

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**A phenomenological investigation of a female leader's
perceptions and experience of discrimination in the work place**

Submitted by

Nonceba Mabovula

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Masters in Education
(Education Leadership and Management)

April 2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to various people for their cooperation without which this piece of work would not have been completed.

To the lady who is the subject of this study and whom it was a delight to interview. It was through her cooperation and willingness to be part of this study that I was able to explore and understand female leadership more deeply than ever before.

To my supervisor, Prof. Hennie van der Mescht, for helping me from the initial stages of this research, for his patience, encouragement and valued assistance throughout my entire study.

To my mentor at work Dr Eric Akrofi, whose professional guidance and patience is highly appreciated. Also my dear colleagues Yolie, Ma J, Bandla, Bulie, Pototo and Lunie and my brothers and sisters for their support.

To Dr Clive Smith and Pam Marshall for their encouragement. Also my classmates Amos, Daniel, Hillary, Rodgers, Toto and Philip for being their only flower and for their support when the going got tough.

To my husband Linda (Dolophu), my children and entire family for helping me when problems seemed to overcome my courage and for forfeiting their time so that I could finish my studies.

To my mother (Mbotho) who prayed for me throughout my journeys to Grahamstown.

Finally, to God with Whom all things are possible and from Whom there came the strength to begin and complete this Masters thesis.

ABSTRACT

Women are now making their mark in virtually every economic sector including traditionally male strongholds of engineering, heavy transport, construction and manufacturing. Probably the most spectacular progress by women has been in the public sector. Many women now have voting rights, follow careers which demand that they work outside of the home, enjoy professional status equal to their male compatriots, occupy top leadership positions in their societies and, furthermore, fulfil their traditional roles of wife and mother.

The present study is an attempt to explore a female leader's perceptions and experience of discrimination in her place of work. The problem has been that although there have been significant changes in women's increased representation in recent years, it is believed that women who succeed in obtaining top management posts still have to deal with unfair barriers. These need to be more carefully explored and understood. In this study I focus on one female leader's perceptions and experiences of leadership in an institution of higher learning. The advantages and disadvantages of such a small case study are discussed later.

A phenomenological approach was used for obtaining information pertaining to the phenomenon "female leadership", because phenomenology does offer ways of understanding not offered by other research methodologies. It enables the researcher to enter the lived world of the researched, and understand events and perceptions from a fresh point of view. A semi-structured interview was used to allow the respondent freedom to elaborate on responses in whatever manner she wished.

The results obtained indicate that women are in a life-world in which, apart from the general experiences shared with their male counterparts, they are also exposed to many other forms of discrimination. Some of these are subtle, and result from years of socialisation into perceived gender role expectations. I hope that what I have discovered may help to contribute to the small but growing body of literature that seeks to

understand women leaders' experiences, and perhaps in time play a role in enhancing their relative position in education and society at large.

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CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The turbulence of the 19th century heralded an awakening to the plight of women and set the scene for some elements of change. This new assertion by women occurred despite the traditional male attitudes (Sutherland 1984: 11 quoted by Greyvenstein 1996). Most people are generally aware of the dramatic changes in recent years in the number of women pursuing professional careers of all types, but especially as managers.

Jegede, Mphuthi, Khabele & Jegede (1996) maintain that of late, it has become obvious that urbanisation and industrialisation are fast removing the perception that a woman can be kept as a domestic servant. In urban areas, the individual worker as opposed to the family unit determines economic life. It is this reality that led to the declaration of 1975 as international Women's year. According to Jegede *et al.* (1996), this declaration highlights the need to bridge the gap of gender inequality in access to education, economic, political and professional advancement.

According to Lemmer & Badenhorst (1997), the most radical change observed has been the increased participation of women in paid employment. This trend which is now extremely well documented is regarded as the most significant labour market development. In South Africa, for example, during the past five years factors such as labour legislation, smaller families and economic pressure have seen more women joining the labour market, which has obviously given them more economic power.

Chanley, the winner of the Business Woman of the year, says in Finance Week (September 2000) that women who are traditionally forever busy with work, family responsibilities and related matters, make a success of careers, especially top positions, precisely because of these pressures. Combining a high-powered office job with

motherhood is a constant challenge. Yet despite such achievements and despite such increased representation in management and leadership positions, it is believed that women are still being discriminated against and are experiencing some forms of subordination in their places of work. For example, their actions may be evaluated as being representative of the way all women work particularly if they make a mistake or error of judgement. When their actions are positive, they are regarded as ordinary and normal and seldom as someone who deserves special mention, encouragement and praise. It is also alleged that in order for women to succeed in traditionally male dominated territory they are sometimes forced to make use of predominantly male patterns of behaviour and then they are accused of masculine behaviour, or violating gender role norms.

What encourages me to undertake this study is that research that has been conducted in various places coupled with my experience as a female teacher show that while there are often marked similarities across countries and institutions in women's status and experiences, women may interpret their situations differently and have different perceptions of discrimination. In other words, while similar problems can be seen around the world, women often interpret their situations differently, giving different weight to issues. I am therefore encouraged to explore this ground.

Although different careers for women are more readily socially accepted today than in the past, relatively few women consciously set out to win promotion to leadership and management position. Consequently there is no shortage of statistical evidence to prove that women remain concentrated in what are perceived as "female" occupation, are paid less than their male counterparts, are less likely to be promoted, and remain under-represented in positions of management and leadership. It is this last-mentioned phenomenon – the paucity of women leaders in both leadership and management positions particularly in the education sector – that is the focus of this study.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THIS RESEARCH

At the present moment, the number of both national and international researchers who have focused on female feelings and experiences regarding discrimination, specifically using interpretive research approaches, is minimal. Few of the existing studies adequately incorporate how women practically experience such discrimination, how they actually feel, how they endure, and how some of them ultimately triumph. Two studies (Ngcobo 1996, and Mwingi 2000), which have prompted me to do this study, are worth mentioning here. Both are qualitative studies of women in the workplace, aimed at gaining in-depth understanding of how female leaders experience leadership and the discrimination which so often accompanies it. Their personalised and richly written accounts have encouraged me to emulate their efforts, it is only when a sufficiently large number of qualitative studies have been undertaken that a more complete picture of the phenomenon of gender discrimination may emerge.

1.3 RESEARCH GOALS

The concern of this study is to explore a female leader's perceptions and experience of discrimination in her place of work. The reason behind this is that despite increased representation of women in management and leadership positions, studies of women by researchers like Greyvenstein & Van der Westhuizen (1992) maintain that women in top management are experiencing a feeling of loneliness, isolation and lack of acceptance as a result of subtle actions of rejection on the part of both male and female peers and subordinates.

1.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Since I am particularly interested in engaging with a female leader's perceptions and lived experience, a phenomenological approach seemed to be an appropriate one to adopt. I think it is essential that I employ an approach that would encourage me to distance myself from what may be an emotional issue, and to "allow a phenomenon to speak for itself" (Van der Mescht 1996:44).

In order to achieve this purpose, the in-depth, semi-structured interview was identified as an appropriate tool with which to gain entry into the participant's lived world, and make meaning of that world through dialogue (Seidman 1991). Semi-structured interviews allow the respondents freedom to elaborate on responses in whatever manner they wish. They also allow a researcher to move from specific questions to unplanned prompts. These prompts are very useful in encouraging open communication as well as insisting on remaining with the "concrete", a vital ingredient of phenomenological interviewing (Valle and King 1978: 6).

Data analysis is a process of unlocking information hidden in the raw data and transforming it into something useful and meaningful. In this study the interview protocol was reduced to natural meaning units, which form the basis for situated descriptions of the respondent's experience of the phenomenon. I shall elaborate on these steps in Chapter 3 of this study.

1.5 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Phenomenology

The word phenomenology will be used in this study to refer to a research approach in which the researcher attempts to "bring to light" that which may be covert or implied. According to Giorgi (1999) the term "phenomenology" comes from the word

“phenomenon” which means, “to make manifest” or “to bring to light”. This means that phenomenology is the process whereby whatever is given or appears is investigated in order to reveal its structure or principle of organisation.

Bracketing

“Bracketing is primarily a method of idealist philosophy, part of a quest for unassailable truths which will form the basis for a reform of understanding” Husserl (1973 cited in Ashworth 1999: 708). According to Ashworth (1999) the process of bracketing refers not to a turning away from the world and a concentration on detached consciousness but to a resolve to set aside theories, research presuppositions and ready-made interpretations. This is done in order to reveal engaged, lived experience.

Protocols

According to Heath (2000) these are the experiential statements in the participant’s own words which are expressed by the respondent during the interview session.

Natural Meaning Units

These are the central themes, which form the basis for general and situated descriptions of the respondent’s experience of the phenomenon. These natural occurring units called Natural Meaning Units (NMUs) ‘represent specific thoughts, feelings, or perceptions, as expressed by the participant’ (Heath 2000: 55).

Gender discrimination

This means that either of the sexes is not enjoying the same benefits as the other. There is inequality in the treatment of one of the sexes, for example either males or females enjoy better working conditions than the other. In this study I argue that men enjoy better working conditions than women. There is a marked inequality in the treatment of both sexes. In the workplace, for example, female discrimination occurs to a greater extent because of traditional male and female gender roles. Men’s activities, privileges, responsibilities and resources are more highly valued than women’s are. This kind of experience I believe occurs across racial categories and groups as studies across the

world show that men and women do not receive equal preparation for formal wage employment.

Gender subordination

Gender subordination within organisational contexts refers to women's lack of institutional and decision-making power.

1.6 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH

The first chapter explains the rationale for undertaking the study. The focus and significance of the study on women in leadership and management highlighting the description of female feelings and experiences as its research question or goal, and a very brief rationale on the use of phenomenology as its methodology, are addressed.

Chapter two is the literature review. Selected literature on female leadership and leadership theory relevant to the research question and topic is explored to develop themes through theory explication.

Chapter three discusses the research methodology. Here the rationale for the use of a phenomenological approach through the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews is justified and fully explained.

Chapter four is the presentation of the data. Here the interview protocols are reduced to natural meaning units. The natural meaning units form the basis of the description that helps to reveal thoughts, feelings or perceptions as expressed by the participant.

Chapter five is a discussion of my findings. This is done through reference to already existing literature from other researchers as a commentary on, or critique of, the data presented in chapter four.

Finally, the last chapter provides a synopsis of the study by drawing conclusions from the findings, making recommendations and presenting a critique of the study.

CHAPTER 2

FEMALE LEADERSHIP

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The world is fast changing: so also values and beliefs are changing. Technology has had a dramatic influence on our world outlook in recent years. However, there is a deep-seated belief to which, despite the realization by many of its 'out-datedness', people still seem to hold fast. This is the slavish treatment of women as a result of the widely held beliefs of gender inequality (Jegade *et al.* 1996: 49).

The above quotation serves as a prelude to this review of literature on female leadership. I feel that the last sentence of the quotation, while being somewhat emotional and perhaps exaggerated, nevertheless reflects commonly held beliefs of societies. I want to argue that the effects of gender discrimination are more complex and subtle than are evident in statistical evidence of women's progress in the workplace: rather, it is a mindset into which we have been socialised. Mwingi (2000: 3) makes the point forcefully:

Equity is more than just numbers. In the case of school leadership, equity means more than additional female school principals. According to Wamahu (1996) equity is the conscious endeavour to break away from the pedagogy of difference that is the order inherent in deeply seated patriarchal societies towards a pedagogy that includes a different ideology; one that embraces and is responsive to the views, vision and aspirations of the minority group. In the case of women in leadership, equity would entail a pedagogy of empowerment where the status and gender roles of women are recognized on precepts other than biological differences and religious traditions. This means that gender equity should be translated beyond the mere numerical increase of women, beyond merely window dressing the issue.

This chapter will attempt to examine the roots of this process through a consideration of five key areas. First I present a picture of imbalances between men and women both in this country (South Africa) and abroad, particularly revealing male dominance in

leadership and management and the impact of such dominance upon women. Secondly, the historical background to patriarchy is highlighted. Thirdly, leadership as a gendered construction is discussed, and, lastly an analysis is made of how women are positioned in leadership theory.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

According to the Central Statistical Services of 1988, here in South Africa, in the late 1980s women constituted 17,4% of all managerial executive and administrative posts. Following this report the Breakwater Monitor found that 93,2% of all management positions were held by men, and a mere 6,8% by women (Ngcobo 1996). A more recent study by the Private Sector (Gaps) in Finance Week (September 2000) assessed more than 100 top companies and produced similar results. To justify their positions the companies cited women's poor skill levels as the main barrier to their advancement.

The global picture is also slanted in favour of men. Women occupy a very small proportion of the higher-level positions in industry generally (Isaacs 1995: 1). Data collected from a wide variety of sources in the USA reveal startling facts. For example, a 1988 study found that only three CEOs among the Fortune 1000, and only 1.7% of the COOs, CFOs, and executive VPs were women (White 1992 in Isaacs 1995). A more recent United Kingdom study revealed that of a female workforce of 61%, a mere eight of the 1178 directors of FTSE 100 companies had made it to executive ranks (*Finance Week* 2000: 46).

Statistics quoted by Greyvenstein & Van der Westhuizen (1992) confirmed this gender bias in educational management in countries such as the USA, the UK, and South Africa. A study by Greyvenstein (2000: 31), for example, showed that fewer than 1% of secondary school principals in South Africa were women. The same pattern appears in the academic world. Tothill (1998: 1) described women academics in South Africa, as elsewhere, as over-represented at the lower levels of the academic hierarchy and under-

represented at the higher. During 1997 the Center for Science Development's (CSD's) Women-in-Research project conducted a survey on the position of women in Higher Education Universities in South Africa. The data confirmed that senior positions in academia were largely filled by males (only 2.1% of deans, 8% of professors, 13.9% of associate professors 24.8% of senior lecturers were women (Lund 1998: 10-16 in Greyvenstein 2000). Looking abroad again according to Isaacs (1995: 2) women make up 10% of both assistant and associate CS professors but only 4% of the full professors, a rank that generally takes about 10 years to achieve (Gries and Marsh 1992 cited in Isaacs 1995: 2). Data such as these are easy to find, and one could provide endless lists to make the point. I would, however, prefer to take this situation as given, and move on to some of the underlying reasons for how and why this has arisen.

