A phenomenological investigation into the experiences of coloured women in organisational leadership in the Western Cape

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The dearth of research concerning coloured women in leadership was the motivation for this study. Studies on women in leadership in South Africa, thus far, have focused mainly on Black African women or a racially diverse sample of women in organisational leadership. From this foundation, the study explored how coloured women in the Western Cape construct and make meaning of their experiences as organisational leaders. The study investigated this phenomenon by conducting interviews with eight coloured women from rural and urban areas in the Western Cape, with more than five years' experience in corporate leadership. The interpretative phenomenological approach informed the data collection process and followed a three-interview sequence. The first interview focused on the demographics and leadership journey, the second on their leadership challenges, and the third on the coping strategies they apply in their work as corporate leaders. Data collected from their narratives were transcribed and analysed, resulting in five main themes. A history of colonialism and apartheid was one of the main drivers that influenced how the women make meaning of their leadership experiences. Being a member of an intermediate race placed between the White and Black African racial groups, coupled with the confusion around the word "coloured", were unique challenges experienced by the women. The women saw these challenges as the "weaponisation of race" and that they have to fight for their space in the racial and gender hierarchy. The women described other challenges, similar to those reported in previous women of colour leadership studies, as the "battle of war". They viewed their leadership journey as a moulding process, which stemmed from their upbringing and continued into their adult life. Moreover, to cope with leadership challenges, they believe it is crucial to have a conducive organisational environment and supportive relationships. Lastly, certain personal characteristics can facilitate the climb up the corporate ladder for coloured women.

Keywords: coloured women, Corporate leadership, Western Cape, Challenges, Supportive environments

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OPSOMMING

Die gebrek aan navorsing rakende kleurling vroue in leierskap was die motivering vir hierdie studie. Studies oor vroue in leierskap in Suid-Afrika het tot dusver hoofsaaklik op Swart Afrika-vroue of 'n diverse rassesteekproef van vroue in organisatoriese leierskap gefokus. Vanuit hierdie oogpunt het die studie ondersoek hoe kleurling vroue in die Wes-Kaap sin maak van hul ervarings as organisatoriese leiers. Die studie het hierdie verskynsel ondersoek deur onderhoude met agt kleurling vroue uit landelike en stedelike gebiede in die Wes-Kaap te voer, wat meer as vyf jaar ondervinding in korporatiewe leierskap het. Die interpretatiewe fenomenologiese benadering het die data-insamelingsproses ingelig en drie onderhoude is met elke vrou gevoer. Die eerste onderhoud het gefokus op die demografie en leierskapsreis, die tweede op hul leierskapsuitdagings, en die derde op die hanteringstrategieë wat hulle in hul werk as korporatiewe leiers toepas. Data wat uit hul stories ingesamel is, is getranskribeer en ontleed, wat tot vyf hooftemas gelei het. 'n Geskiedenis van kolonialisme en apartheid was een van die hoofdrywers wat beïnvloed het hoe die vroue betekenis van hul leierskapservarings maak. Om 'n lid te wees van 'n intermediêre rassegroep wat tussen die Wit- en Swart Afrika-rassegroepe geplaas is, tesame met die verwarring rondom die woord "kleurling", was unieke uitdagings wat die vroue ervaar het. Die vroue het hierdie uitdagings gesien as die "rassewapens" en dat hulle moet veg vir hul spasie in die rasse- en geslagshiërargie. Die vroue het ander uitdagings, soortgelyk aan dié wat in vorige leierskapstudies oor vroue van kleur aangemeld is, as die “oorlogstryd” beskryf. Hulle het hul leierskapsreis as 'n vormingsproses beskou, wat uit hul opvoeding gespruit het en in hul volwasse lewe voortgegaan het. Verder, om leierskapsuitdagings die hoof te bied, glo hulle dit is van kardinale belang om 'n bevorderlike organisatoriese omgewing en ondersteunende verhoudings te hê. Laastens kan sekere persoonlike eienskappe die klim op die korporatiewe leer vir kleurling vroue fasiliteer.

Sleutelwoorde: kleurling vroue, Korporatiewe leierskap, Wes-Kaap, Uitdagings, Ondersteunende omgewings

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Republic of South Africa's Constitution (Constitution of South Africa, 1996;[1] Liebenberg & Goldblatt, 2016) promotes the equality of all people and freedom from discrimination, but deeply embedded socio-cultural and patriarchal structures continue to pose challenges for women in leadership (Penciliah, 2005). While the Constitution of South Africa is considered to have a first-class rating where human rights and gender equality is concerned and promotes women's advancement, in reality, there are discrepancies between the lived realities of women and the legitimate aspirations of the Constitution (Andrews, 2001; Gouws & Galgut, 2016). Researchers argue that the struggle for gender equality will require ongoing conscious awareness and attention (Andrews, 2001; Egbuta, 2020).

The struggle for gender equality is signified by ongoing, widespread reporting and current discussions highlighting the constraints that continue to affect women's advancement in the labour market (Bekana, 2020; Buribayev & Khamzina, 2019; Hazel & Kleyman, 2019; Mariscal et al., 2019). In 2019, women globally only held 29% of senior management roles (Catalyst, 2019). Furthermore, women with university degrees constituted more than half of the workforce in America (Manuel, 2019). Yet, they only held 45% of all management positions, with White women occupying 32.6% of these positions and women of colour (Latina, Black, and Asian) only 12.4% (Catalyst, 2019). The marginalisation of women in Africa is no different. For example, in Nigeria, an African country known for patriarchal domination, women play vital roles in areas such as motherhood, community developers, etc. but are absent within their country's formal decision-making structures (Makama, 2013). Similarly, in South Africa, women's increased visibility in

[1] It must be noted that the use of older references in the study, is either to highlight the origin of the phenomenon, to support the history of events, reference an act, or because of the limited research available on coloured women in leadership in South Africa.

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leadership positions is downplayed by a significant underrepresentation in the top management business structures (Chandler, 2011).

Females make up more than half (51.5%) of a total population of 59.62 million people in South Africa (Statistics South Africa [STATS SA], 2019a) and yet only held 24.5% of top management positions in 2019 compared to the 75.6 % of such posts held by their male counterparts (Department of Labour, 2020). Between 2017 and 2019, there was a minimal increase of 1.5% for female representation in the top management structures of South African organisations (Department of Labour, 2020). White males and White females dominate the senior management positions and respectively hold 52.4% and 13.2% of these positions, while Black African[2] representation is 9.9% for men and 5.4% for women (Department of Labour, 2020). coloured[3] representation is the lowest at 3.4% for men and 2.1% for women, even though the coloured population constitutes the second-highest economically active population next to Black Africans (Department of Labour, 2020). Therefore, it is safe to argue that women in South Africa, more specifically, coloured women, remain underrepresented in the upper echelons of many employment institutions (Snyder, 2014).

The Constitution of South Africa (1996) and the Women Empowerment Gender Equality Bill of 2013 recognises the underrepresentation of women in the upper echelons of organisations (Republic of South Africa, 2013). The Constitution of South Africa and the Women Empowerment Equality Bill separately underline gender equality as a principle and petition for 50% female representation in decision-making roles (Constitution of South Africa, 1996; Republic of South

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[2] Racial population groups in South Africa are divided into four groups, namely Black Africans, coloureds, Whites and Indians/Asians (Statistics South Africa, 2019a). The term 'Black' is used to refer to the previously disadvantaged; these are Black African people, the coloured community, the Indian people and the San and Khoi communities (Dr Ellen Kornegay (The Office on the Status of Women), 1999, p. 6).

[3] The term "coloured" in South Africa is generally used to make reference to a population group assumed to be from "mixed" ancestry (Brown, 2000). The word "coloured" will be used throughout this paper in reference to the participants of this study as they are assumed, in terms of the South African government classification, to be members of that particular population group.

