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The SABPP Women's Report 2013

Anita Bosch (Editor)
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South African Board for People Practices (SABPP)
Women's Report 2013

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1st Floor, Rossouws Attorneys Building
8 Sherborne Road, Parktown
PO Box 2450, Houghton 2041, South Africa
T: +27 11 482 8595 F: +27 11 482 4830
E: hrri@sabpp.co.za www.sabpp.co.za

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The SABPP Women's Report 2013

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to bring you the SABPP Women's Report for the third time. The 2013 edition of the report contains chapters aimed at encouraging concerted action and creating political awareness. The focal chapter of the 2013 Women's Report presents the theme of politics, providing a poignant analysis of South African female politicians and their impact, or lack thereof, on advancing the gender cause. Lindiwe Makhunga provides insight into the history and background of women in South African politics, and critically evaluates the low levels of influence and effect demonstrated by present-day female politicians.

Continuing with the theme of leadership and organisational politics, two chapters provide actionable information, contributed by experienced coaches of female leaders. Leanne Meyer, who is based in the USA, reveals female leadership insights gained in the United States. Leanne reflects on issues such as the power of 360° feedback and how authenticity and leadership development lead to identity development, and shares invaluable coaching themes for the benefit of female leaders. As female leaders in the USA and South Africa seemingly have many issues in common in understanding their corporate careers and in their levels of political astuteness, the chapter dovetails with Renate Volpe's experience of fostering political intelligence amongst South African women. She presents a number of viewpoints on how women can go about increasing their awareness of organisational politics and learn to play the political game with greater effect.

Jenni Gobind looks at how the well-intended Employment Equity Act has, in effect, failed South African women, especially those in senior and executive roles. She also explains the forthcoming proposed amendments to the Act, crystallising the difference between employment equity and affirmative action. The topic of workplace bullying, together with the fact that women are often the preferred targets, is expanded on by Leigh Leo and Robyn Reid, in hopes of stimulating thought around this destructive phenomenon.

The report would not be complete without an update of the statistics of women and men in the South African workplace. Madelyn Geldenhuys provides us with these figures, drawn from various sources and databases. This chapter provides benchmark figures for HR practitioners to bear in mind when styling their gender mainstreaming plans.

The intention of the 2013 Women's Report is to bring topics of a political and leadership nature to the attention of HR practitioners. As always, the report combines evidence-based practice with solid practical experience and suggestions, enabling HR practitioners to deal with women in the workplace in an informed manner, and offers alternative ways of viewing gender at work.

Professor Anita Bosch

*Women in the Workplace research programme
Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management
University of Johannesburg*
E: anitab@uj.ac.za



CHAPTER ONE

Women's political leadership in contemporary South Africa: Form over substance?

Lindiwe Makunga

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Introduction

Although the consistent public image of political power and executive authority in South Africa has historically been dominated by men¹, women have never been absent from South Africa's political sphere². Presently, a South African woman, Dr. Nkosasana Dlamini-Zuma, represents the first woman to lead the African Union, and the collective force of South Africa's political opposition namely, Mamphele Ramphele, Lindiwe Mazibuko, Patricia De Lille, and Helen Zille, is distinctly female.

It can be argued that South African women have never been as visibly present in the formal political arena in as high a number as they presently constitute, or held the high-profile political leadership roles that they presently occupy.

Women are therefore seemingly favourably placed to articulate a collective politics of feminist leadership within the country, if one assumes that a positive relationship exists between increasing the number of women in formal politics and improvements in the frequency and quality of policy and legislation passed in favour of women³.

¹ Gasa, N. (2007). *Let them build more goals*. In Gasa, N. (Ed.), *Women in South African history*. Cape Town: HSRC Press; Veeran, V. (2006). *Women in South Africa: Challenges and aspirations in the new millennium*. *Women in Welfare Education*, 8 (1), pp. 55-63; Sharife, K. (2008). *The black female in modern history: From South Africa*. *New African*. *The Free Library* [October, 1]. Retrieved from [http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The black female in modern history: from South Africa, Khadija...-a0187012532](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+black+female+in+modern+history:+from+South+Africa,+Khadija...-a0187012532)

² As far back as the early 1800s, MaNthatisi ascended the throne of the Basia people to become the regent queen of the Tlokwa, in the region of the country presently known as the Free State. In 1889, the Women's Christian Temperance Union was formed with white, Coloured and African branches (Vincent, L., 1999). *A cake of soap: The volksmoeder ideology and Afrikaner women's campaign for the vote*. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 32(1), pp. 1-17). As early as 1894, women were organising the collective protests against participation in world wars, the pass laws, and racial segregation that would culminate in the 1913 Bloemfontein Women's March, the historic precursor to the commemorated 1956 Women's Pass March. Women were active participants in early trade union movements in the late 1920s and 1930s (Berger, I., 2007) *Generations of Struggle: Trade Unions and the roots of feminism, 1930-1960*. In Gasa, N. (Ed.), *Ibid*. They participated in all aspects of the anti-apartheid struggle in large numbers, were similarly incarcerated, and also formed the ranks of the ANC and PAC in exile and their respective underground military wings.

³ Mansbridge, J. (1999). *Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent "Yes."* *Journal of Politics*, 61 (3), pp. 628-657; Mansbridge, J. (2006). *Quota problems: Combating the dangers of essentialism*. *Politics and Gender*, 1 (4), pp. 621-638; Phillips, A. (1991). *Engendering democracy*. Oxford and University Park: Polity Press and Pennsylvania State University Press; Phillips, A. (1995). *The politics of presence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Young, I. M. (2000). *Inclusion and democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

For decades, women globally have widely advocated and campaigned for the increased presence of women in political leadership, arguing the inability of men to respond to needs of ordinary women⁴. At one point in post-apartheid South Africa, women felt strongly that their needs as women would be better served if more women were active in political leadership⁵. Puzzling, therefore, is the gender anomaly and cruel contradiction that post-apartheid South Africa has come to represent for ordinary women.

South Africa is a highly gender-unequal society that presents harsh realities for women. Ironically, alongside the spectacular achievements of women in South African politics, with a 42.7% representation in formal political leadership, we have the current reality of the status of women in this country — HIV infection rates among women and rates of gender-based violence that can only be described as dismal⁶. In 2012, South Africa was officially labelled “the rape capital of the world” by Interpol⁷. Incredibly high levels of violence against women and children currently co-exist with high socio-economic inequality in a country where women bear the overwhelming burden of unemployment⁸.

The prevalence of gender-based violence in any society is a sobering indicator and a harsh manifestation of entrenched gender inequality and female subordination, and in South Africa it reflects the political, economic, and social embeddedness of traditional patriarchal power that reifies the intersection between the oppression of race, class, and gender.

Women in the formal political arena have become increasingly silent, and their failure to respond to these crises threatens to erode South Africa’s hard-won freedoms and democratic gains. Particularly disturbing is the weakness of ordinary women’s voices from the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, the department tasked with the responsibility of addressing women’s issues in South

Africa. The Minister of this portfolio, Lulu Xingwana, has become a caricature of the ineptitude of government’s response to gender equality issues and a cruel reminder to South African women of the unaccountability of women’s political leadership. Kardam⁹ defines gender accountability as “responsiveness to women’s interests and the incorporation of gender-sensitive policies, programmes and projects in state institutions.”

When applied to the mandate that feminism envisages for women in formal decision-making positions, this concept involves women promoting gender equality interests and being accountable to both women and men in pursuit of gender equality within the parliamentary institution and the state¹⁰.

Particularly disappointing has been the poor quality of women’s recent political leadership in a country where a rich historical legacy of feminist activism achieved substantial gains for women in the formal political arena. The reasons for the failure of women in current political leadership to collectively leverage their numbers and articulate an urgent political agenda on behalf of women are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this chapter, but Amanda Gouws¹¹, in crucially recognising the existence of feminist consciousness among female political representatives in formal politics as “a critical precondition for political action,” provides a possible dimension of the answer.

This chapter aims to explore the current state of women’s political leadership in South Africa, discuss the kind of women’s leadership the country experienced immediately after its first democratic election, and concludes that, while women have made enormous strides in the political arena in terms of increasing their presence and striving towards formal gender parity in the state, there has been a marked absence of gender transformational politics by female politicians from across the political party spectrum regarding South African women’s present concerns.

⁴ Pateman, C. (1988). *The sexual contract*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Pateman, C. (1989). *The disorder of women*. Cambridge: Polity Press

⁵ Human Sciences Research Council. (2005) *Survey on South African voter participation in election*. Pretoria. HSRC.

⁶ Jewkes, R. K., Dunkle, K., Nduna, M., & Shai, N. (2010). Intimate partner violence, relationship power inequity, and incidence of HIV infection in young women in South Africa: A cohort study. *The Lancet*, 376 (9734), pp. 41-48; Levinsohn, J. A., McLaren, Z., Shisana, O., & Zuma, K. (2011). *HIV status and labour market participation in South Africa*. National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper No. 16901; Bornman, S., Budlender, D., Clarke, Y., van der Westhuizen, C., Watson, J., Antunes, S., Iqbal, N. & Manoeq, S. (2012). *The state of the nation, government priorities and women in South Africa*. Cape Town: Women’s Legal Centre.

⁷ Bornman, S. et al. *Idem*, p. 9.

⁸ Levinsohn et al. *Ibid.*; Thurlow, J. (2011). *Has trade liberalization in South Africa affected men and women differently?* International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), DSGD Discussion Paper No. 36.

⁹ Kardam, N. (1997). *Making development organizations accountable: The organizational, political and cognitive contexts*. In Goetz, A. M. (Ed.) *Getting Institutions Right for Women in Development*. London and New York: Zed Books. p. 44.

¹⁰ Goetz, A. (2009). *Governing women: Will new public space for some women make a difference for all women?* In Goetz, A. (Ed.), *Governing women: Women’s political effectiveness in contexts of democratization and governance reform*. London: Routledge.

¹¹ Gouws, A. (1996). *The rise of the femocrat?* *Agenda*, 30, p. 34.



Wathint'abafazi, wathint'imbokodo: Legacies of South African women's political leadership before and post the 1994 elections

Much has been written about the pioneering experiences and substantial feminist gains achieved by South Africa's first post-apartheid cohort of female parliamentarians from across the political spectrum¹².

Entering parliament after the 1994 democratic election in numbers previously unseen in South African history, the 117 women elected as political representatives encountered a harsh, sexist environment that reflected the patriarchal nature of the South Africa parliamentary institution, mirrored in seemingly mundane details like the absence of women's toilets on some floors in the building. Women from across the political party spectrum, most entering parliament for the first time, experienced sexism, male bias, and the dominant masculine culture fostered in the formal political arena, all of which presented considerable constraints, not only to women's abilities to exercise leadership, but to being effective gender equality advocates within the state.

The challenges that women face in widely different professional sectors are astonishingly similar, and politics is in no way less hostile to women than any other environment where men dominate and women are regarded as 'honorary boys,' such as corporate management and various technical professions such as mining and engineering. Women MPs' experiences are compounded by the struggle with the double work burden that parliament's demanding and gruelling schedule imposes on them, and many women found that running a household was substantially more difficult while also helping to run a country¹³.

Added to the complications and demands of balancing work and personal life was the career inexperience of most women who were entering parliament for the first time after years in the trenches of the anti-apartheid struggle¹⁴. While male MPs who were entering parliament for the first time also experienced this

particular challenge, their ignorance of parliamentary processes and procedure was not usually blamed on the unsuitability of their physical presence in that arena in the first place.

While initially disparaged, South African women in parliament between 1994 and 1999 demonstrated powerful lessons for women within all workplace environments on effective responses to sexism, gender biases, and the use of collective agency to demand structural and qualitative changes. During South Africa's negotiated settlement transition from apartheid to democracy, following the exclusion of women as a political interest group from the constitutional negotiations that occurred after the formal dismantling of apartheid in 1990, women from over 90 political party and civil society organisations with broad affiliations formed the Women's National Coalition (WNC).

The leadership of the WNC was comprised largely of prominent ANC Women's League members, such as Dr. Frene Ginwala and Nosizwe Madladla-Routledge, who would not only openly advocate a feminist politics, but would successfully lobby their own political party for the adoption of internal gender quotas¹⁵. The WNC aimed to advance women's political, economic, and social interests during the negotiation process by attaining crucial formal guarantees for women's status in the new democratic South Africa. Their successes include the drafting of a Women's Charter and lobbying for the guarantee of an equality clause in the 1996 Constitution.

Channelling the cooperative multi-party relationship that had defined women's activism in the Women's National Coalition during the transition period, women parliamentarians drew on past experiences of collective mobilisation from civil society and, under the leadership of the Speaker of Parliament, vocal feminist Dr. Frene Ginwala, formed a number of political party and cross-party caucuses and parliamentary bodies¹⁶. Some of these, like the Women's Empowerment Unit (WEP), had a membership that included all female parliamentarians,

¹² See Albertyn, C. (1994). *Women and the transition to democracy in South Africa*. In Kaganas, F. and Murray, C. (Eds.). *Gender and the new South African legal order*, Cape Town: Juta; Albertyn, C. (Ed.). (1999). *Engendering the state: A South African case study*. Johannesburg: Centre for Applied Legal Studies; Britton, H. E. (2005). *Women in the South African parliament: From resistance to governance*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press; Fish, J. N., Britton, H. & Meintjes, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Women's activism in South Africa*. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press; Geisler, G. (2000). *Parliament is another terrain of struggle: Women, men and politics in South Africa*. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 38 (4), pp. 605-630; Geisler, G. (2004). *Women and the remaking of politics in Southern Africa: Negotiating autonomy, incorporation and representation*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute; Hassim, S. (2006). *Women's organisation and democracy in South Africa: Contesting authority*. Scottsville: UKZN Press; Meintjes, S. (2003). *The politics of engagement: Women transforming the policy process — Domestic violence legislation in South Africa*. In Hassim, S. & Goetz, A. M. (Eds.). *No shortcuts to power: African women in politics and policy making*. London and New York: Zed Books.

¹³ Geisler, G. (2000). *Parliament is another terrain of struggle: Women, men and politics in South Africa*. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 38 (4), pp. 605-630; Britton, H. E. *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Geisler, G. *Ibid.*; Britton, H. E. *Ibid.*; Vetten, L., Makhunga, L., & Leisegang, A. (2012). *Making women's representation in parliament count: The case of violence against women*. Johannesburg: Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre.

¹⁵ Hassim, S. (2003). *The gender pact and democratic consolidation: Institutionalizing gender equality in the South African state*. *Feminist Studies*, 29 (3), pp. 504-528. *Academy of Management (AFAM) Inaugural Conference, August 11, 2011, San Antonio, Texas.*

¹⁶ Vetten, L., Makhunga, L., & Leisegang, A. *Ibid.*

regardless of political party affiliation. These caucuses functioned simultaneously as a supportive body for women parliamentarians and as fora for the consideration of issues pertinent to women's interests and gender equality.

The Joint Civil Society-ANC Parliamentary Women's Caucus Campaign to End Violence Against Women and Children was established in 1996 to facilitate cooperation between ANC female parliamentarians and organisations addressing violence against women, as a response to gender-based violence¹⁷. The Women's Empowerment Unit supported women parliamentarians in familiarising themselves with the legislative process, while the Parliamentary Women's Group (PWG) assisted female parliamentarians in learning about strategies involved in passing gender-responsive legislation.

Within an environment that fostered feminist cooperation, female MPs used their collective voice to demand changes to parliament's physical environment and masculine culture¹⁸. In addition, women were successful in lobbying for the establishment of a day-care centre within parliament that would enable them to bring young children to work with them.

Crucial to the success of women MPs as gender equality advocates was their close relationship with women's organisations operating outside of the state, fostered during the transition and shared membership of the WNC, who were able to lobby female parliamentarians to formally pursue women's interests in the state. South Africa's 1998 Domestic Violence Act was the result of a broad-based coalition that had emerged between civil society (non-governmental organisations addressing violence against women), various political parties, and members of the ANC in the national executive¹⁹.

This strategic cooperation was significantly facilitated by the ties that women in civil society had formed with women in political parties, and vice versa. While the parliamentary process that eventually passed the legislation was firmly steered by members of parliament, the initial impetus for a legal response to addressing the issue of violence against women emerged from anti-rape organisations in the late 1980s, and was sustained by the women's movement²⁰.

South African women in the current political sphere: Disasters, disparities and questions

Arguably, at no other moment in South Africa's recent post-apartheid history have the presence and participation of women in South African formal politics been such a pronounced and definitive aspect of the country's political landscape. Currently, women comprise the majority of voters in South African national, provincial, and local elections²¹. Women have emerged as particularly dominant in political opposition to the ANC-led government, with both the head of the official opposition and her counterpart in parliament being female. The newest opposition political formation is also led by a woman — prominent academic and social activist Mamphela Ramphele.