2.3 THE ROOTS OF PATRIARCHY

An argument used by researchers (Greyvenstein 1996 and 2000, for example) suggests that this gender inequity is socially constructed and probably has common ties with religion and culture. A brief exploration of possible roots of gender stereotyping may be useful here.

2.3.1 HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION

According to Mwingi (2000: 10) Christian teaching as we know and receive it today is built on interpretations, and for every era there is a predominant thought. She argues that biblical interpretations of male and female roles in society provided clear distinctions, in both the old and new testament. According to Rockwood (1987: 3 in Greyvenstein 1996), philosophies propagated by the church leaders of the Old Testament time reflected male sexism, rooted in the interpretation of the scriptures.

The New Testament, too, provided ample 'justification' for patriarchy, such as the much quoted 'man is the head of the woman' (1 Corinthians 11: 3). Another area in the Bible where women are unequally treated is in education. For example, in 1 Timothy (2: 11), we

find that women are instructed to learn in silence with subjection. So, whatever women are taught, they should not question, but accept it in silence and subject themselves to it without any complaint or criticism.

The context in which pronouncements such as these were made is of course usually ignored by 'modern' readers. There may well have been a time when submissiveness and subordination on the part of women were appropriate (though not just), perhaps because women depended solely on men for survival. But now that women through employment can and do provide for their own survival, their children and sometimes even their husbands, such instructions are not justified. In this way scripture may be quoted out of context or fashioned to suit man's purposes (Jegade *et al.* 1996: 50). The chief point here is that the spread of Christianity encouraged the spread of unquestioning gender discrimination. Thus gender stereotyping is transferred from one generation to another generation in an unquestioned form via acculturation and socialisation (Greyvenstein 1996).

Greyvenstein (1996: 75) believed that the cultural and historical roots of male domination goes back to the early Greek and Roman era. The early Greeks and Romans favoured the intellectual development of males, stressing their patriarchal rights, duties and obligations (Zinserling, 1973: 48-49, Bullough, 1973: 50 in Greyvenstein 1996). The Greeks defined a women's role simply as that of wife and mother, which required little, if any formal education. The Romans had a slightly higher regard for women and viewed the education of women as a means of achieving motherhood (Clabaugh, 1986: 131 in Greyvenstein 1996).

2.3.2 AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE (PONDOLAND AREA)

My own background is equally powerfully steeped in patriarchy. In the Pondoland area the effects of gender discrimination are; I believe, just as complex as in other societies because gender ideology is too deeply entrenched. In our culture a man is still unquestioningly regarded as the head of the family. This has traditionally been the case.

Political systems simply reinforced these beliefs and practices. Under the Native Law, for example, the head of a kraal was responsible, to some extent, for the acts, torts, and debts of the members of his kraal. The woman, together with her children, were regarded as the property of a man whose superiority would continue until children set up kraals of their own. The position of a head of the family was regarded a surety for the good behaviour of the members of his family. His eldest son (the heir) would, during the father's absence from home, take charge of his family and also conduct legal proceedings (Seymour 1911). It was and is still held that an eldest son is liable on the death of his father, for the welfare of his mother's younger brothers and sisters while they are staying at home, for the reason that he is the heir of his deceased father, and as such their guardian, even if his mother is still alive.

According to the background where I grew up and lived until now, during the lifetime of their husbands, wives are looked upon as minors, and have no legitimate powers; for example the property earned by a wife during her husband's lifetime belongs to him, and she can lay no claim to it even if the man/husband neglects or divorces her. It is only now during this democratic period that such an act is challengeable in a court of law. However, while she is with him, such property is considered as belonging to her "house", which in fact would necessitate her being consulted before it could be disposed of (Seymour 1911: 72).

Husbands are legally permitted to marry more than one wife at a time. The first wife is called the "great wife" or "the wife of the principal house". She ranks above all other wives. Sometimes it happens that a "great wife" or other major wife is not blessed with children. In these cases another woman is placed in her house with the sole objective of raising the seed. The woman who has been brought in to raise the seed does not take the rank of the major wife. She could not claim the title of "great wife" instead she is called "iqadi", in fact, she is generally of no rank. It is worth mentioning that in Pondoland women can still not command power or influence and they remain under the guidance and supervision of their husbands or fathers if they remain unmarried (Seymour 1911).

2.3.3 MODERN AFRICAN SOCIETIES

The effect of this deeply entrenched stereotyped view of women, which has accumulated throughout history, appears to remain at the core of modern society. Consequently, most Africans (including those in other parts of the world) are believed to be living in a patriarchal world due to the fact that the work environment is also divided on the basis of gender (Jegede *et al.* 1996). As a result, some jobs have been termed 'masculine' while others were traditionally termed 'feminine'. For example, leadership/management is 'masculine' while domestic work and teaching are 'feminine'.

Here in South Africa, for example, until the 1960s, men and women received different signals about what was expected of them. According to Rosener (1990) women have been expected to be wives, mothers, community volunteers, teachers and nurses. She goes on to state that in all these roles, they are supposed to be cooperative, supportive, understanding and gentle service providers to others. At the same time men have to appear to be competitive, strong, tough, decisive, and in control.

Men and women have also had different career opportunities. Women were not expected to have careers or at least not the same kind of careers as men, so they either pursued different jobs or were simply denied opportunities men had. Because of this division of labour, women are often regarded as subordinate to men. Whenever they are engaged in paid jobs, it is usually in the classified 'women's jobs' which are less highly paid (see Greyvenstein 1996, 2000). Other well-paid jobs are out of the reach of women because those are regarded as 'masculine'. This gender division of labour in the internal domestic and external spheres is one of the most powerful symptoms of our socialisation into gender stereotyping. Since females remained in the household activities, they have been under-valued together with their occupations. According to Mijere (1995) this developed into personal prejudice, intolerance and mutual distrust and even hatred. This kind of intolerance becomes much more evident when women eventually opt for paid jobs as it manifests itself in all sorts of gender discrimination.

2.4 LEADERSHIP AS GENDERED

It is hardly surprising, then, that the picture of leadership that emerges from research conducted over the past century is predominantly male. Enomoto (2000) has made the point that most of the research on leadership and management has been conducted by men, on men, and for men. In this section I shall explore the implications of these developments in theory.

2.4.1 TRAIT THEORY

The earliest recorded formal studies of leadership were conducted along the lines of trait (or Great Man) thinking. Originating from the writings of Aristotle, trait theory holds that individuals were born with characteristics that would make them leaders (Berenice & Bahr 1988). The notion of charisma is generally thought to have developed from trait theory, since it is the presence of extraordinary characteristics (which cannot be taught or learned) that set charismatic leaders apart from the rest.

According to Max Weber (quoted by Berenice & Bahr 1988: 135):

Charisma is a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities not accessible to the ordinary person.

Because of arguments such as these, the trait approach dominated leadership research until the middle of this century. Naturally research was driven by the need to find out which traits could determine who would be leaders. However, the publications of Stogdill (1948, in Hoy & Miskel 1996) revealed that the trait approach by itself had yielded negligible and confusing results. Though there are certain qualities, characteristics and attitudes that are encountered in all good leaders, researchers (for example, Gibb 1954, cited in Hoy & Miskel 1996) concluded that the numerous studies of leaders had failed to find any consistent pattern of traits which characterise leaders. A list of qualities, no matter how complete, does not seem to provide the key to successful leadership.

Significantly though, the disappointingly short list of traits cited by Stogdill (Hoy & Miskel 1996) has a particularly strong male flavour, including qualities such as aggressiveness and confidence.

2.4.2 WOMEN AND TRAIT THEORY

It would be a mistake to assume that trait thinking is dead. As Blackmore (cited in Ngcobo 1996) reminds us:

People in positions of power-such as selection committees who appoint teachers to promotions posts-have continued to think in terms of the “great man” theory to justify the exclusion of women from leadership positions on the basis that most women do not possess ‘leadership qualities’ such as competitiveness, aggressiveness, rationality, forcefulness and independence (Ngcobo 1996: 10).

Such a view comes from a belief that the “tall and the big, the dominant, the aggressive, the masculine, and the visible are more likely to be chosen as leaders” (Fiedler 1967: 10). The same argument has been repeatedly used to explain selection procedures that are discriminatory on racial grounds (Ngcobo 1996). What is interesting here is that it is often semantics which confuse the issue; stereotyped thinking leads to the kinds of clichés that can conceal the truth. Enomoto (2000: 222), for example, finds the trait theory unhelpful. She reports that “traits that can be possessed by both sexes are often appraised differently in males and females”. In her findings aggressive males are described as “masculine, dominating, successful, heroic, capable, strong, forceful and manly” while aggressive females were thought to be “harsh, pushy, bitchy, domineering, obnoxious, emasculating, uncaring”. The person who is both a woman and an aggressive leader is thought to be a “tough bitch” or “a pushy broad, ” terms that are unbecoming, negative, and sexist (*Ibid.*). Conversely, to be “non-aggressive” is to be weak, soft, lacking in stamina and endurance, potentially less competitive and therefore not successful.

The contradiction suggests that one cannot be a woman leader and still be successful.

But these and similar traits have turned out to be rather poorly correlated with the attainment of leadership status. On the whole, research points to the conclusion that a person becomes a leader not only because of personality attributes, but also on the basis of various situational factors (what the job requires, who is available and so on) together with the interaction between the leader's personality and the situation. Thus researchers turned to a more thorough investigation of the situation, or context, in which leaders operate.

2.4.3 SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The 1960s and 70s were dominated by research testing the inter-relationship of person- and task-orientation to leadership. Hersey & Blanchard's (1988) model of situational leadership is one of the most influential theories dating from this period. In brief, the model postulates that leaders adjust their style according to the situation, in this case the maturity level of the followers. A richer exploration of "situation" was undertaken in Fiedler's (1967) "contingency" theory, where preferred leadership style is matched with the ideal situation. However, even Fiedler's complex model tends to reduce leadership to a transactional recipe, stressing its rational-technicist characteristics.

Again, though theory and thinking have advanced considerably beyond these behavioural models, we should not assume that practice has followed suit. As recently as 1996 an interesting exposition of university management by Leonard (1996 cited in Gold 1996) helps to account for the absence of women from senior administrative positions. Leonard describes the required style of management as technical, meaning that the central concerns are national competitiveness, universities as enterprises, quality and effectiveness. Anyone associated with tertiary education today would be familiar with the global push towards national and international quality control and accountability. According to Leonard the type of leadership most suited to these institutions is rational/technicist, where the leader drags the reluctant academic forward and where line management is supreme. In this approach to management students are positioned as clients to be serviced and accountability is very important. It is therefore assumed that

because men appear to know how to do things properly as if by instinct and women often have to struggle to find the correct answers only men would be capable of managing such institutions. Women who are in leadership positions are consequently viewed as followers, carrying out decisions and following the initiatives of others (men), whereas men are leaders who take the decisions and show the initiative Greyvenstein (1996).

2.4.4 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

It was not until 1978 that an important breakthrough was made in James McGregor Burns's publication of *Leadership*. The book moved away from what Burns (1978: 4) described as transactional leadership, "an exchange of one thing for another" (the rational-technicist approach) between leaders and followers. Burns argued the case for transformational leadership, as a kind of leadership which "seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower" (1978: 4). Burns claimed that "transforming leaders" recognise and exploit an existing need or demand of a potential follower. But, beyond that, the "transforming leader" looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of "transforming leadership" is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents.

"Transformational leaders", as explained by Hoy and Miskel (1996: 393), are leaders who:

... (identify) the need for change, create vision and muster commitment to the vision, concentrate on long-term goals, inspire followers to transcend their own interest for higher order goals, change the organization to accommodate their vision rather than without the existing one and to mentor followers to take responsibility for their own development and that of others.

Transformational leadership therefore operates out of deeply held value systems that include such values as justice and integrity. By expressing their personal standards, transformational leaders are able to unite followers and to change followers, their goals

and beliefs. They inspire followers to transcend their own self-interests for a higher collective purpose.

Burns drew on larger-than-life figures from history, such as Moses, to construct his model of transformational leadership. He included women in his list of super-human leaders (Joan of Arc, for example), but, while conceding that a “male bias is reflected in the false conception of leadership as mere command or control” (Burns 1978: 50), significantly fails to mention the path-breaking work of Mary Parker Follett (1941, cited in Enomoto 2000). Follett’s work was a forceful attack on the prevailing machine metaphor that dominated organisational thinking in the early decades of the 20th century. Indeed, researchers such as Enomoto (2000) and Mwingi (2000) believe that current leadership thinking (with its emphasis on individuals and person-orientation) springs from the pioneering work of Follett.

Interestingly, research by both Rosener (1990) and Mwingi (2000) indicate that women are more likely to be transformational in their leadership than men. Women respondents in a study conducted by Rosener (1990) described themselves in ways that characterise “transformational” leadership, such as getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal. Moreover, they ascribe their power to personal characteristics like charisma, interpersonal skills, hard work, or personal contracts rather than to organisational stature. Women tend to adopt a more democratic or participative style than men. These findings articulate well with Follett’s work, and are also consistent with contemporary thinking on leadership generally such as in Sergiovanni’s (1994) “community” metaphor. According to Rosener (1990) a participatory style helps organisational members to respond creatively to change. She went so far as to claim that women had qualities that intrinsically made them good school principals.