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Africa, 2013).

The Commission of Employment Equity Report of 2019 indicated that gender inequality is intrinsically connected to power, stemming from patriarchal cultural practices that have barricaded women's right to equality and dignity (Department of Labour, 2019). To narrow the gender inequality gap in the workplace, the report suggests that women should have easier access to employment opportunities, skills development, and training (Department of Labour, 2019).

One such approach to address gender inequality in the workplace adopted in South Africa is affirmative action. With origins in the United States, affirmative action refers to the preferential advancement of opportunities and assistance to members of specified disadvantaged groups (Smith, 2014). It is argued that affirmative action in South Africa has its roots in the Carnegie Commission Report, which suggested institutional assistance to poor White people as a strategy to eradicate White poverty (Fourie, 2007). The plan was to ensure employment for poor White people by replacing Black workers, especially in the most skilled areas of the economy (Fourie, 2007). This institutional reform strategy ensured poverty alleviation amongst White people by the 1970s (Fourie, 2007). A similar approach was adopted after 1994, with the new democratic government's inception in South Africa (Fourie, 2007). As a result, the new government introduced affirmative action in an attempt to eradicate poverty and inequalities among Black people in South Africa (Fourie, 2007).

With the Carnegie Commission Report as a blueprint, affirmative action policies in South Africa seek to reduce inequality in the workplace, aimed explicitly at previously marginalised minority groups, which include people of colour, women, and people living with disabilities (Smith, 2014). Affirmative action, employed as a strategy to reduce economic inequality, requires the government to take decisive measures to provide favourable advancement opportunities for these designated groups (Smith, 2014). This transformation process aims to advance socio-economic development, growth, and the empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups, especially women (Kehler, 2001).

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Some women in leadership, however, are resistant to the term "affirmative action" as they believe it promotes stereotypes, implying that the beneficiaries of affirmative action are not suitably qualified or capable of doing the job (Faniko et al., 2017). Affirmative action aims to create an equal society and, therefore, should be considered in context and not promote the notion that these measures favour certain groups at the expense of others (Andrews, 2009). Affirmative action should be viewed as structured, public policy measures designed to redress historical oppression that led to discrimination and inequality of marginalised groups, especially in the economic spheres of society (Burger & Jafta, 2010; Department of Labour, 2019; Deshpande & Weisskopf, 2014).

A recent international study highlighted the top five gender equality struggles for women in the workplace, namely (1) unequal pay, (2) sexual harassment, (3) racism, (4) fewer promotions compared to men, and (5) women undervaluing their worth in the labour market (Wilson, 2019). Similarly, in contemporary South African organisations, women continue to be confronted by challenges such as discrimination, gender bias, gender stereotyping, and patriarchy (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010; Martin & Barnard, 2013; Zuiderveld, 2014). Discrimination and gender inequality, exemplified by sexual harassment and unequal pay, continue to remain prevalent in the workplace (Department of Labour, 2019). More men than women occupy paid employment positions, and adding to this work imbalance is the fact that men are more likely to earn two and a half times more than women (Accenture, 2017).

Moreover, societal gender role division beliefs are constructed within the landscape of deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs and behaviour, where women are seen primarily as the caregiver and men as the head of the house (Kehler, 2001). Contradictory to the ubiquitous understanding of men's role as the breadwinner in society, the perception concerning the role of women varies significantly across cultures (Kabeer, 2016). As much as the South African Constitution champions equal rights and opportunities for women, these rights remain contested in the private and public domains, primarily as a result of deeply embedded and tenacious patriarchal attitudes (Albertyn, 2009). Changes in the status and role of women in society are particularly strongly contested by men of

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strong patriarchal disposition, as this affects the power redistribution within the workforce and in a broader sense within society as a whole (Albertyn, 2009).

The recent Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the power relations between men and women in a deep-rooted patriarchal society (McLaren et al., 2020). Researchers believe that phenomena such as war, natural disasters, and pandemics can change the power relationships between men and women and increase women's predisposition towards gendered burdens and economic losses (McLaren et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic brought the power relations between men and women to the forefront as women's financial positions were compromised more than that of their male counterparts (Kristal & Yaish, 2020).

Scholars argue that women ultimately bore the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic (Kristal & Yaish, 2020) since more women than men work as beauticians, hairdressers, and hospitality personnel (Stier & Yaish, 2008), and these sectors of the economy were hit the hardest by Covid-19 (Kristal & Yaish, 2020). Women also carried the burden of extra childcare responsibilities, especially in countries where schools and childcare facilities were closed during lockdown[4] (Kristal & Yaish, 2020). Consequently, an increase in unemployment among women was inevitable (Kristal & Yaish, 2020). For example, in Spain, unemployment increased by 7% for both males and females, resulting in 63.5% of men and only 46% of women retaining their jobs (Farré et al., 2020). In South Africa, however, between February 2020 and April 2020, 22% of women lost their jobs, while only 10% of men suffered this fate (Casale & Posel, 2020). It is reported that women accounted for two-thirds of all job losses in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic (Casale & Posel, 2020).

Additionally, these women who are still in paid employment were now also burdened with increased childcare and housework due to school closures and restrictions on movements (Casale &

[4] Lockdown is defined as restrictions on the movement and gathering of people as a method implemented to try and reduce the pace of the transmission of a disease (Mboera et al., 2020).

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Posel, 2020; Farré et al., 2020). Influenced by culture and society, women generally are caught between their devotion to their family and career aspirations (Cho et al., 2015). They continuously find themselves in a double bind where they try to balance gender role expectations versus leadership role expectations (O'Neil et al., 2015). Perceived ideals of personal life and leadership are complicated by gender role expectations and a hostile patriarchal system that does not provide equal status to various roles; it is either one or the other (Cho et al., 2015; Curtis, 2017).

A significant secondary effect of the Covid-19 pandemic was an increase in gender-based violence across various continents (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020). Countries that reported a rise in domestic violence, to name just a few, includes the United Kingdom (Mohan, 2020), Singapore (Hingorani, 2020), the United States of America (Almeron, 2020), China (Feng, 2020), and South Africa (Weiner, 2020). As a result, gender-based violence during Covid-19 has been labelled "the shadow pandemic of violence against women" (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020). Before Covid-19, the rise in gender-based violence in South Africa was already at an alarming rate, and just one week into lockdown, more than 87 000 cases of gender-based violence were reported (Weiner, 2020). Although this is not the focus of the research, it demonstrates how the complex intersection of social and economic relations within a patriarchal system adds to and reinforces the vulnerability of women in society (Phalatse, 2020; Weiner, 2020). Furthermore, it ridicules popular Covid-19 phrases such as "we're all in this together" (Bowleg, 2020, p. 917) and "the great equaliser" (Cuomo, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed and reinforced the gender inequality gap in both paid and unpaid work (housework, caring for the children, the aged, the sick and the disabled, etc.) and increased the vulnerability of women in our society (Farré et al., 2020; Gouws & Galgut, 2016). Many scholars agree that as a result of the pandemic, the gender inequality gap has been reinforced, and gains made over the years in terms of gender equality diminished (Casale & Posel, 2020; Farré et al., 2020; Kristal & Yaish, 2020; McLaren et al., 2020).

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South Africa has a longstanding problem in terms of prejudice and inequality, similar to challenges experienced by women globally (Wood, 2019). Women employed in South Africa's labour market reported feelings of invisibility, exclusion, victimisation, stigmatisation, and career plateauing when they have reached a certain level in their career (Idahosa & Vincent, 2014; Zuiderveld, 2014). Furthermore, they also experience organisational challenges such as a lack of female mentorship, low social networking platforms, and a corporate environment not conducive to female professionals with family responsibilities (Zuiderveld, 2014). In a study conducted with women in the South African media sector, participants reported that they feel that being Black and female is a stigma they must deal with every day in their working environment (Zuiderveld, 2014). They described their feelings as a struggle against both race and gender inequality, described in literature as intersectionality (Cho et al., 2015; Crenshaw, 1991; Penciliah, 2005; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012; Woodhams & Lupton, 2014; Zuiderveld, 2014).

Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in 1989 to explain African-American women's oppression in law (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality is based on the interplay of multiple social systems such as race, gender (stemming from patriarchy), ethnicity and social status; which produce and sustain complex inequalities of structural oppression and exclusion of marginalised people (Crenshaw, 1991; Grzanka et al., 2017; Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta et al., 2015; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). Differently-abled women face even more significant impediments, particularly concerning participation and income generation in the labour market (Moodley & Graham, 2015). The complex entanglement of elements of intersectionality makes it challenging to determine the most debilitating effects on women in leadership (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Smith, 2002).

Some scholars, however, argue that the real challenge that women face is stereotypical gendered perceptions about their authority, emanating from deeply-embedded cultural beliefs and prejudices (Ely & Rhode, 2010). Cultural beliefs and stereotypes, often rooted in patriarchal norms (Snyder, 2014), are believed to be commanding determinants of gender roles visible at home, in the workplace, and in society (Wood, 2019). These concepts of gender role division and expectations

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inevitably have a significant impact on women's status in leadership (Mayer et al., 2015).

Intersectionality further highlights the intricate identities of gender and race stereotypes (Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016) rooted in women's historical and structural oppression (Cole, 2009). Gender identity is argued to be deeply rooted in social norms and values and therefore have a powerful impact on leadership thinking (Cho et al., 2015). In broad terms, gender is defined as the socially and culturally constructed role differences assigned to males and females (Makama, 2013; Wood, 2019). It determines what socially acceptable behaviour applies to men and women (Wood, 2019) and plays an intricate role in shaping the relationship between perceived ideals of womanhood and leadership (Curtis, 2017). Research scholars argue that gender identity is fluid and undergoes continuous sculpturing reinforced by social structures and institutions (Wood, 2019). Furthermore, they believe that gender and racial identity are unavoidably connected (Mccall, 2005).

Similarly, racial identities are submerged in social identities (Auster & Prasad, 2016). Social identities are usually conceptualised through easily noticeable characteristics such as gender, race, age, ethnicity, language, and speech but also include less obvious attributes such as social group membership, socio-economic status, and religion (Kaufmann & Wagner, 2017; Prasad, 2012). Visible or invisible, these social identities, also known as social categorising, often lead to falsified perceptions and stereotypes of particular groups, which inevitably leads to unfair discrimination and prejudice (Auster & Prasad, 2016; Mokoele, 2017; Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016).

Individuals belonging to a specific social group are believed to depict similar characteristics and behaviour, which is supposed to be different from other groups provoking certain assumptions about those individuals, known as stereotyping (Jafari, 2012). Stereotyping refers to over-generalised perceptions about a particular group of people based on outward appearances (Jafari, 2012) and is argued to be one of the most salient barriers to women's advancement in leadership (Doubell & Struwig, 2014). Furthermore, Wood (2019) contends that the marginalisation and discrimination of women through sustained stereotypes and gender inequality is one of the worst power displays in a patriarchal society, which debilitates their potential. For example, Black women

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in American culture have a history of experiencing negative stereotypes, compromising how they are perceived in society (Ashley, 2014; Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016).

Three deleterious images of Black women propagated by society are “Mammy,” “Sapphire,” and “Jezebel” (Thomas et al., 2004; West, 2008; Woodard & Mastin, 2005). The Mammy stereotype is depicted as an unsightly, caring mother subservient to White people; Sapphire (or the angry Black woman) is seen as aggressive, domineering, hostile, and resentful; while Jezebel portrays a sexually promiscuous, seductive, and immoral woman (Thomas et al., 2004; West, 2008; Woodard & Mastin, 2005). These stereotypes project a particular type of image on Black women, which reduce their status as organisational leaders to assumptions based on their gender and race (Lewis et al., 2016). Also, their intellectual capabilities are continuously scrutinised and regarded as inferior, compromising their authority as competent, qualified, and accomplished women leaders (Holder et al., 2015).

Furthermore, women in African countries seem to understand the reinforcing effect intersectionality has on the marginalisation of women in organisational leadership (Ngunjiri, 2016). Gender, ethnicity, race, social status, and social identities continue to affect women’s experiences stemming from deep-rooted social patriarchies and hierarchies, prevalent in many African societies (Mokoele, 2017; Ngunjiri, 2016). The common belief, encompassed by a deep-rooted patriarchal system, that men are superior to women and that women are not capable of dealing with leadership challenges are the pillars upholding a social system that keeps women on the peripheries of leadership (Doubell & Struwig, 2014). Consequently, women consistently underestimate while men overestimate their abilities and performance (Kay & Shipman, 2014). This undervalued competence, motivated by men’s over-confident nature and institutionalised male-preferred leadership (O’Neil et al., 2015), leads to women working twice as hard as their male counterparts (Cho et al., 2015). As a result, women continuously have to prove they are good enough to be in leadership (Cho et al., 2015), further elevating feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and lower self-confidence (O’Neil et al., 2015; Stead, 2014).

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Lack of confidence and low self-assurance are reported to be typical struggles for women in leadership, but these individual-level challenges do not always make provision for the impact of social and contextual influences (Cho et al., 2015; Kay & Shipman, 2014). In addition, women hope that their hard work will pay off and will result in equal opportunities and recognition within the organisational structure (Ibarra et al., 2013).

In the absence of the expected rewards, women start to doubt and question their leadership capabilities (O'Neil et al., 2015). Comments such as "are you sure? it requires a lot of travel; you've never had that kind of role" further exacerbate the doubt women are already struggling with (Ibarra & Kessler, 2013, p. 2). Consequently, despite being successful in a dominant male industry, such as engineering, investment banking, and broadcasting, women tend to credit their success to "just lucky" or "in the right place at the right time" and hardly because they truly deserve it (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 58).

Also, agentic male characteristics such as decisiveness, assertiveness, and independence are associated with successful leadership, while society expects women to take on the role of the unselfish caretaker (Ibarra et al., 2013). Women continuously have to negotiate patriarchal norms that prescribe a particular role for them in society (Snyder, 2014). While trying to prove themselves in a male-dominated environment, they have to balance societal expectations and personal aspirations. Men are rewarded and women are penalised for high confidence, self-assurance, and aggressive display of authority, as society associates these behavioural characteristics as acceptable for men but inappropriate for women (Ingersoll et al., 2019). While accepted in men, self-confidence or assertiveness are judged as ostentatious or callous in women (Ibarra et al., 2013).

Displaying appropriate gender behaviour is a focal point in leadership, which results in women continuously monitoring the degree of emotion they display (Brescoll, 2011; Ingersoll et al., 2019). Society regards them as too soft to be leaders and too emotional to make rational decisions, leading to feelings of demoralisation and failure (Ibarra et al., 2013). Subsequently, it reinforces the

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underperformance or absenteeism of women in the top management structures of organisations (Ibarra & Kessler, 2013).

Moreover, women are encouraged to work hard to achieve career success, but when they do, they are often labelled as too aggressive or “having sharp elbows” (Ibarra & Kessler, 2013, p. 2). The underrepresentation of women in top management structures is often accompanied by expressions such as: “they don’t ask,” “they are too nice,” they opt-out” (Ibarra et al., 2013, p. 64), “they off-ramp” (i.e., leaving demanding careers with the expectation that they might be able to resume such career prospects at a later stage) (Auster & Prasad, 2016, p. 1), deflecting blame from an unsupportive, gender-biased organisational environment to choices (often forced) made by women (Auster & Prasad, 2016; Ibarra et al., 2013; Ibarra & Kessler, 2013).

