women fighting for equality within the workplace and career mobility in jobs previously inaccessible to them, I would argue that it is the perceived strength and protection that comes with the B-BBEE strategy and its direct empowerment policies that exacerbate self-limiting behaviour amongst Black South African women and their employers. As I highlighted in Chapter 5, some women accept job they are not qualified for and/or end up merely as token Black African female employees with no real responsibilities or future promotion prospects. The pressure from government on organisations to fill quotas, coupled with (a) employers placing more emphasis on meeting politically legislated quotas when hiring and/or promoting individuals rather than focussing on skills sets, and (b) Black African women employees accepting jobs that they are not qualified to do, all contribute toward weakening the effectiveness of equality policies. Where women are hired on merit, the common but incorrect assumption that their presence in a particular job is due to government legislated quotas creates levels of frustration for both the individual and organisation. Ultimately, this situation undermines the transformation process.

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, when compared to my South African research participants, my UK research participants placed less emphasis on the impact that Equal Opportunity and Managing Diversity policies have on their access to employment, career advancement and tackling informal and formal barriers in the workplace. In instances where my research participants commented on EO policies and the extent to which they would be willing to challenge authority within their organisations, there is a genuine fear of uneven handed reprisal from such actions. According to Pam, a London lawyer, securing future employment within the city would be virtually impossible as it remains an unforgiving place if one goes against the status quo. I consider this fear of retribution and the conviction that there is no effective legal recourse as having a direct link to my research participants' indifference toward EO policies and the benefits to them as employees within the corporate private sector. I refer once again to Jenkins (2009) who describes this attitude well when he argues that equality policies are at times adopted by an organisation merely as a defensive or reactive response to inhibit any discontent within the organisation and demonstrate good practice externally and not necessarily to benefit the employee. This approach to anti-discriminatory legislation is what I sense influences the way my UK research participants view employment equity policies. This is in marked contrast to South Africa where both public and private sector

organisations are obligated by law to enforce employment equality policies and, as such, are perceived primarily by Black Africans as there to protect them rather than the organisation. As I pointed out in my previous discussions on the various government legislated strategies, policies and programmes aimed at remedying past inequalities and the creation of career opportunities for all, it was mainly my South African research participants who were keen to discuss the significance of such policies and the impact they continue to have on creating meaningful long-term inroads for Historically Disadvantaged South Africans (HDSAs). My UK research participants placed less emphasis on these policies, instead viewing them more as a back drop – taken as a given.

It is clear that existing practices of equality policies will not resolve some of these issues of inequality currently being experienced by my research participants. As my research findings in both the UK and South Africa demonstrate, it is important to consider differences within groups. As McDowell (2008:491) states, it is now broadly recognised within feminist literature that identities are complex, multiple and fluid, continuously (re)produced and performed in different arenas of everyday life. Black African women, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, are not a homogenous group and, as such, research conducted on them must examine race, ethnicity, class and gender and other categories namely culture and history in order to reflect the shifting nature of these socially constructed identity categories. This type of approach has shown to be especially useful for me in my analysis of institutionally sanctioned racist practices and their impact on HDSAs. Merely enforcing a law does not change people's attitudes or view on racial categorisation. As demonstrated by my South African research participants Zelelapi and Ntambi in Chapter 5, classifying a Coloured or Indian person as Black, as per government legislation, does not automatically make an individual embrace that categorisation nor are they automatically accepted in a particular environment or considered to 'fit' a prescribed racial identity category. In the case of the UK, the Black Africans living and working in this country come from a range of Sub-Saharan African nations. While they have relatively similar historical backgrounds, ambitions and goals, attention needs to be given to the ethnic and national differences that exist amongst them. As mentioned in Chapter 6, as transnational migrant professionals, or first, second or third generation foreign or locally educated Black African women, it is important to also highlight the intersection of different processes

that operate across spatial scales (McDowell, 2008:495) which go beyond gender, race, ethnic and class intersections. As McDowell (2008) argues, immigration policies also subtly impact on the ways in which women like my research participants are valued and awarded social rights and career advancement opportunities. Moreover, racial prejudices also play a role in the UK despite the advances of equality legislation - whose effectiveness remains questionable.