2.5 INTERACTIVE LEADERSHIP

The term “interactive” was coined by Rosener (1990), arguing that the traditional command-and-control style was becoming outdated, and that a new interactive style was necessary. Judging from what has been said, it is believed that women are more inclined to use the interactive leadership style. Rosener (1990) called this style “interactive leadership” because such women actively work to make their interactions with subordinates positive for everyone involved. It is therefore, believed that women encourage participation, share power and information, enhance other people’s self-worth, and get others excited about their work. In addition, allowing employees to contribute and to feel powerful and important is felt to be a win-win situation for the employees and the organisation. It is also believed that women leaders perform best when they feel good about themselves and their work, and they try to create situations that contribute to that feeling. They create mechanisms that get people to participate and they use a conversational style that sends signals inviting people to get involved.

Despite such dominance, discrimination and other barriers which still exist, there are women who have come up through the ranks of a male world and progressed through the corporate and academic ladders. According to Rosener (1990: 119), women managers who have broken the glass ceiling in medium sized, non-traditional organisations have proven that effective leaders should not be expected to emanate from one angle but from other angles as well. Women have demonstrated that using the command and control style of managing others, a style generally associated with men in large, traditional organisations, is not the only way to succeed. There is, thus, a growing body of literature that presents an alternative picture, in which the special qualities women bring to the workplace are celebrated and valued.

2.6 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Despite the ingrained stereotyping of women, the mid-20th century has heralded tremendous progress in women's issues in many parts of the world. According to Kroeze (1987: 184) cited in Greyvenstein (1996),

Many women now have voting rights: follow careers which demand that they work outside of the home: enjoy professional status equal to their male compatriots: occupy top leadership positions in their societies and furthermore fulfil their traditional roles of wife and mother.

Epstein (1991: 152) confirms the above statement by pointing out that "some women are breaking the glass ceiling, are being paid the same salaries as their male peers, and are able to balance home and family". She goes on to add that they seem to work in organisations where their attributes and contributions are valued and rewarded, without regard to leadership styles. Nowadays women are seen as having desirable leadership attributes and styles (Epstein 1991). This new generation of women are now breaking new ground ignoring some of the "rules of conduct" that spelt success for men. Rosener (1990: 119) puts it like this:

Now a second wave of women is making its way into top management not by adopting the style and habits that have proved successful for men but by drawing on the skills and attitudes they developed from their shared experience as women.

Siegel (cited in Epstein 1991) concurs with Rosener and says that top women succeed because they are women, not in spite of it, therefore it is not appropriate to attach "male" and "female" labels to the two leadership styles. These female managers are drawing on what is unique to their socialisation as women and creating a different path to the top. They are seeking and finding opportunities in fast changing and growing organisations to show that they can achieve results in a different way.

2.7 THE MODERN ERA: CHANGES IN FAVOUR OF WOMEN

According to Jegede *et al.* (1996), a substantial number of women have proved beyond doubt that ‘what a man can do, a woman can do also’. Such have made their mark in history. A brief survey indicates that in almost all fields of human endeavour – such as medicine, business, education, sports, engineering politics and public service women have proved capable. These authors point out that one thinks of people such as Mother Theresa of India and Graça Machel, the wife of the former state president of South Africa; Queen Elizabeth II of England, Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, Golda Meir of Israel, Indira Nehru Gandhi of India, Junko Tabei of Japan, Sirimaya Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, and Lady Diana of England.

South African women are also becoming an economic force to be reckoned with. The latest statistics from *Finance Week* (September 2000) show that whereas women made up only 34% of South Africa’s working population in 1990, this jumped to 40% in 1999. During the same year (1999), the number of women in Parliament and in the Cabinet increased from 26% to 29,8% five years ahead of the target for achieving 30%. And in terms of Deputy Ministers, President Thabo Mbeki has set a new record by appointing women to 61% of key positions (outside of traditional women’s sectors such as social welfare). They also make up 69% of employees in the services sector (private and public) and fill 50% of clerical posts.

According to the millennium survey by the SA Institute for Race Relations cited in *Finance Week* (September, 2000), women had already dominated certain sectors by 1996. South Africa now has women Ministers in key portfolios such as foreign affairs, the public service, health, housing, mineral and energy and even defence. Women are also progressing well in the public corporations, filling many more top positions than five years ago. At management level in the private sector, women have generally not done so well. Though they now fill 28% of management posts, compared with 19% in 1990, the inadequate ratio is a source of concern for government and is receiving urgent attention from the Commission for Gender Equality.

It was Terblanche (1977) who indicated that the economy of South Africa could not function without women. He has been well supported by Ackermann (1984: 29, cited by Greyvenstein 1996) who claimed that South African history offered the opportunity for profound change, particularly towards an inclusive theological anthropology. Their wishes seem to be coming true because South African women have contributed to the advancement of humankind and development. Among such outstanding South African women is Frene Noshir Ginwala, the first woman speaker of the house of parliament from 1995 to date, and the first woman to hold this position; Helen Suzman a member of the parliament who fought for the oppressed South Africans; Dr Ellen Hellman, who was actively involved in the battle for African Advancement; Mrs Leila Reit, the first woman to become a member of the parliament in South Africa, who actively participated in channelling the cause of children; and Stella Nomzamo Sigcawu, who has served in various ministerial posts in politics with remarkable achievement (and of course still occupies one such position today) Jegede *et al.* (1996).

Of no less importance is Mamphela Ramphele, who was a Vice Chancellor and Principal at the University of Cape Town and who at the present moment is a senior official of the World Bank. Winnie Madikizela Mandela is a well-known politician in this country and is also a leader of the A.N.C Women's League. One thinks of Manto Tshabalala Msimang, the health minister, and Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, who recently chaired the world conference on racism in August 2001 in Durban. No doubt, these women and many more have contributed to society as much as (if not more than) men. And many more would have done so if they had had the same privileges. From such evidence, it seems likely that women, given the same opportunity as men, would perform well.

According to de Bruin in *Finance Week* (September 2000) women nowadays are even seen as more intelligent than men and better managers. He went on by stressing the word 'better'. 'Better with relationships, better with planning, setting goals and execution.' He repeated his message with the same conviction at the *Finance Week* videoconference in

Johannesburg, stressing the point that businesses ignore women and their purchasing power at their own peril.

What has been mentioned shows that women should not be seen or rated as second class citizens that are only good for some traditional fields of specialisation. This is because as indicated earlier, there is a growing belief that women are now performing better in some male-oriented subjects and workplace.

In conclusion, I do believe that it is indeed true that the effects of gender and the consequences of stereotyping are more complex and far reaching than one may see in mere names and numbers. Generally people have been so programmed and socialised by social structures, that they easily relegate women into roles of subservience and even social confinement, the result of which is that women's contribution to and membership of public leadership is not valued at all. Even though they now hold the same title and the same position as their male counterparts they are rarely viewed as equals by their male colleagues and by the communities at large.

It is possible that we are seeing the beginning of the end of this systematic and institutionalised inequality and oppression of women. As research has shown, and as is reflected in reality, women are making their mark in more ways than one. Perhaps the time has come when societies will no longer have to succumb and accept the position and status of women as a universal phenomenon and as a reality that existed for decades. This widespread gender stereotyping has, ironically, provided obstacles to the full development of both men and women because, as this study will hopefully show, women lead in ways that are not merely imitative of men.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 THE RATIONALE FOR A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

This section describes a phenomenological research approach method I employed, aiming at uncovering the process followed when doing this study.

3.1.2 BACKGROUND

According to Campbell (n.d.), phenomenology has its origins in the thinking of the German philosopher Husserl and the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, that which Crotty cited by Campbell (n.d.) calls the classical phenomenologist approach. According to Giorgi (1999: 69) the term “phenomenology” comes from the word “phenomenon” which means, “to make manifest” or “to bring to light”. This means that phenomenology is the process whereby whatever is given or appears is investigated in order to reveal its structure or principle of organisation.

3.2 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

Campbell (n.d.) maintains that with the development of positivist approaches phenomenology has been adopted by different disciplines as an appropriate way of exploring research questions, which lead to a different way of knowledge being constructed. In particular, phenomenology has become a way of researching the gaps in the discipline, those areas that previously were not considered important to research. But the fundamental point of departure of the phenomenological approach from traditional natural scientific research is thus; priority is given to the phenomenon under investigation rather than (this being secondary) to an already established methodological framework.

Because phenomenology does offer ways of understanding not offered by other research methodologies in recent years it has now been adopted by other disciplines, though initially it began as a philosophy characterised by its emphasis on consciousness.

3.3 LEBENSWELT – ESSENCES

Early followers of Husserl such as the German philosopher, Max Scheler, claimed that the task of phenomenology is to study essences. According to Van Manen cited in Campbell (n.d.) it is an exploration of the essence of lived experience, *Lebenswelt*.

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger, Husserl's colleague and most brilliant critic, claimed that phenomenology should make manifest what is hidden in ordinary, everyday experience. It must seek to obtain the typical essence or structure of a range of experiences in order to precisely try to understand the variations better. Judging from what the phenomenologists have already said, phenomenology claims to grasp the essence because to return to the variations with knowledge of the essence renders the variations more intelligible. Giorgi (1999) in agreement with Van Manen goes on to highlight the fact that phenomenologists do not seek essences merely for their own sake, but in order to make deeper sense of a multiple and varied concrete experiences. Giorgi (1999: 78) has this to say:

One first encounters variations of experiences, either empirically or imaginatively, and with the help of further free, imaginative variations, one tries to describe essence that withstands the variations, and then armed with the deeper clarity that the essence brings, one returns to the data base in order to classify, systematise and order the concrete experiences. Philosophically, the essence can be understood as that without which the phenomenon could not be what it is.

3.3.1 LEBENSWELT – INTENTIONALITY

As formulated by Husserl after 1910, phenomenology is the study of the structures of consciousness that enable consciousness to refer to objects outside itself. One of the structures of consciousness is intentionality, and being conscious means an intentional act

through which one lets the world appear to oneself. According to Van der Mescht (1996: 40) the term refers to “the fundamental action of the mind to stimuli which make up the real world in order to translate them into its realm of meaningful experience”.

Because the essence of consciousness is intentionality, this means that any object of consciousness transcends the act in which it appears. For example the object I see or hear transcends to consciousness and sometimes it is immanent to consciousness, but it always transcends the act in which it appears. This means that sometimes the object is wholly transcendent to consciousness and there it is restricted entirely to the mind, and then through consciousness the intended meaning is formed or translated into various meaningful experiences appearing to the mind of that particular individual.

The group of meanings resulting in this way characterises the intentional objects thus obtained. The central position of the individual in phenomenological thinking necessitates a careful and detailed description of his/her intentional object as the basis for an analysis and understanding of the phenomenon. By using phenomenology the researcher wishes to capture that deeper sense out of a multiple and varied concrete richness of that experience.

3.3.2 LEBENSWELT – DESCRIPTION

Phenomenologists claim that the phenomenological approach is descriptive in orientation. This claim has been endorsed by Kruger (1988 citing Giorgi 1986) that the operative word in phenomenological research is ‘describe’. According to the phenomenologist Heidegger, all phenomenologists should follow Husserl in attempting to use pure description. Thus, they must all subscribe to Husserl’s slogan “To the things themselves.” According to Aanstoos (1983: 248) the analysis must remain faithful to the descriptive nature of the data, to disclose its essential meaning directly rather than on the basis of a hypothetical framework.

The point here is very clear: the researcher should aim to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon as it appears, rather than indulging in attempts to explain it within a pre-given framework. According to Van den Berg (1972: 64) this is the basic principle of all phenomenology, the investigator remains true to the facts as they are happening. He goes on to explain that the phenomenological researcher is thus wary of theoretical observations and accepted opinions lest, prejudging that which has yet to be fully known, he/she fails to be faithful to the phenomena as they appear. Van den Berg (*ibid.*) says:

In essence, thus, phenomenological praxis in psychology is concerned with the rigorous description of phenomena contextualised in the lebenswelt.

3.3.3 LEBENSWELT – PERSPECTIVITY

According to phenomenologists like Giorgi (1999), Van den Berg (1972) and Polanyi (1969, cited in Van der Mescht 1996: 45) the phenomenological researcher needs to guard against presupposition operating within the field the researcher intends to study. To fight against presupposition the phenomenological researcher should not prejudge any particular phenomenon nor see it through any given perspective merely because previous knowledge about the phenomenon exists. This does not imply that the phenomenological researcher has no presuppositions regarding what he/she intends to study. Clearly, anyone setting out to investigate any phenomenon systematically and rigorously is, from the beginning, guided by what is already understood about the phenomenon. As Giorgi (1970: 162) emphasises:

All facts are selected...by the activity of our consciousness, and hence they are always interpreted facts. Perspectivity thus rules out... the possibility of an absolute stance – and this applies to a phenomenological perspective as well.

Giorgi (1976 cited in Kruger 1988: 149) maintains that the most important thing for the researcher in this case is to strive to achieve a “consistency of meaning that is trans-situational”. The researcher’s primary mandate is “to listen to what the incidents, the

phenomena, tell him” (Van den Berg 1972: 77) and hence to remain faithful to the concrete dimensions of the phenomenon as it appears.

3.3.4 TRANSFORMING RAW DATA

Data analysis is a process of unlocking information hidden in the raw data and transforming it into something useful and meaningful. In the process of unlocking this raw data Aanstoos (1983) recommends Giorgi’s (1975) procedure of identifying meaning units, specifying their central themes, and then articulating the structural coherence of those themes. The interview protocols therefore should be reduced to Natural Meaning Units (NMUs), which will form the basis of general and situated descriptions of the respondents’ experience of the phenomenon.