This mismatch between societally accepted leadership characteristics and conventional feminine qualities puts female leaders in a double bind where women who excel above the glass ceiling are perceived as competent but, in many cases, not necessarily popular amongst colleagues (Ibarra et al., 2013). In contrast, males considered competent are usually idolised and perceived as role models (Ibarra et al., 2013). The glass ceiling, also described as career plateauing, is a metaphor illustrating the organisational barriers hindering women’s advancement in the workplace after a certain point in their career (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

The glass ceiling implies a barricade in a linear structure. Still, in reality, minority groups are continuously confronted with intricate webs of societal constraints hamstringing personal and career advancement throughout their lifespan (Ngunjiri, 2016); therefore, scholars also refer to this phenomenon as a labyrinth (Eagly & Carli, 2007). A labyrinth can be described as a complex network of pathways and boundaries, confusing and complicated to negotiate without guidance (Ullyatt, 2010). Eagly and Carli (2007) noted that “it’s not the glass ceiling but the sum of many obstacles along the way” (p. 63) that inhibit women’s career success in organisational leadership.

To fully comprehend the complex nature of women in leadership, it is paramount to understand the sociopolitical context underlying the challenges for women in corporate leadership.

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South Africa is highly patriarchal, with racial and gender inequalities driven by a sociopolitical landscape directly influenced by colonialism and a long history of apartheid (Morrell et al., 2012). Apartheid was a system introduced to South Africa in 1948 that separated Black Africans, Whites, Indians, and coloureds in very authoritarian ways (Morrell et al., 2012). For example, people of colour had no right to vote and were treated based on their skin colour and ethnicity (Morrell et al., 2012). The unfair treatment of people, particularly women of colour, led to a great deal of hardship and vast inequalities amongst different races in South Africa (Morrell et al., 2012).

Racial categories in South Africa remained constant after apartheid (Rudwick, 2010). Many governmental documents, such as employment application forms, identity documents, and credit applications, require applicants to specify their race (Rudwick, 2010). Coloured women in leadership in South Africa essentially inherited two social constructs—being identified as "coloured, Black or mixed-race" and being female in a predominantly male environment—and they continuously have to navigate the complexities thereof.

In South Africa, the concept of race, especially the classification of coloured ethnicity, is very complex (Bosch, 2014; Murray & Simeon, 2007). The term "coloureds" refers to a specific population group distinguished as people of mixed racial ancestry and not Black people in general, as is custom internationally (Adhikari, 2004, 2006). According to literature, the common understanding is that the identity of coloured people developed through encounters between European settlers, enslaved people from India and East Africa, and indigenous Khoisan and Black communities in the Cape (Erasmus, 2001). Over 180 years, as many as 63 000 enslaved people were brought to Cape Town (Bosch, 2014). They were used as general labourers, household maids, factory workers, and builders, leading to a culture of slavery in South Africa (Bosch, 2014). Consequently, Cape Town in the Western Cape is called home by a majority of coloured people in South Africa (Bosch, 2014; Lesch & Adams, 2016).

With the end of apartheid in 1994, the new Constitution attempted to create a platform to address race, class, and gender inequalities (Morrell et al., 2012). Despite the efforts to construct a

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so-called rainbow nation, race and gender still operate as a determinant for advancement opportunities, and the existence of highly patriarchal societal attitudes further stimulates racialised gender inequalities (Morrell et al., 2012). With the emergence of a democratic government, coloured people were presented with full citizenship rights but still felt marginalised (Adhikari, 2009a). This feeling of marginalisation is encapsulated in an expression prevalent amongst South African coloured communities: "first we were not white enough, and now we are not black enough" (Adhikari, 2009a, p. xvi). Today coloured people constitute 8.8% of the total population of South Africa, with the majority residing in the Western Cape (Statistics South Africa, 2019b). Although coloured people are in the majority in the Western Cape, leadership positions still elude the masses within this group. Coloured females in the Western Cape hold only 2.1% of top management compared to 24.4% for White females and 75.6% for White males (Department of Labour, 2020).

Furthermore, studies on women in leadership in South Africa have focused mainly on the experiences of women leaders in academia (Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2016; Mayer, Oosthuizen, et al., 2017; Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). The available studies on women's leadership in the corporate environment in South Africa either focus on Black African women or a racially diverse sample of women, which includes coloureds, Black Africans, Whites, and Indians (Mayer, Oosthuizen, et al., 2017; Zuiderveld, 2014). Some studies apply confusing terminology, such as "mixed-race" (Mayer, Viviers, et al., 2017), with no further explanation, especially within the South African context. Scholars argue that the term "mixed-race" is inadequate as the apartheid government in South Africa initially used the term to racially classify people born to parents from different races (Murray & Simeon, 2007).

Over the years, referring to coloured people as "mixed-race" has become even more complicated as it can hardly be attributed to direct parentage (Murray & Simeon, 2007). Moreover, ethnic groups indigenous to South Africa, such as the Khoisan (Schuster et al., 2010), fall by definition under the coloured ethnicity, which brings the term "mixed-race" into question (Pillay, 2018). Consequently, members falling within the coloured classification struggle with questions of

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identity as to whether they should identify as coloured, Black, Khoisan, or take a stance on non-racism and identify as a South African (Adhikari, 2004).

Limited studies are to be found on the experiences, challenges, and facilitators to the success of coloured women in corporate leadership in South Africa. Littrell and Nkomo (2005) conducted a study on leadership behaviour amongst different races in South Africa and reported that Black African and White participants were more alike. In contrast, the authors noted that the leadership behaviour of coloured participants was more diverse. Research findings often assumed to speak to Black women's experiences in general, even though women's leadership in South Africa are still affected by race, class, and gender divisions (Kehler, 2001). Black African, coloured, and Indian women are collectively described as Black women (Department of Labour, 1998), and very often, the experiences of coloured women are subsumed under the experiences of Black or Black African women (Kehler, 2001).

The colonial and apartheid history of South Africa makes the experiences of the different racial groups unique in their own way (Pillay, 2018); therefore, it can be argued that the leadership experiences of coloured women within the current socio-economic context could be different from other groups (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005; Salo et al., 2010). The dearth of studies on coloured women in leadership creates a gap in the literature that speaks to their unique experiences in South Africa's labour market, specifically in the Western Cape.

Against this backdrop, this research sought to explore the question: How do coloured women in leadership in the Western Cape construct and make meaning of their experiences as organisational leaders? This study aimed to (1) gain a richer understanding of how coloured women in leadership construct and interpret their experiences as corporate leaders; (2) explore the barriers and facilitators to success that they experience in their workplace and; (3) explore the internal and external factors that shape their coping strategies in a male-driven environment.

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1.1 Overview of chapters

This thesis consists of five chapters. Each chapter in the study provides detailed knowledge of the experiences of coloured women in leadership positions in South African organisations. The following is a summary of each chapter.

Chapter 1: This chapter gives a brief overview of the context of the study, which includes the research question.

Chapter 2: This chapter presents a review of the research literature, highlighting the challenges and experiences of women in organisational leadership in South Africa; and how societal perceptions of women and leadership, constructed within a patriarchal and prejudiced society, influence the individual's understanding of the phenomena.

Chapter 3: This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in the study by providing a detailed account of the research design as well as how data were collected. Furthermore, it provides a detailed description of how the collected data were analysed. This chapter also includes my reflective narrative. Finally, this chapter offers a description of the ethical procedures that pertain to the research.

Chapter 4: This chapter provides a detailed description of the research findings and discusses these findings using the available literature and the theoretical framework adopted in this research. It highlights the themes emerging through the analysis of the data. It also introduces the participants and provides quotes from the interview transcriptions as evidence to the review.

Chapter 5: The final chapter of the thesis provides an overview of the research as well as a discussion of the limitations of the present study. It also outlines several recommendations for future research.

