

The networking practices of women managers in an emerging economy setting:

Negotiating institutional and social barriers

Abstract: Women managers face institutional and social barriers throughout their careers. In this research, we use networking and symbolic interactionism theories to explain how they network while negotiating these impediments in an emerging economy setting. Focus group data revealed three themes. The women in our study, as predicted by networking theory, use networks to bolster career outcomes, although some also use non-influential networks or network ineffectively. Next, symbolic interactionism explains how expectations of, and personal reflections on, networking lead to a lack of confidence and feelings of guilt that can be career-limiting. However, when women understand that their unique networking approach can be powerful, they gain social capital that enhances their leadership. Last, patriarchal cultures of emerging economy settings support stereotypical gender roles, leaving women conflicted between competition and mutual support, thus redefining the so-called Queen Bee phenomenon. We conclude by showing how women can use networking to enhance career and personal development.

Keywords: Women managers, networking, emerging economy, identity, focus group, interactionism

INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding women's growing representation in organisational roles and industries, they remain under-represented in managerial positions (Tatli *et al.*, 2013). While equality and diversity in management teams are encouraged, both intentional and unintentional institutional barriers and discrimination undoubtedly exist in the workplace (Joshi *et al.*, 2015). Women deal with this in various ways: some relocate or withdraw (Tomlinson *et al.*, 2013), some enhance their visibility, and some network to build support (Rastetter and Cornils, 2012). This article offers insight into how female managers in an emerging economy setting, where women often face discrimination, limited role expectations and lower wages, use networking to achieve business success (Ndhlovu and Spring, 2009). Using a focus-group design, we show how networking can assist women to deal with institutional and social disadvantage by supporting their careers with access to organisational networks and with

sponsors who offer mentorship, emotional assistance and advice on how to develop and progress in their careers (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2010; Forret and Dougherty, 2001).

Most gender-related networking research focuses on the differences between the networking practices of men and women (Forret and Dougherty, 2001; 2004; Hughes *et al.*, 2012). Where the focus has been more overtly on the experiences of women, it shows how women managers may be unconsciously prejudiced in the workplace by men and how this may influence their career advancement; focusing on the strategies that organisations can put in place to remedy this (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989). Instead, we focus on how women's own expectations limit their career advancement and how they can consciously use their network strategies to develop self-confidence and self-belief. Our first objective is therefore to understand how women frame their networking practices.

This leads us to look at how women's symbolic interactions and self-confidence influence their networking practices. To do so, we apply symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Stryker, 1980) to assist our understanding of how they act in and value networks because of the subjective meaning that they assign to events and behaviours through processes of "self-perception, decision-making, social-status, power...and politics" (Orser *et al.*, 2010: 953). Symbolic interactionism is based on the belief that human beings are best understood in a practical, interactive relation to their environment, indeed, people develop and rely upon in the process of social interaction to derive symbolic meaning of their environment. People interpret one another's behaviour and these interpretations form the basis of their social bonds (Griffin, 1997). While the behaviour of women at home, work and as part of society has been the subject of many studies (Forret and Dougherty, 2004; Tlairs and Kauser, 2011), less is known about how they draw their roles and networks in all of these areas together to build their careers (Ibarra, 1993; Rutashobya, *et al.*, 2009). Our second objective therefore focuses on how social interactions help women to develop the confidence to use networks more effectively for career purposes.

Research calls for scholars 'to go both broader and deeper into understanding the complexities that define gender inequality on a global stage' (Joshi *et al.*, 2015: 1472). As our last research objective, we extend the research about individual women to emerging economies. In this setting, most research has focused on the role of the organisation, for example to investigate how multinationals redress gender imbalances through network training and offering greater access to opportunities (Rashid, 2010; Tatli *et al.*, 2013; Tlairs and Kauser, 2011), and work flexibility (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2010). While such research

provides guidance on how to coordinate organisational practice to create and gain access to career advancement opportunities, our research goes further. We highlight how women in emerging economies can adapt their own practices, and take more responsibility for their own careers by having more control over their networking strategies.

As such, the objectives of this research are to understand: how women frame their networking; how women's social interactions influence their self-confidence and ability to develop networks that enhance their careers, and how women managers in an emerging economy setting use networks to negotiate obstacles on an institutional and social level. We structure this paper as follows: We discuss this emerging economy setting by considering the institutional and social dimensions of networking theoretically (i.e., networking, symbolic interactionism and identity theory) and pragmatically. We then outline our methodology and present the main themes that emerged from the analysis of our data. We conclude with how we contribute to social networking research and provide a more holistic view of how women in emerging economies can use networking and social interaction to drive their own careers. We show how productive and influential networks offer access to information, support and personal development opportunities, but that women do not always access such networks. We note how masculine structures in an emerging economy is limiting, but can be addressed if women have self-confidence and social capital.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The emerging economy environment

Although female workforce numbers are steadily increasing in most countries (Skaggs *et al.*, 2012), women managers still meet internal and external resistance (Tatli *et al.*, 2013). At work, women often lack support and career advancement opportunities (Blanch and Aluja, 2012; Russo and Hassink, 2012). The opportunities available to women in emerging economy settings can be influenced by government policy, infrastructure, and political and legal rights (Hossain *et al.*, 2009), as well as by opportunities for skills, business acumen and available access to networks at institutional levels (Bullough *et al.*, 2015). At a societal level, women in emerging economies face issues of stereotyping and gendered role expectations (Tan, 2008, Patwardhan *et al.*, 2016). Effectively dealing with these factors has the potential to

increase female numbers in the workforce, especially at senior organisational levels (Booyesen, 2013). This is important because equality and inclusion can lead to lower poverty levels and greater national development success (Licumba *et al.*, 2015).

Gender inequity occurs broadly, for example, by career paths and work practices being gendered (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013) and through male-dominated organisational cultures (Gress and Paek, 2014; Peng *et al.*, 2008). In the patriarchal, masculine cultures often found in emerging economies, this domination is often exacerbated (Hofstede, 1980; Trinidad and Normore, 2005), leaving women to deal with norms that restrict empowerment and career mobility (Haile *et al.*, 2012; Kelly *et al.*, 2012). Networks can provide the means to deal with such inequity because it does not have to be sanctioned by organisations; women can thus enact their own career paths.

In emerging economies, researchers are increasingly focusing on women's networking practices (see Birdie and Kumar, 2015; Bombuwela and Alwis, 2013; Srivastava, 2015). These researchers tend to compare men and women's networks and the consequent influence on careers; for women, this can lead to issues of being discriminated against, lower levels of inclusion (Ibarra, 1993), and having fewer and less powerful networks (Carli, 1999; Rasdi *et al.*, 2013; Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989). Social and institutional impediments therefore restrict women from building meaningful connections for career advancement (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). For women in emerging economies, networking can thus be challenging, even though it is held to be important for career development, gaining influence from and access to information, opportunities and resources (Kantis *et al.*, 2002). This is particularly the case in emerging economies that often base business activity on informal relationships, trust, reputation and former connections, but less on contractual agreement and legal frameworks (Ahlstrom *et al.*, 2003). While it would therefore be important for women to leverage the potency of networks to narrow the gap in the workplace, they face challenges caused by a variety of factors, including limited time because of their household and childcare responsibilities (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

In addition, for a woman in an emerging economy, her status in a network relies on her social role, the strength of her connections, and what she exchanges (Berrou and Combarous, 2012). The institutional and social norms moderate the ability of women to use

networks, especially in a country where gender expectations of inequality are more or less accepted (Lyness and Judiesch, 2014). Research highlights the importance of defining what achievement and advancement mean in different contexts. For example, the labels, 'Asian' and 'Western' do not adequately describe how women in different cultures advance in management (Peus *et al.*, 2015). By understanding and paying more attention to the underlying cultural and social assumptions and interpretations, we can better understand the meaning and existence of impediments.

This research acknowledges that workplace structures and human resource development programs that favour men can disadvantage women managers (Cook and Glass, 2014). It thus becomes important to understand not only how organisations can redress imbalance, but also how individual women can advance their careers through networking (Forret and Dougherty, 2004). Such an approach empowers women to navigate and manage their career paths more directly (Cook *et al.*, 2002). If women understand the challenges and opportunities as they relate to emerging economies, they can gain the power to advance their careers (Kelly *et al.*, 2012; Loh and Dahesihsari, 2013). Therefore, we investigate how women use networking to access personal and professional support and thus to overcome institutional challenges (Rezania and Ouedraogo, 2014). This involves analyzing the social and professional challenges that characterise diverse emerging economies (Alvi, 2012), specifically those unique to women networking (Hughes *et al.*, 2012).