Using the same procedure in my own (this) study, the protocol was reviewed to identify the experiential statement in the participant’s own words. These naturally occurring units, called Natural Meaning Units (NMUs), each represent specific thoughts, feelings, or perceptions, as expressed by the participant. The NMUs were described to determine the conveyed meaning(s), and were then placed into categories as appropriate. A synthesis was made of those constituents that were irreducible elements. Any and all relevant data that occurred during the interviews was worked into the revised, final description.

3.4 BRACKETING IN PHENOMENOLOGY

The first and ongoing step of the phenomenological method is to deliberately ‘bracket’ presuppositions. Accordingly, presuppositions derived from formal theories and research findings related to the general topic of meaning and purpose in life were acknowledged and put aside. Giorgi’s (1975) principle of bracketing specific procedural assumptions was also employed.

So among the specific kinds of presuppositions to be bracketed according to these authors are those based on theories or earlier research findings, those drawn from the

investigator's personal knowledge and belief, and those assumptions which would dictate specific research methods. Ablamowicz (1992: 711 in Ashworth 1999) makes a rather specific point about the way in which bracketing should produce undistorted descriptions:

...The researcher cannot assume any hierarchical ordering of the elements comprising the conscious experience; that is, initially all components should be given equal importance and no external theoretical concepts can be used as a norm to decide that some internal aspects are more essential than others.

In reporting a study of loss of love, Vacek, in Ashworth (1999), agrees with Denne and Thompson that the investigator should bracket scientific theories and research findings. He writes:

No hypotheses are postulated, no constructs are derived. Only the experience itself, purified as much as possible from any prejudice, counts as evidence.

Similarly Guglietti-Kelly and Westcott in Ashworth (1999) were concerned that previous research might distort their access to the phenomenon of shyness. In the introduction to the methodology of her study of the way in which Ojibwe's Native Americans experience a life-world suffused with "personhood," Smith (in Ashworth 1999: 711) states that:

....In order to understand how it is that "persons" determine an Ojibwe's reality one must try to enter that reality on its own terms. And the best way to do this, of course, is to listen to the words of natives without the impediment of preconceptions whether such preconceptions are grounded in what Husserl called an implicit "naïve realism" or in explicit theories developed from within a Euro-American cultural framework. In short, one must affect a phenomenological epoche.

What the above authors mean is that it is imperative for the researcher to help reveal the personal reality of the respondent without imposing his/her pre-conceived ideas, knowledge and beliefs about the phenomena in question, but to describe that phenomenon as it really is, as it reveals itself in terms of its essential nature against the

background of reality. In any fundamental analysis the point of departure can only be the phenomenon itself to be studied.

Conrad in Ashworth (1999) found it particularly important to bracket the natural attitude, since it tends to lead the researcher in such things as what causes the phenomenon, not what the phenomenon is in its appearance as a human experience. A danger in such a failure of bracketing lies in the fact that the models and concepts of attribution theory have an ambiguous relationship to experience. Ashworth goes on to highlight the fact that some authors, following Heide, claim to be mapping “lay psychological theory” and to be trying to describe how people actually go about attributing responsibility, praise, and blame for actions.

Polkinghorne (1989 cited in Heath 2000: 55) describes bracketing as self-reflection by the investigator to examine his or her own beliefs, in order to become aware of any hidden or potential presuppositions and biases that could change the way the investigator obtains the data and interprets the results. Heath (2000) goes on to explain that phenomenology relies on two main ways to prevent bias. Firstly, bracketing, which involves suspending one’s preconceptions and presuppositions. This is done by laying these presuppositions and preconceptions out in as clear and complete a form as possible (Valle *et al.*, 1989 in Heath 2000: 55).

The second method of preventing bias is the use of imaginative variation (Heath 2000). This will involve playing with the sentences to see if they could have more than one possible meaning. Where a sentence is found which has more than one possible meaning, the protocol needs to be checked to see if other sentences can help clarify it. When the meaning remains in doubt, participants will be asked to explain what they mean, or to elaborate. What the researcher needs to note through the entire study is that “bracketing as one of the key features of phenomenological methodology is done not only before the interviews are performed but also repeatedly throughout the data analysis” (Heath 2000: 55)

3.5 PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

The focus of this part is on research practice, and on the quest for entry into the life-world of research participant. Applying (the role of) bracketing in my own research study, the role of bracketing is illustrated by the way in which an aspect of the life-world of gender “discrimination” is revealed.

This study therefore requires reflection on the content of the mind to the exclusion of everything else. Husserl (1970) called this type of reflection the phenomenological reduction. Because the mind can be directed toward non-existent as well as real objects, Husserl (1970) notes that the phenomenological reflection does not presuppose that anything exists, but rather amounts to a “bracketing of existence,” that is, setting aside the question of the real existence of the contemplated object. He asserts that:

The psychologist as such in his inquiry must...take and have no position: he must neither concur nor refuse, nor remain in problematic suspense, as if he had a say in the validities of the persons who are his subjects. So long as he has not acquired this posture as a serious and consciously established one, he has not arrived at his true subject matter; as soon as he violates it, he has lost his subject matter (Husserl 1970: 240).

This means that in this kind of study bracketing assumptions based on personal knowledge and beliefs are very important. According to Husserl (1970) when issues of personal morality are apparently involved, the researcher can perhaps most easily lose the subject matter. He adds say that to hear these expressions clearly and to retain a continuing lively interest in the life-world of the person who is possibly very differently inclined from oneself, certainly requires the researcher to bracket his/her own experience and attitudes.

The question the researchers pose concerns what presuppositions must be bracketed in phenomenological research. According to Ashworth (1999) the point which must always be borne in mind, is that the procedure has the purpose of allowing the life-world of the

participant in the research to emerge in clarity. This is done so as to allow a study of some specific phenomenon within that life-world to be carried out. According to Ashworth (1999: 707) the researcher must “suspend presuppositions in order to enter the life-world (and must continually practice the *epoche* in order to remain there)”. But it is once “within” the life -world that the “work of laying open the phenomenon of interest has to be undertaken” (Ashworth 1999).

3.6 CRITERIA FOR SELECTING SUBJECTS

Since I was particularly interested in research on women leaders’ perceptions and lived experiences, I felt it was appropriate to adopt the phenomenological approach. This study adopted Giorgi’s (1970) phenomenological method in order to describe the perceptions and experiences of a female leader participant so as to try to better understand discrimination in the workplace. According to my own knowledge this participant satisfied one or more requirements for selection as a candidate for this study. According to Stones (in Kruger 1988) subjects who are pre-eminently suitable for participating in this form of research are those who:

- Have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched
- Are verbally fluent and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions in relation to the researched phenomenon
- Have the same home-language as the researcher, since this will obviate the possible loss of subtle semantic nuances owing to the need to translate from one language to another.

My participant was a female Xhosa speaking manager who had been in management for more than five years. She has leadership experience and is “verbally fluent ... able to communicate her feelings, thoughts and perceptions” (Stones in Van der Mescht, 1996: 54-55). Though the interviews were in fact not conducted in our home language (Xhosa), I felt that the respondent’s command of and facility with English was such that she was

able to capture and express her perceptions of her experiences. She also had experience and had served for quite some time in different management institutions and that in itself enabled her to articulate different modes of experiences.

The participant was purposively selected on the basis of her experience in management and leadership. Robson (1999: 141) sees this kind of sampling as the ‘researcher’s judgement as to typicality or interest’. In this study I specifically wanted to interview a female leader who occupied leadership positions in higher education, since I myself am employed at a university. The task of selecting that participant was made easy by the fact that at the present moment there are very few female managers/leaders in institutions of higher education. Males presently dominate the field.

Before I started with the interviewing exercise I struggled a little bit because although I had already identified the research respondent it took me some time to approach her. I found it difficult to consult with her, let alone ask her for permission to use her in this study, for various reasons, one of which is the nature of this study. I thought it was essential that I employed an approach which would encourage me to distance myself from what may be an emotional issue, and ‘to allow a phenomenon to speak for itself’ (Van der Mescht 1996: 44). I also did not want her to start self-reflecting or examining her own beliefs about or experiences of the phenomenon. That, I believe, could have changed the way she presented herself and could have influenced or impacted on the interview procedure. I also was not even sure that she would agree to participate in the project but I hoped for the best. I eventually approached her, and she agreed to participate in this study.

3.7 NATURE OF THE INTERVIEW

Before the study was conducted, considerable time was spent preparing interview techniques and creating a list of non-leading questions. In-depth, semi-structured

interviews are generally regarded as appropriate tools with which to gain entry into the participants' lived world, and to make meaning of that world through dialogue (Seidman 1991).

But the skill of asking the right kind of question is one which grows with experience and experimentation. Researchers like Kruger (1988: 151) maintain that:

...rapport should exist between the researcher and the subjects. It is probably best to put questions to the subjects in tape-recorded interview sessions. Many researchers assert that the spoken interview allows the subjects to be as near as possible to their lived experience, does not preclude the possibility of dialogue during this early phase of research and does not entail the inhibiting effect of the process of writing on spontaneity of expression.

In this study the research interview was open-ended and conducted in an informal, non-directive manner, as I tried to influence the subject as little as possible. Naturally, where I failed to understand a particular point made by the subject, I did seek greater clarity.

This style of interviewing allowed the respondent freedom to elaborate on responses in whatever manner she wished. As Markison & Gognalons-Caillard (cited in Kruger 1988) pointed out, the advantage of a semi-structured or non-directive interview is its flexibility, which allows the investigator to grasp more fully the subject's experience than would be possible through the implementation of a more rigid methodological technique.

I moved from a fairly specific opening question – ‘Please tell me what role you play in management?’ - to non-leading and open-ended questions such as ‘Can you say more about that?’ and ‘Does this feel complete to you?’ The aim was to let her tell her stories, just the same way that she would tell a friend.

My second direct question led from ‘How do you see yourself as a leader/manager?’ to unplanned prompts such as ‘Is there anything else you'd like to add? Can you expand on that? Could you give me an example of that?’ These prompts were useful in encouraging

open communication as well as insisting on remaining with the “concrete”, a vital ingredient of phenomenological interviewing (Valle & King 1978: 6).

I then proceeded with other questions with a view to entering her “concrete” reality on its own terms. For example, “How do others see you?” This was done so as to let the respondent open up a little bit further for her to articulate different modes of experiences. The next question was “What style of management works best for you?” This question was aimed at probing her perceptions of her management experience. The intention was to let her think about various things that helped her to succeed or fail if there were any such factors. The last question which was asked, was just an attempt to probe her own understanding of the phenomenon “female leadership”: “What are your thoughts on the future of women and their role in management?” The intention was to allow her to reflect more objectively on the broader issue of gender in leadership.

3.8 TRANSCRIPTION

The interview lasted two hours and the taped interview was transcribed, and the accuracy double-checked. The interview protocol was reduced to natural meaning units, which formed the basis for general and situated descriptions of the respondents’ experience of the phenomenon. Each protocol was then reviewed to identify the experiential statement in the participant’s own words. The Natural Meaning Units (NMUs) were described to determine the conveyed meaning (s), and were then placed into categories as appropriate. The natural meaning units formed the basis for the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research data consisting of the Natural Meaning Units (NMUs) and their explications which formed the basis for the situated description of the respondent's experiential statements in her own words in her place of work. The NMUs I have used in this chapter are the central themes, which represent specific thoughts, feelings, or perceptions, as expressed by the participant.

The data I used in this study was obtained from one respondent in one department in an institution of higher learning. According to Giorgi (1985: 19 quoted by Michael 2000):

One would rarely conduct research of this type with only one subject. It is important to realise this because it is most difficult to write an essential general description of the situated structure with only one instance. The more the subjects are, the greater the variations, and hence the better the ability to see what is essential.

Initially the idea was to concentrate on three female respondents but one was finally selected due to difficulties encountered with regard to gaining entry into various institutions of higher learning such as a University. At the present moment there are very few female managers/leaders in such institutions as males presently dominate the field. For example, permission was requested from one Registrar Academic of one institution to conduct the study, but she was pessimistic about it and after some time her response was negative, and no reasons were given for that refusal. What must be noted is that I was not looking for any available female manager. I wanted a manager who could meet the criteria for selection and unfortunately they were very few. Also, the data I obtained from this single interview was extremely rich, to the extent where both my supervisor and I felt it was unnecessary to interview more participants. Naturally this made the step of writing an "essential general description" (Giorgi 1985 cited in Michael 2000: 19)

impossible; nevertheless, the richness of the single situated description is such that I believe it can stand on its own.

The most important thing that must be noted here is that the aim of this study was not to generalise the findings. A discussion of the limitation of this study will follow later in my concluding chapters of this study.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE USED

As phenomenologists claim that the operative word in phenomenological research is 'describe', the next step in this study therefore was to analyse the raw data. In the process of unlocking this raw data Aanstoos (1983), asserts that one should try to follow Giorgi's (1975), procedure of identifying meaning units, specifying their central themes, and then articulating the structural coherence of those themes. The interview protocol therefore was reduced to Natural Meaning Units (NMUs). This is because, according to Aanstoos (1983), the analysis must remain faithful to the descriptive nature of the data, to disclose its essential meaning directly rather than on the basis of a hypothetical framework and this was what I intended to do.

In order to succeed in this kind of exercise what was expected of me then was to bracket any presuppositions. This means that it was therefore important for me to not adopt a position on the correctness or falsity of the claims, which the respondent had made. My duty therefore was to present her NMUs as they were and not to reduce or expand on what she had claimed.

Lastly, each NMu was followed by the explication of each theme, so as to reveal the life world and the everyday female feelings and experiences of that particular individual. It was hoped that by both description and explanation of each theme, a clear perspective of her practical experience such as discrimination in the workplace, how she actually feels, what she endures, and how she ultimately triumphed would be revealed.

4.3 WHAT WORLD DOES THE TEXT DESCRIBE?

A large portion of the following text depicts the conditions of the life world of a female manager in an institution of higher learning in the Public Relation Department where she is a manager. The aim was to unveil from the phenomenological point of view her experience, her achievements, likes or dislikes and her role in management of her department and in the institution at large.