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Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides a literature review on the challenges and experiences of women in leadership globally and in South Africa. It is followed by an overview of the social constructionism theory as a theoretical framework to better understand the meaning-making processes and social constructs of realities for coloured women in leadership.

This literature review was based on the available literature on the experiences of women in leadership. Database searches included various combinations of words such as "leadership," "coloured women in leadership," "coloured women in leadership in South Africa," challenges of women in leadership," "successes of women in leadership," and "coping strategies of women in leadership". The two primary sources of information were Google Scholar and the online library of the University of Stellenbosch. Information searched and accessed from the online library includes electronic databases such as Emerald, Sabinet, Academic Search Premier, SAGE, PsycARTICLES, ProQuest, etc. After an extensive search of available data on the experiences of coloured women in leadership, it was clear that there is a dearth of studies. Available studies mostly focused on women's leadership experiences, regardless of race, Black women in America, Black African women, and Black women in general (coloured, Black African, and Indian) in South Africa. Because of the scarcity of studies on coloured women in leadership, this literature review draws mainly on the available research on women of colour, particularly Black women globally and in South Africa.

Attention, however, must be given to the terminology in the literature used to describe women of colour. Scholars employed various ways of identifying women of colour, such as African-American, Black African, Black, Hispanic, coloured, and Indian. For this literature review, the same would apply. The term "women of colour" includes all women who do not fall under the racial classification of White. The term "Black" refers to previously disadvantaged groups in South Africa, including Black Africans, coloureds, and Indians.

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It also should be noted that some researchers (i.e., Aziz, 2017; February, 2019; Holtzman, 2018; Mayer & Surtee, 2015; Nwosu & Ndinda, 2018; Wicomb, 2011) use the lowercase "c" when they refer to coloureds. One explanation is that the word "coloured" derogatorily refers to a racial category that did not exist before the apartheid government employed it to categorise people who did not fit into the Black/White racial divisions (Holtzman, 2018). Therefore, this study will continue to employ the lowercase "c" when using the term "coloured".

2.1 Leadership

The concept of leadership is well debated and can be defined in many ways, which is influenced by one's theoretical stance (Bolden, 2004; Mayer & Surtee, 2015). For example, House et al. (2004) describe leadership as the ability of an individual to influence, motivate and enable others to achieve a particular goal. Similarly, leadership can also be seen as a process of interactive influences between various stakeholders in a specific context, whereby an individual constructs an appropriate setting that convinces others to work together towards a common goal that would improve the standing of all people involved (Mackay, 2000; Silva, 2016; Summerfield, 2014).

For many years, however, the understanding of leadership derived from studies done on White men in the United States (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). As a result, society believed that only men with unique and exceptional qualities could lead and idealised the "Great Man" theory, demonstrating that society perceived men as superior to women (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). At the same time, society determined that only men made good leaders and denied access to and marginalised women seeking leadership roles (Ibarra et al., 2013). As set by society, these norms, also known as patriarchal norms, continue to be a major contributor to women's struggle against a masculine form of leadership (Christman & McClellan, 2008).

Often unrecognised, leadership practices are not unfamiliar to women as they have always been involved in community initiatives (Batschari, 2002; Carli & Eagly, 2001; Hassan & Silong, 2008; Hemson, 2002). Various definitions for community exist, but in general, it refers to a collective effort whereby individuals in the community come together and address specific issues,

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such as food security or poverty alleviation (Batschari, 2002; Hassan & Silong, 2008). A research study in South Africa reported how three female groups in remote areas of KwaZulu-Natal took ownership of their communities' well-being by establishing community gardens to promote food sustainability and generate income (Batschari, 2002).

Further evidence of women taking the lead was very significant during the apartheid struggles in South Africa (Healy-Clancy, 2017). Healy-Clancy argued that Black women continuously contested the oppression under apartheid and demanded a better life for themselves and their families (Healy-Clancy, 2017). During that time, Black women were expected to stay at home, care for the children and manage the household while their partners were absent, mainly because they had to migrate into cities for work (Healy-Clancy, 2017). Women, however, started mobilising themselves collectively as mothers, undermining apartheid laws by moving between the city and home, despite it being unlawful at the time. For example, on 9 August 1956, over 20 000 women from all over South Africa and from different races marched to the Union Buildings of Pretoria protesting against discriminative laws (Miller, 2011), such as the pass laws and compulsory medical examination for Black African women (Walker, 1991).

Some of the women mentioned in history books, Helen Joseph, Sophie Williams, Lilian Ngoyi, and Rahima Moosa, led this momentous event and delivered thousands of personally endorsed petitions by women to the prime minister's secretary (Miller, 2011). Celebrated every year as Women's Day in South Africa, the women's march of 1956 is argued to have laid the foundation for the emancipation of all women (Miller, 2011).

Despite women leaders' accomplishments in leadership, they remain immensely underrepresented in the top echelons of organisations (Derks et al., 2016; Faniko et al., 2017; Khwela et al., 2020). A combination of structural and organisational challenges such as limited mentoring, low social networking platforms, patriarchal power structures, discrimination, stereotyping, bullying, harassment, and negative preconceptions contribute to the perpetuation of the underrepresentation of women in organisational leadership (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Basford

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et al., 2014; Elmuti et al., 2009; Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016; Khwela et al., 2020; Kiamba, 2008; Zuiderveld, 2014).

2.2 Leadership challenges

On the surface, women have made considerable strides in moving into the upper echelons of organisations (Snyder, 2014). In particular, South Africa has been praised for exemplary women's participation in politics (World Economic Forum, 2019). On the list of the 50 most powerful and influential women in Africa in 2020, two women from South Africa obtained the first two top spots, namely Bonang Matheba and Graca Machel (Mogoatlhe, 2020). Despite all these accolades, once the surface is scratched, persistent patriarchal beliefs that men are more effective leaders than women continue to hamper women's movement into society's upper echelons (Makama, 2013; Wood, 2019). For example, South Africa had two female vice-presidents, yet neither managed to move into the president's seat (Gwaelane, 2020). Another example of women's patriarchal struggle is women's absence in the top leadership roles of the major political parties in South Africa (Gwaelane, 2020).

Emanating from these deep-seated patriarchal practices, women's organisational leadership struggles are not limited to specific cultures, ethnicities, or countries but is a global phenomenon (Albertyn, 2009; Bierema, 2003; Makama, 2013; Morrell et al., 2012; Wood, 2019). Women in leadership are confronted with numerous workplace challenges that were constructed and perpetuated by men acting as gatekeepers to keep women on the peripheries (Yaghi, 2017).

Furthermore, evidence from research indicates that South African women in organisational leadership continue to experience challenges such as discrimination and bias towards women, gender stereotyping, male resistance, prejudices, and marginalisation (Martin & Barnard, 2013). In African countries, already afflicted by a history of adversity due to historical disempowerment, oppression, and discrimination, women's leadership challenges, Black women in particular, are perpetuated by strong patriarchal cultures and systems (Mayer et al., 2018; Poltera & Schreiner, 2019).

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2.2.1 Patriarchy

Initially, patriarchy was used to describe the power of the father as the head of the household (Wood, 2019). The meaning of patriarchy, however, has been redefined to include different spheres of society (Wood, 2019). Today it is defined as the upholding of male dominance at the expense of women's advancement, always authoritarian and suppressive (Wood, 2019). For example, parents would regard the education of boys as more important than the girls in the family (Makama, 2013). The attention parents gave to the schooling of boys may have been borne from the belief that men would be responsible for taking care of their family, while the prospects for the girls were to get married, stay at home, and take care of the children (Makama, 2013). Women and men's positions in society are inscribed long before birth and subsequently place women already in a disadvantaged position (Kiamba, 2008). Men, on the other hand, are assumed to be in power and are, therefore, nurtured and prepared throughout their lives to take a leadership role in society (Kiamba, 2008).