Network theory and practice

Network theory describes a network as a web of interconnected actors through which people, in this case women, seek to achieve shared goals (Borgatti and Halgin, 2011). A review of the literature reveals a persistent link between the quality of such networks and the likelihood of enhanced career outcomes, such as earlier-than-expected promotions, training opportunities and enhanced career paths (Ibarra, 1993). The network literature that focuses on women (Ahlstrom *et al.*, 2003; Ibarra *et al.*, 2013) reveals that the relationship between networks and such outcomes is the same for women in emerging economies. However, this literature also shows a number of important reasons that prevent women from using networks to the same extent as men (Rutashobya *et al.*, 2009). In emerging markets, the social

expectation is that women should act as the primary caregiver and take care of the bulk of household duties. This means that they should ideally choose family-friendly jobs, and that work should not impede family time (Hewlett and Rashid, 2010). While the latter idea is laudable if it leads to work-life balance, it also means that women are left with fewer opportunities to build networks. Also of concern is that the more social networks that women build contain fewer influential ties than men, all which result in less opportunity to seek guidance and mentoring (Manolova *et al.*, 2014).

We also explored in more detail the available research about the factors that influence women's career advancement in emerging economies. The four most prominent themes are that, in emerging economies: (1) Women are the primary carer/nurturer in the family (Tatli and Kauser, 2011). (2) Collectivist and/or socialist cultures expect networking relationships to be maintained predominantly 'for subjective rather than objective career success outcomes' (Rasdi *et al.*, 2013: 694). (3) There is a lack of a clear career strategy and vision on how to align people, sponsors and mentors to increase women's visibility and advance their careers (Malhotra and Singh, 2015; Kiaye and Singh, 2013). (4) There are few women mentors to assist with restrictions on women's social interactions (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011).

While the nature and especially the limitations of the networks of women in emerging economies are therefore fairly well understood, what is missing from the narrative is the personal impediments that women impose on themselves or the limitations that they impose on other women. Little research focuses on how women perceive and interpret the impact of their networking efforts on their career advancement, their expectations, and how they negotiate self-identified barriers, prejudice and expectations of men towards women in the workforce (Ramadani *et al.*, 2013; Siddique, 2014). In general, the literature views these barriers as imposed by the working environment infrastructure and male counterparts (Assaad, 2015), and women helplessly receiving these impediments. Instead we argue that women have unique networking approaches and strong and diverse ties (Phillips *et al.*, 2013), and can thus use them to their benefit. Indeed, many of the institutional and social issues posed by emerging economies can either be overcome or minimised through the benefit of networking because it can inhibit the restrictions on women's career advancement (Joshi *et al.*, 2015; Tatli *et al.*, 2013).

Symbolic interactionism and identity

We explain the circumstances in which female managers' networks occur by using symbolic interactionism to theorise how 'meanings emerge through interaction' (Scott and Marshall, 2009: 696). Therefore, we focus on how women interpret and understand their interactions. This seminal theory of Mead (1934) essentially assumes that people act in accordance with the roles that different circumstances construct for them and that a sense of self and self-reflection underlies the communication of social interactions. Seeing that this view may well be too general for modern contemporary society, we use Stryker's (1980) broader focus on situations where social stability and societal change influence individual behaviour. This 'structural' symbolic interactionism sees society shaped by social interaction that, in turn, is shaped by previous interaction. Beyond society in general, interaction with people in a particular situation, such as the workplace, shape the self-image, perception and expectations of the individual (Orser *et al.*, 2010).

While women may react to societal stereotyping, they also react to how they see themselves beyond an identity constructed by motherhood and raising a family (Laney *et al.*, 2014). By including the micro-inequities (Cortina, 2008) caused by gender stereotypes and subservience in the workplace, these identities may limit their opportunities or result in the unequal uptake of them (Patwardhan *et al.*, 2016; Peus *et al.*, 2015). What can follow is the self-fulfilling prophecy whereby stereotyping produces disadvantage which, in turn, becomes reconstituted and accepted as normative by women and men in relationships (Stryker, 1968) so that acceptance becomes women's default position (Carter, 2014). In other words, women's meaning of things can thus change with their and others' interpretation (Blumer, 1973). Such a sense of self and associated behaviour may need to change when circumstances or environments change. The complex professional and social contexts in which women may find themselves influence how they structure their subjectivity and careers according to what is expected of them in both work and non-work environments.

However, while the default position of some women who encounter institutional and social impediments is often self-imposed, and can keep them from reaching careers and personal goals (Patwardhan *et al.*, 2016; Sandberg and Chávez, 2014), those who do advance

to leadership positions challenge these societal norms and expectations (Peus *et al.*, 2015). These women succeed because their individual achievement orientation and drive help them overcome impediments on an interpersonal, organisational and social systems level (Peus *et al.*, 2015). Such a change in attitude and intrinsic expectations, and the optimal use of networks for career advancement can therefore distinguish how women perceive their success and the effort that they put into achieving it.

When work is stereotyped as ‘women’s work’ and ‘men’s work’, it becomes gendered (Benschop *et al.*, 2001, McKenna *et al.*, 2016). Benschop (2009) warns that networking can perpetuate gender inequalities because identity construction inheres in professional language about networking. Social reality and self-reference are thus important parts of influencing self-identity (Zanoni *et al.*, 2010) and thus how women network. These factors often lead them to make choices throughout their careers that prevent women from advancing as fast as men because they fear social disapproval, penalty or exclusion (Tatli *et al.*, 2013). While a lack of self-confidence may impede women’s careers (Michailidis *et al.*, 2012), the social capital gained through mentoring can remedy this situation. With most research into these factors originating in developed economies such as the USA and Europe, emerging economies offer researchers a more nuanced view. Two examples of this necessarily extend the literature: First Hughes *et al.* (2012) call for research into female managers and business owners. Second, Tedmanson *et al.* (2012: 531) advocate for business managers and entrepreneurs from emerging economies from Asia and Africa to be considered. MacDonald (2007) adds that the cultural and organisational impact upon female advancement in the workplace is important research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research followed an inductive approach to build theory by exploring the research objectives (Kitzinger, 1995). The need for a qualitative design to address underexplored areas of research is clearly established in management research. To illustrate, in their *Academy of Management Journal* editorial on qualitative research methods, Bansal and Corley (2012: 512) argue that “quantitative research is about careful preparation and faithful execution of

the plan laid out in the beginning; qualitative research is about exploring ideas.” Others extend this by arguing that qualitative research is ideal “when the particular topic is new and there is not much previously published research on that topic” (Myers, 2013: 9). Qualitative research helps us to answer questions and examine individuals in social setting (Berg, 2007). Thus, as our research question addresses a relatively underexplored area, we deemed a qualitative approach to be most suitable. Using focus groups allowed us to observe women participants discussing their workplace dynamics and how they do, or do not interact (Marshall, 1998) after asking them a variety of open-ended questions. This approach initially generated rich descriptions and deeper background on the experiences and interpretations of networking by the women in our study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013; Patton, 2014). Most importantly, focus groups provided a naturalistic setting. Therefore, our participants could share real experiences and stories as women, which enabled us to understand how women reflect on their social reality (i.e., feelings, behaviour and experience) (Holloway and Wheeler, 2013) while networking. In addition, such an approach allowed us to play an active part in the research by observing, talking to, and then interpreting women’s unique situations (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Sample and data collection

The focus-group participants were recruited from South Africa, which is regarded as an emerging economy (Diamond and Price, 2012), using a snowball sample of six focus groups of between four and eight women managers per group (n = 41). Small groups of between six and 12 women allowed us to observe the participants in terms of how they interact, share their experiences and discuss open ended questions in a natural conversation setting. Each focus group was held at a central venue where we started with light refreshments and then each participant had to briefly introduce themselves to the group. The focus-group facilitator was a well-known, respected CEO of a finance organisation, who leads a female business development organisation. We invited research participants using social networking sites (women business networking sites, *LinkedIn* and *Facebook*), and emails, through which they were encouraged to share the invitation with others in their networks. We audio-recorded the focus groups and took field notes of their paralinguistics (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). The field notes included annotations about the context and other observations (Holloway and Wheeler, 2013). The interactions whereby participants shared or reacted to different opinions

provided us with rich, nuanced data about their reflection on each other's stories (Silverman, 2016). Theoretical saturation was reached after four focus groups, but a further two focus groups were conducted to add to the direct quotes. Table 1 displays participants' age and occupation, and the industry in which they were working at the time. It shows that the women who participated in the focus groups averaged 51 years-of-age. Most had a certificate or diploma (42%), or postgraduate education (26%). Ninety percent of women were involved in services, retail, trades, or manufacturing industries and all were employed as Chief Executive Officers, Chief Finance Officers, Principals, Directors, or Line or Division Managers, therefore middle to senior management.