Female opposition leaders are positioned at a unique vantage point in that they can be increasingly critical of the ANC-led government's efforts without alienating themselves from their parties in ways that harmed outspoken feminists like Pregs Govender and Nosizwe Madlala-Routledge.

In certain alarming instances, however, the behaviour of South African women in the opposition has explicitly negated gender equality aspirations. In 2009, the Democratic Alliance leader, Helen Zille, in a move that implicitly reflected the lack of faith in women's political leadership, despite her own gender, appointed an all-male Cabinet in the Western Cape's provincial government. The silence from women in political leadership on the scourge of violence against women has been quite deafening.

Mamphela Ramphele and her newly formed political organisation, Agang, present new opportunities for women's political engagement. That Ramphele is a revered social activist, a medical doctor, and has written extensively on issues of social inequality in South Africa bodes well for those interested in a decisive shift in women's political leadership. Interestingly, though Ramphele launched her party at the historic women's jail at Constitution Hill, she has never been explicitly identified as a feminist. Addressing the silence of women in politics on feminism, Hassim²² notes that "this ideology has not been a vote-catcher in South Africa."

¹⁷ Shifman, P., Madlala-Routledge, N., & Smith, V. (1997). *Women in parliament caucus for action to end violence*. *Agenda*, 36, pp. 23-26.

¹⁸ Britton, H. E. (2005). *Ibid.*; Geisler, G. *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Meintjes, S. *Ibid.*

²⁰ Meintjes, S. *Ibid.*

²¹ Human Sciences Research Council. *Ibid.*

²² Hassim, S. (2009). *Godzille and the witches: Gender and the 2009 elections*. In Southall, R. and Daniel, J. (Eds.), *Zunami! The 2009 South African elections*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, p. 200.

The present role of feminism in South African politics

Where before and straight after the 1994 elections Parliament fostered feminist cooperation amongst women in a non-partisan way, women's feminist, collective, and non-partisan activism in parliament has recently become largely demobilised²³. The momentum that was built by the women's movement during the political transition and democratic negotiations around entrenching women's rights in the new democratic dispensation has not been sustained in the post-apartheid period, and promoting the status of women in South Africa has gradually become symbolic, rather than a substantive effort.

This trend is further augmented by the exodus from parliament of many female MPs who had identified with feminist and gender equality advocates such as Pregs Govender and many more after the second democratic elections in 1999. According to Britton²⁴, the exodus of close to a third of the ANC's first-term female parliamentarians, coupled with their replacement by technocratic and professional female politicians without activist backgrounds, has led to the depoliticisation of women's issues within parliament.

This trend has undertones of the manipulation of women's suffrage aspirations in the 1920s and '30s, when white women were given the vote. During this time, Hertzog pitted the notion of indiscriminate voting rights for all women against native (African, Coloured, and Asian) voting rights, citing the negative results such democratisation would yield. The creation of an 'enemy' in the form of native women within what was once a coalition of likeminded women sealed Hertzog's electoral success²⁵.

One could argue that the present selection of South African female Ministers is similarly, and once again, tainted by the agenda of advancing patriarchal male interests, in this case those of the ANC, to the detriment of the advancement of all women.

The strategic relationship between women's civil society organisations and female MPs that defined early democratic legislative reforms, such as the reform of marriage legislation and the 1998 Domestic Violence Act, is largely perceived to have broken down. Many women's civil society organisations have articulated frustration of the effects of government's lack of consultation and engagement with the women's movement on issues of urgent concern, not only on women and children, but on South Africans broadly²⁶.

The Joint Civil Society-ANC Parliamentary Women's Caucus Campaign to End Violence Against Women and Children that was formed in 1996 is no longer in existence. Neither are the Women's Empowerment Unit or the crèche. Many cite the lack of civil society consultation around the formation of a Women's Ministry in 2009 as an indication that the parliament-civil society relationship that defined the immediate political post-transition phase has largely been eroded. Presently, many women's organisations have articulated the sentiment that "although the current South African government is dominated by former comrades, allies and activists from the liberation struggle, members of civil society organisations still question the potential for true collaboration."²⁷

²³ Britton, H. E. *Ibid.*; Britton, H. (2006). *Organising against gender violence in South Africa*. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (1), pp. 145-163.

²⁴ Britton, H. E. *Idem*, p. 3.

²⁵ Vincent, L. *Ibid.*

²⁶ Van Donk, M. & Maceba, M. (1999). *Women at the crossroads: Women in governance*. *Agenda*, 40, pp. 18-22.

²⁷ Britton, H. (2006). *Organising against gender violence in South Africa*. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (1), pp. 145-163.

Conclusion

While we cannot deny the formidable presence of women in the public arena, worryingly, in a country with alarming levels of violence against women and gender inequality, we have to interrogate the qualitative absence of strong feminist leadership and strong gender equality advocates in the public arena by women in a country where nearly half the representatives (42.7%) in South African parliament are women.

An alarming disparity between the visibility of women in formal political leadership and one of the most of the gender-progressive legal frameworks in the world, which includes the right to freedom of choice, and South Africa's overwhelming levels of violence against women and gender inequality, presents the current contradictions in women's political leadership in this country.

In the first five years of the post-apartheid state, legislation was passed that addressed crucial gender equality concerns, such as reproductive rights, marriage, and domestic violence. This was essentially achieved through a collective feminist activism by female parliamentarians, who demonstrated women's political effectiveness in parliament as agents of gender equality. The cohort of leaders that were responsive to the gender cause present powerful lessons to women in politics, not only in prioritising women's concerns, but in articulating a gender-accountable leadership.

According to Van Donk and Maceba, "political transformation requires change agents, people who will take responsibility to initiate and direct the required transformation"²⁸. Perhaps the absence of female political leadership willing to take this responsibility is the largest current transformational challenge facing South Africa.

²⁸ Van Donk, M. *Ibid.*



CHAPTER TWO

The Employment Equity Act has failed women

Jenni Gobind

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Introduction

The South African perception of the role of women has remained largely unchanged. As women progress in their careers, inequality escalates when issues related to time available for work are not addressed and solved. Female corporate career progress is still weighted against the stereotyped corporate mindset of the ideal worker being available for work 24 hours a day. Women are still discriminated against, hence their often poor progress in the workplace, particularly in the higher hierarchical levels¹.

In its attempt to address previous inequalities, government has implemented laws to compel business in South Africa to accelerate transformation in order to redress past unfair discrimination and achieve greater social justice and equality. The company workforce profile should represent the demographic composition of South African society.

The Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 (EEA), which came into effect on 9 August 1999², prohibits unfair discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, and marital status, among other things. Affirmative action, however, is allowed. The Act requires designated employers (those with more than 50 employees) to conduct a detailed analysis of employment policies, practices, procedures, and the working environment to identify barriers that adversely affect the designated groups: black people, women, and people with disabilities. Such employers are expected to prepare employment equity plans that indicate how they aim to increase workplace representation of these groups.

The EEA was introduced to promote the constitutional right of equality while eliminating unfair discrimination in employment. It also set out requirements designed to bring about a diverse workforce that broadly represents the South African population.

¹ G Andrag, B.G.O. (2012). White paper: Female Executive Career in Corporate South Africa, SEgroup. Retrieved from http://www.systemic-excellence-group.com/sites/default/files/Female%20Executive%20Career%20in%20Corporate%20South%20Africa_1.pdf

² Republic of South Africa. (1998). Employment Equity Act No 55: Pretoria, Government Printers.

The purpose of the EEA is to achieve equity in the workplace by, firstly, promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination, and, secondly, implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce³. The intention of the legislation is to remove discrimination that has prevented the vast majority of the population from attaining adequate levels of education^{4/5} and access to jobs. It also provides for a level of preferential treatment for those who were previously disadvantaged by previous South African political dispensations. In the event of an Act failing to give effect to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa⁶ legislators are obligated to amend the Act. The process required is detailed and time consuming, spanning months before an amendment can come into effect.

Employment Equity Amendment Bill 2012

The Employment Equity Amendment Bill is an example of legislation that is undergoing the process of revision before being signed into effect. The Employment Equity Bill is, at present, a draft version of law. Most Bills are drawn up by a government department under direction of the relevant Minister or Deputy Minister. This kind of Bill must be approved by the Cabinet before being submitted to parliament. The State Law Advisors certify a Bill as being consistent with the Constitution and properly drafted.

Before a Bill can become a law, it must be considered by both Houses of Parliament: the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). It is published in the Government Gazette for public comment, and then referred to the relevant committee. It is debated in the relevant committees of parliament, and amended if necessary. If the Bill passes through both the NA and the NCOP, it goes to the president for assent (signed into law). Once it is signed by the president, it becomes an Act of parliament and a law of the land.

The Employment Equity Amendment Bill has not yet been signed into law (at the time of writing this report), and therefore has not yet come into effect.

The proposed amendments are designed to speed up the objectives of the EEA. The current definition of designated groups — black people, women, and people with disabilities — remains intact, contrary to the rumour that white women may be excluded. The Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Amendment Bill⁷ removed white disabled people and white women from the definition of designated groups within the B-BBEE Act. The B-BBEE Act⁸ seeks to change the objective of equitable representation in all categories and levels in the workforce through B-BBEE, of which black people (Africans, Coloureds, and Indians) are the beneficiaries. Included in this are black women, workers, youths, people with disabilities, and people living in rural areas. The important difference between these two acts is that the EEA seeks to protect and advance women and persons living with a disability of all races, while the B-BBEE seeks to advance economic empowerment and not just employment opportunities for black people.

It has been rumoured that there is a strong possibility that white persons living with disabilities and white women, who form part of the designated groups in terms of the EEA, will lose the protection of affirmative action, as provisions of the B-BBEE Act defining broad-based black economic empowerment will prevail when these two acts come into conflict. As yet, the EEA has not removed white women or white disabled people from the designated groups.

The Employment Equity Act amendments would, in future, limit the definition to persons who are citizens of South Africa. The recruitment of black foreign nationals will not boost employers' compliance with affirmative action goals⁹. Additionally, applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is being considered.

³ Andrag, B.G.O. Ibid.

⁴ Republic of South Africa, Skills Development Act No 97 of 1998, Government Printers: Pretoria.

⁵ Republic of South Africa, Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998, Government Printers: Pretoria.

⁶ Republic of South Africa, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No 108 of 1996, Government Printers: Pretoria.

⁷ The Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Amendment Bill [B42-2012]. Creda Communications ISBN 978-1-4850-0058-7. Retrieved from http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/commonrepository/Processed/20121129/478645_1.pdf

⁸ The Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Amendment Bill [B42-2012]. Creda Communications ISBN 978-1-4850-0058-7. Retrieved from http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/commonrepository/Processed/20121129/478645_1.pdf

⁹ Maeso, M. (2012). Proposed amendments to the Employment Equity Act. Shepstone & Wylie Attorneys. Retrieved from http://www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global%5B_id%5D=88311

One of the many changes incorporated into the Employment Equity Amendment Bill is that rights will be extended to workers employed by temporary employment services. Employees who are placed by a temporary employment service with a client for longer than six months will be deemed to be employees of the client and thus, will have to be incorporated into any employment equity plan. An employment equity plan sets out the steps that the employer plans to follow to achieve equity objectives.

One of the most important features of the EEA Bill is that an employer will have to take into account the demographic profile of the national and regional economically active population. Employers will also be measured against other employers operating under comparable circumstances in implementing employment equity. Employers will also be expected to take reasonable steps to train suitably qualified people from designated groups¹⁰.

The Minister of Labour would have the power to issue a regulation specifying the circumstances under which an employer's compliance should be determined in line with the demographic profile of either the national or regional economically active population.

Employment equity vs. affirmative action

The concept employment equity has occupied many a debate in the South African world of work. The ultimate purpose of legislation has been to restore human dignity through the provision of equal opportunities of employment. Employment equity is defined as the employment of individuals in a fair and non-biased manner¹¹.

Affirmative action is the protection and advancement of the interests of persons disadvantaged by past unfair discrimination, and sets and monitors target numbers regarding employment of designated groups, while employment equity seeks to prevent future unfair discrimination in South Africa within a holistic framework prohibiting any form of discrimination, provided by the South African Bill of Rights¹². It should be

noted that the terms employment equity and affirmative action are sometimes used interchangeably, although they are two different, but related concepts¹³. For as long as discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, and so forth exists in South African workplaces, the EEA will exist.

Coetzee¹⁴ describes the relationship between employment equity and affirmative action as the assumption that one lives in a fair world, a world in which the playing field is not slanted. In contrast, when speaking of affirmative action, the assumption is that decades or centuries of bias have created a slanted playing field, and that measures in the form of targets and numbers need to be taken to level this playing field.

According to Nel¹⁵, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 stipulates that employers may not refuse to reward individuals on the basis of their attributes. For instance, an employer may see an individual's sexual orientation or race as an unfavourable attribute, and, on those grounds, refuse to promote or grant them an annual increase. The EEA attempts to regulate such unjust behaviour. Affirmative action is a specific practice that focuses narrowly on putting members of certain groups into specific positions. This is achieved through the efforts of senior managers in charge of recruitment and promotions. This may exist in the form of a written policy, and is generally viewed as a process of limited duration designed to remedy past discrimination and will not, in isolation, result in true employment equity.

Employment equity is an overarching vision that focuses broadly on changing policies, practices, and attitudes. This is achieved through the efforts of the entire workforce, and requires commitment and creativity that extend well beyond formal policies. It is viewed as a permanent, ongoing goal. Employment equity cannot be achieved through affirmative action alone.

¹⁰ Maeso, M. *Ibid.*

¹¹ Bendix, S. (2010). *Industrial Relations in South Africa* [5th ed.]. Cape Town: Juta.

¹² Erasmus, B. J., Leodolf, P. van Z., Mda, T., & Nel, P. S. (2010). *Managing training and development in South Africa* [5th ed.]. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

¹³ Oosthuizen, R. M. & Naidoo, V. (2010). Attitudes towards and experience of employment equity. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde*, 36(1), Art. #836, 9 pages. DOI:10.4102/sajip.v36i1.836.

¹⁴ Coetzee, M. (2005). *The fairness of affirmative action: An organisational justice perspective*. University of Pretoria.

¹⁵ Nel, P. S., Kirsten, M., Swanepoel, B. J., Erasmus, B. J., & Poisat, P. (2008). *South African employment relations theory and practice*. [6th ed.]. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Harish¹⁶ compares other countries that have mandatory programmes that “have made significant progress in improving the employment and earnings of the designated groups, although they still have a long way to go.” Harish cites research evidence from various countries suggesting a mixed record of success in addressing the complex issues of discrimination and inequality in employment. Northern Ireland, for example, appears to offer a clear example of improvement in the representation of Catholics through an affirmative action policy that is well designed and effectively enforced.

In Canada and the USA, there have been improvements in the representation and pay of women and racial groups, though significant inequality remains. Harish mentions that employment equity was introduced recently, in 1998, in South Africa, and there have been improvements for black men in some occupational groups, but few signs of progress for women. Quotas in India and Malaysia have been in place for some years, and have produced gains in employment for designated groups, resulting in a significant reduction in the poverty of the Malay population. In South Africa, India, and Malaysia, a large proportion of women work in the informal economy and therefore do not benefit from public policies designed to reduce inequality. Although numerous organisations that have implemented affirmative action and employment equity policies, Harish¹⁷ states that the proportion of women who benefit from these policies is insignificant. In South Africa, the impact of the EEA has yet to be felt by women.

The failings of the EEA are illustrated in the data presented in the Statistics South Africa (STATSA) report. These shortcomings are further exacerbated when combined with the CENSUS 2011 report. According to STATSA¹⁸, the unemployment rate for women was 27.1% in the first quarter in 2008, while the rate for men was 6.6 percentage points lower; by the fourth quarter of 2012, this gap had narrowed to 5.5 percentage points. The unemployment rate for women remained higher than the national average between the first quarter of 2008 and the fourth quarter of 2012.

The biggest difference in the unemployment rates of men and women was observed in the second quarter of 2008, at 7.1 percentage points, while the smallest difference was realised in the fourth quarter of 2009, at 3.5 percentage points. Data suggests that the EEA has not assisted women, as a designated group, in acquiring employment, and women continue to be marginalised in leadership positions.

Data suggests that the EEA has also failed other groups. The decrease in the unemployment rate of the white population, versus an increase in the unemployment rates of the three other designated groups, indicates a failure of the EEA. Between the third and fourth quarters of 2012, the unemployment rate decreased by 0.6 of a percentage point for the black African population, by 1 percentage point for the Coloured population, and by 0.3 of a percentage point for the white population group. Year-on-year comparisons show an increase in the unemployment rate among the black African, Coloured, and Indian/Asian population groups, while it decreased among the white population group¹⁹.