Natural Meaning Units	Explication
1. I belong to what the University sees as middle management. So, in general terms I'm supposed to be the link between senior management and the University stakeholders. ... The office I work in is supposed to disseminate information as much as possible that's supposed to be my role in management.	She sees herself as part of the middle management in the University and her job according to her, is supposed to be a link between senior management and the University stake-holders. She believes that it is her duty to disseminate information to the University community at large.

<p>2.</p> <p>Now eh ...I regret to say that eh... here in this Institution I don't think it is well understood, I think it is not well understood by Senior management, the individuals themselves are not educated in what Public Relations is. The tendency people see it as mhh ... people who do the little things such as making sure that the room is clean, putting flowers here and there ...</p>	<p>She then believes that her role as a Director for Public Relations Office (P.R.O) is not well understood by both management and some individuals and she regrets that. She feels that the individuals themselves are not well educated in what the role of Public Relations is. She feels that people do not understand her position and her role is only seen as that of decorating and cleaning of places earmarked for functions to be held in the University. That is causing her to feel unhappy about her situation.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>...they neglect important things such as involving that office in the making of the university policies for instance even as I'm talking to you only now is the university formulating its policies, and only now will these policies be discussed at management level.</p>	<p>She also feels that her position is being undermined and is not happy about that. As a Director for P.R.O she believes that her office is being neglected especially by senior management when it comes to policy formulation. She and her office are not even involved in important meetings like designing of University policies.</p>
<p>4.</p> <p>So you can imagine eh...it's like we are functioning on an ad hoc eh...basis. We, the Public relations Office here must go and draw literally sap information, literally beg, "what are you doing now Doctor so and so? What are your plans now? Who is</p>	<p>Her day to day running of the office is not a pleasant one because she has to endure the frustration of begging for information, when something is to be done. Instead of people coming to her office, it is now her duty to go out begging people to explain</p>

<p>coming?” And that is very strenuous.</p>	<p>what they are involved in and so on.</p>
<p>5. I feel that eh...even the fact that I'm a woman makes things worse. Sometimes I think if I were a man may be eh...the man will bully them, you know eh... or the man they'll do on a man to man basis.</p>	<p>She believes it is done because she is a female. She believes that if she were a man she could be more successful because she could force matters and ‘bully.’ She believes that men manage successfully because of their aggressive leadership and because they treat each other on a man to man basis.</p>
<p>6. Now there's also the concept, that the question of values, personal values, I, as an individual as a single person I am not the kind of person, sorry eh..eh...a lady not necessary that I am single. I don't go out to the commonlyto the common places where people go socialise where one could go to get everyday information. One, because I'm female, you know. It's not so easy to be out there where people socialise.</p>	<p>She is proud of her upbringing. She feels that because of her personal values she is unable to go to common places where people go to socialise and be in a position to get first hand information by talking about their businesses even out of work. Also because she is a woman, she ought to behave like a lady and not to go out looking for everyday information or gossip.</p>
<p>7. So eh...whereas eh.....my role at management could be stronger it's not as strong as I would like, and I really think the two short things is ignorance on the part of the individuals and that I'm female. I think if I were a male, a male is though they were</p>	<p>She then feels that the fact that she is a woman hinders her role as a manager. She sees her position as a Director as one of powerful position in the institution but feels that although the position is strong enough it is not as strong as she would like.</p>

<p>not, though they were not ignorant some things would be pushed.</p>	
<p>8. Yes, these things emanate from this ignorance that I'm talking about, you know, eh.....the role of public relations is to try and influence the stakeholders internally and externally. Such that whoever looks at the institution in eh..., they have a positive image about the institution, that is the role, in broad terms that's what one is supposed to do.</p>	<p>She believes that she is doing a very important job in the University, holding a very important position – that of portraying the image of the University both internally and externally.</p>
<p>9. but one finds that over and above these few examples I've given you, often I am like I supervise cleaning and that's exactly because of this ignorance I'm talking about'.</p>	<p>But because of the ignorance on the part of people she is working with she finds herself operating multiple roles even that of supervising things outside her scope of work. Her position is lowered to a status of supervising cleaners.</p>
<p>10. Things are not as smooth because the people in technical services don't understand their aspect of public relations, that they too have a duty, that they too are supposed to deliver this service so that when a visitor comes the things are smooth.</p>	<p>She acknowledges the fact that it is not easy to perform her job well especially outside her office, because the people who are working in technical services lack public relations skills.</p>

<p>11.</p> <p>So there is this additional burden you know, of eh... doing a little more than you were really supposed to do.</p>	<p>The additional workload outside her scope of work is a burden for her.</p>
<p>12.</p> <p>I already gave you an example when we have something, this is where people see us when there are functions, if there are no functions people think we are not doing anything and it's because they don't understand, and I don't completely blame them. You know, you find that you, you the petty things such as making sure the place is opened, yet the administrative work has been done, the paper work of communicating with the various sections of the university.</p>	<p>She believes that people only recognise them when there are functions to be hosted by the institution. When there is nothing going on they are seen as people who have nothing to do. She also believes that the reason people believe that they are only there for functions is because they don't understand the full extent of the role of Public Relations. They are seen as people who are responsible only for entertainment and she does not blame them. Much of what they do is "invisible".</p>
<p>13.</p> <p>We do it on paper but come the days we must be on the phone again "Please open room Z, please make sure it's cleaned" and then I have to physically go and see that it's cleaned and often it's not'.</p>	<p>She feels that they write down and do all the necessary preparations but even when the administrative work has been done with various sections of the University, she is often expected to see to physical arrangements herself, because her planning has been ignored.</p>
<p>14.</p> <p>I should not be doing that, I should, people should in fact, people should not even see the Director as it were but should see us as a team, ...communications ladies with the</p>	<p>She believes that by virtue of the position she holds in the University she should be delegating from her office. She should not be as visible as she is. She strongly</p>

<p>media, gentlemen publications, gentlemen we interview for the publications eh... whatever.</p>	<p>believes in teamwork, and would like to work as a team with her colleagues.</p>
<p>15. I don't have to be so busy, so visible like that except when perhaps for the purposes of protocol. This aesthetic aspect of it here is what people know under public relations.</p>	<p>She feels that she should not be so busy, and so visible except for purposes of protocol. People have a narrow understanding of public relations; they think it is about "aesthetics".</p>
<p>16. And so for six months between the departure of the director and July, I was acting, but I was acting by virtue of being the next in line in terms of seniority, not necessarily eh... because I was Deputy Director only.</p>	<p>She believes that her leadership potential and skills were nurtured when the previous Director left. She feels that she was offered the job because she was an acting Director then, and not because she was a Deputy Director and the one next on line.</p>
<p>17. So I was second choice, but I took it because I wanted to prove to myself that I can try and I can learn and I also wanted to show them that I'm confident and I wasn't assuming I'd know everything that's how I got the job.</p>	<p>She acknowledges the fact that she was not the first choice but when the person earmarked for the job declined, the job was offered to her and she is very grateful for that. She grabbed the opportunity because she wanted to show that she is confident and wanted to prove to herself that she is willing to try and learn the job.</p>
<p>18. So I've been now a Director since July 1st 1999. I promise we've been uphill, uphill for the reason that I've said to you that part of 50% of what we do we are always coming to educate the people we work</p>	<p>Ever since she started managing the P.R.O office she experienced a lot of problems, problems she feels she has already highlighted to me. She then believes that it is important to explain to the people she</p>

with.	work with the functions of a P.R.O.
<p>19.</p> <p>Here is a little example, Wednesday, day before yesterday we had a function here on campus and eh...I went to the team which was the committee, which was arranging for this function. I wanted to find out from them. Guess what they said, Oh, we want tablecloths. We want flowers because that's what people think we do.</p>	<p>She is expected to bring flowers and tablecloths when there are functions. She believes that her position has been lowered by committees she used to work with to such an extent that she feels she is being undermined or discriminated.</p>
<p>20.</p> <p>But anyway the point I'm making is 50% of our time we are teaching the people that we are working with, you know, that, no, this you can't, you don't do it this way, it is done this way. And if you only say so, you know people don't learn fast, they don't take correction well. They are defensive in a way, they assume it's easy, yours is to be there, mine is to stay there, put the pot plants and take the tablecloths, and that's it.</p>	<p>Her experience when dealing with the University community is not a pleasant one. As a result of this she believes that they need to be informed about the role of a P.R.O. She believes that people who refuse to be corrected make her role in management more difficult. She also feels that people tend to be defensive when she tries to correct them and that is very difficult to manage.</p>
<p>21.</p> <p>Uhm-m.....I must confess eh...I feel that I'm not exercising my full potential and eh.....this is not a personal, this is not a personal thing.</p>	<p>She acknowledges the fact that she is not exercising her full potential.</p>
<p>22.</p> <p>The office itself doesn't have resource, the resources that we need. Communication as you know these days is not limited to person to person, communication as you</p>	<p>Also the lack of resources is a major setback for her. She believes that people who believe that communication is limited to face to face only and nothing more are</p>

<p>and I are doing, we use machinery, computers, that's how you link up with the rest of the world.</p>	<p>hindering her position and progress.</p>
<p>23. So, I think I'm not doing as well as I could, and I feel as if hum...m... hampered as if I'm handcuffed. I can't, I must, I shouldn't as I must not go as far as I would like. Now that affects the morale of the people I work with of course, you know, because you find out that although we have terms of reference, people are doing things outside their terms of reference.</p>	<p>She is of the opinion that the morale of her staff members is affected by what is happening. What is more painful is the fact that her staff members are being misused by being asked to perform duties outside their scope of work.</p>
<p>24. You know, take an event such as graduation. The young man who is employed here to be as I say in publication he turns into a driver, messenger when such functions start, you know and sometimes that's demoralising.</p>	<p>She is aware of the fact that during certain occasions like graduations one of her staff members is asked to perform the duties of a driver or a messenger and this is demoralising for both her and her staff members.</p>
<p>25. Anyway.. the positive thing talking about how am I as a manager, I manage because I try to be eh...open as possible. We always lay, I always lay our cards on the table, to say as it is.</p>	<p>She believes that her leadership style is democratic, and to be a good leader one needs to be as open as possible. Good working relations makes management easier.</p>

<p>26.</p> <p>I try not to stick to, shall I say the terms of reference, ...</p>	<p>She does not necessarily stick to the rules.</p>
<p>27.</p> <p>Then, share assignments in terms of what needs to be done, myself included.</p>	<p>She perceives that teamwork is a vital tool of management. They share assignments among themselves.</p>
<p>28.</p> <p>And I try to be exemplary so I try to do whatever needs to be done and not say I am a Director or a manager, what have been.</p>	<p>She is a good example to her staff members and she believes she is their role model.</p>
<p>29.</p> <p>I think other people see me as a weak manager. I really think other people see me as a weak manager and I don't blame them. I concede that it's just that I feel that I'm not completely responsible for that weakness, and I feel that it won't help to complain, what will help is to do.</p>	<p>She perceives herself as a good manager, but on the other hand she knows that people see her as weak and has to concede to that. At the same time feels that she is not completely responsible for her weaknesses as there are so many contributing factors to that fact. She also feels that even if she complained, nothing would help her. The best thing to do is just behave as if nothing is disturbing her and things are just normal.</p>
<p>30.</p> <p>Now we would have liked to look at our publics in the following categories: students, students who have graduated that is convocants, the workers, you know, as you know the mere academics but of course often there are overlaps in order to</p>	<p>She has a clear picture of how their duties should be allocated.</p>

<p>serve them.</p>	
<p>31. We categorise them this way, so that we are able to deliver services according to their needs. Now we had staff, we had colleague whose job here, her position was to be an alumna officer. Her job was to take care of convocation and alumna businesses, her job would have been solely gather data on alumna around here, where they are, what are they doing now, arrange functions to raise funds, arrange motivating eh.....conferences, you know, so that they impart what they have learnt back into the institution.</p>	<p>This clear structure would make them effective. She believes that the job they are doing is very important and one of them involves delivering of services according to the University needs. One of her staff member's responsibilities was alumni contact.</p>
<p>32 We used to be eight. Four of those people have left, we are only eight, and they left randomly. Unfortunately of the four eh.....three were senior or important senior people, of the people we have now, we have a receptionist, a publishing manageress and publishing officer and myself, and yet all these functions still need to be done.</p>	<p>She believes that her office is now understaffed, but still expected to deliver services as if nothing has happened. She feels that she has been disadvantaged when three of the members of the staff left. What makes her job so difficult is the fact that nothing has been done about those people who have left. Up to the present moment they were never replaced.</p>

<p>33.</p> <p>But we are not able to do that because the person who should do that is not there, and yet when we are looked at, people look at those things and say, convocation is weak. Student recruitment is weak, event management is weak, publications are weak, event management is weak, publication is weak.</p>	<p>The work which was supposed to be done by them has been re allocated to the remaining staff members. She feels that they are overloaded as a result. She complains of being seen as dysfunctional.</p>
<p>34.</p> <p>The office is not even given a budget. We don't have complete autonomy over a budget, we have to go and impact the principal.</p>	<p>She feels that lack of a budget is the major obstacle for her work.</p>
<p>35.</p> <p>Ehmm ...I think it helps to understand people you work with... You know just how good a performer that they are, that they keep time, its important also to know their personal history, so that you can relate to them as people. You don't relate to them as a position in the office. So I try to relate that way with my colleagues ...</p>	<p>She sees herself as being sensitive to the needs of other people and perceives herself as an approachable leader who is concerned about the well fare of her colleagues. She tries to befriend them as much as she can.</p>