Insert TABLE 1 here

To keep the discussion focused, yet allow ideas to emerge, we posed three broad questions: (1) Describe your networking process; (2) What is important in your network, and (3) Identify and describe the challenges to your networking efforts. We used interview techniques that guide focus-group discussions: paraphrasing; minimal oral responses like “*uh-hm, yes, I see*” to encourage participants to respond fully; and post-summaries to categorise or thematised individual responses, conclude segments of discussions, and/or ensure the interpretation was accurate and clearly described.

Data management

We approached the research questions from a symbolic interactionist approach by actively exploring human behaviour using focus groups to better understand how the participants interpret their experiences (Berg, 2007). Networking theory provided the groundwork for this approach by asking questions about how they interact, what they value about these interactions and what inhibited them. We used an independent transcriber to transcribe the focus groups discussions from the audio recordings and *NVivo* (QSR International, 2010) to analyse the transcripts. To ensure rigour throughout our data management and analysis we followed the four-step cognitive process of Morse and Field (1996). First, we ‘immersed’ ourselves in the research by reading and rereading the transcripts to gain an in-depth understanding of the content and to make sense of the data. For example, we read and reread each of the focus group transcripts. We moved to the next step when no new information

emerged from our initial reading of the data. This involved exploring the data for patterns and themes (Patton, 2014) by conducting text and word frequency searches in *NVivo* to identify the most representative statements and themes. These themes were then coded. For example, we conducted a word frequency search for the word “network”. We worked through all the quotes where network was used and coded all those relevant to this one theme. Third, we identified themes by systematically working through the findings, backwards and forwards between the transcripts and their contexts. This helped us, for example, to make sense of the underlying layers of the networking process, by separating the identified themes (e.g., *networking practices*) into subthemes (e.g., *network approach* and *network types*). Subthemes provided more in-depth and rich nuances of these findings. Then, as another layer, we identified the additional or sub-themes of strategic engagement and networking factors. Finally, we compared the themes against the literature. While the themes from their reflections and perceptions were then confirmed, they also extended the literature (Hyde, 2000) (see Table 2).

Trustworthiness

We analysed the data independently using Guba’s model (see Krefting, 1991; Neuman, 2006). It is based on establishing trustworthiness represented by credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. To ensure *credibility* we employed techniques such as: reflexivity through keeping field notes, personal observation, and establishing trust with the participants. We also used triangulation of different analytical methods (coding manually and by using *NVivo*) and member checking (asking participants to check the results for accuracy of interpretation) for repeatable results (Torrance, 2012). While we took these measures to protect the truth value of the results, we ensured their *transferability* by choosing a convenience sample and clarifying it within a defined timeframe. We ensured *dependability* by densely describing the research and its method as seen above. We also conducted a stepwise focus-group process to ensure replication. For instance, we discussed how the focus groups were conducted, with whom, and how the data were managed throughout the process. To ensure *confirmability* and objectivity throughout the research, we used *NVivo* for the coding and decoding of the themes (Creswell, 1994), by alternating between themes, direct

quotes and the literature to support or contrast findings to confirm neutrality. To ensure confirmability, we asked some participants to verify the results by confirming our recorded themes and subthemes (Creswell, 1994). We conducted member checking by, for instance, contacting the participants by phone to check whether our interpretation of their words and the theme that emerged from this was correct. Consequently, using Morse and Field's (1996) approach as described above, we gained an in-depth understanding of how networking applies to women.

Discussion of Findings

Table 2 displays the themes and subthemes that emerged from this analysis; they relate broadly to our three research objectives. Themes were identified by their frequency and then coded according to these objectives. The main themes are network, social interactions and emerging economy; each is separated into with a number of sub- themes that emerged from the data. We then triangulated the results with the literature to make sense of the findings. The quotes from the data (with their links to the literature), which support, contrast and verify the results, are expanded in Table 2 and discussed in the remainder of this section.

Insert TABLE 2 here

From the discussion of the first research question on how the women described their networking process, a *networking* theme, which clarified the networking approach and types, emerged with the support of four subthemes. The first two subthemes explained the network approach and were *network planning (strategic engagement)* and *networking success* factors. Participants mentioned that women, who proactively and strategically control their networking and plan how to expand it, are more successful in business and their careers: *I think a woman can network on different levels; you start with a holistic approach towards personal development and use those skills to bring other people together. Successful networking involves trust; transparency and competence, as well as, doing good work for your social network [which] is like a ripple effect. That to me is always good. At least you know that you have done something right when people refer clients to you. This*

complemented the literature that also describes successful women as those willing to expand their network beyond their comfort zone (Xesha *et al.*, 2014).

Moving to the type of networks that the women use, two more subthemes emerged, namely the influence and diversity of networks. Women mentioned that influential network connections are crucial. This means that striking the right balance between professional and social interactions was a struggle: *The building of relationships with the idea that some of those people you can help, and some can help you and some of those people will know other people.* Those who realised that they need diverse networks gained more influence: *We talk to people all the time. Each person that you meet is a potential networker, client, referral or anything. I find that I constantly network.* Diverse networks thus allow access to diverse information, skills set and opportunities (De Vita *et al.*, 2014).

In response to the second research question about what is important in their networks, the themes that emerged from the discussion dealt with issues of *identity* and *social interaction*. Self-esteem, self-confidence and self-knowledge supported identity while guilt and pressure, and social interaction further described interaction as additional themes to this topic. Symbolic interactionism and identity therefore relate to self-esteem: *It is about time women get over these boundaries themselves and network with confidence in their abilities to put anybody else in their place if they overstep the boundaries and get on with the business.* Sometimes this self-fulfilling gender stereotype (Bradley-Geist *et al.*, 2015) and unrealistic expectations for women (Mavin, 2008) prevented them from realizing their true potential. The women also discussed their lack of self-confidence, and showed guilt and pressure that influenced how they behaved as mothers on the one hand and workers on the other. Women felt guilty working after hours, often feeling it is 'forbidden' because they are expected to look after their families. This guilt also applied to networking: *I do not make the time to network, because I just can't justify it to myself. I know it is valuable to participate in all the golf and other invitations that I get at work. But I don't; I cannot. My male colleagues tend to not seem to feel as if they have to make that trade off.*

The participants viewed themselves as moving easily between personal and social layers, often not distinguishing between their work and life connections (Livingstone *et al.*, 2014). The sociocultural changes encountered as women progress in their careers did not

necessarily lead to an equal reduction in responsibilities at home, with work-life balance (WLB) suffering in the process (Adame *et al.*, 2016). Women often feel guilty about lacking WLB because it adds to their stress (Kaufmann, 2011). Some networking events occur after hours and place increased pressure on women to balance their work and personal lives (Kerbo, 2006; Mansor *et al.*, 2015). To ensure networking does not encroach on WLB, self-knowledge is important to network well strategically so that it is approached in a way that does not lessen career expectations (Rashid, 2010). It is important to develop a clear strategy on how value will be created through the networks (Cross, 2011): *Networking is a skill and to network it is important to start with yourself, to realise your value, to establish it and to communicating it.*

The rich nuances in answers to the third research question on the challenges that these women face in their networking efforts were important and surprisingly complicated and interrelated. The issue of having to deal with issues in an *emerging economy* emerged as a theme without probing. Subthemes on this included a distinct difference between the *institutional* and *social environment*.