In certain cultures, members continue to uphold and reinforce patriarchal traditions, especially in the family structures where women are conditioned to be good mothers and wives to their husbands (Cho et al., 2015). The value of African women, in particular, has always been assessed in terms of their ability to birth children and take care of the family (Kiamba, 2008). The identity of women as caring mothers and devoted wives has been passed on through generations, grooming young girls and women to be subservient to the dominant power of patriarchy (Bierema, 2003). It can, therefore, be argued that the enculturation of boys and girls to follow societally prescribed gender roles, in part, contributes to stereotyping and gender-bias challenges experienced by women in leadership (Kiamba, 2008).

Patrilineal family structures, based on the belief that the son in the family is the one entitled to the father's inheritance, adds to the perpetuation of patriarchal practices (Syibly et al., 2020). Consequently, the patrilineal family structures further reinforce the notion of male superiority in society (Gultom, 2017). Although these kinds of kinship to heritage are still prevalent today, the

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increased awareness of gender inequality and discrimination elicited a more inclusive inheritance structure (Gultom, 2017; Syibly et al., 2020). The continuation and justification of the patrilineal family structure in most African countries, including South Africa, are disguised under the banner of "protection of culture" (Albertyn, 2009; Mbajiorgu, 2017).

2.2.2 Culture

As described by Albertyn (2009) and Wood (2019), culture is the adoption of a particular way of life of certain ethnic groups based on specific norms, values, and internally accepted group behaviour. The ever-prevailing cultural practices in many communities continue to impute a secondary status to women (Kiamba, 2008). Specific cultural impositions common in some "rural villages in Africa, where the man walks in front of the women" further reinforce the notion of masculine leadership and diminish the status of women as valued persons in society (Kiamba, 2008, p. 8). Moreover, as Crosby (2016) argued, sexism is intricately embedded within the cultural enforcement of gender role identity, amplifying the double bind for women. For example, over the years, society has come to accept the changing role of women in the labour market, yet women are still expected to choose childbearing over education (Cho et al., 2015; Crosby, 2016). A bind offers two options, but only one option is acceptable (Crosby, 2016). The other alternative is viewed as demeaning and unacceptable, forcing women to behave in a culturally instructed way (Crosby, 2016).

In South Africa particularly (as mentioned), women have been fighting for equal rights, including the right to land, long before the commencement of the Constitution of South Africa in 1996, when most traditional leaders strongly argued that culture should be preserved and protected from European influences (Albertyn, 2009). Contrary to women's fight for gender equality, the fight by traditional leaders for the preservation of culture indirectly suggested the continuation of a powerful patriarchal structure, thereby endorsing conventional gender role division (Albertyn, 2009). The so-called "preservation of culture" found a place in the South African customary law

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(Mbajiorgu, 2017), whereby the position of women was reinforced as objects to enhance the status of men (Albertyn, 2009).

With origins in Rome and Holland, customary law depicted women as weak, vulnerable members of society who needed to be protected by the males in the family, depriving them of any independence (Nolde, 1991). Before 1994, during apartheid, the essence of customary law in South Africa was to discriminate against and devalue the role of women to child bearers who raised children (Mbajiorgu, 2017). They were also not considered financial contributors to the family's survival, subsequently denying them the right to land ownership (Mbajiorgu, 2017).

Post-apartheid, after 1994, with the institution of the Constitution in 1996, it was clear that there were efforts to replace discriminatory and gender inequality laws with more inclusive and applicable laws, irrespective of gender (Mbajiorgu, 2017). The nature of customary law in South Africa, however, continued to sustain gender inequality and stereotyping by differentiating between the kinds of rights relevant to women and those applicable to men (Mbajiorgu, 2017). Furthermore, the understanding of appropriate gender roles and responsibilities is believed to be shaped through cultural context; therefore, it is argued that culture is a significant sculptor of gender stereotyping (Albertyn, 2009).

2.2.3 Gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping is described as "categorical beliefs regarding the traits and behavioural characteristics ascribed to individuals based on their gender" (Duehr & Bono, 2006, p. 816). A broader definition is the belief that gender stereotyping stems from socio-cultural and relational constructs, whereby labour and social roles are assigned to men and women based on their biological makeup and over-generalised societal beliefs of typical male and female behaviour (Hussain et al., 2015). For many years, women, especially Black African women, had very specific roles, which were to be a mother and wife (Biri & Mutambwa, 2013). A comparative study conducted in the United States of America between 1983 and 2014 reported that these beliefs had not changed much in 30 years and people still hold strong views about the primary social category

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of gender (Haines et al., 2016). The authors compared the data they collected in 1983 with the data they collected in 2014 and found that despite changes in the status of women in society, gender stereotyping has increased. People still believe in the basic gender differences that women should have a more sharing, warm, and caring nature compared to men who should display an attitude of command, competence, and independence (Haines et al., 2016; Mwale & Dodo, 2017).

Gender role differences are prevalent in all spheres of society, i.e., household, economy, politics, and religion (Wood, 2019). The widespread prevalence of gender stereotyping in society provides an opportunity to reinforce gender-role divisions and overall male control (Wood, 2019). In contemporary society, women work as many hours as their husbands while still expected to perform their duties as wives and mothers (Cho et al., 2015; Farré et al., 2020; McLaren et al., 2020). Working long hours in the labour market, coupled with childcare and family responsibilities, is also described as the “double shift” of career women (Naidoo & Jano, 2002). However, more women are forced to further their studies to compete in the labour market, which adds another “shift” to their already overburdened life (Smith, 2017). Nwosu and Ndinda (2018) found that female-headed households are increasing in South Africa and may negatively impact Black African and coloured communities where unemployment and poverty are most prevalent.

Furthermore, women are also more likely to leave paid employment to take care of the family (Stier & Yaish, 2008), reconfirming the gender role expectations set by society, which dictate that women’s primary responsibility is to take care of the family (Snyder, 2014). In times of crisis, it is automatically assumed that women would have to sacrifice career promotions and put the family’s needs first by taking on the extra childcare and household responsibilities (Stier & Yaish, 2008). Contrary to what would be expected, women are not relieved from any other duties to compensate for the time required to spend on additional household burdens (Moreno & Shaw, 2018). Researchers argue that the limited engagement of men in household responsibilities is justified by a deep-rooted patriarchal notion echoing that men should be the breadwinners and

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provide for their family and that the wives should take care of the children (Farré et al., 2020; Makama, 2013; McLaren et al., 2020; Walker & Aritz, 2015).

Consistent with internalised gender role expectations of women as carers first, career women are consistently trying to navigate and balance the conflicting roles associated with family responsibilities and career success (Kantamneni, 2020). Against this backdrop, it can be argued that the perceived ideals of womanhood and organisational leadership are complicated by intersecting societal and individual gender role expectations (Curtis, 2017). Consequently, commitments associated with being a mother and a wife have often been used to justify women's exclusion from top management positions in the labour market, alienating them from promotional opportunities (Cho et al., 2015).

Gender stereotyping leads to the evaluation of women in terms of gender and not performance, which ultimately results in the devaluation of their authority as leaders (Glass & Cook, 2016; Penciliah, 2005). Moreover, operating within a patriarchal, hierarchical society leaves little chance for women to enjoy the same opportunities as their male counterparts (De la Rey, 2005).

In the field of gender studies, researchers have reported extensively on the different leadership behaviour of men and women, with men presumed to be more agentic, task-orientated in nature (Jogulu & Wood, 2006), while women are presumed to be more transformative and people-orientated (Duehr & Bono, 2006). Many organisations regard agentic characteristics as vital for successful leadership (Elmuti et al., 2009). In contrast, women commonly display more transformational leadership characteristics, which include elements of cooperation, collaborative problem solving and decision-making, consideration for others, and attentiveness (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; De la Rey, 2005; Duehr & Bono, 2006; Jogulu & Wood, 2006).