Furthermore, data collected during the course of this study demonstrates the importance of research that acknowledges the significance of intersectionality. This research has important implications for research and analysis of women in other professions as well. Aside from acknowledging the importance of intersectionality, it also recognises the importance of thick description in research as well as attention to particularities and context. Furthermore, while it has been useful, intersectionality has also opened up many more questions primarily due to the different axial that are crossed. It is clear from my findings that some of the experiences of this intracategorical group - Black African women - are not unique to them. Individuals of different racial groups are just as likely to experience inequalities in the ways that my research participants have demonstrated. In the case of South Africa in particular, more attention needs to be given to the political implications of favouring one racial group of people over other groups within the Historically Disadvantaged South Africans (HDSA). Particular attention should also be given to other identity categories, namely ethnicity and class, and how they affect individuals within all racial groups if the country is to benefit as a whole. Pushing organisations into hiring individuals deemed suitable only on the basis of their gender and race will continue to undermine government efforts to promote equal opportunities for all. This current practice risks frustrating both employers and employees in the long run - as touched on in Chapter 5.

In conclusion, while I acknowledge that changes have occurred as a consequence of new and amended policies, I also maintain that many problems and tensions remain. Moving forward, policies need to be more carefully designed in order to redress the complexity of contemporary inequalities and recognise that because employment cannot be separated from individuals' lives and community contexts, more holistic policies addressing work and life need to be designed. With regard to changes in Black African family formation, doing research without attending to family life leaves one unable to

understand how such women handle their work life. Future research needs to look at Black African women's work life interface more holistically, i.e., including the extended family and family socio-cultural expectations and how they impinge on women's careers. How my transnational research participants structure their lives and deal with family obligations, particularly as members of the African Diaspora needs some consideration as well. Only then can the progress that has been achieved under the current equality legislation in both countries continue to improve the gender and racial composition within the private sector workforce and other sectors of employment.

Appendix

Main Research Participants – Johannesburg and London

Key Women whose Narratives I intensively focused on in the Thesis

Johannesburg

Petunia. Aged 40, Petunia was born in South Africa but grew up in exile in South Central Africa. She attended boarding school there before moving to the UK where she studied and obtained graduate level academic and professional qualifications in law. After qualifying, Petunia returned to South Africa where she has since worked for a number of high profile law firms in Johannesburg. Married to a non-South African European, Petunia has two children and lives in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg.

Frieda. Aged 48, Frieda was born and partly raised in KwaZulu Natal Province, South Africa. After completing her primary education and part of her secondary education, Frieda was awarded a scholarship to study in the United States for her final year of secondary school. Upon completing her secondary education, she was awarded a second scholarship to study for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Economics and Finance at an American university. She returned to South Africa where she joined a private equity firm. After five years, Friday moved to join one of South Africa's largest financial institutions. Joining as a Senior Manager in 2004, Frieda has worked up the ranks to current position of head of the bank's Trade Finance business. Frieda is married to a South African, has two children and resides in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg.

Ghonsie. Forty years old Ghonsie was born Soweto. She studied in one of the local Black township schools under the care of her grandmother before moving to the Eastern Cape Province to live with her mother. After completing primary school, she returned to Johannesburg for secondary school and has lived there since. Ghonsie later studied an undergraduate degree in Psychology at a university in the Northern Province. Upon completion, she moved back to Johannesburg where she worked in Human Resources before moving to an international motor vehicle company. At the time of being interviewed, Ghonsie held the position of Business Manager in the company. She was also about to embark on an MBA programme. Ghonsie has been married twice, three children and lives in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg.

Cathie. Aged 37, Cathy was born in Pretoria but grew up in KwaZulu Natal where she lived until completing an undergraduate degree in the Social Sciences. Unable to complete her MSc degree due to political unrest, Cathie left KwaZulu Natal and moved to Johannesburg in 1992 where she initially worked as a personal assistant/PR position for a private company. Following the 1994 elections, Cathie moved to an international brewing company where she was placed on a management trainee programme. Her position at the time of interview was Executive Assistant Marketing Director. Cathy was also enrolled on a MBA. Married to a South African, Cathy has two children and resides on the outskirts of Johannesburg's northern suburbs.

Khomotso. Aged 35, Khomotso was born in Johannesburg. With the exception of a few years living in the Northwest Province as an adult, Khomotso has lived in Johannesburg all her life. She was educated in Bantu school both for primary and secondary school and later attended a mixed race university where she obtained a degree in Economics. At the time of being interviewed, she worked for an oil company as Manager, Human Resources. Divorced once, Khomotso has married again to a South African man and has two children. She lives in Johannesburg's northern suburbs.