The *institutional environment* was further differentiated by the additional themes that we identified: *disadvantage, equity, opportunity* and *male-dominated environment*; the *social environment* produced *familiarity*, and the *Queen Bee syndrome* that either supported or hindered networking practices. The institutional aspect of the emerging market backdrop seemed to contribute to some of the networking challenges: *You're dealing with still very chauvinistic men. That is why women are always at a disadvantage whether from a disadvantaged background or not.* Although social change, and the active inclusion of women in the workforce is improving (Booyesen, 2013; Ndhlovu and Spring, 2009), widespread stereotyping and (non)advancement issues remain to be resolved (Murray, 2010). The traditional view of women, and what society expects of them, still impact upon the choices that they make in emerging economies (Assaad, 2003; 2015).

These women faced different sets of institutional challenges from men. Participants mentioned that the masculine nature of institutional structures favoured men's advancement, and thus required women to negotiate the 'disadvantage' of femininity: *In the business world, one should be very careful not to be misjudged. Women can easily be judged as to be too forward; it is still very tricky.* Control, competitiveness and assertion are common accepted

characteristics of male managers who operate in these environments (Russo and Hassink, 2012).

Participants spoke about equity in the workplace: *Women are trying to be strong and assertive, but everyone feels that they are trying to be a man. Some are seen as being pushy.* They shared perceptions that assertive and ambitious women were seen as bossy (Sandberg and Chávez, 2014), whereas men who behaved similarly were seen to be positive role models (Michailidis *et al.*, 2012). This leads to another view that women have fewer opportunities in their workplace: *No opportunity, no need to network. I felt uncomfortable to do it, as if it is not my place to do that.* This refers to networks as a canvassing opportunity that women can create and use as needed (Reagans, 2011). Challenges of a male-dominated workplace were expressed: *I think men network well in a homogenous situation, with their business partner, but not across networks. I think women are much better at that, one day you are dealing with a teacher, and then a CEO.* Therefore, networks develop differently for men and women in the work environment, leading to differences in their social capital (Chou and Zolkiewski, 2012; Choi, 2015).

The social environment in emerging economies is based on familiarity networks where people engage with others they know and trust: *A new friend, a new business partner or a new contact. Networking is my core contacts. They are the people I will network with; I know they add value to me and (I know) where I can add value to them.* Socially, people are drawn to those who share the same background, aspirations or goals (Phillips *et al.*, 2013).

This social environment is then depicted as two interactions: either biased towards other women, or supportive: *women are nasty to one another and don't support one another or other groups that support one another. Some compete against each other; they sabotage each other's chances.* The literature frames this rivalry in the work environment between women as the Queen Bee syndrome: the behaviour by senior women in male-dominated environments that leads them to dissociate from other women and act more masculine (Derks *et al.*, 2011). This syndrome prevents women from being role models and thus supportive of other women (Ellemers, 2014), which the literature notes generally but does not specify to emerging economies where women are scouted for skills and experience. This

leads to increased pressure, higher productivity, and intense rivalry for positions (Langevang and Gough, 2012).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this research, we theorise that women's social identities influence their networking both positively and negatively. Women face social and institutional barriers in the emerging economy, wherein networks are used in specific ways to assist their personal and career development. Empirical results thus supported the main matters under investigation, with networking practices, social interactions, and the emerging economy as the main themes. In addressing the first research objective, we found that networking was related to career success and increased self-esteem and confidence (Ramli *et al.*, 2016). For the women in our study, two main components of networking influenced its effectiveness in career advancement. They are women's perception of their identity that is, in turn, influenced by levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-knowledge. In contrast, women also allowed feelings of guilt and pressure to colour their interactions. Looking secondly at social interactionism, we saw that identity, through self-esteem, self-confidence and self-knowledge, and interaction influence the success or perceived success of these interactions. Social interaction is also influenced by feelings of guilt and pressure as well as social interaction. Last, we looked at the emerging economy relating to institutions (with the layers of disadvantage, equity, opportunity and male-dominated environment as additional themes) and social environment — familiarity and Queen Bee status versus supportive roles further explains this — perspectives. In sum, we identified symbolic interactionism as an approach to observe women's interactions in focus groups and networking theory to understand how they take responsibility for their career paths and control their networks to achieve career advancement. These theories are applied as we contribute in three areas.

Our first contribution is to networking theory (Scott and Liew, 2012) in that we highlight how women sometimes use networking ineffectively. The women in our sample formed strong ties with a limited number of people, but these ties often lacked influence (Browne, 2000). Therefore, while participants saw networking as important and built strong relationships, these activities did not advance their career or achieve business goals. Women

networked to gain moral and personal support, reinforce their identity, and boost their confidence about their WLB. Unlike others (e.g., Rastetter and Cornils, 2012; Carole, 2013), our research into women's networking in an emerging economy shows that influential networks in these contexts are not always easily available or accessible, thus limiting opportunities for self-promotion and advancement. Individual constraint of entering in these relationships and institutional barriers of entry contribute to the lack of inclusion of influential role players in their networks. Trust is developed over time with repeated encounters and a track record, both of which influence how decisions are made and how and if value is exchanged and the network is valued (Misner and Morgan, 2000). It seems that women in the emerging market context face restrictions with whom they are allowed to network and what kind of networks they may access (Lyon, 2000). This then limits the means by which they build rapport and trust (Wells *et al.*, 2003). Indeed, when women establish trust in their network, information is shared more easily and faster. Open communication channels increase rapport building and support of each other and eventually career or personal development. We can therefore summarise our contribution presented here, and in Table 2 as:

Proposition 1: Ineffective use of mainly non-influential networks limits otherwise positive aspects of women's networking, such as trust, dependency, good rapport, and openness.

Our second contribution focused on the impact of identity and social interaction on networking quality. We saw that patriarchal societies limit the opportunities for women to socialise outside their personal networks. This makes it more difficult for women to reach beyond their own personal networks to access opportunities to build rapport and trust relationships (Castells, 2000). Our research reveals the deeper layers of awareness of self-esteem and identity as described in the theory of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Stryker, 1980) that may explain this difficulty. Our data showed that some participants lacked self-confidence, thus limiting their ability to benefit from networking. Self-doubt and low self-esteem profoundly affected how participants behaved during networking and how they developed and implemented a networking strategy. Societal disapproval and limited opportunity to build to build their careers and gain experience also adds to this sense of underachievement and lack of self-belief (Bastian and Zali, 2016). Indeed, some women saw

networking as a cry for help that could be interpreted as incompetency or fragility. We thus offer:

Proposition 2: A lack of confidence and feelings of guilt inhibits the usefulness of some women's networking, but an understanding of the power of their own unique networking approaches helps to develop social capital and enhance leadership and mentoring roles.

The specific context of emerging economies and its institutional impact provided a rich context for this research, which leads to our third contribution. Researchers and policy makers emphasise that, while the number of women in emerging economy workplaces has increased, including within more senior positions, economic and social challenges remain (Cook and Glass, 2014; Kiaye and Singh, 2013). To illustrate, only 6.1 percent of employed women in South Africa fill private sector management positions (Stats.SA, 2013). Our participants lamented the lack of support structures and opportunity to build confidence in their abilities by those occupying their inequitable, male-dominated workplaces and homes (Martin and Barnard, 2013) so that their social advancement and empowerment is hindered. We found that considering symbolic interaction in an emerging economy (Carlson, 2013) is potentially important since most cultures are masculine in the sense that they emphasise actions, behaviours and rituals that influence networking. How society influences these behaviours may directly affect how strategic women network to benefit their careers and workplaces. This increases women's internal conflict and stress (Hewlett and Rashid, 2011). Therefore, by considering networking in an emerging economy, we propose that its institutional and social environments moderate the success of networking strategies:

Proposition 3: Women in emerging economy workplaces face institutional barriers, stereotyped gender roles, masculine organisational cultures and role conflict, and therefore need to apply their networks as a career development strategy to break through the imposed ceilings.