Recent studies confirmed this notion by highlighting how women in leadership dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic (Animashaun & Wossink, 2020; Coscieme et al., 2020). Researchers believe that countries governed by female leaders proved to have a better handle on the epidemic's

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impact on their countries than states governed by male leaders (Animashaun & Wossink, 2020). In particular, two female leaders, chancellor Angela Merkel from Germany and prime minister Jacinda Ardern from New Zealand, were praised for their handling of the Covid-19 pandemic (Blacburn et al., 2020). These countries were not only more effective in flattening the curve, but they also had fewer deaths based on the population total (Coscieme et al., 2020).

Furthermore, a study by Coscieme et al. (2020) explored the different outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic in countries led by females compared to nations governed by males. The authors found that most countries led by female leaders were guided by their people's social well-being and had a particularly strong focus on social inclusivity and social care. They also found that social inclusivity, e.g., higher female participation in the workplace and lower gender inequality, ultimately leads to a country with happier citizens. As proof of the trust and faith that New Zeeland citizens have in the leadership of Jacinda Ardern, they re-elected her as prime minister of the country for a second time (Khalil, 2020; Lester, 2020). Leadership traits primarily associated with women, such as compassion, empathy, and understanding, are deemed vital in a time of crisis (Ryan et al., 2011).

Women are generally appointed when organisations are in crisis or, at worst, when a company is on the brink of collapsing (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Men, on the other hand, believed to be more decisive and aggressive, are typically preferred when the financial prosperity of the organisation takes priority (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). This phenomenon whereby organisations appoint women during volatile times in their lifespan with a high chance of failure is known as the "glass cliff" (Ryan et al., 2007; Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

The glass cliff is one of several phenomena within an invisible structure that keeps women on the peripheries, termed by Yaghi (2017) as the "glass prison".

2.2.4 Glass prison

Yaghi (2017) credits the existence of the glass prison to the perpetuation of patriarchal organisational systems. Within this glass prison, there are several phenomena of gendered injustice

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at play, which include the glass ceiling (Glass & Cook, 2016), the glass escalator (Kamberidou, 2010; Williams, 1992), and the glass cliff (Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

2.2.4.1 Glass ceiling. Scholars define the "glass ceiling" as an invisible barrier that impedes women's advancement into the upper echelons of organisations (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017). Despite conscious efforts by governments in many countries, several structural barriers still exist that inhibit women's elevation up the ladder (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017). Obstacles such as gender stereotypes, conscious and unconscious bias, comparison to male standards, increased scrutiny, and lack of mentorship are some of the factors that create a glass ceiling for women (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

The most significant gender inequality, slowing the progression of women into leadership positions in the world currently, is believed to be the political empowerment gap (World Economic Forum, 2019). The political empowerment gap is followed by economic participation and opportunity, whereby men are still in an advantaged position and women are trying to get on par with them (World Economic Forum, 2019). South Africa ranks 10th on the list of political gender parity, yet when it comes to economic participation and educational attainments, the country is placed 92nd and 67th, respectively amongst 153 countries (World Economic Forum, 2019).

A study by Ndinda and Okeke-Uzodike (2012) on Black African women in business leadership in South Africa reported on Black African women's underrepresentation in leadership and the barriers associated with the glass ceiling. The mentioned study was used as a reference to illustrate how it impacts coloured women in the labour market in South Africa. The representation of coloured women is higher in lower levels of the hierarchy, mainly at technically skilled (5%) and professionally qualified (15%) levels, but this is where it slows down (Department of Labour, 2020). The transition from the professionally skilled level to senior management level (3.3%) appears to be a stringent filtering process, allowing only a few women to pass through. The higher up in the hierarchy, the lower the presentation for coloured women becomes (Department of Labour, 2020). Reiterating the assumption made by Ndinda and Okeke-Uzodike (2012), it would be

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expected that more coloured women would be able to transition to senior management, considering the high percentage of coloured women in lower levels of the company.

It may be illustrative of the glass ceiling and token status assigned to Black women in organisations' top management structures (Booysen, 2007; Cotter et al., 2001). Researchers argue that one of the reasons for the low female representation in the upper echelons of South African organisations appears to be a White male-dominated culture and Black people's inclusion as tokens (Booysen, 2007; Ntim & Soobaroyen, 2013).

The South African government introduced the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act in 2003 to encourage higher economic participation of Black South Africans (Alessandri et al., 2011; Ntim, 2013). Black people, however, were denied a good quality education because of racial segregation during apartheid and were limited to careers typically found outside the boardroom (Healy-Clancy, 2017). Although compliance with the BBBEE Act is voluntary, appointing a Black leader would increase companies' likelihood to attract lucrative government contracts and reap the full rewards of governmental proposed diversity measures (Alessandri et al., 2011; Gyapong et al., 2016). Consequently, to reap the rewards of government-proposed diversity measures, companies appointed Black people as non-executive board members, with minimal responsibility or decision-making powers (Gyapong et al., 2016).

The appointment of Black women as either executive or non-executive board members with limited decision-making powers perpetuates the perception of women as tools only to attract investor interest and overshadows their competencies, qualifications, and leadership success (Cotter et al., 2001; Kulich et al., 2015). Also, it reflects labour market discrimination that continues to keep women on the peripheries and contributes to the glass ceiling effect that obstructs women's advancement in the corporate environment (Cotter et al., 2001). Moreover, when women manage to pass the glass ceiling, they might find themselves on the edge of a glass cliff (Murrell, 2018).

2.2.4.2 Glass cliff. The "glass cliff" is a term adopted by Ryan and Haslam (2005) to support their arguments for failed leadership amongst British women. As mentioned, organisations

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typically appoint women when facing a crisis (Rink et al., 2013). In contrast, men join organisations under much more stable, prosperous circumstances (Ryan et al., 2011). Appointments based on gender reinforce the phenomenon of "think manager, think male", which is indicative of the patriarchal male-preferred leadership bias (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). However, when organisations face adversity, they adopt the phenomenon of "think crisis, think female" (Ryan et al., 2011). This assertion was supported by Bruckmüller and Branscombe (2010), reporting that women are perceived to be better at upholding morale and motivating employees during times of crisis.

Nevertheless, the underlying motivation to appoint women during precarious situations is usually very selfish and cruel (Rink et al., 2013). It highlights the high degree of dangerous gender-discriminatory practices against women in leadership (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007). When organisations appoint women in such fickle times, in most cases, the intention is to use them as scapegoats for organisational failure (Rink et al., 2013). In the process, organisations establish doubt about female leadership capabilities while hiding male leadership shortcomings (Rink et al., 2013). Moreover, organisations employ women to create the illusion that they are implementing all necessary rescue measures to manage the crisis (Kulich et al., 2015). By using women as tools to spur organisational credibility instead of crediting their leadership capabilities, organisations further degenerate confidence in female leadership (Kulich et al., 2015).

The glass cliff phenomenon is evidence of incessant underestimation and underappreciation of female leadership values, reinforcing their status as second-class citizens (Rink et al., 2013). Similar patterns are observed within the political arena, where women are selected for seats that are difficult to win, not because they are seen as accomplished leaders but rather as a front with the knowledge that they will fall out of the political spectrum (Ryan et al., 2010).

A study by Ryan et al. (2010), using data from the United Kingdom (UK) elections in 2006, illustrates how the class cliff can erode confidence in female leadership capabilities and aspirations. The authors compared the strategies of the two most prominent political parties, namely the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. The Conservative Party was more likely to nominate

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women for seats in areas with strong opposition party affiliation. Consequently, women secured significantly less support from voters compared to their male counterparts that were campaigning in areas where their party already had a strong foothold. In contrast, however, the playground was level for both males and females in the Labour Party. Women were given the same opportunities as their male counterparts and were equally successful in obtaining votes from their supporters. As reported by the authors, the findings suggested that if women are granted the same opportunities and support as men, they are more likely to succeed in so-called male-dominated fields.