Vanessa. Aged 48, Vanessa was born in KwaZulu Natal Province. At age six, her family moved to the USA where she spent her most of her childhood and early adulthood. During the period she spent in the USA, Vanessa's family moved briefly to south central Africa where she spent part of her teenage years. She eventually returned to South Africa in 1995 at the age of 37. Vanessa holds a BA and a Masters Degree in Journalism both from American Ivy league universities. Prior to returning to South Africa, Vanessa worked as a wire service reporter for a major American newspaper. Upon her return to South Africa, Vanessa initially joined a major financial institution as Head of Corporate Affairs. She later moved to an international consumer products company to work as Director of Communications before joining a major mining company as an Executive Director. At the time of interview, Vanessa was working for another financial institution as Corporate Affairs Director. A dual American and South African citizen, Vanessa is married to an American citizen, has three boys and lives in Johannesburg's northern suburbs.

Evelyn. Born in Swaziland to West African parents, Evelyn aged 33 spent most of her childhood in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. During her teenage years, she attended an international boarding school for her secondary education before moving to Johannesburg. In Johannesburg, Evelyn attended one of the city's top previously white universities where she qualified as a lawyer. She has since worked for an international IT company, a large medical firm, and more recently for a Recruitment Agency. Evelyn is single, has no children and lives in Johannesburg's northern suburbs. She has dual nationality.

Khosi. Aged 43, Khosi was born in the Northwest Province of South Africa. She grew up in the area where she attended what she refers to as a "traditional South African Bantu school". She later obtained a BA qualification to work in the Arts and an MSc in a medical field – also from a historically Black university. Khosi initially worked in a hospital before becoming a university lecturer. She later moved into corporate life in Johannesburg where she has since worked as a Human Resource Director for two major mining companies. Khosi is divorced and widowed and is a mother of four children. At the time of the interview, she lives on the outskirts of Johannesburg with her four children and new partner.

Lesego. Born in 1969 in Johannesburg, Lesego grew up and attended school in Swaziland, Lesotho and the Ciskei Bantustan. She studied a Bachelor of Science degree at a historically Black African university in the Northern Province before moving to Johannesburg where she obtained another Bachelor of Science degree at one of the local previously white universities. Lesego has since worked for a Life Assurance company where she currently holds the position of Head of Corporate Affairs lives in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. She is married and has two children.

Manyani. Manyani, aged 38 was born on the outskirts of Johannesburg. She attended local Bantu primary and secondary schools before enrolling at one of the Eastern Cape Province's top universities to study for a BA in History and Religious Studies. She has since worked the South African local government where she was employed as a Communications Officer before being promoted to Corporate Social Investment Manager. After obtaining an MBA, Manyani moved into the private corporate sector. At the time of the interview, she worked for a petrochemical organisation as Head of Corporate Affairs. She is married to a South African and has two children.

Rhonda. Thirty-nine year old Rhonda was born in the Northern Province of South Africa. Educated in Bantu primary and secondary schools, she qualified as a Chartered Accountant at a historically Black university. She also holds a certificate in Management from a top French university and Financial Diploma from one of Johannesburg's top universities. Today Rhonda describes herself as Banker due to her career choices which have seen her work for some the country's top local and international banks. She initially worked for a large government financial organisation before moving into the private corporate sector. Married to a South African, Rhonda has two children and lives on the outskirts of Johannesburg's northern suburbs.

Ntando. Forty-four year old Ntando was born in the Eastern Cape Province. She was educated at a church run school before attending a historically Black university in one of the homelands. Ntando studied for a Bachelor of Science degree qualification in Psychology. She also has a senior executive diploma from an American Ivy league university. Upon moving to Johannesburg, Ntando has worked for various mining houses and private investment companies. She is currently Human Resources and Group Strategy Director for an oil and gas company. Ntando is divorced and lives with her son in northern Johannesburg.

Thamela. Born in South Central Africa to South African parents living in exile, 38 year old Thamela grew up in exile where she attended primary and part of secondary school before moving to north America. She attended top private secondary schools here before attending an American Ivy league university where she obtained a BSc and MSc in Economics. Thamela worked for a Public Policy Research firm for a while for returning to South Africa in the mid 2000s. She has since worked in investment banking for a major South African bank. Thamela is not married but has a partner and has no children.

Dimpo. Born and raised in Soweto, Gauteng Province, Dimpo aged 45 is seen by many in South Africa as one of South Africa's leading businesswomen. Educated at a Bantu primary and secondary school, Dimpo obtained a graduate qualification in Accounting from KwaZulu Natal Province. She also has a diploma in Tertiary Education, a postgraduate degree from an American university and several leadership development diplomas from both local and international institutes. Employed as Executive Director, Human Resources, Dimpo also holds several non-executive positions for a number of private sector financial institutions, government and non governmental organizations. Married to a South African American, Dimpo has two children and lives in Johannesburg's northern suburbs.