Our last contribution focuses on the conflict that women experience while using networking to support their careers. Empowered women realise the importance of the influence they gain in having the right networks, as well as access they provide to information and resources. These women then incorporate this into their career management strategy to overcome issues of not having the right social standing or access to the right

opportunities (Naser *et al.*, 2009). They confront society's expectation that they will remain passive and acquiescent, and workplace expectations that they will compete for limited positions and promotion. However, our data showed that such circumstances also produce the Queen Bee syndrome in the form of competition with other women (Derks *et al.*, 2011) that manifests itself with criticism of each other at work, and expectations of other women to perform better (Ellemers *et al.*, 2004). These more complex findings in this emerging economy extend the existing research by highlighting the tension behind women competing for limited positions while also feeling the need to support each other. In particular, the competitive environment conflicts with the values of inclusiveness and impartiality (or *ubuntu* from isiZulu culture, which means 'humanity to others') (Shrivastava *et al.*, 2014). This leads us to propose that:

Proposition 4: Social networks provide a mechanism for women to use their unique networking skills to overcome institutional and social impediments, but incongruity between competition and support of other women limits their usefulness.

We also promote the practical relevance of our study. For example, our results could benefit HR practitioners, specifically in how they might develop: leadership programs that solve the lack of mentorship and access to education faced by women in emerging economy workplaces; networking exercises and opportunities acknowledging that influential networks are important; and introductions to mentors and sponsors. As HR managers strive to create organisations that embrace the attributes that women bring to networking, they should create structures and practices that reward the relationships formed by women. HR managers can thus use them in workplaces to gain the high levels of cooperation and authenticity that result from such networking. Such practices could be engendered through, for example, training to manage stress and WLB more effectively, or flexible working arrangements and other support mechanisms.

In addition, it is important for HR practitioners to understand that women managers' lacking mentorship is one of the main obstacles to their networking well in an emerging economy workplace. Leadership development could involve assigning mentors to women managers because mentoring opens up women's opportunity to access influential connections and develop specific skill sets. This would accord with the specific call of Capron *et al.*

(2014) for women to be provided with sponsorship when opportunities arise, help with formulating skills development suited to their position, and psychosocial support by sharing experiences and managing WLB (McKenna *et al.*, 2016).

Our research comes with limitations. Although using qualitative approach limits the generalisability of the findings, this research sought a nuanced perception of women's networking practices by interpreting personal reflections. Future research could use quantitative research to target a wider, more representative audience of different cultures and social groupings. This would increase the understanding of diversity in organisational expectations, work-related stress and WLB.

This research was limited to perceptions of women from one country, and therefore its findings could benefit from contrasting them with other samples to ascertain the value of female managers networking in a broader business context. Our participants nonetheless represented a broad range of cultural backgrounds, education and management levels. In sum, this paper shows how, in an emerging economy, women deal with institutional and social impediments to their careers by using networking. While we highlight some inefficiency in networking, we show how it helps women to overcome obstacles at work or home to the betterment of their careers.

REFERENCES

- Adame, C., Caplliure, E.-M. and Miquel, M.-J. (2016). 'Work-life balance and firms: A matter of women?' *Journal of Business Research*, **69**: 4, 1379–1383.
- Ahlstrom, D., Young, M.N. and Nair A. (2003). 'Navigating China's feudal governance structures: Some guidelines for foreign enterprises'. *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, **68**: 1, 4-13.
- Alvi, F.H. (2012). 'Rethinking the institutional contexts of emerging markets through metaphor analyses'. *Management International Review*, **52**: 4, 519–539.
- Assaad, R. (2003). 'Gender and employment: Egypt in comparative perspective', in M.P. Posusney and E.A. Doumato (eds.), *Women and Globalization in the Arab Middle East: Gender, Economy and Society*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers (pp. 119–141).

- Assaad, R. (2015). 'Women's Participation in Paid Employment in Egypt is a Matter of Policy not Simply Ideology'. *Egypt Network for Integrated Development*. Policy Brief 022. http://enid.org.eg/Uploads/PDF/PB22_women_employment_assaad.pdf
- Bansal, P. and Corley, K. (2012). 'Publishing in AMJ—Part 7: What's different about qualitative research?' *Academy of Management Journal*, **55**: 3, 509–513.
- Bastian, B.L and Zali, M.R. (2016). 'Entrepreneurial motives and their antecedents of men and women in North Africa and the Middle East'. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, **31**: 7, 1-36.
- Benschop, Y., Halsema, L. and Schreurs, P. (2001). 'The division of labour and inequalities between the sexes: An ideological dilemma'. *Gender, Work and Organization*, **8**: 1, 1–18.
- Benschop, Y. (2009). 'The micro-politics of gendering in networking'. *Gender, Work & Organization*, **16**: 2, 217–237.
- Berg, B.L. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. 6th edn. San Francisco, CA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Berrou, J.P. and Combarous, F. (2012). 'The personal networks of entrepreneurs in an informal African urban economy: Does the 'strength of ties' matter?' *Review of Social Economy*, **70**: 1, 1–30.
- Birdie, A.K. and Kumar, K. (2015). 'Organizational commitment, job involvement and work life balance among dual career women in different professions'. *International Journal of Education and Management Studies*, **5**: 3, 242.
- Blanch, A. and Aluja, A. (2012). 'Social support (family and supervisor), work-family conflict, and burnout: Sex differences'. *Human Relations*, **65**: 7, 811–833.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism, Perspective and Method*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Blumer, H. (1973). 'Symbolic interactionism as a pragmatic perspective: The bias of emergent theory.' *American Sociological Review*, **38**: 6, 797–798.
- Bogaards, M., de Klerk, S. and Mostert, K. (2012). 'Business socializing: Women's social networking perceptions.' *African Journal of Business Management*, **6**: 30, 8822–8836.

- Bombuwela, P. and Alwis, A.A. (2013). 'Effects of glass ceiling on women career development in private sector organizations - case of Sri Lanka'. *Journal of Competitiveness*, **5**: 2, 3-19.
- Booyesen, L. (2013). 'Societal power shifts and changing social identities in South Africa: Workplace implications'. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, **10**: 1, 1-20.
- Borgatti, S.P. and Halgin, D.S. (2011). 'On network theory'. *Organization Science*, **22**: 5, 1168–1181.
- Bradley-Geist, J., Rivera, I. and Geringer, S. (2015). 'The collateral damage of ambient sexism: Observing sexism impacts bystander self-esteem and career aspirations'. *Sex Roles*, **73**: 1–2, 29–42.
- Browne, K.E. (2000). 'Work style and network management: Gendered patterns and economic consequence in Martinique'. *Gender & Society*, **14**: 3, 435–456.
- Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2015). *Business research methods*, 4th edn, Oxford: U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Bullough, A., Sully De Luque, M., Abdelzaher, D. and Heim, W. (2015). 'Developing women leaders through entrepreneurship education and training'. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, **29**: 2, 250–270.
- Burt, R.S. (2004). 'Structural holes and good ideas'. *American Journal of Sociology*, **110**: 2, 349–399.
- Capron, R., Weber, M., Harvey, A. and Patterson, M. (2014). *The role that mentors play in women's work life balance*, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA.: ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
- Carli, L.L. (1999). 'Gender, interpersonal power, and social influence'. *Journal of social issues*, **55**: 1, 81-99.
- Carlson, E. (2013). 'Precepting and symbolic interactionism — a theoretical look at preceptorship during clinical practice'. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, **69**: 2, 457–464.
- Carter, M. (2014). 'Gender socialization and identity theory'. *Social Sciences*, **3**: 2, 242–263.
- Carole, J. (2013). 'Leveraging a women's network to attract, develop and retain high potential female talent'. *Strategic HR Review*, **12**: 3, 132–137.