The official labour force participation rate, according to CENSUS²⁰ 2012, is lowest among black African women, at 49 percent, compared to white women at 67.2 percent. Based on the expanded definition, the overall labour force participation rate is lowest among women in the Indian/Asian population group, which may be due to religious impediments imposed on women²¹. The purpose of the Act was to achieve equity in the workplace, yet data suggests other designated groups are marginalised.

Women are faced with escalating rates of unemployment, further exacerbated by the challenge of competing with other women who are similarly classified in a designated group. Black women have to deal with the challenge of competing with both other women and black men. The employment equity challenge lies not only in the competition for work, but also in being the supplier of work, as well as in economic growth. Legislation has proven ineffective, despite the positive picture painted by political analysts, as data has provided irrefutable evidence of the contrary.

¹⁶ Harish, C., Jain, P. J., Slone and Frank M. Horwitz, S., Horwitz, F. M., Taggar, S., & Armonk, N. W. (2003). *Employment Equity and Affirmative Action: An International Comparison*. N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, ISBN-10: 0-7656-0453-1 and ISBN-13: 978-0-76-560452-1. Retrieved from <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ri/2007/v62/n2/016093ar.pdf>

¹⁷ Harish, C., Jain, P. J., Horwitz, S., Horwitz, F. M., Taggar, S., & Armonk, N. W. *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Statistics South Africa, *Statistical release, P0211 Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 4. (2012)*. Retrieved from <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02114thQuarter2012.pdf>

¹⁹ Statistics South Africa. *Ibid.*

²⁰ Statistics South Africa. *Statistical release [Revised] P0301.4, Census 2011*. Retrieved from <http://www.statssa.gov.za/Publications/P03014/P030142011.pdf>

²¹ Statistics South Africa. *Statistical release [Revised] P0301.4, Census 2011*. Retrieved from <http://www.statssa.gov.za/Publications/P03014/P030142011.pdf>



The purpose of this chapter is not to further segregate women according to race, but to investigate the merit of the EEA and to ask the question: Has the EEA failed women? Research data suggest that the EE Act has failed women in not allowing them equal opportunity in securing employment in positions previously occupied by men. Women's share of the labour market continues to be insignificant and declining. Employers are faced now with the challenge, as legislators have failed.

Employment equity as a challenge for business

Literature indicates that it is a challenge for organisations to create working environments in which employees experience job satisfaction through fair employment practices, while also optimally achieving company objectives. These challenges indicate the need for leadership to address prevalent and persistent unfair exclusionary measures that are characteristic of South African business.

These realities emphasise the need for organisations to communicate the underlying purpose of an EE policy, and the need to involve the entire workforce in this transformational initiative. Misinterpretation has to be addressed and openly discussed as part of a communication strategy. EE is one of the most pressing challenges facing South African managers. Many organisations underestimate the process of instituting EE with regard to different organisational procedures, practices, and roles, as well as the effect thereof on an organisations' climate and culture²².

The search for AA managers implies not only a deliberate effort on the part of organisations, but also having the necessary tools to effectively and professionally manage the change process. Simply stated, in their endeavours to implement EE efficiently, management needs to have a shared vision of what the organisation ultimately wants to achieve through its EE policy²³. Management also needs to consider whether the organisation has the capacity to design and lead the process of creating fair, equitable and tangible actions that show their commitment to EE²⁴.

With regard to non-management employees, sustainable change depends on active engagement in partnerships between employers, employees, and unions in workplaces in identifying equity issues and agreeing on response plans to address them. It is imperative that EE initiatives are regarded as fair and impartial²⁵.

Has the EEA failed women?

Many may argue that the label of a special EE status is just; however, this status has done very little for South African women, as proven by the fact that women make up 42.2% of the workplace population in South Africa but only hold 4.4% of Chief Executive Officer positions in corporate South Africa²⁶. A comparative internet investigation into women serving on the boards of the Top 10-performing companies of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) showed a higher representation of female executives in the more recently established organisations like MTN and Petra Mining. Although male directors verbalise that they will allow women on their boards, 37% of JSE-listed companies have no women on their boards yet. Existing 'old boys clubs' contribute to this phenomenon. Many management decisions are made during after-hours socialisation, where EE strategy and policy have very little influence, and women are often excluded and seen as compliance numbers rather than contributors.

On the other hand, it has to be considered that, although female students exceed 50% of the enrolment figure at tertiary institutions in South Africa, few qualify in maths and science areas; they tend to not pursue qualifications in the natural sciences. However, enrolment figures overall indicate the large number of qualified women becoming available for the workforce, yet gender disparity in South Africa continues to exist in the labour market. Women are poorly represented in the highly skilled and better remunerated employment categories. While legislation is in place, the practical application is lacking. Responsibility now lies with organisations and the individuals who drive strategy implementation. Legislation is inanimate — it requires action to give it effect, and HR practitioners have the ability to give effect to proposed change.

²² Nienaber, H. (2007). *Assessing the management status of South Africa*. *European Business Review*, 19(1), 72–88.

²³ Oosthuizen, R. M. & Naidoo, V. *Ibid.*

²⁴ Nienaber, H. *Ibid.*

²⁵ Doyle-Bedwell, P. (2008). *With the appropriate qualifications – Aboriginal people and employment equity*. *Canadian Women Studies*, 26 (3/4), 77–89.

²⁶ Andrag, B.G.O. *Ibid.*

Practical application for HR practitioners

Tom Boardman, former CEO of Nedbank explains how he, as CEO, changed Nedbank's employee value proposition to include women-friendly employment practices such as i) flexible working arrangements ii) crèches iii), competitive maternity benefits, and iv) creating a culture and working environment that has made Nedbank a preferred employer amongst women. The progress Nedbank has made in growing the number of women executives is indicative that Tom Boardman's strategy works. The Nedbank Group Limited has 17.9% women in their executive management team, compared to the second in line, First Rand Limited, at 13.4%.

If companies want to effect diversity and equality in their organisations, they have to take ownership of their employment equity and diversity policies, and deliberately orchestrate efforts to implement these. Companies who want to successfully introduce diversity policies should have the ability to design and integrate strategy around three broad considerations: people issues, market competitiveness, and corporate reputation. Diversity takes equality forward, and research indicates that organisations that are serious about diversity show better overall financial performance. Good managers spend time to align unique people contributions to creating unique and superior economic performance²⁷.

To change the status quo and increase the amount of women on strategic levels in boardrooms, HR practitioners should intervene in two areas: the corporate mindset of the organisation and human resources management. The first intervention will successfully contribute to increasing the numbers of women in executive leadership. This should enhance business performance to maximise the triple bottom line. Changes in the external environment should motivate organisations to capture the values of diversity in their institutional philosophy. The increased understanding of the advantages a diversified management team could contribute to decision-making, which will ignite the need to change. The second intervention should be aimed at a collateral strategy to support and accelerate change within management. This intervention, as a support for the first, should accelerate visible results.

Conclusion

Women need to use their limited positions in the workplace to empower other women. Mentorship and succession planning are fertile ground to instil values and cultivate women in leadership roles. The unfortunate imbalance in the treatment of women in the workplace may unfortunately continue; change therefore has to come from within organisations. Discussing statistics of the number of women who are entering the workplace and are not being promoted, or referring to popular case law of women who have attempted to challenge the courts regarding unfair discrimination, is of no consequence.

The irony may lie in the fact that most articles and reports are written by men who document these atrocities, yet little is done about the persistent inequality. As more women claim their positions within organisations, the imbalance should shift. The intention is not to fight the system but to legally exploit available mechanisms and empower women through other women who are currently in positions of authority and leadership.

²⁷ Andrag, B.G.O. Ibid.



CHAPTER THREE

Leadership insights from the United States

Leanne Meyer

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Introduction – The leadership gap

Despite the fact that, in the United States of America (US), women are outpacing men in acquiring education, the line-up at the top of most fields is still male. The number of well-educated and well-qualified women in entry-level positions is robust, yet there is still great disparity when it comes to the number of women in corporate leadership. Top circles of leadership remain dominated by men — women make up just 14% of Fortune 500 executive committees. Only 21 of the Fortune 500 CEOs are women, with women holding just 16% of board seats¹.

So why are more women not reaching the top of their professions in the US? The unfolding debate between Sheryl Sandberg (Facebook COO) and Anne-Marie Slaughter (former advisor to Hillary Clinton and Princeton professor), which has been billed as Sandberg vs. Slaughter, would have us believe that there are opposing sides in addressing the reasons why the number of top women leaders in many fields remains stubbornly low. “Ms Slaughter who has urged workplaces to change and women to stop blaming themselves took on Ms Sandberg, who has somewhat unintentionally come to epitomize the higher-harder-faster school of female achievement”. One side seems to advocate ‘fix the woman’ strategies, while the other side emphasizes fixing the system.

An inclusive strategy would be more helpful than this either/or approach in tapping the full potential of women. Both internal and external forces keep women from advancing in their careers.

¹ Kantor, J. (2012, June 21). Elite women put a new spin on an old debate. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/22/us/elite-women-put-a-new-spin-on-work-life-debate.html?_r=0

Overemphasising one without a clear understanding of the other will not address women's slow progress to the top. Biases in systems, structures, and processes need to be eliminated; at the same time, women need to be empowered with the knowledge and networks to succeed.

The executive coaching process is just one of the many vehicles women are availing themselves of in their aspirations to lead effectively within existing power frameworks. This chapter is not a 'fix-the-women' strategy, but rather a report from the trenches that HR practitioners may find helpful as they work to empower their female talent and change the shape of women's leadership funnels within organisations.

By exploring the internal and external obstacles often found at play in the lived experiences of female leaders via coaching relationships, we can help women navigate organisational and personal obstacles (many of which they are unaware) and shape the rules of engagement, with the hope of sustaining capacity and interest in leadership. The coaching experiences referred to in this chapter include women in leadership roles in US workplaces ranging from senior director to vice president, partner, shareholder, and managing director. For the most part, they have spent at least an uninterrupted decade at national and global for-profit organisations based in the US. On average, these women would be considered 'high potential' and coaching is used as a vehicle for leadership development, preparing them for transitioning to more senior leadership roles and smoothing out rough edges, rather than remedying shortcomings.

The power of 360° feedback

The collection and sharing of feedback from 360° interviews is the first step in many executive coaching processes. The perceptions gathered from one's boss, the organisation's leadership team, peers, and direct reports are particularly valuable for women, who tend to receive less direct feedback than men do².

However, the experience of receiving this feedback can be somewhat disheartening. High-achieving women sometimes feel blind-sided when they realise that they 1) may have outgrown their professional identity and/or are 2) bumping up against gender stereotypes and the double bind, and this is the first they are hearing of it.

1. Outgrowing one's professional identity

Whereas productivity is the key word for one's early career (i.e. work hard and deliver as instructed), from a leadership role perspective, this is not necessarily the key to success during the achievement phase of one's career. It is important to note that career progression gradually becomes more about driving strategic results by effectively managing others and building networks of influence, and less about individual performance. This is a critical inflection point, when aspiring leaders must change their perspective on what is important and, accordingly, how they spend their time. In doing so, they make the shift from expert to achiever. This transition "remains one of the most painful bottlenecks in most organisations"³.

Many women have been plodding away at their jobs, excelling, hitting targets, and consistently being rewarded for positive performance reviews, without realising that they are perceived and valued as a strong individual contributor or middle manager, but not a strategic resource. They feel passed over for certain roles and are surprised to learn they were not even considered for those roles. Likewise, they are confronted with the perceptions that their executive skills are considered only mediocre (when did the criteria change?) or informed that their positions are merely titles (VP, etc.), and that they are not true leadership material.

Their surprised reaction is indicative of a lack of feedback, as well as an absence of sponsors and mentors. It also points to the reality that many women keep their heads down and lunch at their desk during a crunch time in their careers, while they juggle the demands of big jobs, childcare and aging parents.

2. Bumping up against gender stereotypes and the double bind

Gathered feedback is often contradictory, and in making sense of these discrepancies, there is an opportunity to discuss the impact of gender stereotypes and the double bind on a woman's career. Many women are uncomfortable talking about these types of 'women's issues.' There is a strong perception that this is an obsolete conversation and an issue used by women who have a chip on their shoulders, or women who just can't cut it. Now that it is personal, and in the form of

² Ely, R. J., Ibarra, H., & Kolb, D. (2011). *Taking gender into account: Theory and design for women's leadership development programs*. INSEAD Research. Retrieved from http://www.insead.edu/facultyresearch/research/details_papers.cfm?id=29213

³ Rooke, D. & Torbert, W. R. (2005). *Seven transformations of leadership*. (2009). Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Pub.



confusing feedback from colleagues and leaders in women's direct sphere, there is a willingness to listen, often for the first time.

When looking at personal 360° feedback, it is important to remember that, where less than 20% of any one group exists within a larger group, they are likely to be stereotyped. Therefore, if we look at women in traditionally male-dominated environments or at senior levels of leadership, we see what is termed a double bind — conflicting messages that negate each other.

Too often, and without realising, men, good men, close women off or fail to see their potential because of stereotyping and a culturally generated blindness to their full range of capabilities. This affects how women discuss or are discussed when it comes to performance, promotions, and pay issues, as well as how their behaviour is seen and interpreted.

Often, women believe they are being passionate about something, and are deemed as being emotional for doing so. When women speak in ways expected of male leaders, they are often perceived as aggressive, but if they speak in ways expected of women (read 'feminine'), they are often seen as less confident, less competent, and soft leaders.

Research shows that likeability is critically important if a woman wants to influence other people. The more likeable a woman is, the more her influence increases. Likeability is therefore critical to advancement. The dilemma is that women who are assertive, self-promoting, and ask for things directly are often less likeable. This is unfortunate, because these are typically the very behaviours necessary for getting ahead in corporate environments. Men do not face this same double bind⁴.

High-performing, dedicated women who play by the rules are consistently penalised for bringing their foundational strengths to the table — nurturing, group orientation, empathy, collaboration, admitting fault, and nuance. Consequently, women find themselves relegated to 'acting the man.' This works for a while, as a woman can become 'one of the guys.' Eventually, however, she reaches a position where acting and leading as a man results in hard, career-jeopardising criticism. Suddenly, especially for women moving into senior leadership positions, behaviour and comportsment seen as firm,

decisive, and fully engaged in men, are experienced as aggressive, overbearing, or too emotional in women.

Unfortunately, a woman often finds that she is seen as either too feminine, i.e. weak, or too masculine and strident. The ability to be tough and direct is often the reason for their upward mobility and initial success. Yet, that same straight-forwardness frequently leads to career suicide. This double bind leaves women in a frustrating, talent-robbing, and identity-debilitating limbo.

Moving forward – Two things to keep in mind

After hearing such feedback, there may be initial feelings of anger, discouragement, and uncertainty about how to move forward. Women aren't sure who they need to compare themselves to and often, by default, regard themselves as 'deficient men'. Before taking the next logical step of an executive coaching process — the setting of new developmental goals — it is helpful to pause and consider the following:

1. Leadership development is identity development

How we become leaders and take up our leadership roles constitute a fundamental process of identity development⁵. What this means is that the quest for leadership is primarily an inner quest to discover who we are, what we can be, and what we offer as leaders. Our gender plays a dynamic role in how we understand who we are, and therefore has a great impact on how we come to understand ourselves as leaders. We come into the workplace, not only as individuals, but as men and women⁶.

It is critical that we strive for a comfortable understanding of the impact of our gender on our understanding of our leadership role as it plays out in different organisational cultural settings, just as we are comfortable studying the impacts of our personality, character traits, or behaviour through more traditional developmental tools like an MBTI or DISC profile. A stance of curiosity as opposed to repudiation is helpful.

Equally important, especially for high-achieving women who are used to getting it right or throwing themselves into quick mastery of a skill set (i.e. those who would score the "perfectionist pattern" on the aforementioned DISC profile), is the reality that identity development is a process. Becoming a leader is not inherent in the

⁴ Catalyst (2007). *The double-bind dilemma for women in leadership: Damned if you do, doomed if you don't*. New York, NY: Catalyst.

⁵ Ely, R. J., Ibarra, H., & Kolb, D. *Ibid.*

⁶ Gurian, M. & Annis, B. (2008). *Leadership and the sexes: Using gender science to create success in business (1st ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

title, nor is it mastered overnight; it is an iterative process. Our leadership identity is honed over time in a two-steps-forward, one-step-back process of being and doing, reflecting, and receiving feedback, of trying and making mistakes, and experiencing successes. Coaching provides safe ground for this identity work and a supportive sounding board for flexing leadership muscle.