Nthambi. Thirty-nine year old Nthambi was born South Central Africa to South African parents who were living in exile. At the age of 15 when she went to boarding

school in Zimbabwe. Upon completing secondary school she moved to Europe where she studied for both her Bachelor and Master's degree qualifications. Nthambi worked in Europe for a number of years before turning to South Africa. Nthambi has since worked for the South African government as a diplomat, an international finance group and a local bank as head of department. Divorced once, she is married again and has one daughter. Nthambi lives in Johannesburg's northern suburbs.

Bambi. Aged 45, Bambi was born in South Africa but grew up in southern Africa. She attended university in Eastern Europe where she obtained an MSc. Bambi returned to South Africa where she initially worked for the South African government before moving on to work within the corporate private sector. She is currently head of Corporate Affairs for an international beverage company. She also serves on as non-executive director for several international and local corporate private sector organisations, government and non-governmental organisations. Bambi is single and has no children. She lives in Johannesburg's northern suburbs.

Gladys. Forty-eight years old Gladys was born in the Eastern Cape Province where she grew up and completed her primary and secondary education. She later moved to one of one of the homelands where she obtained a Bachelor's degree. She was later awarded a scholarship to study for a postgraduate management degree in the United States. Before returning to South Africa, Gladys worked in the United States for some years. Upon her return she worked for the South African government and several international and local corporate private sector organisations before co-founding a private company – now listed on the JSE. She holds several non-executive positions in both corporate private sector and non-governmental organisations. Married to a South African, Gladys has two sons and lives in Johannesburg's northern suburbs.

London

Pam. Forty-two years old Pam was born in Zimbabwe. After obtaining an undergraduate qualification in Law at one of Zimbabwe's national universities, Pam moved to the UK where she did several non professional jobs before enrolling at one of the University of London institutions to study for a Masters degree in Law. Upon graduating, Pam worked for a financial institution before joining small privately owned law firm where she still works as a solicitor. Married to a Zimbabwean, Pam has three children and lives in north London.

Zeelapi. Zeelapi was born in KwaZulu Natal Province, South Africa. At 16 she moved to Johannesburg where she worked as a maid, fashion model and several other miscellaneous jobs before gaining a scholarship to attend university in the UK. While studying for her a BSc and MSc and other professional qualifications, Zeelapi also worked for a private bank. She continued to work for the same private bank as an investment banker after qualifying. Zeelapi is involved in a number of charitable organisations as a mentor. She is single, has no children and lives in central London. She intends to return to South Africa in the near future.

Lindi. Born and educated in Zimbabwe, Lindi aged 43 moved to South Africa after obtaining a law qualification from a Zimbabwean university. She moved to Cape Town

where she obtained a postgraduate degree in management from a local university. Lindi returned to Zimbabwe where she worked for a government ministry before moving back to South Africa in 2006 to join an international oil company. She later moved with the same organisation to London where she still works. Lindi is married to a Zimbabwean. They have two children and live in Surrey.

Mary. Thirty-nine years old Mary was born in Zambia where she lived until her early twenties. At age 16 Mary left secondary school to join a local television station as a continuity announcer. She later gained a scholarship to study journalism in south east Asian at one of the university there. She returned to Zambia to continue working at the same television station before resigning and moving to South Africa in 1994. In South Africa, she worked for a private television station before leaving once again to study for an MSc in Journalism at a university in the United Kingdom. She returned to South Africa again and joined a Johannesburg based private television. She once again resigned to join a state run television station. In 2001 she moved to London to join a British broadcasting company where she currently works. Mary has been divorced twice and lives with her three children in London.

Evelyn. Forty-three years old Evelyn was born in Zimbabwe. After obtaining a BA and an MSc qualification, Evelyn worked in Zimbabwe the Human Resource department of a private corporate organisation before moving to the UK in 1986. She spent the next two years working in non professional jobs (i.e., as a Cleaner and nursing home Care Assistant) before finally gaining employment in a private corporate organisation's Human Resources department. After working in various roles within the department, Evelyn is currently Head of Recruitment. Married to an African Caribbean man, Evelyn has two children and lives in north London. She is a dual citizen.

Itunde. Born in north London in 1966 to Nigerian parents, Itunde moved back to Nigeria with her family at the age of four. Following her primary and secondary school education, Itunde enrolled at a local college where she obtained a Diploma in Mass Communications. In 1986, she returned to the UK where she initially found difficulty in gaining employment in her field. In an effort to survive, she worked as a Cleaning lady for two years and later on as a Personal Assistant. During this period, she re-trained as an IT Specialist. Holder of a postgraduate degree in IT, Itunde is currently employed as an IT Director for large organisation in London. She is married to a Nigeria, has five children and lives in north London. She is a dual citizen.