- Castells, M. (2000). 'Toward a sociology of the network society'. *Contemporary sociology*, **29**: 5, 693-699.
- Choi, Y. (2015). 'Career success factors of women in the public sector: An empirical analysis of the Korean central government'. *Asian Social Science*, **11**: 9, 300.
- Cortina, L.M. (2008). 'Unseen injustice: Incivility as modern discrimination in organizations'. *Academy of Management Review*, **33**: 1, 55–75.
- Chou, H. and Zolkiewski, J. (2012). 'Decoding network dynamics'. *Industrial Marketing Management*, **41**: 2, 247–258.
- Cook, A. and Glass, C. (2014). 'Women and top leadership positions: Towards an institutional analysis'. *Gender, Work & Organization*, **21**: 1, 91–103.
- Cook, E.P., Heppner, M.J. and O'Brien, K.M. (2002). 'Career development of women of color and white women: Assumptions, Conceptualization, and Interventions from an Ecological Perspective'. *The Career Development Quarterly*, **50**: 4, 291-305.
- Creswell, J.W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*, London: Sage.
- Cross, J. (2011). *Informal learning: Rediscovering the natural pathways That Inspire Innovation and Performance*, San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2013). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*, 4th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.
- Derks, B., Van Laar, C., Ellemers, N., De Groot, K. (2011). 'Gender-bias primes elicit Queen-Bee responses among senior policewomen'. *Psychological Science*, **22**: 10, 1243–1249.
- De Vita, L., Mari, M. and Poggesi, S. (2014). 'Women entrepreneurs in and from developing countries: Evidences from the literature'. *European Management Journal*, **32**: 3, 451-460.
- Diamond, G. and Price, G. (2012). 'The political economy of corporate governance reform in South Africa'. *South African Journal of Business Management*, **43**: 1, 57–67.
- Durbin, S. and Tomlinson, J. (2010). 'Female part-time managers: Networks and career mobility'. *Work, Employment & Society*, **24**: 4, 621–640.
- Eagly, A.H. and Carli, L.L. (2007). *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders*, Boston, M.A.: Harvard.

- Ellemers, N. (2014). 'Women at work'. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, **1**: 1, 46–54.
- Ellemers, N., Heuvel, H., Gilder, D., Maass, A. and Bonvini, A. (2004). 'The underrepresentation of women in science: Differential commitment or the queen bee syndrome?' *British Journal of Social Psychology*, **43**: 3, 315–338.
- Forret, M.L. and Dougherty, T.W. (2001). 'Correlates of networking behavior for managerial and professional employees'. *Group & Organization Management*, **26**: 3, 283–311.
- Forret, M.L. and Dougherty, T.W. (2004). 'Networking behaviors and career outcomes: differences for men and women?' *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, **25**: 3, 419–437.
- Gress, D.R. and Paek, J. (2014). 'Differential spaces in Korean places? Feminist geography and female managers in South Korea'. *Gender, Work & Organization*, **21**: 2, 165–186.
- Haas, A., Snehota, I. and Corsaro, D. (2012). 'Creating value in business relationships: The role of sales'. *Industrial Marketing Management*, **41**: 1, 94–105.
- Haile, H.B., Bock, B. and Folmer, H. (2012). 'Microfinance and female empowerment: Do institutions matter?' *Women's Studies International Forum*, **35**: 4, 256–265.
- Henry, C., Foss, L. and Ahl, H. (2016). 'Gender and entrepreneurship research: A review of methodological approaches.' *International Small Business Journal*, **34**: 3, 217–241.
- Hewlett, S.A. and Rashid, R. (2010). 'The battle for female talent in emerging markets'. *Harvard Business Review*, **88**: 5, 101–106.
- Hewlett, S.A., and Rashid, R. (2011). *Winning the war for talent in emerging markets: Why women are the solution*, Boston, M.A.: Harvard Business Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). 'Culture and organizations'. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, **10**: 4, 15–41.
- Holloway, I. and Wheeler, S. (2013). *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare*, Chichester, U.K.: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hossain, A., Naser, K., Islam, R. and Zaman, A. (2009). 'Differences between public and private university women graduates in the development of small enterprises: Evidence from an emerging economy'. *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, **9**: 3, 1–22.

- Hughes, K.D., Jennings, J.E., Brush, C., Carter, S. and Welter, F. (2012). 'Extending women's entrepreneurship research in new directions'. *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice*, **36**: 3, 429–442.
- Hyde, F.H. (2000). 'Recognising deductive processes in qualitative research'. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, **3**: 2, 82-90.
- Ibarra, H. (1993). 'Personal networks of women and minorities in management: A conceptual framework'. *Academy of Management Review*, **18**: 1, 56-87.
- Ibarra, H., Ely, R. and Kolb, D. (2013). 'Women rising: The unseen barriers'. *Harvard Business Review*, **91**: 9, 61–66.
- Joshi, A., Neely, B., Emrich, C., Griffiths, D. and George, G. (2015). 'Gender research in AMJ: An overview of five decades of empirical research and calls to action'. *Academy of Management Journal*, **58**: 5, 1459-1475.
- Kantis, H., Ishida, M. and Komori, M. (2002). 'Entrepreneurship in emerging economies: The creation and development of new firms in Latin America and East Asia'. Summary Report. Inter-American Development Bank.
- Kaufmann, A.E. (2011). *Changing female identities: Decisions and dilemmas in the Workplace*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kelly, D.J., Singer, S. and Herrington, M. (2012). 'GEM 2011 global report', available at <http://www.gemconsortium.org/docs/download/2409> (accessed August 1, 2016).
- Kerbo, H.R. (2006). *Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in Historical, Comparative and Global Perspective*, 6th edn, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kiaye, R.E. and Singh, A.M. (2013). 'The glass ceiling: A perspective of women working in Durban'. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, **28**: 1, 28–42.
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research. Introducing focus groups. *BMJ: British medical journal*, **311**: 7000, 299.
- Krefting, L. (1991). 'Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness'. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, **45**: 3, 214–222.
- Laney, E.K., Carruthers, L., Hall M.E.L. and Anderson, T. (2014). 'Expanding the self: Motherhood and identity development in faculty women'. *Journal of Family Issues*, **35**: 9, 1227–1251.

- Langevang, T. and Gough K.V. (2012). 'Diverging pathways: Young female employment and entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa'. *Geographical Journal*, **178**: 3, 242–252
- Licumba, E.A., Dzator, J. and Zhang, J.X. (2015). 'Gender equality in education and economic growth in selected Southern African countries'. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, **49**: 6, 349–360. *Project MUSE*. <https://muse.jhu.edu/>
- Livingstone, D.W., Pollock, K. and Raykov, M. (2014). 'Family binds and glass ceilings: Women managers' promotion limits in a 'knowledge economy'. *Critical Sociology*, **42**: 1, 145-166.
- Loh, J. and Dahehsihari, R. (2013). 'Resilience and economic empowerment: A qualitative investigation of entrepreneurial Indonesian women'. *Journal of Enterprising Culture*, **21**: 1, 107–121.
- Lyness, K.S. and Judiesch, M.K. (2014). 'Gender egalitarianism and work–life balance for managers: Multisource perspectives in 36 countries'. *Applied Psychology*, **63**: 1, 96-129.
- Lyon, F. (2000). 'Trust, networks and norms: the creation of social capital in agricultural economies in Ghana'. *World Development*, **28**: 4, 663-681.
- MacDonald, S. (2007). 'Working for the family'. *Human Resource Management Journal*, **17**: 2, 118–133.
- Malhotra, P. and Singh, M. (2015). Linking team leaders' human and social capital to their team members' career advancement (No. WP2015-03-24). [PubMed](#) Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, Research and Publication Department.
- Manolova, T.S., Manev, I.M. and Gyoshev, B.S. (2014). 'Friends with money? Owner's financial network and new venture internationalization in a transition economy'. *International Small Business Journal*, **32**: 8, 944-966.
- Mansor, S., Ariffin, H.D.F., Baharudin, M.H.M. and Hamzah, Z. (2015). The relationship between role conflict as internal barrier and career advancement among women in banking sector. First International Conference on Economics and Banking (ICEB-15)
- Marshall, G. (1998). 'Interactionism'. *A dictionary of sociology*, (accessed 15 October 2015) from Encyclopedia.com: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-interactionism.html>
- Martin, P. and Barnard, A. (2013). 'The experience of women in male-dominated occupations: A constructivist grounded theory inquiry'. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde*, **39**: 2, 1099–1119.