Coaching tip: Narrative development processes should undergird this type of leadership identity development. Through telling the sense-making story of their life and leadership – knowing how and for what reasons they do things —placing work, career, and living in an integrated context, women gain clarity. In the larger context, they can see what meaning they get from work, as well as how their skills, talents, and abilities are applied in ways that promote their sense of identity. From this position, they have more confidence in the why and how of their leadership.

2. A question of authenticity

Not surprisingly, given the conflicting messages often received in 360° feedback, women may repudiate new approaches because these feel inauthentic. There is a desire to use strategies that feel more comfortable and come more naturally. This ‘quest for authenticity’ is supported by research, indicating that women have a more insistent desire to discover who they are, what they want, and what they really feel and believe. In addition, they have a more insistent desire to express themselves fully in the environments where they live and work⁷. This is to be supported, as these are the very actions that support a strong, sustainable leadership identity.

However, it is important to make sure that women engaged in the coaching process do not confuse feeling comfortable with being authentic. Learning to be an effective leader takes complex skills development, and requires stretching beyond one’s comfort zone. It is important to emphasise that authenticity is not about acting in ways that feel comfortable, “but rather acting on one’s core values in order to advance the work required to accomplish shared goals”⁸.

This loyalty to their true nature — an excessive need to be themselves — is one of the toughest obstacles to positive long-term change in women’s behaviour.

When women start defining as inauthentic or phony anything that is not characteristic of them, they commit themselves to a misguided definition of self that, on one hand, is somewhat vain, and, on the other hand, provides a limited view of self, which is not helpful for those aspiring to leadership roles, which by their very nature require one to stop thinking about self and start behaving in ways that benefit others⁹.

Coaching tip: Assist coaching clients in developing clarity around their core values that will guide leadership behaviour. Help them clarify whether their struggles are value violations or merely stretch issues. Encourage them to examine their purpose in any situation. Why am I doing this? Does this reflect who I am and what I value? Will this help me be the person/leader I imagine myself becoming?

Common coaching themes

Executive coaching is custom in nature, as each coaching client is dealing with unique challenges. However, broad themes such as identity shifts can be found at the forefront of coaching conversations with both aspiring and established female leaders. We will look at three such identity shifts. The first, being prevalent in the majority of conversations, is given the most attention; however, this chapter would not be complete without a brief description of the other two.

1. From worker bee to strategic resource^{TM10}

This transition, as identified earlier, has to do with the move from being a dependable task-oriented worker to a strategic thinker and doer who offers solutions and makes value-added contributions, dealing with the challenges and capitalising on the opportunities facing an organisation from a proactive, initiating stance. The need for aspiring leaders to make this transition is gender neutral; however, there are women-centric obstacles to be aware of and address. These have to do with visioning, executive presence, and specific derailing behaviours.

- *Women and the vision thing*

Visioning skill sets include the ability to sense opportunities and threats, set strategic direction, and then inspire others in that direction. Since women tend to score relatively low on these key elements of visioning, coaching in this area is vital¹¹. Strategic

⁷ Nadaff, T. (2005). *Leading authentically: New research into the link between essential self and leadership effectiveness. Enlightened power. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.*

⁸ Ely, R. J., Ibarra, H., & Kolb, D. *Ibid.*

⁹ Goldsmith, M. (2007). *What got you here won't get you there. New York: Hyperion.*

¹⁰ *TM Transitioning Season, United States*

¹¹ Ibarra, H., & Obodaru, O. January 2009. *Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from <http://hbr.org/2009/01/women-and-the-vision-thing/ar/1>*

assignments that stretch also provide real-world opportunities to strengthen visioning skills.

Developing strategic visioning skill sets involves 'open' time; that is, time allowed for the thinking, ideas, and insights required for visioning to incubate — time that is often in short supply in a woman's life. The coaching process should explore ways to free up time for strategic thinking and planning processes. This often includes enhancing delegation skills, learning to manage to the quality requirements of outputs instead of managing or micromanaging processes, redesigning meetings to drive performance and alignment, and, at a very practical level, building structured 'strategic white space' into calendars.

The persuasive side benefit of these strategies is the development of one's own team while at the same time developing the ability to achieve results through others — an attribute of a strategic leader. In addition, the confidence that comes from clarity around a strong vision is energising for both the leader and the team.

- *Executive presence*

As one works to develop the skills set of a strategic leader, it is critical to consider the importance of executive presence. "Lacking executive presence" is often cited in 360° feedback interviews as the reason why female leaders are not making the leap into the positions to which they aspire, and, according to research, this can account for as much as 28% of a woman's success¹².

On further questioning in feedback gathering settings, it is clear that 'executive presence' is highly intuitive and difficult to pin down. Clearly, double bind issues — the deep underlying perception that women do not fit the image of an ideal leader — are still pervasive in business, and make defining the skills sets and behaviours underpinning executive presence all the more murky.

Regardless of definition, lacking executive presence translates as the inability to present oneself in such a way so as to be considered leadership material, i.e. a strategic resource.

Recent research identified three pillars of executive presence: gravitas — the ability to project confidence, poise under pressure, and decisiveness; communication, which comprises excellent speaking skills, assertiveness, and the ability to read an audience or situation; and appearance — looking polished and pulled together¹³.

Each of these areas can be developed through the coaching relationship, with the ultimate goal of projecting a mature self-confidence, an ability to take control of difficult, unpredictable situations, making tough decisions in a timely way, and holding one's own with other talented and often strong-willed members of the executive team.

- *Derailing behaviours*

The ability to hold one's own with other talented and strong-willed members of the executive team is, surprisingly, where most time is spent in the coaching relationship, and also where most feedback is generated in 360's. This highlights the reality that the higher you go, the more your problems are behavioural¹⁴.

Leadership teams, bosses, and peers often perceive female leaders as either being so "nice" that they are working at cross-purposes to the strategic goals and pressures of many for-profit enterprises, or so defensive and abrasive that they are not considered to be contributors, collaborators, or partners in building business. Instead, women need to be viewed as committed business partners in the trenches. The tendency is to immediately explain this away as the double-bind phenomena (liked or competent, but not both), but on closer inspection, in intimate conversations with coaching clients, there is often an admission of a compulsive need to play "the cleverest girl in the room" and/or an emphasis on being nice. Both of these approaches have negative consequences.

The derailing behaviour of wanting to be the cleverest girl in the room is characterised by a high need for control. This woman comes across as impatient with any colleague or team that cannot keep up with her fast-thinking mind. She resorts to sarcasm and, often, vulgarity, and practises aggressive non-listening, where she appears to listen but communicates

¹² Center for talent innovation. (2012). *Executive presence is key to corporate advancement*. New York: Marie Claire.

¹³ Center for talent innovation. *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Goldsmith, M. *Ibid.*

her true feelings through negative body language (eye-rolling, raised eyebrows, crossed arms, and withdrawal from conversations).

Others experience these responses as signs of tremendous disrespect. What she may find sharp and witty comes across as abrasive and defensive. The relational devastation she causes as she fails to maintain composure in pressurised situations obscures the vision others could have of her as an officer of the company, a strategic resource, and a leader with the ability to inspire others. This type of behaviour may be just as prevalent in male colleagues, but the fact that men may act out in similar ways does not make this right, nor is this an effective approach to strategic leadership.

In many corporate cultures, leaders, specifically female leaders, often feel devalued. Feeling devalued pushes women into a survival zone; it increases their fear, distracts their attention, drains their energy, and diminishes the value they are capable of creating. The more women feel that their value is at risk, the more energy they spend defending it, and the less energy they have available to create value. How leaders feel profoundly affects how they perform¹⁵.

Coaching tip: It is critical that coaching processes assist leaders in becoming aware of and secure in their own value, so that they are free to invest energy in empowering others and, ultimately, in fuelling their organisation's broader success.

At the other extreme of these derailing behaviours is the nice (but essentially ineffective) leader. These women take great pride in their capacity to be nice while those around them are engaged in the cutthroat side of business, making decisions based on profit and not people, and playing political games. They remain untainted, bastions of all that is good and right and ethical, and their teams and direct reports sing their praises. However, their colleagues view them as enablers of mediocrity . . . nice — as in **Not Interested to Care Enough**.

The mediocrity reference is particularly biting for two reasons. First, these nice girls take pride in being effective, pointing to the quality and volume of work they generate and for which they are responsible. It hurts to hear that, at a certain leadership level, interest and value lie in results, rather than the processes that drive them. Second, nice girls are proud of how well they coach and develop teams, as well as their loyalty and protectiveness toward their teams. To be regarded as enablers of mediocrity illustrates that, rather than being valued for their ability to develop staff (staff that often was not welcome on other teams), they are being judged negatively, based on their team's performance. Often, this mediocre performance is a result of the leader's focus on avoiding conflict and wanting everyone to be happy with an outcome. They lack the ability to provide honest feedback, and struggle to make the hard decisions needed to improve performance.

From a coaching perspective, performance analysis and conflict handling skills are foundationally important for these nice girls. Performance analysis provides a framework for recognising skill deficiencies among teams, leveraging options such as coaching and feedback, working with consequences for desired results, clarifying expectations, and making the tough decisions necessary to move teams ahead. Conflict management helps coaching clients understand that one's conflict-handling style needs to be situation specific, and that there are alternative and, at times, more effective modes than collaboration¹⁶.

Coaching tip: The focus of coaching here is on the understanding that leadership development is about building skill sets for managing people and problems, and that being nice is not an effective leadership strategy.

2. From clueless to connected™¹⁷

Female leaders are often clueless about two key points, and these points are connected. First, as identified earlier, many female leaders do not recognise that they are in the stage of their career where their success will not be determined by mere productivity, but rather by the robustness of their networks of influence. Second, if there are no strong networks, as is often the case with female leaders, who tend to have no specific

¹⁵ Schwartz, T. (2011). *Be excellent at anything*. New York: Free Press.

¹⁶ Kilmann, R. H. (2011). *Celebrating 40 years with the TKI Assessment. A summary of my favorite insights*. www.cpp.com. Retrieved from https://www.cpp.com/PDFs/Author_Insights_April_2011.pdf

¹⁷™ *Transitioning Season, United States*



mentors, sponsors, and influential stakeholders, then the rules of the game are not explicit. So how does one even compete?¹⁸

Because of their discomfort with workplace politics, women often refuse to build networks of influence, as they view this behaviour as being inauthentic and manipulative, focused on self-promotion and power grabbing. When women condemn these politics and avoid engaging, they effectively remove themselves from the game without consciously acknowledging it. They spend all their time carrying out the content of their job. Smart employers love them for it — and keep them in middle management¹⁹.

Through coaching, female leaders can come to understand that organisations, by their natures, are political environments, and to succeed in them, one must learn to acquire and wield influence. It is possible to accomplish this without power grabbing. The robust exchange of support, ideas, resources, and insights results in the team being better equipped to get the job done and leaders being better able to move beyond functional specialities and address strategic issues facing the overall business.

Building a strong network then needs to be reframed as one of the hallmarks of being a great leader²⁰. If done strategically, networking can also meet many of the needs related to work — connections to colleagues, recognition, and giving back to the community. It also provides a way to sustain drive, ignite enthusiasm, and reclaim ambition.

Coaching tip: Both stakeholder analysis and network analysis are valuable coaching building blocks.

3. From perfection to passion^{TM21}

Strong leaders have strong stories. They have a strong sense of where they came from, who they are now, and what they imagine for the future. Anyone aspiring to any form of leadership — thought, community, or corporate — needs this kind of clarity. We tend to follow people who have a healthy self-perception, strong values, and a well-defined vision. If you are just meeting requirements, you are not a leader — you are nothing more than a competent worker.

The coaching process itself, however, often creates situations where aspiring leaders become overly focused on others' perceptions of them, and excessively concerned with meeting the expectations of others. This is not a powerful position. Being at the whim of a set of external requirements is unsettling. Women, in particular, have a tendency to get lost in the 'perfect,' as they attempt to become everything to everyone — the perfect leader, mother, spouse, friend, executive, community leader, and host. The list of perfections goes on and on.

In doing so, rather than discover their potential, women can actually dismiss, discount, and diminish the very power, perspectives, and possibilities they have in hand. They fail to value who they are and the good they are already doing. They neglect what is personally meaningful to them, and ultimately end up questioning their value, worth, talents, and, finally, their very identity. To counteract this tendency, it is imperative for the coaching process to help aspiring female leaders articulate a purpose for leadership development that is larger than what they are²². They need help redirecting their attention outward. Their focus should be on who they need to be in order to advance broader goals. It is vital that leadership be viewed, not as something that they go and do, but rather as who they inherently are, in service to a larger mission. Leadership is integrated into identity, not an appliqué.

Beyond coaching

Often, the underpinnings of executive success are understanding the culture that is specific to a given company at a given time, and ascertaining whether the requisite skills needed of executives for the distinct culture match those of aspiring leaders. This is especially important for women, who tend to place a high premium on believing in their company's direction.

Up to 25% of new executives fail within 18 months²³ — many as they enter boardrooms for the first time and are disheartened by what they find. At this level, all too often, female leaders do not achieve what they had hoped, or find little meaning in their work, largely as a result of a bad culture fit. This is no longer a question of being coached for success; conversations must turn to culture fit.

¹⁸ Wittenberg-Cox, A. & Maitland, A. (2008). *Why women mean business: Understanding the emergence of our next economic revolution*. Chichester, England: Wiley.

¹⁹ Wittenberg-Cox, A. & Maitland, A. *Ibid.*

²⁰ Ibarra, H. & Hunter, M. (2007). *How leaders create and use networks*. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from <http://hbr.org/product/how-leaders-create-and-use-networks/an/R0701C-PDF-ENG>

²¹ *TM Transitioning Season, United States*

²² Ely, R. J., Ibarra, H., & Kolb, D. *Ibid.*

²³ Brinkman, B. & McGarrity, G. (n.d.). *Corporate culture and the perfect fit*. Vallon white paper. Retrieved from <http://buckleybrinkman.com/Corporate%20Culture%20and%20the%20Perfect%20Fit.pdf>

Conclusion

Many of the deficiencies that comprise the gap between women in middle management and effective senior leadership can be addressed via the executive coaching process. 360° feedback allows women aspiring to senior leadership to realise they've not only outgrown their own professional identity, but are also coming to terms with gender stereotypes and the accompanying double bind. Rather than it becoming a career-limiting obstacle, this awareness can be viewed as a springboard for both personal and career growth. As women delve into their identities, both as individuals and as leaders, and as they seek to live out their identities in more authentic ways, they move from a task-oriented focus to one that positions them as highly valued strategic resources within their organisations. As they come to understand that good leadership demands more than just competence, they are able to build robust networks of influence. The resulting exchange of knowledge, ideas, and insights equips both the leaders and their teams for more strategic growth.

Finally, as these women learn to set aside their strive for perfection in exchange for the pursuit of that which they are truly passionate about, and as they come to value how they are already equipped for success, they become engaged in greater purpose and broader vision. When engaged as a growth-oriented strategy (as opposed to a remedial intervention), the executive coaching process can help aspiring female leaders make powerful leadership transitions, and strengthen the overall atmosphere of the organisation.



CHAPTER FOUR

Understanding political intelligence in the workplace

Renate Volpe

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Introduction

I recently had the opportunity of coaching a number of very senior women in the South African business world, many of whom seemed to share a similar story. They sat before me, exhausted and confused, summoning their waning energies to put forward a brave face. Together, we start exploring why they were feeling so disempowered. We explored why these women were considering resigning when they had worked so hard to reach senior positions of influence. Even when they were earning large amounts of money, they continued to doubt themselves, often disillusioned by and angry with their employers, let alone struggling with multiple roles and responsibilities on the home front.

It has been said that the corporate world was “designed by men, for men with wives.” This adage provides the insight that can make all the difference and contribute to women’s resilience in the workplace, and, if understood, can position women in a manner that will allow them to make worthy contributions that will be both valued and appreciated.

Using the analogy of a game, one could compare the working world to a game of rugby. Rugby is a tough game. Protective clothing is worn, and the game is played according to a very specific set of rules. Now imagine going onto a rugby field wearing netball clothes and playing rugby according to netball rules. Chaos! Injuries! Red cards! Bench time! Being ousted from the team.

Well, there it is in a nutshell. It all begins and ends with understanding the rules of the game, and one of the most important rules at work is understanding workplace politics.

Politics are those actions taken within the workplace or organisation to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcome in a situation in which there is uncertainty or lack of consensus about choices.

That politics exist and need to be dealt with appropriately is the thrust of this chapter, with particular reference to women’s role in the workplace.