<p>36.</p> <p>They should be open and be able to say eh...today I'm not feeling okay. I don't know why, but I'm not feeling okay, so that one could relate to that dutifully. I'll know that it's not work related, it is just as when I need them to do the extra mile.</p>	<p>She believes in openness among her staff members.</p>
<p>37.</p> <p>Again to use day before yesterday's example, we left at ten in the night, we are not paid overtime, we have never asked for overtime. But what I even say is, its that we must establish these working relations throughout your working life, so that when there is a need to deviate and to get them to sacrifice, then you don't have to go on your knees all the time.</p>	<p>Although some days they only stop working at night, they don't complain. They are not paid overtime and had never asked for it although they sacrificed a lot. Through those difficult circumstances she has managed to establish good relations with her colleagues. Because they are working as a team, the team spirit of her office helps to accomplish their goals.</p>
<p>38</p> <p>They will make that extra mile, because you understand them as individuals, ... human relation is very important.</p>	<p>She acknowledges the fact that human relations is one of the important leadership styles and she is utilising it to the fullest.</p>
<p>39</p> <p>I liase with faculties and try to assist them in such that faculties produce their own, out of their own budgets.</p>	<p>She avails herself whenever her expertise and guidance is needed by faculties or any other person who need her services especially in regard to publications.</p>

<p>40</p> <p>At the end of the day, there are publications on campus, they may not be made by P.R.O, or through P.R.O, but they are there. So being that way you give of yourself its not strenuous, its not like an assignment from a teacher that is, you know, you have to meet this deadline so, at the end of it, thanks God. Every mistake is ground for improvement.</p>	<p>She learns from mistakes and they help her improve her style of leadership and management.</p>
<p>41</p> <p>I must confess that the two previous Directors themselves, especially the one we had, the very first one who had employed me. I learnt a lot from her because eh...I learnt my job, I learnt this thing on the job, a lot I learnt on the job. I learnt a lot from that first Boss, first Director. Eh... fortunately for me too we establish personal relations, I link up with her, I still ask her, I still consult.</p>	<p>She attributes her successes to her previous boss and luckily for her she still has good contact with her. She still looks at her previous Directors as role models. She strongly believes that she has gained her management experience by learning on the job. She feels lucky to have her previous Boss as someone she can consult with.</p>
<p>42</p> <p>I also read a lot, there's journals now. As I say there are degrees now, there are books now on Public relations, strategic public relations, front line public relations, you know, South African version of Public Relations and so on.</p>	<p>She also believes that reading books and journals helps her to develop her management capabilities.</p>
<p>43</p> <p>Eh...there we are also members of the</p>	<p>By registering as members of Public</p>

<p>South African Institute, called PRISA, Public Relations Institute of S.A. The Universities are also members of what is called UNITEC, which is Universities and Technikons. So, we exchange ideas, we learn ...</p>	<p>Relation Institute of S.A and attending the PRISA conferences they exchange ideas and learn. She strongly believes in learning as a manager, from colleagues and from other people who might be of help. This helps her relate positively to people.</p>
<p>44 I also watch television eh ...programs. There used to be programs eh...called LESEDI, Lesedi I think, I can't remember, but it was women on the go. And you learn from other people. I want to tell you, if you think you are above learning you can't go anywhere. I think it's a good attitude to always say, what can I learn from Nonceba Mabovula, that's how you relate to people. What can I learn?</p>	<p>She feels that watching television programs like Lesedi (Women on the go) develop her management skill. She is particularly interested in programs that have something to do with women in management. She is committed to life-long learning.</p>
<p>45 Don't enlarge the weakness, enlarge the strength.</p>	<p>She believes in enlarging her strengths but not her weaknesses.</p>
<p>46 I want to break the thing about colleagues fearing you because you are a leader, because you are in charge of them. I want to break the thing of the fearing at the same time maintaining the dignity of respect. In other words they too must know my weaknesses but they must also know my strength.</p>	<p>She does not want colleagues to fear her, but does want respect from them. She is close to her staff members and is proud of that. She also believes in not hiding her strengths or weaknesses.</p>

<p>47</p> <p>but I learn a lot from them also, for the various reasons that we are exposed to different things in life. That young lady for instance, who is now a receptionist, she is so well connected in town. Just her personality, she is so well connected I'm often learning from her, in our conversations I am learning from her, you know.</p>	<p>She is very proud of her staff members, and she listens and learns a lot from them too. She appreciates and acknowledges the role played by her receptionist. She takes her suggestions very well and is able to improve her leadership skills. Her receptionist is a well known person in town and because of that she is very informative and helpful.</p>
<p>48</p> <p>Be as transparent as possible, you know, I have something to share, of course by virtue of who I am, and by virtue of the fact that, this structure works top-down, that can't be helped. So whatever I bring down but we talk, and I encourage them to criticise. We talk about housing. Very soon housing policy is going to change here.</p>	<p>She associates herself with member consultation in order to manage successfully. She believes that good leadership involves being transparent. She encourages her staff members to criticise her where necessary as she believes that constructive criticism makes one learn and grow.</p>
<p>49</p> <p>I let them express their anger. "Why did they tell us this?" I learn from that, Ohmmm...It could have been better to do it this way. When I go to management, I also sound intelligent, because I picked up the vibes, that other people would have like these things to be approached this way, then we debate that.</p>	<p>She sees herself as a caring and approachable leader who lets her staff members express their anger and willingness to debate issues. She then prides herself in taking an interest in what other people say and do.</p>

<p>50</p> <p>I think the future of women is very bright Ncebsie. I really think it is very bright, I just think that someone a woman, needs to have whether it's a consultancy or something, but to motivate women.</p>	<p>She believes that women have a very bright future in leadership and management. She feels that the upliftment of women's strengths in management depends on women themselves motivating and encouraging each other.</p>
<p>51</p> <p>I think that we as women ourselves in a way, whether we admit it or not, there is something at the back of the majority of most women's mind, you know. Eh... what's more eh... a deficit attitude, I'm married, I've got kids. I can't handle, you know, but to me I see those things as a virtue. In fact the fact that one is a mother and a wife, and still does something else. I think to me to be able to juggle your time, such that and be able to cope with more than one thing, that recalls your attention and sleep at night, for me I think that's wonderful.</p>	<p>She believes that women themselves are not courageous enough – they have a deficit attitude that needs to be corrected. She strongly feels that women themselves perceive themselves as weak managers. They look at management as a male domain. She also feels that women see themselves as mothers and lacking in management skills and capabilities. She is proud of her ability to juggle many roles and her time.</p>
<p>52</p> <p>I think women are born leaders because looking at my brothers or the then managers, then management is this way, because this is what they do. When a man is a manager, all he does is to concentrate on his job, there is no space for home. They don't have responsibilities at home per se, not as much as the woman does.</p>	<p>She believes that women are born leaders. She feels that men who are leaders or managers neglect their home and only concentrate on the job -their careers take precedence over family.</p>

<p>53</p> <p>So I think women really need to be motivated a lot, what's more we are in the majority, you know, something needs to be done to take away this.</p>	<p>Women need to be motivated and encouraged to become leaders.</p>
<p>54</p> <p>We tend to trivialise our capability. We tend to belittle ourselves, even among ourselves, you know, just simple things such as oh...she is single, she is not married.</p>	<p>Her experience has shown her that women belittle themselves, They trivialise their capabilities and they lack confidence.</p>
<p>55</p> <p>People tend not to look at you in a holistic manner, if you didn't do ----, defeat, the same thing about the way you manage.</p>	<p>People are inclined to focus on mistakes, and not see the whole picture.</p>
<p>56</p> <p>We have a tendency to think eh...it's been a man's world, so since it's been a man's world we can't do it.</p>	<p>She feels that women need to stop this tendency of looking at management as a man's world and believe in themselves.</p>
<p>57</p> <p>I really think women have a lot to give, a lot to give, and if we can also take away this malicious competition because it is another thing which I perceive sometimes among us. When we are managers on our own, then now it becomes ranks. She is</p>	<p>She feels that women lack confidence and believes that if they can stop unnecessary competition and instead help and uplift one another they can be better managers.</p>

better than me, you know, instead of complementing each other or who we are.	
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4.4 SITUATED DESCRIPTION

The situated description which follows is, in a sense, a summary or distillation of the meanings conveyed and captured in the NMUs. Since I shall not be presenting a general description, this description will be the basis of further data analysis and commentary.

The essence of her experience as a leader is a sense of conflict between her frustration and anger about the way she is being treated in the institution on the one hand, and her positive and visionary expectations about her role in her office and the future of women as leaders on the other hand.

Three areas emerge strongly from the Natural Meaning Units:

Firstly, she is frustrated at work and feels there is nothing she can do to change that. Secondly, because of her leadership style, she perceives herself as a good leader who is also proud of her upbringing. Thirdly, she believes in the leadership qualities of women (but contrary to her belief on the role of women she also feels that women are not confident about themselves and they look upon men as leaders).

I shall now show how the Natural Meaning Units reveal these themes, but before that a brief overview of the context where she works might be useful to start with. The numbers in brackets refer to NMUs.

4.4.1 THE CONTEXT IN WHICH SHE WORKS

The participant belongs to the University middle management and she views herself as the communication link between senior management and the University stake-holders (NMU 1). Another important aspect that makes her believe that her job is valuable is that she believes it is her official duty to portray the image of the university both internally and externally (NMU 8). Her leadership potentialities and skills came to be realised when she was promoted from being a Deputy Director to a Director for Public Relations. She immediately grabbed that opportunity as she felt that it was the beginning of her career as a leader, her chance to prove that she was capable of doing the job successfully (NMU 17).

4.4.2 HOW SHE EXPERIENCES MANAGEMENT

Although she feels confident enough about her role as a manager in **her own office**, there are many things she is not happy about. For example she sees her position as a Director of Public Relations as one of the powerful positions in the institution but although the position is strong, she does **not receive the support she needs** (NMU 7). She perceives herself as a good manager but at the same time feels **that people see her as a weak manager** (29). She then believes she is not completely responsible for her weaknesses (NMU 29) and she links this perception to various aspects **including her gender status** (NMU 5). Other aspects include her feeling that her day-to-day running of the office is not a pleasant experience because she has to endure the frustration of **not having access to information** when something is to be done. She therefore feels she is being **kept in the dark** and thus deprived of her rights and privileges. She explains: “We, the Public Relations Office here must go and draw, literally sap information, literally beg, ‘what are you doing now Dr. so and so?’ ‘What are your plans now? Who is coming?’” and that is very strenuous” (NMU 4). Clearly she experiences this to be a **communication problem**.

She feels that she is experiencing unfair treatment at the hands of management and other University stakeholders who make her management role unbearable. She feels that they

are not taking her role seriously. What makes it so painful is the fact that senior management is part of that ignorance: “I regret to say that ... here in this institution I don't think it is well understood by senior management, the individuals **themselves are not educated in what Public Relation is**” (NMU 2). She believes what she is doing – planning, paper work, and so on – is largely “invisible” to the rest of the organisation (NMU 12).

The respondent feels that her staff members are also disadvantaged because her office is **not recognised**. She is of the opinion that the morale of her staff members is affected by what is happening. What is more painful is the fact that certain staff members (including herself) are made to perform duties **outside their scope of work**, and are **being misused** by people in the institution. She is sensitive about that and she feels that it is demoralising both to her and her staff members; “You know, take an event such as graduation, the young man who is employed here to be as I say in publication, he turns into a driver, messenger when such functions start” (NMU 23).

She believes that people are **not quite certain** about her role in management and she is very unhappy about that: “The tendency, people see it as mhh... people who do the little things such as making sure that the room is clean, putting flowers here and there, etc.” (NMU 2). Sometimes she finds herself operating multiple roles outside her scope of work and that makes her very unhappy because her position is lowered to the status of supervisory staff (NMU 9).

She agrees that what she found herself doing is not very easy, because she does not get cooperation from those other sections, which are not directly under her jurisdiction (NMU 10). Although she is part of management she is **not even involved in policy formulation**. As a Director she believes she is being side-lined when it comes to decision-making, and policy formulation by management: “Even as I am talking to you, only now is the University formulating its policies, and only now these policies be discussed at management level” (NMU3). Moreover her office is **under-resourced**:

“The office itself doesn’t have resources, the resources that we need. Our computers are not up to date with internet. That makes my work very difficult” (NMU 21).

The **lack of a budget** is a major setback for her. Her office is not even allocated its own budget. In this instance she feels hopeless and defeated (NMU 33). This adds to her frustration, although she is trying to cope in that kind of situation.

The respondent also feels that if she were the kind of woman who **socialised with men**, she would be recognised but because of her **personal values and upbringing** she could not do that. Governed by her values she is unable to go to common places where people socialise so as to be in a good position to get first-hand information. Also because she does not mix with men, drink with them, or enjoy their company this deprives her of recognition. “I don’t go out to the common places where people go to socialise, where one could go to get everyday information” (NMU 6).

What makes her job so difficult is the fact that although they are known to be **understaffed** in her department, nothing has been done to solve that problem. Instead the work, which was supposed to be done by those who have left, has been re-allocated to the remaining staff members “We used to be eight. Four of those people have left, we are only four, and they left randomly” (NMU 31). She feels that they are overloaded and as a result she is worried of being seen as less functioning

But we were not able to do that because the person who should do that is not there, and yet people look at those things and say, convocation is weak, student recruitment is weak, event management is weak, and publications are weak (NMU 33).

Although her office goes beyond its scope of work and some days they work over time, they never complain; “I feel that it won’t help to complain, what will help is to do” (NMU 28). Although she and her staff are working tirelessly and sometimes work overtime **there are no incentives to encourage them**. “Again to use day before

yesterday's example, we left at ten in the night. We were not paid overtime, we have never asked for overtime" (NMU 36).