- Mavin, S. (2008). 'Queen Bees, wannabees and afraid to bees: No more 'best enemies' for women in management?' *British Journal of Management*, **19**, S75–S84.
- McKenna, B., Verreyne, M. and Waddell, N. (2016). 'Locating gendered work practices: A typology'. *International Journal of Manpower*, **37**: 6, 1085–1107.
- Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press.
- Michailidis, M.P., Morphitou, R.N. and Theophylatou, I. (2012). 'Women at work equality versus inequality: Barriers for advancing in the workplace'. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **23**: 20, 4231–4245.
- Misner, I.R. and Morgan, D. (2000). *Masters of networking: Building relationships for your pocketbook and soul*, Marietta, Georgia: Bard Press.
- Morse, J.M. and Field, P. (1996). *Nursing research: The application of qualitative Approaches*, London, UK: Chapman and Hall.
- Murray, P. (2010). 'Gendered observations and experiences in executive women's work'. *Human Resource Management Journal*, **20**: 3, 277–293.
- Myers, M.D. (2013). *Qualitative research in business and management*, 2nd edn. London, UK, Sage Publications.
- Naser, K., Mohammed, W.R and Nuseibeh, R. (2009). 'Factors that affect women entrepreneurs: Evidence from an emerging economy'. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, **17**: 3, 225 – 247.
- Ndhlovu, T.P. and Spring, A. (2009). 'South African women in business and management: Transformation in progress'. *Journal of African Business*, **10**: 1, 31–49.
- Neuman, W.L. (2006). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*, 6th edn. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Orser, B., Spence, M., Riding, A. and Carrington, C.A. (2010). 'Gender and export propensity'. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, **34**: 5, 933–957.
- Peng, M.W., Wang, D.Y.L. and Jiang, Y. (2008). 'An institution-based view of international business strategy: A focus on emerging economies'. *Journal of International Business Studies*, **39**: 5, 920-936.
- Peus, C., Braun, S. and Knipfer, K. (2015). 'On becoming a leader in Asia and America: Empirical evidence from women managers'. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **26**: 1, 55-67.

- Patwardhan, V., Mayya, S. and Joshi, H.G. (2016). 'Barriers to career advancement of women managers in Indian five star hotels: A gender perspective'. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, **6**: 2, 248-271.
- Patton, M.Q. (2014). 'Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice'. 4th edn. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication.
- Phillips, N., Tracey, P. and Karra, N. (2013). 'Building entrepreneurial tie portfolios through strategic homophily: The role of narrative identity work in venture creation and early growth'. *Journal of Business Venturing*, **28**: 1, 134–150.
- NVivo qualitative data analysis Software; QSR International Pty Ltd. Version 10, 2010. Ragins, B.R. and Sundstrom, E. (1989). 'Gender and power in organizations: A longitudinal perspective'. *Psychological bulletin*, **105**: 1, 51.
- Ramadani, V., Gërguri, S., Dana, L.P. and Tašaminova, T. (2013). 'Women entrepreneurs in the Republic of Macedonia: waiting for directions'. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, **19**: 1, 95-121.
- Ramli, H. S. B., Chin, A. L. L., & Choo, A. C. P. (2016). Career success for women in higher education institution: The factors influencing the success of women academician. *International Business Management*, **10**: 17, 3929-3935.
- Rasdi, R.M., Garavan, T.N. and Ismail, M. (2013). 'Networking behaviours and managers' career success in the Malaysian public service: The moderating effect of gender'. *Personnel Review*, **42**: 6, 684 – 703.
- Rashid, R. (2010). 'The battle for female talent in emerging markets'. *Harvard Business Review*, **88**: 5, 101-106.
- Rastetter, D. and Cornils, D. (2012). 'Networking: Aufstiegsforderliche strategien für frauen in fuhrungspositionen'. *Gruppendynamik und organizationsberatung*, **43**: 1, 43–61.
- Reagans, R. (2011). 'Close encounters: Analyzing how social similarity and propinquity contribute to strong network connections'. *Organization Science*, **22**: 4, 835–849.
- Rezania, D. and Ouedraogo, N. (2014). 'Organization development through ad hoc problem solving: A case of knowledge transfer capacity development in an ERP implementation project'. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, **7**: 1, 23–42.
- Russo, G. and Hassink, W. (2012). 'Multiple glass ceilings'. *Industrial Relations*, **51**: 4, 892–915.

- Rutashobya, L.K., Allan, I.S. and Nilsson, K. (2009). 'Gender, social networks, and entrepreneurial outcomes in Tanzania'. *Journal of African Business*, 10: 1, 67–83.
- Sandberg, S. and Chávez, A.M. (2014). 'Bossy,' the other B-word. Confident girls are often called the other B-word'. *The Wall Street Journal*, Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304360704579419150649284412> (accessed August 1, 2016).
- Scott, J. and Marshall, G. (2009). *A dictionary of sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scott, K. and Liew, T. (2012). 'Social networking as a development tool: A critical reflection'. *Urban Studies*, **49**: 12, 2751–2767.
- Shrivastava, S., Selvarajah, C., Meyer, D. and Dorasamy, N. (2014). 'Exploring excellence in leadership perceptions amongst South African managers'. *Human Resource Development International*, **17**: 1, 47–66.
- Siddique, C.M. (2014). 'Impediments to market orientation: An exploratory study of retail SMEs in the United Arab Emirates'. *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, **7**: 1, 33-56.
- Silverman, D. (Ed.). (2016). *Qualitative research*, London, U.K.: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Skaggs, S., Stainback, K. and Duncan, P. (2012). 'Shaking things up or business as usual? The influence of female corporate executives and board of directors on women's managerial representation'. *Social Science Research*, **41**: 4, 936–948.
- Srivastava, S.B. (2015). 'Network intervention: Assessing the effects of formal mentoring on workplace networks'. *Social Forces*, **94**: 1, 427-452.
- Stats.SA. (2013). 'Gender statistics in South Africa, 2011'. Statistics South Africa. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-10-05/Report-03-10-052011.pdf>
- Stryker, S. (1968). 'Identity salience and role performance: The relevance of symbolic interaction theory for family research'. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, **30**: 4, 558–564.
- Stryker, S. (1980). *Symbolic interactionism: A social structural version*, Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin-Cummings Publishing Company.

- Tan, J. (2008). 'Breaking the "bamboo curtain" and the "glass ceiling": the experience of women entrepreneurs in high-tech industries in an emerging market'. *Journal of Business Ethics*, **80**: 3, 547-564.
- Tatli, A., Vassilopoulou, J. and Özbilgin, M. (2013). 'An unrequited affinity between talent shortages and untapped female potential: The relevance of gender quotas for talent management in high growth potential economies of the Asia Pacific region'. *International Business Review*, **22**:3, 539-553.
- Tedmanson, D., Verduyn, K., Essers, C. and Gartner, W.B. (2012). 'Critical perspectives in entrepreneurship research'. *Organization*, **19**: 5, 531-541.
- Tlaiss, H. and Kauser, S. (2011). 'The impact of gender, family, and work on the career advancement of Lebanese women managers'. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, **26**: 1, 8-36.
- Tomlinson, J., Muzio, D., Sommerlad, H., Webley, L. and Duff, L. (2013). 'Structure, agency and career strategies of white women and black and minority ethnic individuals in the legal profession'. *Human Relations*, **66**: 2, 245-269.
- Torrance, H. (2012). 'Triangulation, respondent validation, and democratic participation in mixed methods research'. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, **6**: 2, 111-123.
- Trinidad, C. and Normore, A.H. (2005). 'Leadership and gender: a dangerous liaison?' *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, **26**: 7:574-590.
- Wells, B.L., Pfantz, T.J. and Bryne, J.L. (2003). 'Russian women business owners: Evidence of entrepreneurship in a transition economy'. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, **8**: 1, 59-71.
- Xesha, D., Iwu, C.G. and Slabbert, A. (2014). 'Business relationships as a driver of success for small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in South Africa'. *Journal of Economics*, **5**: 1, 37-43.
- Zanoni, P., Janssens, M., Benschop, Y. and Nkomo, S.M. (2010). 'Guest editorial: Unpacking diversity, grasping inequality: rethinking difference through critical perspectives'. *Organization*, **17**, 9-29.