Politics can be either dysfunctional or healthy. The question might be asked, “When are politics ‘good’ and when are they ‘bad’? The answer is that it has to do with the intention behind the action. If the intention is egocentric and about self-preservation at the expense of others, then the politics are bad. When decisions are made that affect the company’s future sustainability, then the politics may be considered acceptable or good. When politics within the workplace become dysfunctional, the status quo is maintained, and an individual’s agenda may be advanced at the expense of others. Dysfunctional politics are also the cause of avoidance, confusion, and prevention of custodianship of assets, people, and relationships.

Political intelligence is the ability to read the environment whilst staying focused on goals and action steps, recognising where the power lies, and identifying the true motives and hidden agendas of others.

Leaders are astute players of politics. The good news is that being politically smart is not a character trait, but rather a skill that can be mastered. Each person has a natural political style that can be made more effective. For those women who are serious about their careers, political acumen is an essential competency in the work world.

How to use influence for the better

Politics will occur in all places of work; they simply cannot be avoided. Even those who choose not to play will, by default, be played. It is therefore necessary to learn lessons and become informed about politics. In this way, the action or non-action that one chooses to take will be informed, rather than ignorant or reactive. The general perception around politics in the workplace is negative, conjuring up an image of people manipulating the system to their own benefit.

Speaking for myself, in my earliest years as an idealist and optimist, I preferred to believe that hard work and principled behaviour alone would ensure my career success. Looking back, there was so much I missed or simply did not understand.

If you take on the responsibility to better the workplace, it can only be achieved by being politically astute. Politics are not bad if they serve company goals by ensuring that the workplace is productive and that morale remains high. The distinction between good and bad politics generally rests in the eye of the beholder. If one likes the person and believes in what he or she is doing, one would see the behaviour in a positive light. If one dislikes the person, the action would be reframed negatively.

The columns below illustrate this proposition:

Don't like	Like
Sucking up	Building a relationship
Hoodwinking	Persuading or influencing
Power hungry	Career minded
Opportunistic	Astute
Scheming	Strategising
Pitting people against one another	Encouraging change and innovation
Manipulation	Communication strategy

How does one become politically astute or intelligent?

It starts by recognising that there are multiple interests in organisations. One has to be aware of these interests and to whom they belong. Individuals and groups hold various positions, so one needs to know how these are different from your own. To get things done requires power. If you are opposed, you need more power than your opponents, because you need power to get people to do things. This gives you influence, which increases your effectiveness.

Begin by assessing your power base

By understanding your power base, you immediately know how much bargaining power you have. Typical questions that you could ask when determining your power base are:

- Do I have **information power** and first or immediate access to important information?
- Am I **centrally positioned** in a network, i.e. Am I on a committee or leading a team?



- Do I have **autonomy**, i.e. How much freedom, discretion, and independence do I have?
- Am I **persistent**? (Consider the power of nagging.) Do I give up too soon?
- Do I maximise my **personal power**, i.e. Am I charming and pleasant to be around?
- Am I an **expert** in a field and sought after for my opinions and knowledge?

You will be empowered to act in the appropriate manner based on your awareness of your vulnerabilities and strengths regarding your power base.

The 10 rules of the game of political savvy in the working world

From my experience in assisting South African women to empower themselves politically in the workplace, I have formulated ten rules regarding political savvy. These are:

1. *Politics are part of the natural ebb and flow in communication between people.*
2. *Politics and games are everywhere. One cannot escape them. They exist in the home, religious sphere, friendship circles, and at work.*
3. *Work out what people need, and translate your communications to address these needs.*
4. *Treat people the way they wish to be treated, rather than how you wish to be treated. In other words, if they need power, make them feel powerful. If they need clarity, give them that.*
5. *Don't raise people's defences. Doing so will make them resistant and evasive. Learn the art of diplomacy.*
6. *Use the AAA formula:*
 - i. *Admit that politics are unavoidable. Acknowledge that politics exist. Use your natural insight to work out what is actually happening, and become an astute observer of human behaviour.*
 - ii. *Action implies working out a few viable alternatives or choices with regard to what you could do. Avoid thinking in terms of 'all or nothing.' Sort these alternatives into an order ranging from something your conscience can live with easily to the most political, self-preserving decision. Make a decision you can live with and, in this manner, maintain your integrity.*

7. *Always behave appropriately and in accordance with the culture and context in which you find yourself. E.g., if you are entering a mining or a financial company, it would be foolish to presume that you are going into a soft, people-oriented culture. One of the snares is the branding and marketing or sales job done to solicit employees to join companies. Company vision statements often say, "We value our human assets."*

It is important to determine the truth of this by speaking to employees in the company before making decisions.

8. *You cannot NOT play the political game. Those who choose not to play will be played and end up being a victim of a situation, without understanding what occurred. Even observing passively is participating.*
9. *Know 'who is who.' Important things to know include who started the company, who went to university with whom, and who socialises with whom. This knowledge will allow you to lobby the right person for a specific aim, which is all part of research, doing homework, and becoming an expert at networking.*
10. *Playing political games is the only way that the employer or employee can make the company better. It is of paramount importance to learn the rules of the game and then improvise as you go along.*

"Please sir, may I?"

Women, in particular, complain about chauvinism and paternalism in the workplace. However, women may be the very ones perpetuating such a culture. Think about fathers and their daughters. All too often, the little girl is Daddy's princess. With her cuteness and beguiling ways, she twists him around her little finger. She learns to earn his approval by pleasing him and making him feel like her protector.

There are two views on this type of relationship between men and women in the workplace. Many a successful woman has been heard to say that a senior man at work took her under his wing, guided her, and protected and mentored her, thereby significantly contributing to her current standing. Sadly, many more will say that men at work don't take them seriously, are dismissive of them, and consistently demean them.

Even today, women are brought up to be nice, well-mannered girls, to be polite and respectful, and to be caretakers, often while putting others' needs, wants, desires, and opinions before their own. Whether consciously or not, women often look to men to guide, nurture, and protect them. It is no wonder then that men at work regard women as little girls playing a role in the adult world. Women should not be surprised if they are then regarded as lesser mortals in need of guidance and assistance. This interaction is, of course, further exacerbated by the significant, perpetual influence that society, tradition, and religious beliefs have on the roles of and interplay between the genders.

Breaking the chauvinism/paternalism cycle

Firstly, women need to investigate and explore (and, if appropriate, admit) if they relate to the men at work and in the home in a subservient manner. Women need to ask themselves if they have a double-value system and, in fact, still expect men to be their supporters, protectors, breadwinners, and advisors.

At work, these beliefs manifest in a number of ways. On initiating a discussion or making a request, the conversation may be interspersed with "Please sir, may I?", "Would you mind?", "We would like to ...", "Could I please?" Body language may be coy, or, at best, tentative and submissive. The tone of voice may be wheedling, suggesting, apologetic, or even seductive, or simply not sufficiently confident and assertive.

The man being spoken to has now had his fatherly, paternal, chauvinistic, or simply male response buttons pushed. As such, he will respond in either a nurturing (paternal) or chauvinistic and/or critical manner. This is termed a parent/child interaction. Not getting enmeshed or entangled in a parent/child interaction in the workplace is the challenge. Understanding and insight are followed by the challenge of altered behaviour.

Responding or maintaining a consistently mature manner is especially valuable in the face of paternalistic, disrespectful, or chauvinistic behaviour. Such mature behaviour would involve being fully prepared for the interaction to come. Having done one's homework, planning, research, and fact finding beforehand would mean being absolutely clear about what one wants and does not want out of the specific interaction. It involves being aware of one's emotions, acknowledging them within, and appearing outwardly calm and in control.

Adopting assertive body language — a square posture, upright carriage, steady eye contact, and a controlled voice — is essential. Engaging in conversation on a factual level and presenting the facts succinctly and clearly often present a problem for women, who speak far too much, make too much small talk, and may be in danger of talking themselves out of a deal.

Alluding to the background context of the meeting, establishing a current perspective, aligning the discussion to the listener's objectives or needs, tabling the intended plan, and selling benefits all enhance the chances of a successful interaction, beneficial to both parties.

When questioned or disapproved of, it is important to maintain maturity, reminding oneself that one's power, expertise, and desired contribution are essential to the situation. Should the interaction not prove satisfactory, persistence is a true source of power. Women back off too soon, and then react with dismay when another claims their idea.

Women are on the verge of making their largest and most magnificent contribution to the world at large, and specifically to the world of work. It is a tenuous situation at best. Those who stand tall (tall trees taking the wind), the trailblazers for the rest of womankind, are being watched, and they need to be supported.

Reserve Bank Governor Gill Markus made an important observation. She said that, when women have conversations, they focus on the 5% that is not working in their lives, whereas men are more likely to focus on what is working. If a woman herself feels inferior, making less of others gives her a sense of superiority.

My appeal is to focus on the positive, to learn from mistakes made, to claim successes, to understand the taking of risks, and to accept being both visible and credible. It is important to remember that the ultimate challenge is to learn how to play the game whilst simultaneously trying to change and improve the rules.



CHAPTER FIVE

Gender and workplace bullying

Leigh Leo and Robyn Reid

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Introduction

Many researchers agree that bullying is a frequent occurrence in the workplace¹. In a study conducted in 2000 by the Work Dignity Institute, it was found that approximately 77.8% of South Africans had experienced bullying in the workplace.

More recently, in 2012, it was found that 31.1% of a sample of 13 911 people had experienced workplace bullying². These statistics make it clear that bullying is a prevalent, contemporary issue in the South African workplace, yet awareness of and research into bullying in South Africa is still in its infancy³.

Currently, there is no generally accepted definition of workplace bullying, and, as such is described in a number of ways. First, bullying can be described as a gradually evolving process⁴. During the early phases, victims are typically subjected to very discreet and indirect bullying behaviour and, later, to more direct, aggressive acts. Bullying may eventually escalate to acts of both physical and psychological violence. Alternatively, workplace bullying can be defined as a type of aggressive behaviour that manifests in interpersonal work relationships, between two individuals, or between an individual and a group⁵.

Additionally, workplace bullying can be seen as a series of actions, such as harassment, offending, and socially excluding someone at work, that negatively affect individuals' ability to do their job⁶. A more comprehensive definition describes workplace bullying as "...repeated actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers, which are all unwanted by the victim, which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence, and distress, and that may interfere with job performance and/or cause an unpleasant working environment"⁷.

¹ Hoel, H., Cooper, C. L., & Faragher, B. (2001). *The experience of bullying in Great Britain: The impact of organisational status*. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 10(4), 443-465; Pietersen, C. (2007). *Interpersonal bullying behaviours in the workplace*. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 33(1), 59-66; Cunniff, L. & Mostert, K. (2012). *Prevalence of workplace bullying of South African employees*. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(1), 1-15.

² Cunniff, L. & Mostert, K. *Ibid.*

³ Pietersen, C. *Ibid.*

⁴ Einarsen, S., Raknes, B. I., & Matthiesen, S. B. (1994). *Bullying and harassment at work and their relationships to work environment quality: An exploration study*. *European Work and Organisational Psychologist*, 4, 391-401.

⁵ Zapf, D. & Einarsen, S. (2001). *Bullying in the workplace: Recent trends in research and practice – An introduction*. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10 (4), 369-373.

⁶ Rothmann, J. C. & Rothmann, S. (2006). *The South African employee health and wellness survey: User manual*. Potchefstroom, South Africa: Afriforte (Pty) Ltd.

⁷ Rothmann, J. C., & Rothmann, S. *Idem*, p. 14.

Gender and race are prominent socio-demographic influences in workplace bullying. According to the Global Health and Safety Issue, it was found that most perpetrators of bullying were managers, where males formed 62% of bullies, and 58% of the targets were found to be women⁸. Additionally, it was found that female bullies tend to target women in 80% of cases, while male bullies target men in only 55% of cases⁹. However, international research suggests that gender-related experiences of workplace bullying could be country-specific¹⁰. In a study conducted in Spain, it was found that women experienced considerably more bullying than men did¹¹. Conversely, in Iceland, it was found that men experienced more workplace bullying than women did¹².

Workplace bullying is a pertinent issue for the management of people in an organisation, as bullying and harassment lead to lowered levels of job satisfaction and productivity, and even a negative work culture.

Types of bullying

There are two main types of bullying, namely direct and indirect bullying¹³. Direct bullying relates to behaviour that is face-to-face and at an interpersonal level. It includes acts of verbal abuse, such as public humiliation, criticism, inaccurate accusations, as well as threatening behaviour and intimidation¹⁴. Indirect bullying is a

restrained type of bullying that is used to affect people on an emotional level. Examples of indirect bullying are gossiping, manipulating situations, and spreading rumours¹⁵. Indirect bullying behaviours can be grouped into five categories, namely threats to professional status, threats to personal standing, isolation, excessive overwork, and destabilisation¹⁶. Bullying can also take the form of either horizontal or downward bullying; thus it can occur between co-workers, between managers, or between supervisors and their subordinates¹⁷.

Gossip, sarcasm, vulgarity, and isolation are the main types of bullying behaviour in the workplace¹⁸. This preference for the use of indirect tactics over direct or physical bullying may be due to the fact that such acts are more acceptable in modern society¹⁹. Additionally, it was found that, in South Africa, the majority of informants experienced downward bullying, as opposed to horizontal bullying²⁰, and that the perpetrators of bullying all employed verbal and/or indirect tactics to bully their targets²¹. On the other hand, it has been found that direct bullying and bullying by supervisors were more prevalent than indirect bullying and bullying by colleagues²² (refer to Figure 1). This reinforces the idea that bullying manifests differently in different countries and even within different industries. In South Africa, perpetrators seem to generally be supervisors who employ mostly verbal or direct tactics on their targets.

⁸ Cobb, E. P. (2012). *Workplace Bullying: A Global Health and Safety Issue*. Retrieved From <http://www.forbes.com/sites/worldviews/2012/04/30/why-women-are-the-worst-kind-of-bullies/workplace-bullying-institute-2009>

⁹ Cobb, E. P. *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Cortina, L. M., Magley, V. J., Williams, J. H., & Langhout, R. D. (2001). Incivility in the workplace: Incidence and impact. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 6*(1), 64-80; Niedhammer, I., David, S., & Degioanni, S. (2007). Economic activities and occupations at high risk for workplace bullying: Results from a large-scale cross-sectional survey in the general working population in France. *International Archives for Occupational and Environmental Health, 80*, 346-353.

¹¹ Moreno-Jimenez, B., Munoz, A. R., Salin, D., & Benadero, M. E. M. (2008). Workplace bullying in Southern Europe: Prevalence, forms and risk groups in a Spanish sample. *International Journal of Organisational Behaviour, 13*(2), 95-109.

¹² Ólafsson, R. F. & Jóhannsdóttir, H. L. (2004). Coping with bullying in the workplace: The effect of gender, age and type of bullying. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 32*(3), 319-333.

¹³ Ross, D. M. (1996). *Childhood bullying and teasing: What school personnel, other professionals, and parents can do*. Alexandria, VA: American Counselling Association.

¹⁴ Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., & Notelaers, G. (2009). Measuring exposure to bullying and harassment at work: Validity, factor structure and psychometric properties of the Negative Acts Questionnaire – Revised. *Work & Stress, 23*(1), 24-44.

¹⁵ Cunniff, L. & Mostert, K. *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Rayner, C. & Höel, H. (1997). A summary review of literature relating to workplace bullying. *Journal of Community Applied Social Psychology, 7*, 181-191.

¹⁷ Pietersen, C. *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Farrel, G. A., Bobrowski, C., & Bobrowski, P. (2006). Scoping workplace aggression in nursing: Findings from an Australian study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 55*(6), 778-787.

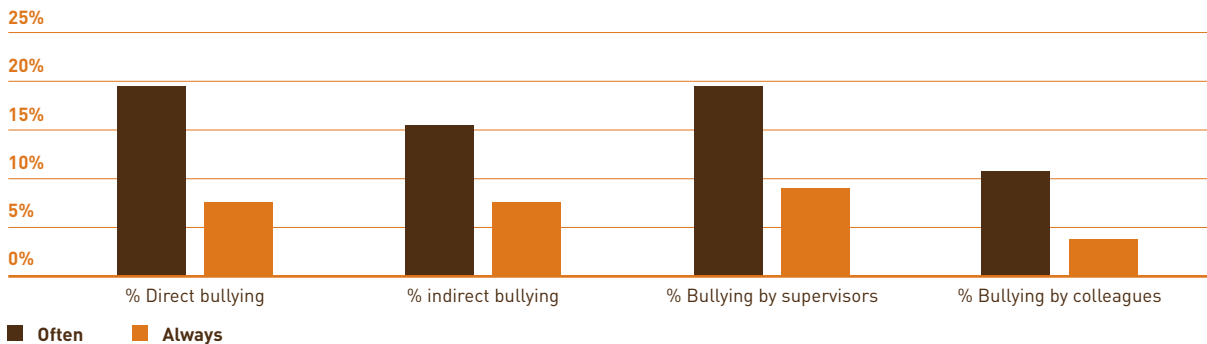
¹⁹ Crawford, N. (1999). Conundrums and confusion in organisations: The ethnology of the word "bully." *International Journal of Manpower, 20*(2), 82-107.