Lily. Born in the northern part of Nigeria in 1998, Lily lived and studied in Nigeria up until she gained a postgraduate qualification in Engineering. She soon joined a large international oil company in a neighbouring West African country where she worked for a year before returning to Nigeria. Two years later she was transferred to the United States where she worked for where she worked for two years before moving to the UK in 1996. She worked with the same company for two years before she resigned and moved to the USA with her new husband. While in the USA, Lily took a career break during which time she had her children. She also returned back to university to study for another an postgraduate degree in management. After five years, Lily moved to the UK where she worked for another international oil company. She is currently employed in an oil and gas company and is working on another MSc in Geophysics. She separated and lives with her two children in Surrey. She has dual British/Nigerian citizenship.

Iddy. Fifty years old Iddy was born in East London where she lived until her parents moved back to their native Nigeria when she was 17 years old. She completed her secondary school there before enrolling in a local university to study Pharmaceuticals. As a pharmacy professional, Iddy worked for various national service organisations before moving into academia. In 1990, she moved back to the UK where she returned back to university to study for a PhD. She has since worked in a number of UK universities as an academic. Iddy also belongs to a leading UK Pharmaceutical governing body. Divorced once, Iddy is married again to a European national and has four children. She lives in central London.

Emily. Aged 38, Emily was born in south London to a Nigerian father and West Indian mother. She lived here up until the age of five before moving back to Nigeria with her parents. Emily left Nigeria at the age of eight to move to Ireland for a year before moving back to London. At age 11, Emily's family moved back to Nigeria once again where she lived until the age of 18. She completed her A Levels in the UK before enrolling at a university in Surrey where she obtained a Bachelor of Science degree. She went on to obtain a PhD in Pharmaceuticals from a London university. Emily has since worked for two International Pharmaceutical companies. She currently works as Policy Manager. She is married to a Nigerian, has one daughter and lives in south west London.

Iona. Forty-eight years old Iona was born in Cameroon where she lived until her early teenage years. She moved to the UK to complete her A Levels, BSc and MSc qualifications. She returned back to Cameroon where she worked for a government ministry and a commercial bank. Unhappy with her work situation, Iona moved back to the UK where she has worked for several small private organisations as Marketing Manager. During this period, she has also obtained an MBA. She is currently employed as a Manager for British Bank. She was married to a Ghanaian national and has two children whom she lives with in greater London.

Bubu. Born in Nigeria, 51 years old Bubu lived there until 1981 when she obtained her BSc before moving to the UK. In the UK, she continued to study and obtained a PG Dip, MSc and PhD qualifications in Pharmacology. Bubu has since worked for a private organisation as a pharmacist and manager and as a lecturer at a leading UK university. She is married to a fellow Nigerian, has three children and lives in greater London.

Supplementary Participants – Johannesburg and London

I used information from these narratives to illuminate various points

Professor Njobe. Director and Lecturer at South African University for past ten years. Educated in the USA. Holds a PhD. American citizen.

Helen. Director and Lecturer at South African University for past ten years. Educated in the Zambia and USA. Holds a PhD. Dual South African/Zambian.

Tiniko. Financial Analyst. Educated in South Africa, Botswana and the USA. Holds an MBA. South African citizen.

Patricia. General Manager Health Care Insurance. Also qualified medical doctor. South African citizen.

Kerry. Life Coach. Holds a PhD. South African citizen.

Petronela. Recruitment Consultant and Researcher. BA qualification. South African citizen.

Yvonne. Recruitment Consultant and Researcher. BA qualification. South African citizen.

Gabbie. South African Executive Director, General Business. MBA

Towela. South African Academic. PhD

Christa. Director, Business Leadership, South Africa, BA, MSc

Sandra. Relationship Manager, Banking and Finance Educated in Tanzania, Belgium and UK, MSc.

Fiona. Banking and Finance, Educated in Zambia and UK. MSc

Mildred. IT Management Consultant. Educated in Zambia and UK. MSc.

Vivian. IT Management Consultant. Educated in Zambia and UK. MSc.

Tsitsi. CEO Recruitment Agency. Educated in Nigeria and the UK. A qualified medical doctor, also has a PhD. British/Nigerian citizen

Candice. Executive Life Coach and Organisational Development, and Public Speaker, Educated in Nigeria and the UK. Holds MSc. South African citizen.

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