4.4.3 HER STYLE OF LEADERSHIP

Her own style of leadership is **contrary to her belief about what makes male managers successful**. When leading she adopts an 'open' style of management (NMU 25) and does not believe in sticking too rigidly to the rules (NMU 26) She is flexible and creative (NMU 27), **leads by example** (NMU 28) and to enlarge her strength (NMU 45).

The kind of leadership style she prefers is **bottom up** kind of management; she does not believe in top down management at all (NMU 48).

Contrary to her sense of failure and weakness is her **ambition and sense of optimism** regarding the role of women in leadership and her own leadership. She took the position because she believed she could 'prove herself' (NMU 17).

She prides herself on achieving high standards of **motivation and high morale** among her staff members. She believes that allowing employees to contribute and to feel powerful and important is a win-win situation as it is very healthy for the employees and the organisation at large. "That young lady for instance, who is now a receptionist, she is so well connected in town. I'm often learning from her, in our conversation I am learning from her. She likes community work a lot, so she is connected" (NMU 47).

Her openness leads to **good human relations** (NMU 38), she knows her staff well (NMU 38), they can **discuss problems openly** (NMU 36) and they can express their feelings, even anger, openly (NMU 49). For example her dealing with her staff members are **based on trust** and lead to the gradual accumulation of experience and skill. This is because she sees herself as being very sensitive to the needs of other people especially her staff members. "Its important also to know their **personal history**, so that you can

relate to them as people. You don't relate to them as a position in the office. So I try to relate that way with my colleagues" (NMU 35). She does this because she acknowledges the fact that the **positive human relations** is one of the important leadership qualities.

She believes that leadership involves **team building** and this is what is happening in her office, because she knows that team work leads to a good team spirit where people are willing to work long hours without expecting overtime (NMU 36). She is also **opposed to arousing fear in her followers** (NMU 46) rather wanting to be close to them but still have their respect. She also believes in "**transparency**"(NMU 48). I think it helps to understand people that you work with, your team is very important" (NMU 35).

She feels that they are all working as a team and she attributes her leadership successes to her team building skills. She prefers to perceive herself and her colleagues as partners who **are working together for a common goal**. She also acknowledges the fact that things are not very smooth in her role as a manager but because they are working as a team she feels that the team spirit of her office helps them to accomplish many goals and helps to overcome many problems.

She believes in **reading to gain information** and to broaden her scope so to be an effective leader. "I also read a lot, there are journals now. As I say there are degrees now, there are books now on Public Relations" (NMU 43). It is her belief that reading a lot of books and journals develops her management capabilities. She is adamant that a leader or a manager cannot afford to isolate knowledge from management. She also feels that **attending conferences** and watching television programmes about women develops her management skills.

Her communication skills are also not limited to her office. This is demonstrated by her **continued involvement with her previous directors** who are outside the campus. She attributes her successes to them as she regards them as her role models. "I learnt a lot from that first Boss, first Director. Eh... fortunately for me too we establish personal relations, I link up with her, I still ask her, I still consult" (NMU 42).

She believes in **listening to her members of her staff**. “I listen to them, I encourage them to criticise, we talk about housing, I let them express their anger, I learn from that” (NMU 49). She prides herself as a kind of manager whose relationship with others left an impact upon them because of her good communication skills. For example she feels that she avails herself whenever her expertise and guidance are needed, especially in regard to publications in the institution as a whole.

She believes in **consulting** with other people even if they were not managers like herself. “I want to tell you, if you think you are above learning you can’t go anywhere. I think it’s a good attitude to always say, what can I learn from Nonceba Mabovula, that’s how you relate to people” (NMU 45). Her attitude helps her to gain more ideas that help to empower her in her job. She believes that learning from other people helps her to know how to handle people and what best style to use in certain circumstances. She believes she is democratic in her style of management.

4.4.5 HER BELIEF ABOUT THE FUTURE OF WOMEN

She is **positive** about the future of women as leaders (NMU 50), believing that women have the ability to “juggle” their time, could do many different things at the same time (NMU 51) and were born leaders (NMU 52). She is adamant that women have a very **bright future** in leadership or management. She feels that the upliftment of women’s strengths depend on women themselves; “I think the future of women is very bright Ncebsie, really think it is very bright” (NMU 50).

She strongly believes that women are **born leaders** and they only need to be motivated (NMU 50). She believes that motivation is the best tool for management. “So I think women really need to be motivated a lot, what’s more we are in the majority” (NMU 53). She believes that an important issue for administrators is motivation.

Despite the progress that women have achieved she notes that women **do not believe in themselves**. They have a “**deficit**” attitude (NMU 51), they belittle themselves and trivialise their capabilities (NMU 54) and they also compete with each other instead of working together (NMU 57). She says: “I think that we as women ourselves in a way, whether we admit it or not, there is something at the back of the majority of most women’s mind, you know, eh...a deficit attitude ” (NMU 51).

She also feels that women see themselves as mothers and not as managers or leaders; they believe that they lack management and leadership skills: “Eh...what’s more, eh... I’m married, I’ve got kids I can’t handle” (NMU 51). She thinks of women as people who are **not confident in themselves**. “We tend to **trivialise our capability**, we tend to belittle ourselves, even among ourselves, you know” (NMU 54).

She is also of the opinion that **strong leadership is associated with men** because, according to her, men manage successfully by forcing matters and bullying. She strongly believes that men get things done successfully because of their **aggressive behaviour** and because they treat each other on a “man -to-man basis” which was not possible with women; “Sometimes I think if I were a man may be eh...the man will bully them, you know eh... or the man they’ll do on a man to man basis” (NMU 5).

The respondent strongly feels that **women themselves look at management as a male domain** and by so doing undermine themselves. “We have a tendency to think that it’s being a man’s world” (NMU 56). Lastly, she views women as **their own worst enemies** and she puts it like this: “When we are managers on our own, then now it becomes ranks. She is better than me, you know, instead of complementing each other or who we are” (NMU 57). She believes that the problem with women is that they are jealous of one another, they don’t complement each other and also they don’t value the leadership of other women.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This respondent is visionary, but at the same time feels trapped and dysfunctional in her management role. She has confidence in the ability of women as leaders. She has strong views on a particular human relations leadership style on the one hand, but is paralysed by the frustrating feeling of failure and ineffectiveness in her own work and leadership in her workplace on the other hand. The essence of her experience is that she feels trapped and powerless. Her work is misunderstood and devalued, but she is powerless to change that.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings in view of how the respondent perceives herself and the situation and what possible roots the data follows in relation to existing leadership theories and thinking emanating from the literature chapter. In the previous chapter (chapter 4) the Natural Meaning Units were described and developed into a situated description to determine the conveyed meaning without any input from the researcher. Here I interpret and comment on the data using the existing literature and leadership theories to help reveal and bring out her thoughts, feelings and perceptions of her leadership role in the institution. Themes that emerged in the previous chapter form the basis of the findings for this chapter, namely, her leadership experience, her leadership style and her belief about the future of women will form the sub headings.

5.2 HOW SHE EXPERIENCES LEADERSHIP

The respondent in this study is the victim of the socio-economic and organisational instability of the institution where she works, which has manifested itself in various ways. Fiedler's (1967) Contingency theory helps to explain the position under which she works. The situation in which she works is far from ideal. To mention but a few examples, she has to run the office with no budget and her office is under-resourced. The restructuring and rationalisation process within the institution led to the loss of at least four posts thereby increasing the workload of the remaining four members.

This alone has created unrealistic expectations, and as a result she complains of being seen as dysfunctional. This impacted negatively on her staff including herself. The result is that she feels frustrated, angry, powerless and trapped in a situation she is powerless to

change. Seeing that her situational factors are not favourable for her to lead she feels powerless and depressed. In this case her plight can be best explained further by situational theorists because they believe that a person becomes a leader not only because of personality attributes, but also on the basis of various situational factors (what the job requires or who is available, etc), together with the interaction between the leader's personality and the situation. Judging from the circumstances surrounding the respondent it is undoubtedly true that the environment contributes to the success or failure of leadership.

The lack of interaction between her and institutional management contributed to poor performance. There is also lack of cooperation and support between her and her counterparts. She therefore feels she is being kept in the dark because there is lack of communication between her and management. This shows that there are problems in the institution that may be caused by various circumstances, like resistance to change by the institutional personnel, lack of vision by those in the position of power, the abuse of power and the misappropriation of institutional resources. Where there is no shared vision by all the stake-holders, organisations like this one are bound to suffer. Leadership performance and effectiveness depends upon the appropriate favourable conditions of the organisation.

Her leadership is being undermined because the institutional personnel and various stakeholders do not take her role seriously and her office is not entirely recognised. This emanates from the fact that most of them are not educated in what Public Relation is, and the result of that is that she and her staff members feel misused in the institution at large. I believe that her plight cannot be viewed as an isolated case or something new and unknown; this is the problem most women manager/leaders experience in their role as leaders. Greyvenstein (1991), for example, noted that women are often pushed to one side in unimportant peripheral portfolios in the organisational structure and it is constantly drummed into them that their presence in the top management team was actually a special concession and are seen as representatives of the female sex and that they are not being

judged according to their actual abilities as individuals. This is what is happening also to this leader.

I believe also that the respondent is not only depressed but lonely because another finding that came to the fore is that she associates her perceived weaknesses in the institution with her inability to mix with men and a sense of non-recognition of her personal values and upbringing. Because she works in an institution dominated by male leadership she feels lonely and therefore ought to behave like a lady and not to go out looking for everyday information or gossip. Such findings are well supported by researchers like Shakeshaft (1987) and King (1981) both cited in Greyvenstein (1991). They pointed out that women experience a feeling of loneliness, isolation, and lack of acceptance particularly as a result of subtle reactions of rejection on the part of peers and subordinates in the ranks of both male and female colleagues.

She is proud of her values. She does not want to involve herself in the company of men as she does not identify with their values at all. She feels she cannot mix with such kind of people who cannot use the management forums or platforms to discuss management issues but prefer to gossip in places she cannot even imagine herself going to. I feel that in all institutions or organisations there is a need for the promotion of institutional and individual's values and beliefs. This suggests that there is no organisation that is value free and that individual and organisational values need to be made explicit and openly debated as part of management process. Management literature that focuses on organisational culture clearly points to the importance of clarifying and identifying norms and values which all members in the organisation subscribe to (see, for example, Schein 1992).

I believe that where there are organisational values that are known and communicated freely, properly and openly, there will be a spirit of tolerance that will prevail among all its members. Where there is tolerance there will be good working relations and mutual understanding and an active appreciation of the value of human difference. There will be no problem of sex or gender, race or class difference and people will live together in

harmony. A spirit of Ubuntu will prevail and different languages, different cultural backgrounds and religions, because such values are tolerated in the workplace (Mbigi 1995). The problems that this woman experiences arise out of a lack of understanding of her values and beliefs, and this leads to lack of tolerance in the institution. Schein's (1992) exploration of organisational culture has drawn attention to the importance of shared values. A healthy organisational climate (or culture) is characterised by shared norms and values. In a sense, the conflict between her personal values and those of her colleagues is therefore a symptom of the larger problem.

The respondent is of the opinion that strong leadership is associated with men. To me, although she might not be aware that she is actually admitting defeat, I believe she is trapped in the earliest thinking of leadership "traits", based on the writings of people like Aristotle who perceived that leadership was associated with characteristics such as being "dominant" and "aggressive". This is due to the fact that she believes that the only reason why men succeed in their execution of duties is because they bully and treat each other on a man-to-man basis which is not possible with women. Her thinking supports Enomoto's findings (2000: 222) which describe perceived male leadership as "masculine, dominating, successful, heroic, capable, strong, forceful and manly". Because such characteristics are associated with male managers or leaders they are then seen to be autocratic and their management style is very much linked with autocracy.

This does not end there. Again, without being aware of her divided thinking, she believes in male supremacy and envies their management behaviour or style. She feels that men 'push' things in order to succeed in leadership. With such thinking she is unable to free herself from patriarchal beliefs and dominance. She is justifying the fact that there are some jobs which are set aside for a particular group and in the eyes of the majority labelled 'masculine' while others are labelled 'feminine'. For example leadership and management are seen as 'masculine' while domestic work and teaching are seen as 'feminine'.

She admits that because she does not ‘bully’ other people or ‘push’ things, as a woman and because she is not a man, she is therefore doomed to fail, and so she admits that men will continue leading. She in fact wishes she could do likewise, and bully in order to be successful. She seems to be the victim of male dominance and her institutional stereotyped thinking. The effects of gender and consequences of stereotyping are complex and far reaching and people are programmed and socialised by social structures they grew up in. Perhaps she has reached the point of thinking that nothing is going to change and therefore she must stop bothering trying to change cultural roots that go back to the early days of mankind.

She believes that she is seen as a weak manager where she works. Be that as it may, she ascribes her perceived ‘weakness’ to the fact that she is a woman and does not believe that she is really weak. Judging from her belief in male supremacy this does not come as a surprise that she is seen as a weak manager. Some of the petty jobs she is made to perform are really out of her jurisdiction and she is not supposed to do them. She does not use her positional status to express her concerns or act accordingly for fear of being seen as not doing her job properly. She believes that even if she could voice her concerns she would not receive the support she needs. She believes that she will not even be taken seriously by management as they themselves do not take her role seriously. Her feelings of being seen as a weak leader also confirm the patriarchal belief where women are seen as unfit to manage large organisations. This feeling has been explained by researchers like Greyvenstein (1996) who expressed the patriarchal belief that:

women are weak, passive, emotional, dependent, fearful, unsure of themselves, while men are strong, aggressive, independent, fearless, self-assured and rational.

This belief perpetuates the feeling that most men appear to know how to do things properly and women do not.

5.2.1 HER LEADERSHIP STYLE

Contrary to her belief about male managers is her own style of leadership. When leading she adopts an “open” style of leadership and does not believe in sticking too rigidly to the rules. The kind of leadership style she prefers is bottom up and does not believe in top down management at all. Her “bottom up” style of management is very often associated with transformational leadership. Rosener (1990) described female leadership style in ways that characterise “transformational” leadership, getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal.