²⁰ Pietersen, C. *Ibid.*

²¹ Einarsen, S., Raknes, B. I., & Matthiesen, S. B. *Ibid.*

²² Cunniff, L. & Mostert, K. *Ibid.*

Figure 1: Percentage of people who experienced direct bullying, indirect bullying, bullying by a supervisor, and bullying by a colleague.



The graph is a representation of a South African study conducted in six different sectors including: financial, mining, government, manufacturing, academic, and call centres. The graph indicates the percentage of people who experienced direct bullying, indirect bullying, bullying by a supervisor, and bullying by a colleague within the South African landscape²³.

Figure 1 shows that a significant number of individuals (20.5%) often experienced direct bullying in the workplace. Additionally, it was found that supervisors

were more often behind workplace bullying than colleagues. According to the Health and Safety Authority of South Africa, bullies abuse the existing power structure, which gives them professional or personal power they over their victims²⁴ — the power imbalance between a supervisor and their incumbent is conducive to bullying²⁵. The consequences of bullying by a supervisor can be devastating to trust in the organisation²⁶.

Table 1: Consequences of workplace bullying for both the organisation and individuals

The consequences of bullying	
Consequences for the individual	Consequences for the organisation
1. Psychological well-being	1. Poor work performance
1.1 Reduced motivation	2. Increased absenteeism
1.2 Anxiety	3. Increased turnover
1.3 Depression	4. Reduced productivity and quality
1.4 Lowered self-esteem	5. Increased medical expenses
2. Physical health	6. Financial losses/impact
2.1 Sleep- and eating disorders	7. Hindered group communication
2.2 Stress-related illness	8. A hostile work environment
3. Work-related performance	9. High recruiting costs
3.1 Damaged reputation	10. Damage to corporate image
3.2 Harming of the individual's occupational situation and level of work	11. Poor work performance
3.3. Intention to leave the organisation	12. Loss of trust
3.4. Decreased performance	13. Loss of skills and experience
3.5. Low morale	

²³ Cunniff, L. & Mostert, K. *Ibid.*

²⁴ Cobb, E. P. *Ibid.*

²⁵ Cunniff, L. & Mostert, K. *Ibid.*

²⁶ Hodson, R., Roscigno, V. J., & Lopez, S. H. (2006). Chaos and the abuse of power: Workplace bullying in organizational and interactional context. *Work and Occupations*, 33(4), 382-416.

The consequences of bullying

Workplace bullying has negative physical and psychological effects on the individual, and severe consequences for the organisation²⁷. Research has shown that individuals are affected by bullying in three main areas namely, psychological well-being, physical health, and work-related performance²⁸. It is important to pay attention to workplace bullying, as there are several negative workplace consequences that could ensue, should bullying be allowed to become rampant in an organisation.

A workforce that experiences bullying can cause damage to an organisation's productivity through decreases in the performance of employees, increased violence, more employees wanting to resign, and a subsequent increase in recruiting costs to fill vacant positions²⁹. Bullying in the workplace can also cultivate a hostile work environment that is characterised by distrust, anger, and suspicion, culminating in poor group communication³⁰.

From **Table 1**, it is clear that a plethora of consequences arise as a result of workplace bullying. Research indicates that workplace bullying yields severe consequences for both the individual and the organisation³¹. Table 1 shows the consequences associated with bullying for individuals in three areas, namely psychological well-being, physical health, and work-related performance. Furthermore, it shows the detrimental consequences organisations could face if workplace bullying is not addressed.

Workplace bullying amongst women

Very little research has been done in South Africa on the different bullying experiences of men and women in the workplace. International researchers agree that women are easier targets for bullying in the workplace, and that men and women experience different types of bullying³². This is due to the different interpersonal styles of men and women, and the fact that the workplace is still a male-dominated environment³³. Men dominate in management positions in South Africa, and they are also the most economically active gender³⁴. Studies have found that men tend to suffer more physical abuse, while women tend to experience more verbal abuse³⁵. Furthermore, workplace bullying incidents tend to be same-sex harassment, and male bullies tend to employ tactics such as public screaming, name-calling, and threats of job loss³⁶.

Gender differences in the experience of workplace bullying have received more attention in international research. However, the results of these studies have been inconclusive³⁷. In South Africa, only three studies have looked into whether one gender group experiences more workplace bullying than the other. These studies found that: firstly, South African women were more vulnerable to workplace bullying than men were³⁸. Secondly, bullying behaviours were, for the most part, not gender specific³⁹. Thirdly, men reported significantly higher levels of workplace bullying than women did, more direct and indirect bullying from supervisors, and more direct bullying by colleagues⁴⁰.

²⁷ Hood, S. B. (2004). *Workplace bullying*. *Canadian Business*, 77(8).

²⁸ Matthiesen, S. B. & Einarsen, S. (2001). *Accounts of workplace bullying: The role of the organisation*. *European Journal of Work and Occupational Psychology*, 10, 467-484; Cunliff, L. & Mostert, K. *Ibid.*

²⁹ Mayhew, C., McCarthy, P., Chappell, D., Quinlan, M., Barker, M., & Sheehan, M. (2004). *Measuring the extent of the impact from occupational violence and bullying on traumatised workers*. *Employee Responsibility and Rights Journal*, 16(3), 117-134; Djurkovic, N., McCormack, D., & Casimir, G. (2008). *Workplace bullying and intention to leave: The moderating effect of perceived organisational support*. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 18(4), 405-422.

³⁰ Frost, P. J. (2003). *Toxic emotions at work: How compassionate managers handle pain and conflict*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

³¹ Van den Broeck, A., Baillien, E., & De Witte, H. (2011). *Job Demands-Resources Model*. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 37(2), 1-12.

³² Cortina, L. M., Magley, V. J., Williams, J. H., & Langhout, R. D. *Ibid.*; Namie, G. (2003). *Workplace bullying: Escalated incivility*. *Ivey Business Journal*, 68(2), 1-6; Niedhammer, I., David, S., & Degioanni, S. *Ibid.*

³³ Rayner, C. & Cooper, C. (1997). *Workplace bullying: Myth or reality — Can we afford to ignore it?* *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 18, 211-214.

³⁴ Commission for Employment Equity. (2010). *Tenth Commission of Employment Equity Annual Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.policy.org.za/article/tenth-commission-or-employee-equity-annual-report-july-2010-2010-07-29>

³⁵ Farrel, G. A., Bobrowski, C., & Bobrowski, P. *Ibid.*

³⁶ Namie, G. *Ibid.*

³⁷ Cunliff, L. & Mostert, K. *Ibid.*

³⁸ Steinman, S. (2003). *Workplace violence in the health sector. Country case study: South Africa*. Retrieved from <http://www.statssa.gov.za/Publications/P0021/P00212010.pdf>

³⁹ Pietersen, C. *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Cunliff, L. & Mostert, K. *Ibid.*

These inconclusive results can be attributed to the fact that the first two studies⁴¹ focussed on different sectors, namely the health and academic sectors respectively. This indicates that the experience of workplace bullying may differ between industries. This is also in line with international research, which has shown that there are higher levels of workplace bullying in the health and public sectors than in other industries⁴². The narrow focus of these studies in terms of industry limits the generalisation of their results to other sectors. However, in 2012, a study on workplace bullying was conducted across six different industries, namely financial, mining, government, manufacturing, academia, and call centres⁴³. Consequently, their results allow for a more generalised application.

Practical application for human resource practitioners

Here are five practical tips for HR practitioners to address bullying in their workplace.

1. Promote a positive workplace culture

An understanding and awareness of the prevalence of workplace bullying and its far-reaching effects is an essential step in creating a positive work culture and minimising the risks posed by bullying behaviour. As an HR practitioner, you can create prevention initiatives that create a culture where bullying is not tolerated, and, if it does occur, is recognised and acted upon. The first step to preventing bullying in the workplace is to secure the commitment and involvement of your organisation by obtaining support from top management and the cooperation and participation of the employees.

2. Develop a bullying policy and related procedures

HR practitioners need to take it upon themselves to create a zero tolerance anti-bullying policy. Anti-bullying policies should clearly define bullying, include examples, and clearly spell out the consequences of such behaviour. This is part of a wider commitment to a safe and friendly work environment. It is also essential to ensure that the organisation's bullying policy is publicised by posting it in central locations and highlighted as part of the employee orientation process.

Employees should also be provided with an independent contact, which person should be available to offer advice, information, and support, and handle complaints of workplace bullying. The contact officer should be objective, unbiased, and able to provide assistance to the employee, but should not be directly responsible for conducting the investigation. A procedure for anonymous reporting can also be put in place, so as to encourage victims to come forward.

3. Raise awareness and provide training

As an HR practitioner, you can hold awareness campaigns in the form of training sessions and workshops on workplace bullying and the consequences of engaging in it for all employees. Such initiatives should focus on the development of healthy and productive communication skills through information, instruction, and training to promote a positive work culture and reduce the risk of bullying in the workplace. These strategies should not simply focus on minimising or controlling bullying, but should be designed to create a long-term change within the workplace.

HR practitioners should also consider conducting periodic surveys of current employees to assess whether any destructive behaviour is impacting on morale or creating other problems in the workplace.

4. Seek information

If there is a bully in the organisation, it is imperative that management and HR recognise the red flags. A pattern of resignations, discharges, or requests for transfers might be an indication of workplace bullying. An increase in sick leave or the number of grievances filed could also flag the need for further investigation. Additionally, conducting meaningful exit interviews with each individual who leaves the organisation will help identify any problems and patterns. Larger organisations can keep statistical records and information relating to these events, to allow for a more thorough analysis.

5. Encourage 'active' managing

Workplace bullying prevention efforts can be better served by giving management a more active role. In doing so, managers are in a better position to

⁴¹ Steinman, S. *Ibid.*; Pietersen, C. *Ibid.*

⁴² Ortega, A., Hogh, A., Pejtersen, J. H., & Olsen, O. (2009). Prevalence of workplace bullying and risk groups: A representative population study. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 82, 417-426.

⁴³ Cunniff, L. & Mostert, K. *Ibid.*

spot potential bullies and eliminate inappropriate behaviour with their presence. As an HR practitioner, you can make managers aware of the responsibility they have to assist their employees, thereby improving management's sensitivity in dealing with conflicts. Additionally, managers need to take all complaints seriously and investigate each complaint properly. Immediate action should be taken to address bullying behaviour. Another option may be to provide alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to deal with conflict.

Conclusion

This chapter discusses several specific and practical implications regarding workplace bullying for managers, organisations, and women in the workplace. Firstly, the present chapter creates awareness of the prevalence of bullying amongst South African employees, and specifically women, in the workplace⁴⁴, through both direct and indirect bullying. Information regarding workplace bullying amongst women will increase awareness of what constitutes workplace bullying and how to manage it, which will contribute to diminishing its occurrence and impact on women in the workplace⁴⁵. It also highlights why the necessary resources and support are needed from organisations and managers.

Secondly, this chapter gives managers and HR practitioners insight into the importance of having the necessary prevention methods in place to address bullying in the workplace by informing managers of the serious potential consequences associated with workplace bullying for both individuals and the organisation. By taking into consideration the seriousness of workplace bullying, managers can ensure that they establish and maintain a workplace where the intrinsic dignity and value of persons are respected, which will make the organisation more productive and successful⁴⁶. Finally, this chapter raises awareness among organisations, managers, HR practitioners, researchers, and employees of the pervasive and damaging nature of bullying in the workplace.

Research on bullying in South Africa is still in its infancy. What should become apparent through this chapter is the need for further research on workplace bullying in South Africa, specifically on the influence of different socio-demographic characteristics and industries, as well as the country context. Workplace bullying is a prevalent problem in South African organisations. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important for both employers and employees to be well informed regarding the manifestations and effects of workplace bullying, in order to combat this phenomenon effectively.

Furthermore, it is important that organisations realise that workplace bullying can lead to several negative outcomes, including increased absenteeism and high turnover, if it is not adequately addressed. Moreover, it is essential that the HR practitioners in organisations investigate and address bullying, and ensure the active participation and co-operation of managers in preventing bullying in the workplace.

⁴⁴ Van Schalkwyk, L., Else, C., & Rothmann, I. (2011). The moderating role of perceived organisational support in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention across sectors in South Africa. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9(1), 1-13.

⁴⁵ MacIntosh, J., O'Donnell, S., Wuest, J., & Merritt-Gray, M. (2011). How workplace bullying changes how women promote their health. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, 4(1), 48-66.

⁴⁶ Momberg, M. A. (2011). *The prevalence and consequences of workplace bullying in South Africa. Unpublished Master's thesis. Port Elizabeth: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan.*



CHAPTER SIX

A statistical update on women in the South African workplace

Madelyn Geldenhuys

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Introduction

This chapter investigates the statistical representation of women in the South African workplace. **Table 1**, presents basic information regarding how women fit into the larger population. A comparison between 2011 and end 2012/beginning 2013 is provided. It is evident that:

- 52% of the national population is female, indicating an increase of 1.1% since 2011.
- The fertility rate of women is between 2.5 and 2.7¹ children per woman of childbearing age. This has not changed since 2010.
- Women's average life expectancy is 48.45 years. This trend is globally evident. Women suffer many more health concerns, such as obesity and heart disease. Furthermore, they seem to have much more stress². This could be a result of women having to deal with issues such as balancing work and family, and working in both paid and unpaid markets. From a South African perspective, 50% of deaths are due to HIV³, which is more prevalent amongst women.
- The number of women in the South African parliament, as reported by the World Classification, has decreased by 0.9%.
- There is an increase of 1.4%⁴ in the number of men and women in the current South African labour market.
- From an economic and job-creation perspective, the demand for jobs will continue to outstrip supply if every child has at least one child of their own. An average economic growth rate of 1.1%⁵ was estimated from mid-2010 to mid-2011 for South Africa. In the previous year, the economic growth was estimated at 1.2%⁶. If this trend persists, we can only expect an increase in the growth rate in the next 2 to 5 years of 1.2% to 1.5%⁷.

¹ World bank. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN/countries>

² Dr. M. Alvarez. (2013). Female life span decreasing: Some possible reasons for this bizarre trend. <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2013/03/05/female-life-span-decreasing-some-possible-reasons-for-bizarre-trend/>

³ Mail and Guardian. (2009). South African Institute of Race and relations. <http://mg.co.za/article/2009-11-19-sa-life-expectancy-decreases>.

⁴ Statistics SA, Quarterly Report, 2012 (4th quarter).

⁵ Sguazzin, A. (June, 2011). South Africa's growth rate slows to 1,1%, HIV prevalence rises. Bloomberg News

⁶ Sguazzin, A. Ibid.

⁷ Sguazzin, A. Ibid.

Table 1: Stats SA, 2011; 2012

Population statistics			
		2011 ^{8/9}	End 2012 ¹⁰
South Africa: Total population		47 850 700	50 586 757
South African women: Total population		50.9%	52.0%
Fertility rate	2.7 children per woman of childbearing age	2.7 children per woman of childbearing age	2.7 children per woman of childbearing age
Life expectancy		52 to 55.2 years	48.45 years ¹¹
Women in parliament: Upper House or Senate		33%	32.1% ^{1*}
Women in parliament: Lower or Single House		Not reported	42.3% ^{**}
South Africa: Total working population		32 670 000	33 128 000
• Women		16 797 000	16 995 000
• Men		15 873 000	16 133 000

**Women in parliament in Upper House or Senate occupy 17 of the 53 seats. **Women in parliament in Lower or Single House occupy 169 of the 400 seats.*

Demographics of women in the South African workplace

Table 2, illustrates the most notable year-on-year growth (from 2010 to 2011, and from 2011 to 2012) in various statistical areas related to women, together with comparisons to men.