Table 1: Profile of participants

Focus group (FG)	Average age	Cultural background	Industry
FG 1 8 participants	35-44	Caucasian Black African (Tswana and Xhosa)	Financial risk administration Property sales Speaker and trainer Credit management consultancy Banking institution
FG 2 6 participants	45-54	Caucasian Black African (Tswana and Xhosa) Coloured	Industrial Media consultant Adult education Supply chain and logistics Jewelry design Financial services Retirements planning
FG 3 7 participants	45-54	Caucasian Black African (Sotho and Xhosa) Indian	Multinational logistics Retail Mining Design and technology Automotive industry
FG 4 8 participants	45-54	Caucasian Black African Pakistani	Financial services Insurance industry Manufacturing Services
FG 5 7 participants	45-54	Caucasian Black African	Retail Trade Research and development
FG 6 4 participants	35-44	Caucasian	Design Services

Table 2: Main themes and quotes grouped by NVivo and content analysis

Research Questions	Themes	Subthemes	Additional themes	Illustrative quotes	Literature support
Describe your networking process.	Network: proactive relationships with interaction towards career development and advancement.	Network approach: strategic choices and actions	Strategic engagement: conscious and proactive planning of networking interactions	<p>“One needs to have an objective. When you network, why do you network? Why am I going to that party? I am going to that party because I need to get 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. I realize that I'm not going in there and start asking people for deals, I'm going to start real relationships with those people and then that relationship will reciprocate, because when you go there with, an objective in mind, if why you are going to network, then at the end of the day you know that you meet people.”</p> <p>“I strongly believe that you go and network with an objective in mind. Then you get something out of it, or you go out there for fun or you go out there because you are lonely, you know, you just need people...”</p>	Networks are important for strategy (Malhotra and Singh, 2015) and women need to plan networking for career success and advancement (Xesha et al., 2014).
			Networking success factors: measuring success of the interactions	<p>“To participate to the best of one’s ability in a variety of events. To contribute one’s skills and experience where these can be used for the benefit of the organization and its membership. To remain in good standing, to treat fellow members with respect and consideration.”</p> <p>“You have to find out what they do and how it will fit with what you need, if there is no purpose I think it is a waste of time.”</p>	Success factors include trust, dependency commitment, and good rapport (Choi, 2015). An overall openness and clear objectives with networking can also improve its effectiveness (Bogaards et al., 2012).
		Network types: defining different relationships	Influential networks: important connections that should be included	<p>“I think people need to decide why they are networking, like for me a good networking experience is going somewhere and meeting someone great, who you connect with and share your values”</p> <p>“Relationships have become even more critical and corporate do not understand how important relationships are.”</p>	Women often network ineffectively because it most often occurs with other women, it lacks influence, and it is limited in providing useful mentoring and other benefits. (Browne, 2000), and limitations on their usefulness for mentoring and other purposes (Eagly and Carli, 2007).
			Diverse networks: variety of connections that needs to be included	<p>“I think women have the ability to develop big and strong networks because they have so many touch points.”</p> <p>“From time to time I do get referrals from not just social or formal networks but from existing clients.”</p> <p>“I think that when you start a business it is the first place where you must look at your immediate social network. I think the days are over where people say that you do not do business with family and friends, those days are long gone.”</p>	Social networking relationships offer a range of value propositions (Bogaards et al., 2012). By being part of the network, the women can access, transfer and embed information and adapt their networking strategies, but by doing so they also risk being excluded by others (Licumba, Dzator and Zhang 2015). Diverse connections bring more

					opportunity and richer information to a network (Haas et al., 2012).
What is important in your network?	Social interactionism: what is important as part of your networking and how do you see yourself in this process	Identity: how you perceive yourself	Self-esteem issues: low versus high self-esteem issues impacting on your interactions	“Women have self-esteem issues. It originated probably in the 70s, where women were expected to stay at home. I think women still have this mindset most of the time about their own ability and about what is expected of them.”	Self-objection, stereotyping by other women and sexism in the workplace may still negatively impact on self-esteem and career development (Bombuwela and Alwis, 2013; Bradley-Geist et al., 2015).
			Self-confidence: personal reflection	“I think woman also tend to feel intimidated when networking in a male environment”. “You have to learn to handle yourself, be passionate about what you do and want to sell it to others. You have to believe in it.”	Self-doubt, lack of confidence and family responsibilities cause women to limit their careers (Bastian and Zali, 2016).
			Self-knowledge: how you perceive your value	“It’s been a journey to discover that I’m still learning what works and what doesn’t and what works for me is going to be different from what works for you.” “Your background and networking experience influence your conversations at a networking event.”	Factors that could influence women’s networking include personal upbringing and past experience (Kaufmann, 2011).
		Interaction: actions taken and the actual process	Guilt and pressure: self and externally imposed	“Women are afraid of failure and I think more women should see it differently, learn from the experience and move on.” “Those of us with kids and having that responsibility — you feel guilty about networking after hours even more.”	Women need to “balance the demands of traditional family life with managerial responsibilities”, establish networking and maintain it and offer mentoring (Kerbo, 2006: 299). Women have been mentored in traditional roles such as caregiver or homemakers, but not as much in leadership positions (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2010). Women experience higher levels of distress, guilt and stress (Hewlett and Rashid, 2011) in their attempts to balance work-family life and adhere to societies expectations (Adame et al., 2016).
			Social interaction: the actual process and	“Women cannot communicate their worth; they cannot market themselves. They need to open up themselves” “Women should be able to achieve so much more, since they are paying attention. They should be able to do so much more with the information	Connecting people to others increases the value created by a network and participants’ own value as connectors (Cross, 2011). The literature supports the

			actions taken	they get for their connections.” “Women do not express themselves always as clearly. We need to learn to say exactly what we want and not be shy to ask for it.”	importance of understanding one’s own ability and to find one’s unique networking approach to develop social capital as an important and valuable skill (Phillips, Tracey and Karra <i>et al.</i> , 2013).
Identify and describe the challenges to your networking efforts.	Emerging economy – patriarchal cultural expectations	Institutional environment masculine working environment	Dis-advantage: unfavourable circumstance	“I come from a background where I had to struggle to get where I am. I know of a lot of people that do not have the advantages of having access to a computer, a bank and networks, they face a real challenge.”	Distinct gender role differences, and women lacking education in underdeveloped infrastructures are some of the issues that women face in these economies (Birdie and Kumar, 2015; Rutashobya et al., 2009).
			Equity - perceived unequal chances of success	“Personally, in my working environment I do not actively network well. Women do not feel supported by networks, whereas men in our work environment do.” “I looked at the structures in our organization, and was very conscious of the fact that women weren’t well represented in the senior structures, on executive and the level below. There are lots of obstacles for them to be successful, so along the way, they throw in the towel and there is not great support for when they do encounter obstacles.”	Barriers that impede female management and career advancement include internal and external pressures (Tatli <i>et al.</i> , 2013), stereotypes (Ibarra et al., 2013), and disproportionate work-home responsibility (Eagly and Carli, 2007).
			Opportunity	“You should know who is who and what they might bring to the table, women should not just make contact, they need to learn how to link people and get to know them for what and who they are.” “I think I have seen so many women that crash and burn in their networking since they do not have experience. They do not take the opportunities as they come up to learn, other appear desperate and not confident at all.”	The literature mentions that role conflict and stereotyping in a society influence the level of support that is available and accessible for women (Blanch and Aluja, 2012; Hewlett and Rashid, 2010).
			Male-dominated environment	“Networking in a male-orientated industry is also not easy. It is not an easy world to be in, for a female.” “I think females also tend to feel intimidated when networking in a male environment.”	Women entering male dominated workplaces (Gress and Paek, 2014) must work hard to break through ceiling of stereotyping to attain leadership roles (Cook and Glass, 2014, Livingstone et al., 2014).
		Social environment	Familiarity	“In the current South Africa that we live in I think the trend is actually to do business with people that you trust and know than with people that are strangers, because people can get bitten quit badly. When you do work for people in your social network, you try just that much harder, because you	Social networks consist of friends, family, and close and strong connections. These connections know the individual very well and this familiarity applies to

				do not want them to think that your company is letting them down. I think you try harder when referrals come from your social network.”	business networks, which these connections make easier to build (Haas <i>et al.</i> , 2012). Women use these diverse network connections for support and to access information (Hughes <i>et al.</i> , 2012).
			Queen Bee versus supportive	<p>“It depends how women view the threat of other women as competition in business. Accept each other’s strengths and walk the same road without feeling threatened.”</p> <p>“I think it depends how the woman actually view, the threat of their competition in another woman’s business. I will agree that that perception of threat comes in certain instances.”</p> <p>“I think only in some instances and amongst certain groups there’s a huge conflict on that issue. One group of business women feels very strongly that women are really nasty to one another and don’t support one another and then there’s the other group that feels equally strongly or stronger that they do really support one another and will do whatever they can to help one another.”</p>	Senior women influence career choices and access to development opportunities by junior women. The Queen Bee syndrome occurs when senior women feel threatened or make it harder for junior women to succeed (Derks et al, 2011).