Also contrary to her sense of failure and weaknesses within the institution as a whole, she is very comfortable as a leader in her office (but it must be noted that the situation is different within the institution at large) as she describes herself in ways that characterise “transformational” leadership. For example she prides herself on achieving high standards of motivation and high morale among her staff members. She believes that allowing employees to contribute and to feel powerful and important is a win-win situation very healthy for the employees and the organisation at large. She also believes in “transparency”. Her openness leads to good human relations and she strongly believes in teamwork.

According to Griffin (1990: 405 cited in Rosener 1990) team building activities are intended to enhance the effectiveness and satisfaction of individuals who work in groups or teams and to promote overall group effectiveness. She therefore prefers to perceive herself and her colleagues as partners who are also working together for a common goal. She also acknowledges the fact that things are not very smooth in her role as a manager but because they are working as a team she feels that the team spirit of her office helps them to accomplish so many goals and helps to overcome so many problems. She does this because she acknowledges the fact that the human relations approach is one of the important leadership approaches and one of the best weapons she is utilising. Judging from what she is doing, she is both a transformational and an interactive leader. Rosener (1990) calls this style interactive leadership because she believes that such women actively work to make their interactions with subordinates positive for everyone involved.

Her interactive leadership style reflects the kind of person who works hand in hand with her subordinates, and who also puts the needs and interest of other people first so that they might feel good about themselves and their work situations. Such leaders create mechanisms that get people to participate and they use a conversational style that sends signals inviting people to get involved (Berenice & Bahr 1988).

Based on these findings it appears that the respondent is both a transformational and an interactive leader. As an interactive leader in her office she encourage participation, share power and information and get her staff members excited about their work. Her inter-activeness helps her to gain more ideas that help to empower her in her job because she believes that by learning from other people helps her to know how to handle people and what best style to use in certain circumstances. Interactive leaders are also viewed as transformational. Also in support of these findings Rosener (1990) in her survey of 69 world-class leaders (of whom 9 were women), found that women came out higher on the transformational factor than their male counterparts.

5.2.2 HER BELIEFS ON THE FUTURE OF WOMEN

She strongly believes that women are born leaders and they only need to be motivated. Her view is supported by Peters (cited in De Bruin 2000) who says that women nowadays are even seen as more intelligent than men and better managers. He goes on by stressing the word 'better', better with relationships, better with planning, setting goals and execution. But this is despite her feeling that women do not believe in themselves especially those who are married. According to her, women have a "deficit" attitude, they belittle themselves and tend to trivialise their capabilities.

Although she is referring to other women and not herself, I believe she is in the same boat as other women. Take her out of her office and she lacks confidence herself and is in need of being motivated also. Although I agree that she has confidence when in her office, looking at her in the institution at large, she is no better off than other women. She

lacks confidence, does not believe in herself either and tends to belittle herself. What is at stake here is that motivation is the key to management, regardless of gender, but women need to be motivated more than men. She also feels that women are lacking in management skills and capabilities. Although she is again referring to other women she herself also lacks management skills, and this is obvious when she is seen within the institution as a whole.

Nevertheless she is positive about the future of women as leaders and regards them as born leaders who are having the ability to ‘juggle’ their time and do many different things at the same time. She feels that the ‘upliftment’ of women’s strengths depended on women themselves as they have a lot to give. Her statement is well supported by Irene Chanley (cited in *Finance Week* September 2000), winner of the Business Woman of the year who says that at least half of all positions at large organisations should be fielded by women. Chanley believes that women, forever busy with work, family responsibilities and related matters, make a success of careers, especially top positions, precisely because of these pressures. She feels that combining a high-powered office job with motherhood is a constant challenge.

This is indeed true because a substantial number of women have proved beyond doubt that ‘what a man can do, a woman can do also’. Such have made their mark in history. Rosener (1990) concurs with Chanley and says that top women succeed because they are women, and are drawing on what is unique to their socialisation as women and are creating a different path to the top.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This leader is an interesting mixture of success and failure trapped in an unstable, hierarchical organisation and her own stereotyped thinking. She believes in the future of women as leaders, and see herself as a good leader, while on the other hand she views leadership as a man’s field. She is a typical victim of cultural and societal discourse: she

cannot divorce herself from the beliefs of male supremacy. She sees men as aggressors and bullies but also hopes she can adopt their aggressive behaviour so as to succeed. She finds consolation within the boundaries of her office but outside her office she knows she cannot succeed and is bound to fail. Her leadership is characterised by conflicting ideas and interests, and a crippling sense of failure.

CHAPTER 6

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF MY FINDINGS

It is clear from the preceding chapter that the circumstances surrounding the respondent's leadership role in the institution has impacted negatively on her personality. As a researcher and more especially as a woman, I have found this study to be of significant value in developing an understanding of the subtle implications of gender discrimination. The changes that are taking place both nationally and internationally can no longer be disregarded. Institutions can no longer afford to disregard and evade consequences brought about by change, and the findings of this study could be of significant help and benefit in this regard.

This study shows that a major intervention in institutions of higher learning is of paramount importance. The value of this study could therefore best be explained by answering the following question: 'What might these interventions include in the context of institutions of higher learning and myself so as to help other women especially those in management to succeed and escape from their stereotyped feelings and thinking?'

What I can say is that the key to success for women, especially those in management, lies in recognising the existence of these feelings and reactions, in anticipating them, and in planning effective ways of coping with them.

Intervention strategies will concern the creation of an environment conducive to their well being and advancement. I shall itemise only five actions that institutions should bear in mind and pursue:

It is by actions, behaviour and attitudes of staff that an organisational culture can be developed, thereby helping management structures to bring about these sorts of changes in their institutions.

Retraining of institutional personnel in gender-sensitivity is essential and institutions must develop on-going plans to solve this problem.

Education organisations should play a vital role in identifying and conveying to the communities they serve the major issues of the time, for example a capacity building strategy must be developed for those charged with the responsibility for planning.

It is not good enough for an organisation to assume that transformation happens in the ordinary course of events and that no institutional effort is required. Management must devise seminars, workshops, programmes and research that inform all staff of the central issues at stake.

Many women appointed to leadership positions are leaving or about to leave because they feel marginalized and discomforted by having to work among people who do not understand the issues and a system which militates against their inclusion in its decision-making structures.

Women must decide if success in leadership and management is what they really want and desire. If the answer is 'yes', they must plan for it, confront the problems and voice their feelings and opinions. They also must work and support each other, be strong enough and be less vulnerable to criticism. Knowledge of leadership theories and skills as mentioned earlier in chapter 2 and 5 will contribute to their leadership roles.

6.2 ADVANTAGES OF THIS METHOD OF STUDY

The research approach adopted in this study has served my purpose well, since it has allowed me ways of understanding not offered by other research methodologies.

According to Giorgi (1999: 77):

Everything that is spoken about, is spoken about in terms of how objects or events appear to the consciousness of the beholder, which is the literal definition of “phenomenon” for phenomenology. It is a philosophy that is based upon intuition, which is a technical term meaning that it is based on how objects present themselves to consciousness (so “how” and “what” are both fully considered) and it proceeds descriptively. It is not anti-empirical, imaginative variations and possible acts of consciousness.

I believe the methodology allowed me to enter and understand the ‘consciousness’ of the participant, to view the phenomenon of discrimination in the workplace through her eyes. It is through viewing her experience through her own intentional understanding that I was able to describe her experience.

6.3 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study was an attempt to explore female leaders’ perceptions and experience of discrimination in their places of work. But because of the nature of the study and because of the duration or time limits and the required limits for this particular study, it only concentrated on one female leader’s perception of leadership. Also, it only covers one particular department in an institution of higher learning.

Being a single case study this research is naturally vulnerable to the usual criticisms and objections levelled at small-scale qualitative studies, including lack of generalisability, subjectivity on the part of the researcher, validity of findings and a possible lack of rigour. On the subject of generalisability, Polkinghorne’s (1989: 58) suggestion that that the importance of phenomenological research lies not in its generalisability but rather in

its ability to enlarge on, deepen and, in some cases correct understandings of a phenomenon that are arrived at through empirical research provides a clear response. I hope that I have described and discussed the case richly enough to be both interesting and “true” for the reader.

Subjectivity is a more complex issue, since it links directly with validity. “How valid are these findings?” is a question every researcher has to face at some stage, and the question deserves an answer. Of the studies I have read which are similar to mine, the work of Michael (2000) is perhaps the best source for me to draw on. Her study was also a phenomenological case study of a single leader. In answering the possible charge of having been too emotionally involved in the issue to have retained any kind of objectivity, she has this to say:

A second limitation of this research is the fact that I have had to be so strongly involved in the process of the research that it must have influenced, in some way, the research process. I do not think that there is a way of avoiding this; all research requires the researcher to be personally involved in the project (Cantrell 1993). However, it does raise the thorny issue of the validity of this research. Many qualitative researchers have grappled with this issue. Polkinghorne (1989: 57) gives a list of questions that a phenomenological researcher should consider when approaching the issue of validity:

Did the interviewer influence the contents of the subjects’ descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the subjects’ actual experience?
Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation of the interview?
Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?

Naturally it would be difficult for me to assess my performance on the first criterion. What I can claim is that the nature of phenomenological interviewing is such that “interference” is unlikely to occur. Typically one asks one or two very open-ended questions, followed by the occasional “Can you tell me more?” or “Can you give me an example of that?” It is difficult to influence a respondent’s answers when one does not

have an agenda at all! As to the accuracy of the transcript, this was verified by the respondent. Polkinghorne's final criterion really refers to validity, in the phenomenological sense of the word. Put differently, the question asks: Do the findings spring directly from the data? And further: Would an independent reader agree that the findings presented do indeed arise from the data, and nowhere else? This is for the reader to judge. To that end, I have included natural meaning units derived from the interview protocol, so that the reader may judge for herself whether my "interpretation" of the data is accurate and feasible.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing points have pointed to the fact that gender discrimination occurs to a great extent in work places. It has also been shown that women lack institutional and decision-making powers, they have to deal with unfair barriers and they experience subtle reactions of rejection on the part of peers and subordinates. They are often pushed to one side in unimportant peripheral portfolios in the organisational structure, they are seen to be inferior to men because of their sex, they are undermined, and as a result their actions are evaluated as being representative of the way all women work. Chiefly, however, what has arisen is that the most significant barrier women face is their very own mindsets.

Based on the above findings I recommend that:

There must be a larger number of suitable female leader models for young women to look to in many sectors including education because women need mentors and advocates.

An increase in numbers of women would enable them to feel less like marginal people, would change prevalent group norms, and would provide role models and role situations to socialise the next generation of professionals.

Women should be encouraged to begin planning their careers even before they leave universities or institutions of higher learning and not to stumble into career planning much later in life.

Women need to believe in themselves and to know that as a visible minority they should avoid feeling pressured to perform effectively and be commitment in their roles as managers. They also have to be visible when top leadership positions are available.

Women must be aware of the fact that because of the past experience of gender discrimination their journey to management or leadership may be more difficult than of their male counterparts, and that they may experience great frustration along the way. Staff development programmes in management should accommodate both male and females.

Every effort must be made to combat the socialised mindset of inferiority which women labour under. The 'ideal' model of leadership needs to be balanced by an increased emphasis on what women have to offer as leaders.

Lastly, in view of the limitations of the method used in the present study there is a need for further investigations of this type.

6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Clearly there is a great need for further investigation of this important issue, especially at a time when the country is undergoing transformation. As discussed earlier, there is evidence that women are increasingly making their mark in leadership and management in South Africa, and the country can only benefit from a greater range of studies examining the way women lead, and the barriers that confront them. Qualitative studies are usually small case studies, and they tend to enrich each other.

Furthermore future studies must draw their sample from a wide range of women in leadership and management positions so that the findings may be more generalisable. Future research could also explore some other factors that may lead to females obtaining fewer promotional opportunities than males, such as the abilities of females, motivation to work and their dedication to work or whether they bring changes in the organisational structures due to their perceived style of management.

A phenomenological study is, by its nature, an in-depth analysis of individuals' perceptions. Clearly a study in which more data sources have been drawn on – such as the responses of followers and co-workers and observation of leaders in action - would add to the richness and perhaps validity of the findings.

Such findings may help to contribute to the small but growing body of literature that seeks to understand women leaders' experiences, and perhaps in time play a role in enhancing their relative position in education and society at large.

6.6 CONCLUSION

On the basis of these findings on gender discrimination it is evident that women are disadvantaged in the job situation where they 'compete' with men. Their disadvantage is unfortunately based on their sex. The results obtained from this study, together with

literature that has been reviewed, shows that gender discrimination is still a pervasive problem despite some measures to curb it. This is in spite of the ideals expressed in the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, a bold call for redress and equity on all grounds. The Act aims to correct the demographic imbalance in the nation's workforce by compelling employers to remove barriers to advancement of 'Blacks' 'Coloureds' 'Indians', women and the disabled, and actively to advance them in all categories of employment through 'affirmative action'. It begins by placing an obligation on all employers to promote equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination in any employment policy or practice. This obligation is reinforced by a prohibition on unfair discrimination, which reads as follows:

No person may unfairly discriminate, either directly or indirectly, against an employee, in any employment policy or practice, on one or more ground including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language or birth.

The Act also expressly excludes harassment of an employee on any of the listed grounds.

But an Act does not necessarily reflect reality, and the question remains: How can the worthy ideals of the Act be translated into real action? There is evidence of a change in the collective mindset, but, as has been shown, the roots of discrimination lie deep. The change process is slow, and is likely to be painful. But if the ideals conceptualised in the Employment Equity Act are to be realised, it is a process worth working towards.

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