Table 2: Stats SA, 2011; 2012 - Characteristics of women in the South African workplace

		Beginning 2011 (January to March) <i>*SABPP women's report 2011^{12/13}</i>	End 2011 (October to December)	End 2012 ¹⁴ (October to December)
Unemployment rate				
Women		2 237 000	2 129 000	2 279 000
Men		2 126 000	2 115 000	2 222 000
Employment per sector				
Women	Formal sector	3 703 000	3 982 000	3 944 000
	Informal sector	915 000	874 000	874 000
	Agriculture	208 000	198 000	227 000
	Private households	863 000	866 000	840 000
Men	Formal sector	5 516 000	5 634 000	5 668 000
	Informal sector	1 264 000	1 260 000	1 331 000
	Agriculture	395 000	432 000	458 000
	Private households	255 000	251 000	236 000
Employment by industry				
Women	Mining	37 000	34 000	49 000
	Manufacturing	629 000	581 000	557 000
	Utilities	31 000	14 000	22 000
	Construction	108 000	118 000	141 000
	Trade	1 397 000	1 469 000	1 414 000
	Transport	130 000	167 000	142 000
	Finance	662 000	743 000	747 000
	Community and social	1 621 000	1 729 000	1 744 000
Men	Mining	276 000	294 000	308 000
	Manufacturing	1 174 000	1 208 000	1 173 000
	Utilities	66 000	67 000	76 000
	Construction	923 000	939 000	920 000
	Trade	1 565 000	1 592 000	1 507 000
	Transport	597 000	621 000	673 000
	Finance	969 000	996 000	1 057 000
	Community and social	1 207 000	1 173 000	1 284 000

⁸ Geldenhuys, M. (2011). *Demographics of women in the workplace: A South African perspective. SABPP Women's Report 2011, South African Board for People Practices. Parktown, South Africa, pp. 12-23.*

⁹ Statistics SA, *Quarterly Report, 2011 (1st quarter).*

¹⁰ Statistics SA, *Quarterly Report, 2012 (4th quarter).*

¹¹ Index Mundi. (2012). *South Africa.*

¹² Geldenhuys, M. *Ibid.*

¹³ Statistics SA. *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Statistics SA. *Ibid.*



		Beginning 2011 (January to March) *SABPP women's report 2011 ^{12/13}	End 2011 (October to December)	End 2012 ¹⁴ (October to December)
Employment by occupation				
Women	Manager	361 000	340 000	330 000
	Professional	328 000	343 000	345 000
	Technician	811 000	838 000	829 000
	Clerk	931 000	1 066 000	1 015 000
	Sales and services	826 000	886 000	909 000
	Skilled agriculture	22 000	21 000	24 000
	Craft and related trades	203 000	186 000	189 000
	Plant and machine	178 000	165 000	147 000
	Elementary	1 188 000	1 233 000	1 269 000
Domestic worker	842 000	843 000	828 000	
Men	Manager	775 000	790 000	745 000
	Professional	421 000	402 000	460 000
	Technician	650 000	660 000	675 000
	Clerk	409 000	457 000	428 000
	Sales and services	1 078 000	1 075 000	1 086 000
	Skilled agriculture	53 000	46 000	36 000
	Craft and related trades	1 418 000	1 452 000	1 471 000
	Plant and machine	956 000	960 000	992 000
	Elementary	1 633 000	1 700 000	1 765 000
Domestic worker	35 000	35 000	33 000	
Status of employment				
Women	Employee	4 870 000	5 125 000	5 116 000
	Employer	173 000	148 000	138 000
	Own-account worker	581 000	580 000	544 000
	Unpaid household member	65 000	68 000	53 000
Men	Employee	6 191 000	6 335 000	6 394 000
	Employer	553 000	556 000	560 000
	Own-account worker	649 000	650 000	708 000
	Unpaid household member	37 000	36 000	30 000
Number of hours worked per week				
Women	15 or less	134 000	238 000	254 000
	15-29	498 000	774 000	814 000
	30-39	565 000	982 000	940 000
	40-45	3 123 000	7 424 000	7 404 000
	45 or more	1 369 000	4 129 000	4 165 000
Men	15 or less	86 000	95 000	77 000
	15-29	269 000	273 000	278 000
	30-39	355 000	356 000	339 000
	40-45	4 045 000	4 159 000	4 273 000
	45 or more	2 675 000	2 693 000	2 725 000

*Demographics reported in the SABPP Women's Report 2011. **Labour force includes all people, employed and unemployed.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate is high for both men and women. Table 2 indicates that:

- 2 279 000 South African women are without any form of employment.
- Men without any form of employment have also increased to 2 222 000.
- While there was an increase by December 2012 in the unemployment of both, more women than men became unemployed.
- According to a recent article by the Oxford Business Group¹⁵, global unemployment is still a problem. It is predicted that employment will only start increasing by 2014, when an economic upturn is expected.

Employment by sector

The employment by sector's figures in Table 2 are graphically represented in Figure 2.

- There are fewer women the formal sector and private households, compared to 2011.
- More women are employed in the agricultural sector.
- Men's overall participation in the formal, informal, and agricultural sectors increased from end 2011 to end 2012.
- Fewer men occupy positions in private households.
- Despite the increase in women in agriculture, there

are still more men in this sector, as well as in the formal and informal sectors, while there is only one sector where more women than men are employed, namely private households.

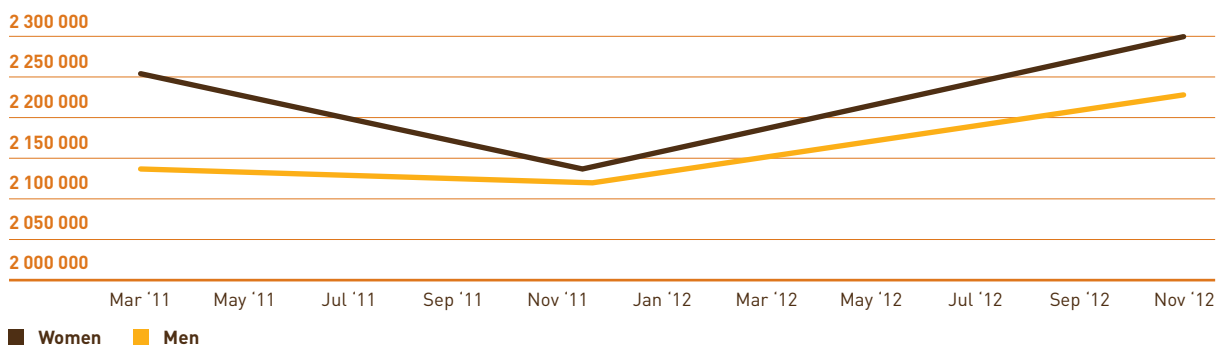
- The increase in employment of women in agriculture is to be expected, based on AFGRI's establishment of the impact they have on social systems. Overall increases in employment for men and women might have been strengthened by the B-BBEE Act, which supports the establishment of more black-owned enterprises¹⁶. In addition, AFGRI have set specific plans in place for greater inclusion of women¹⁷ in agriculture.

Traditionally male-dominated sectors and occupations — Employment by industry

The increase in the number of women employed in the mining, construction, finance, and community and social sectors is illustrated in Figure 3. Similar increases are found for men, except for the construction industry, where there was a slight drop in the employment of men. Table 2 indicates the following central developments:

- More men than women are employed in the manufacturing, utilities, construction, transport, trade, and finance industries.
- More women occupy positions within the community and social industry, which is in line with global trends.

Figure 1: Fluctuation in unemployment rates for women and men



¹⁵ Oxford Business Group. (April 2013). South Africa: Battling unemployment. http://www.zawya.com/story/South_Africa_Battling_unemployment-ZAWYA20130415095351/
¹⁶ AFGRI integrated annual report (2012).
¹⁷ AFGRI. Ibid.

Figure 2: Women and men employed in economic sectors

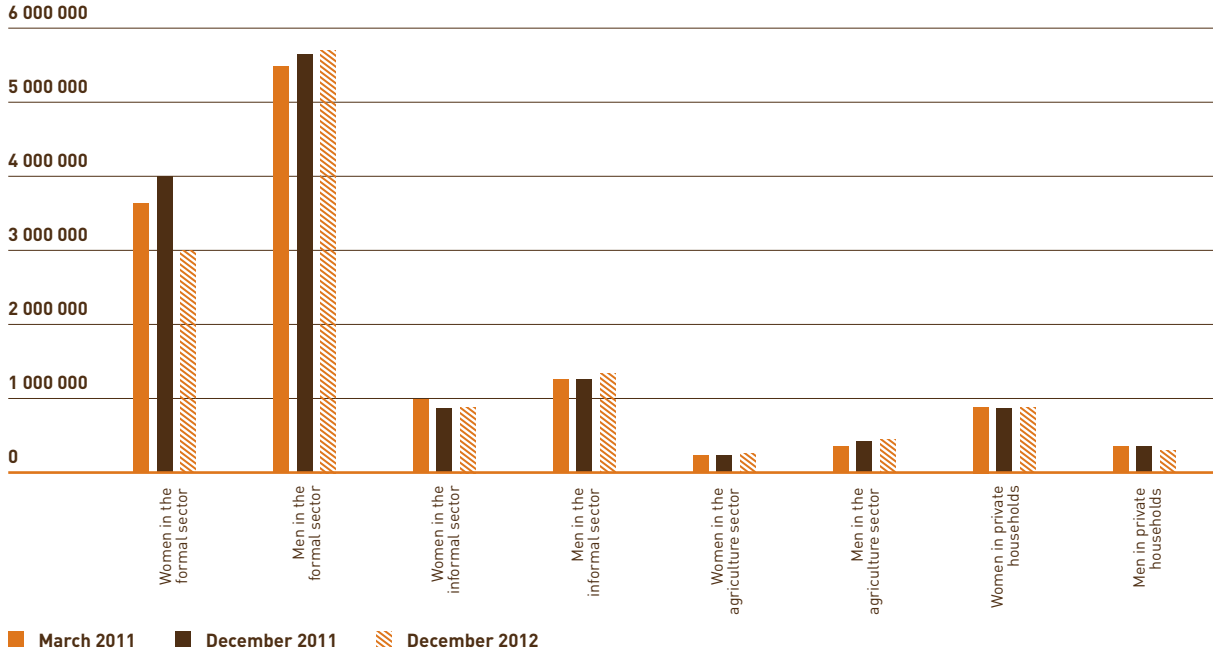
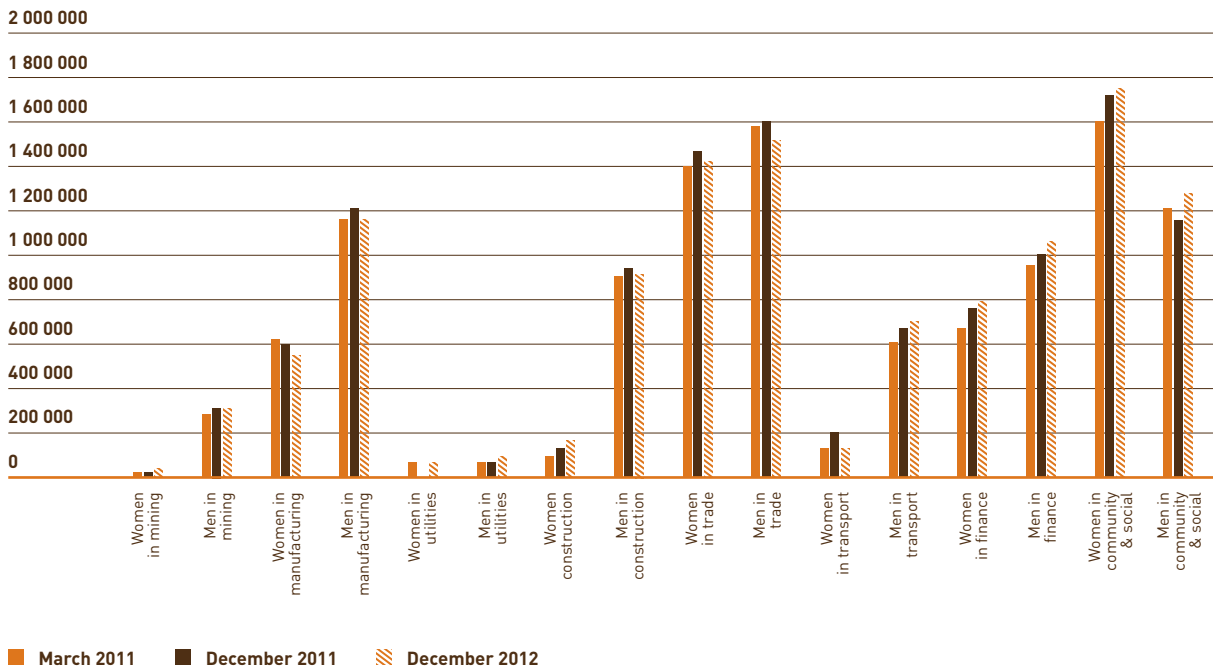


Figure 3: The representation of women and men according to industry



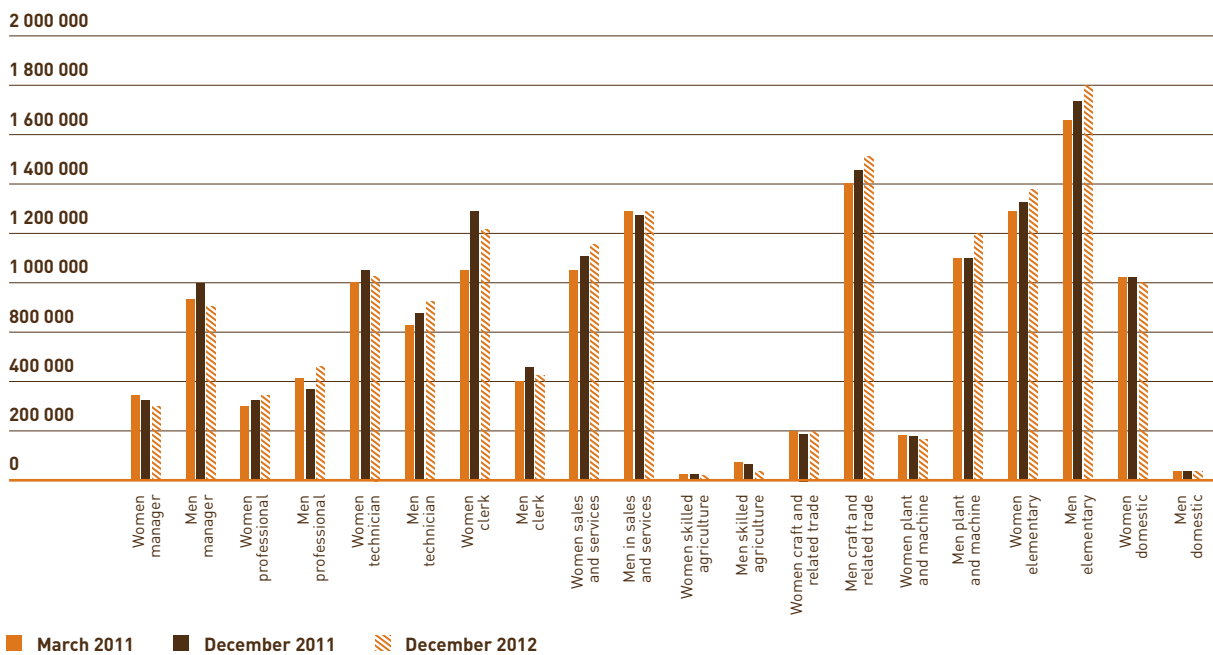
- There is an increase in the number of women employed in the mining, and community and social industries. Some of the fluctuations in the mining sector can be ascribed to mine closures for social, environmental, political, labour unrest, or safety reasons, as well as government policies¹⁸. In general, there is an increase in jobs in the mining environment; however, permanent positions have declined¹⁹.
- Although women are still under-represented in the utilities market (the practical application of fields such as economics, electrical, energy, information technology, solar power, and engineering), they have received more employment opportunities during 2012. These erratic highs and lows can partly be ascribed to the going green initiative²⁰ creating more opportunities and more professionals²¹ in this field. Furthermore, Eskom, the largest employer in the utilities industry, received a mandate from government to employ vast numbers of people, which also played a role in the sharp increases in employment.
- The South African manufacturing sector has shrunk, due to the global economic downturn. One of the key challenges for this industry is to increase local production²². This industry also faces 1) competition from imports, 2) rising cost of electricity and fuel, 3) low domestic and international demand, and 4) poor performance by other sectors of the economy, which results in lower manufacturing demand²³.

Employment by occupation

Table 2 also presents the representation of men and women according to occupation.

- Men are more prominent in the managerial, professional, sales and services, skilled agriculture, craft and related trades, and elementary occupations.
- More women than men are employed in technical, clerical, and domestic occupations. Technical and clerical work roles often require attention to detail, which research has shown to be a characteristic associated with women.

Figure 4: Employment by occupation for women and men



¹⁸ Geldenhuys, M. Ibid.
¹⁹ SAPA (January, 2013). Mining, manufacturing sector lost 15 000 jobs in December. <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-01-10-mining-manufacturing-sector-lost-15-000-jobs-in-december>
²⁰ B. N. Ndaba. (2013). Helping you master power transformation in power and utilities. <http://www.ey.com/ZA/en/Industries/Power---Utilities>
²¹ B. N. Ndaba. Ibid.
²² Manufacturing in South Africa (2013). SouthAfrica.Info.
²³ Bizconnect. Standard bank (2013). Local manufacturing under the spotlight. <http://bizconnect.standardbank.co.za/sector-news/manufacturing/local-manufacturing-under-the-spotlight.aspx>

- Women are far less represented in the craft and related trade, and plant and machine occupations, which are traditionally male roles, due to the social stigma attached to women practising these trades, and education systems favouring men in traditionally male-dominated occupations.
- It is interesting to note that fewer women were employed in the clerical industry during 2012 when compared to the previous periods.
- More women are working in sales and services occupations, which may be due to the fact that the services industry provides greater pay parity for women in relation to men. Sales and services are also physically less demanding.
- Clerical work is one of the Five Cs occupational grouping primarily associated with women, namely clerical, caring, cashiering, catering, and cleaning. This begs consideration of technology entering the clerical space and potentially eliminating these positions.
- There are still far fewer women than men in the management and professional categories.
- A decline in both men and women in management is evident. This could be due to organisations delayering, creating flatter organisational structures,

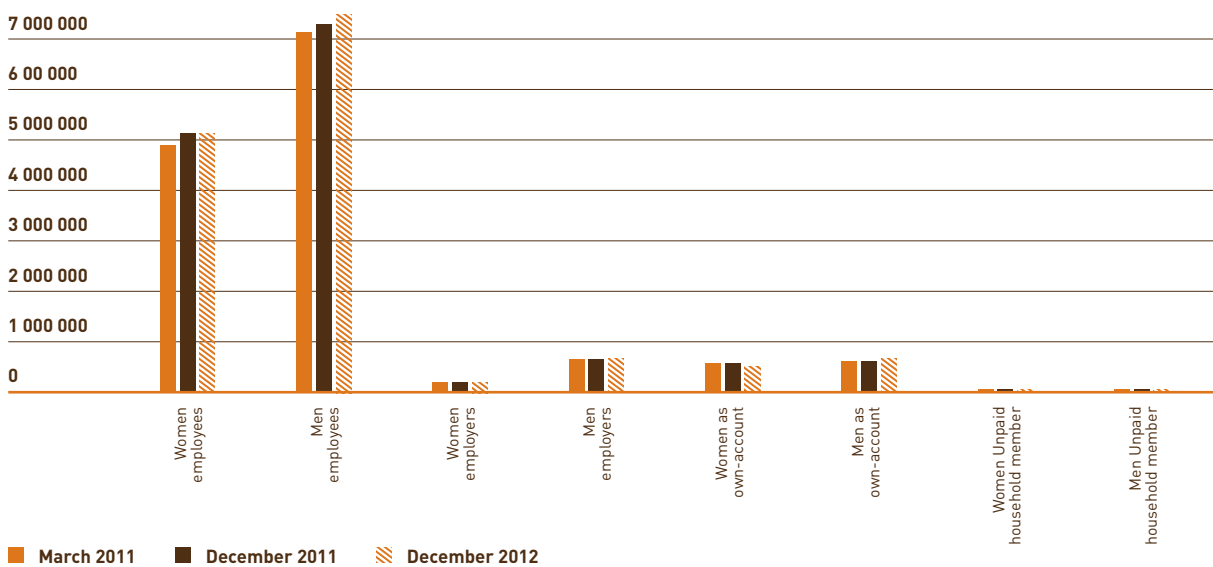
and removing unnecessary managerial layers, due to the economic downturn demanding greater efficiencies.

Job seniority levels and Status of employment

Women are well represented in elementary level positions, which confirms that women dominate lower-level jobs²⁴. As previously mentioned, women dominate clerical jobs, which form part of lower-level jobs.

- More women became employees during 2011.
- The number of women as employees decreased from 2011, so that by the end of 2012, an overall decrease of 0.2% was evident.
- The progress that women have made in job seniority levels therefore seems to have eroded over time.
- Compared to men, fewer women are employers and own-account workers. There was little change in female own-account workers (single operators, working or consulting as an individual, e.g., psychologist) during 2011, with a decrease of 0.5% towards the end of 2012.
- Compared to the 560 000 reported male employers at the beginning of 2011, far fewer female employers (138 000) are found. There has therefore been no growth in female entrepreneurship in South Africa since 2011.

Figure 5: The status of employment of women and men



²⁴ Geldenhuys, M. Ibid.

- The number of women who are unpaid household members has also increased. This is in line with the social norm of women being home-makers, and, worryingly, a possible perception of employers that it is more acceptable to retrench women, as men are considered the breadwinners.
- Most women work between 40-45 hours per week.
- Women’s work hours are steadily on the increase in both full-day and half-day positions. A reported 4 165 000 (30%) of the 13 577 000 women work longer hours than what is legislated in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.
- More women work longer hours than the 2 725 000 men working more than 45 hours per week.
- Black African women 6.1% occupy senior management positions, while white women occupy 18.6%. Black African women in the professionally qualified category are, however, at 16.1%, which could be evidence of an imminent increase in African female managers in senior and top management positions in the near future, due to the increase in professional skills amongst this group.
- Still in the minority, Coloured women enjoy a mere 2.6% representation in top management, and Indian women 2.9%.
- There are more professionally qualified Coloured women (4.3%) than Indian women (3.7%).
- There are more professionally qualified men than women. However, this gap is not significant, with the exception of the gap between white women and white men, which is 10%.

Racial distribution of women in the workplace

Women remain in lower levels of authority than men, irrespective of race. Table 3, below, illustrates the racial distribution of women in the workplace.

- 3.6% of African women occupy positions in top management. White women constitute 12.8% of top management.
- Coloured (1.5%) and Indian (1.6%) women are in the minority in this regard.
- There are more African and white female managers than Coloured male managers.
- White men (59.8%) continue to dominate top management levels.

Women in leadership

Although women make up more than half of the South African population, they are not accordingly represented in the workplace, specifically with regard to leadership positions. Alberdi states that it may take decades to achieve equality between men and women in leadership positions²⁵. Few would deny the benefits of having women in senior management, with research suggesting distinct advantages such as²⁶ diversity with regards to different viewpoints within organisations.

Table 3 (CEE, 2013)

Racial distribution of women in the South African workforce										
	Men				Women				Foreign	
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Men	Women
Top management	8.8%	3.2%	5.7%	59.8%	3.6%	1.5%	1.6%	12.8%	2.7%	0.4%
Senior management	12.3%	4.5%	6.6%	43.8%	6.1%	2.6%	2.9%	18.6%	2%	0.5%
Professionally qualified	18%	5.1%	5.3%	27.7%	16.1%	4.3%	3.7%	17.5%	1.8%	0.6%
Skilled	31.9%	6.4%	3.3%	14.3%	23.3%	5.5%	2.5%	11.2%	1.2%	0.3%

²⁵ Business women’s association with South Africa. Women’s leadership census, 2011.
²⁶ Business women’s association with South Africa. Ibid.



Table 4, lists the following statistics for listed companies:

- Fewer women in the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Managing Director, compared to 2012; only 12 in the role of CEO or MD;
- A slight increase in women in the role of Chairperson of the Board;
- A slight increase in female directors;
- Little change to the number of female executive managers. Women are therefore not progressing in environments that were traditionally structured for men by men i.e. the corporate sector, and also not in the South African entrepreneurial sector.

Women in leadership roles tend to populate lower management positions, e.g., executive management, but percentages should once again be read with caution, due to the low original headcount. Figure 6, below, shows a comparison of men and women according to level of leadership positions.

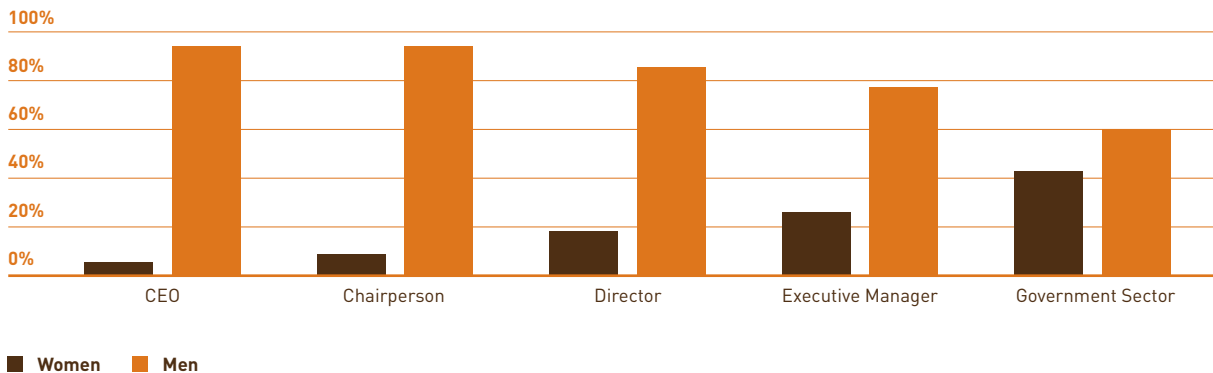
- Women are still far under-represented in leadership positions.
- Only government institutions have a significant number of women in leadership positions.

These statistics are cause for concern when considering the fact that the population of working women has increased and the numbers of women in leadership positions have decreased.

Table 4 (BWA census, 2011; 2012)

Women in leadership			
Position		2011	2012
CEO/MD		4.4%	3.6% (12 women)
Chairperson		5.3%	5.5% (18 women)
Directors		15.8%	17.1% (669 women)
Executive managers		21.6%	21.4% (1452 women)

Figure 6: Distribution of women compared to men in leadership positions²⁷



²⁷ Business Women's Association of South Africa. Women in leadership census (2012).

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the demographics and comparative representation of women and men in the South African workplace²⁸. Unemployment rates are very high for both men and women, yet women still bear the brunt of unemployment. However, the impact of the global economic crisis and South Africa's a skills deficit²⁹ should not be ignored. It was reported that companies in South Africa suffer an 83% skills deficit in general, and that bridging this gap is imperative to South Africa's economic growth³⁰.

Despite the increase in women in the labour market, women globally still occupy lower-level positions³¹. There was a 0.6% increase in women in professional positions, which might be due to the growing number of female graduates produced by South African higher education institutions.

Statistics show an extraordinarily high number of women in clerical positions, compared to men. It is also clear that women work longer hours, which could be due to their male partners being more helpful on the home front or other social support structures, wherein other women offer support or household services, being in place. Lips³² highlights society's expectations of women as leaders, and notes that women face numerous barriers, such as that:

- 1 *women in leadership roles elicit different responses than men do,*
- 2 *women are expected to combine leadership with compassion,*
- 3 *subordinates grudgingly accept direction from women,*
- 4 *women who promote themselves and their abilities incur disapproval, and*
- 5 *women often require more external validation than their male counterparts.*

These barriers and stereotypes, which may be the fundamental reason why women are ironically only 'making headway' in domestic positions, provide food for thought in addressing processes to address the current inequalities between men and women in the workplace.

²⁸ Geldenhuys, M. *Ibid.*

²⁹ Oxford Business Group. *Ibid.*

³⁰ Hlengiwe Mkhize (2013). South Africa: Battling unemployment. http://www.zawya.com/story/South_Africa_Battling_unemployment-ZAWYA20130415095351/.

³¹ Mintz, B. & Krymkowski, D. H. (2010). The ethic, race and gender gaps in workplace authority: Changes over time in the United States. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 51, 20-45.

³² Lips, H. (2009). Women and leadership: Delicate balancing act. <http://www.womensmedia.com/lead/88-women-and-leadership-delicate-balancing-act.html>



Contributors

Prof. Anita Bosch

Anita holds a PhD from the School of Management at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom. She is an Associate Professor in the department of Industrial Psychology and People Management at the University of Johannesburg, and leads the Women in the Workplace research programme at UJ. She has served on the South African Board for People Practices (2006-2009) and is a registered Master HR Practitioner.

Anita is actively involved in collaborative and dialogue-based change processes, as well as women's identity and leadership development. Through her experience as an operations manager for a consulting company, head of a for-profit unit at a university, researcher, as well as consulting in the fields of human resources and organisational development, she effectively addresses the workplace needs of clients. She is the editor for Africa of the journal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and editor of the annual Women's Report of the SABPP

Email: anitab@uj.ac.za

Dr. Madelyn Geldenhuys

Madelyn is a registered Industrial Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. She holds a bachelor degree specialising in Personnel Management, Training and Development, and a Master's and PhD degree specialising in Industrial Psychology from the North West University. She is a researcher and lecturer, consults on work-related topics, and performs psychometric evaluations and counselling. She is currently a lecturer at the University of Johannesburg, and is involved in research on positive psychology, meaningful work, and women in the workplace. She has been involved with conference proceedings on a national and international level, and has supervised research students on honours, Master's and PhD level.

Email: madelyng@uj.ac.za

Ms. Jenni Gobind

Jenni Gobind is a doctoral candidate and lecturer at the University of Johannesburg's Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management within the Faculty of Management. She holds an MPhil in HIV/AIDS Management from the Africa Centre for HIV/AIDS Management at the University of Stellenbosch. Jenni completed her undergraduate degree in Law at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She has published a number of articles, and has a keen interest in the field of employment relations, HIV/AIDS management, as well as evaluation and policy development.

Email: jgobind@uj.ac.za

Ms. Leigh Leo

Leigh Leo is studying towards a Master's degree in Industrial Psychology at the University of Johannesburg and holds a B.Com Honours degree (cum laude) in Industrial Psychology at the same institution. She is currently involved with research in the field of embodied cognition and consumer psychology, which looks at the role of incidental haptic sensations in consumer judgements of a brand. Her interests lie in empowering people with the knowledge to make better decisions. Leigh is currently registered as a student psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

Email: leigh0727@gmail.com

Ms. Lindiwe Makunga

Lindiwe Makhunga is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Studies at Wits University, and researches primarily in the field of gender politics, conflict and development, and institutional settings. She holds an MA degree (cum laude) in Gender and Development from the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University. She completed her undergraduate degree in Politics at Wits University, and has been working in the area of gender equality since early 2008 as a researcher and activist. Her specific interests are gender relations in post-conflict settings, governance, and legislative politics.

Email: l.makhunga@gmail.com

Ms. Leanne Meyer

Leanne Meyer is an executive coach whose calling is to help people make sense of their lives through the reclamation of passion and purpose. She is passionate about empowering women at all levels of leadership to lean into who they are and live out their unique callings. As such, she is a sought-after speaker for keynote addresses, seminars, conferences, and workshops.

Her journey began in South Africa, where her interest in the possibility for human change and transformation was ignited. She has spent the past twenty years building and applying her change-agent skills in South Africa, England, Ireland, and the United States, working with major corporations and serving as lecturer and faculty member for several schools, including Carnegie Mellon University, Duquesne University, and Carlow University. Leanne holds a Master's degree in Industrial Psychology from the University of Johannesburg. She is based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and principal member of the company Transitioning Season.

Email: leanne@transitioningseason.com

Ms. Robyn Reid

Robyn Reid holds a B.Com Honours degree (cum laude) in Industrial Psychology from the University of Johannesburg. She is currently studying towards a Master's degree in Industrial Psychology at the same institution. She is also registered as a student in Industrial Psychology at the Health Professions Council of South Africa. "Lived Experience of Male Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment" is the research topic for her Master's degree, and she has a specific interest in research on workplace bullying.

Email: robynreid@telkomsa.net

Dr. Renate Volpe

*Renate Volpe is a leading South African facilitator and coach in the arena of people development, leadership, and change management. She holds a PhD in Leadership, and uniquely combines strong academic ability with astute business acumen. A successful corporate player and business owner with 30 years' experience, she has held retainers with blue chip companies, such as Anglo American, for over 20 years. Renate turned entrepreneur in 1995, and founded Dr Renate Volpe Leadership Consulting. She published the popular read, *The Entrepreneurial Mind Shift*. In 2005, Cell C distributed her publication on self-esteem nationally. She also contributed to *Conversations in Leadership*, and her more recent publication is titled: *Lessons from the School of Hard Knocks*.*

Email: renate@drrenatevolpe.co.za





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Department of Industrial Psychology
and People Management

E: anitab@uj.co.za
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South African Board for People Practices
1st Floor, Rossouws Attorneys Building
8 Sherborne Road, Parktown
PO Box 2450, Houghton 2041, South Africa

T: +27 11 482 8595 F: +27 11 482 4830
E: hrrri@sabpp.co.za www.sabpp.co.za