All groups that may be perceived as different by a dominant group are affected by the glass cliff, similar to the glass ceiling (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). A study by Cook and Glass (2013) explored the conditions under which marginalised groups (people of colour) are most likely to be advanced into leadership positions. The authors compiled their findings based on information drawn from 344 universities across the United States of America. They compared the conditions under which universities appoint male head basketball coaches from different races. Their findings suggested that people of colour are more likely to be employed as head coaches in predominantly Black schools, particularly when basketball teams are failing. Although the study participants were male, the study's findings seem suitable to explain the impact of race on people of colour, irrespective of gender.

Cook and Glass (2013) concur with other researchers' findings, highlighting several restraints that the glass cliff has on Black people. The study reported that Black people's career opportunities are limited to industries occupied predominantly by other marginalised groups, restricting them from leading in more diverse sectors. Also, because White males are assumed to have good leadership abilities, it leaves no room for people of colour to make mistakes because if they do, it can cause irrevocable damage to their careers (Brescoll et al., 2010). Furthermore, born from stereotyping and prejudice, employers are less likely to perceive people of colour as the strongest leaders for the job, therefore not the preferred candidates for leadership positions (Maume, 2012). Consequently, they are more vulnerable to criticism and layoffs (Maume, 2012).

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In addition, they face an increased risk of career suicide as they are more likely to be appointed into failing organisations. They generally do not have the luxury of time or the necessary resources to deal with pre-existing challenges that would enable them to turn things around. Lastly, people of colour who fail in leadership will most likely be replaced by a White person. As a result, the White person is presented as the organisational saviour, while the Black person's competence is questioned.

Despite reservations about Black males' competence, compared to women, they are more likely to be appointed into management positions (Brandt & Laiho, 2013). A phenomenon known as the glass escalator (Brandt & Laiho, 2013).

2.2.4.3 Glass escalator. The "glass escalator" was coined by Christine Williams in 1992, claiming that, unlike women who find it challenging to enter male-dominant settings, men enjoy preference when entering predominantly female-dominant work environments. In the process, men are fast-tracked into senior management positions (Williams, 1992). Ndinda and Okeke-Uzodike (2012) applied the glass escalator to the South African context with an emphasis on Black African women. Coloured women in leadership were more or less in the same predicament as African women, but according to Ndinda and Okeke-Uzodike (2012), to a lesser degree. However, the focus of their study was on Black African women's struggles in leadership, and the authors did not engage much on the challenges encountered by coloured women in leadership in South Africa. Nevertheless, their discussion on how the men (regardless of race) and White women in South Africa had a structural advantage compared to Black African women is still valid today. Furthermore, as Ndinda and Okeke-Uzodike (2012) posited, coloured women in South Africa were also structurally disadvantaged.

The government has proposed several programmes to promote higher representation of marginalised groups in all spheres of the country, including all women, irrespective of race, and disabled people (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012). One such measure was the Employment Equity Act, which the government implemented to address the inequality of race and gender in the

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workplace (Department of Labour, 1998). In the earlier years, during apartheid, White women had freedom of movement (Healy-Clancy, 2017). Still, a patriarchal dominance restrained and dictated their role in society, which implies that, to some degree, they were also subjected to gender discrimination in South Africa (Healy-Clancy, 2017).

With the commencement of the Employment Equity Act (EEA), this situation, however, has changed as it appears that White women have been fast-tracked into top management positions (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012). Statistics confirm that the representation of White women in the higher echelons of organisations, especially in the private sector, is substantially higher in relation to their Economic Active Population (EAP) than women from other ethnicities (Department of Labour, 2020). The "structural advantage", a common phrase in defining the glass escalator, may have favoured White women more than other racial groups in South Africa because of their relation to people in the upper echelons of the labour market (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012; Ndinda & Uzodike, 2008).

On the other hand, regardless of race, men seem to be on the same trajectory as they have always occupied in history as they have a much higher representation in the top management structures of organisations in South Africa (Department of Labour, 2020). Men currently occupy 75.6% of top management positions in South Africa, whereas women only 24.4% (Department of Labour, 2020). The same scenario occurs in senior management, with men taking up 64.7% of senior management positions and women only 35.3% (Department of Labour, 2020). The overrepresentation of men on the glass escalator displays similar patterns to the escalation of White women in South Africa (Brandt & Laiho, 2013). Men's accelerated promotions reinforce the gender stereotyping that finds agentic behaviour most desirable for effective leadership (Brandt & Laiho, 2013). Moreover, it illuminates the presence of a glass ceiling for women in leadership (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012).

The results presented by Cook and Glass (2013) paint a bleak picture for coloured women advancing past the glass ceiling. Not only are women burdened with challenges based on their

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gender, but they also have to navigate race challenges, as exemplified in the study by Cook and Glass (2013). Scholars further argue that perceptions of leadership are fluid and dependent on the situation but ultimately are influenced by race (Carton & Rosette, 2011; Sy et al., 2010), which in turn may negatively affect leadership advancement opportunities, especially for minority groups (Festekjian et al., 2014).

2.2.5 Race

Race is not constructed by a set of pre-given requirements but rather shaped through cultural and social identities (Rudwick, 2010). Throughout history, race has been used as a tool to categorise people either by skin colour or cultural background, illustrative of the fact that race is not a genetic distinction amongst groups in society but an imaginary and social construct of people that are perceived to share similar characteristics (Rudwick, 2010). However, even though the argument is that race is an imagined social construct, it does provide a sense of belonging and a place of meaning-making to the members who identify with the group (Rudwick, 2010).

South Africa was one of a few countries that institutionalised racism and the hierarchy of racial categorisations, employing a system of apartheid and racial segregation (Rudwick, 2010). Racial segregation was introduced through the Population Registration Act of 1950 to divide South Africans and cement the perceptions of race and ethnicity differences (Adhikari, 2006). The forced classification of people based on race, coupled with the Group Areas Act of 1950, made it possible for the apartheid government to remove Black African and coloured people from their homes and relocate them to areas far from cities and towns (Adhikari, 2006). As a result, the different groups developed particular identities that gave them a sense of belonging, unconsciously creating a breeding ground for stereotypes about the various race groups in South Africa (Adhikari, 2006).

Negative stereotypes inflicted upon coloured people in earlier years was that they are lazy, irresponsible, dirty (Adhikari, 2006), they swear and drink a lot, and that they are generally immoral, uncultured people in need of a White person’s supervision (Adhikari, 2009a; February, 2019). These kinds of negative perceptions based on race have a significant denigrating effect on

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the skills and capabilities of coloured people in leadership (April & Josias, 2017), more so for women as they are further disadvantaged through intersections of both race and gender (Lewis et al., 2016). Also, Beyers (2009) believes that a person's self-definition is almost futile as the perceptions of society place individuals into a category based on assumed racial group characteristics and stereotypes.

Therefore, it can be argued that race is key to how people perceive themselves and those around them (Festekjian et al., 2014). It plays a pivotal role in conceptualising stereotypes, discrimination, and personal leadership motivation (Festekjian et al., 2014). It is reported that the experiences of stereotyping in the workplace for White women are different from that of Black women (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017). Armstrong and Mitchell argued that stereotypes of White women would focus primarily on their competence. In contrast, stereotyping of Black women would be targeted at their race (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017), which consequently guides conscious and unconscious discriminatory practices (Faniko et al., 2017; Snyder, 2014). Black women are stereotypically assumed to be incompetent, unemployed, and lack an interest in education (Roberts & Carter Andrews, 2013).

Race-based perceptions often play a vital role in determining leadership aspirations and opportunities for Black women in the labour market (Festekjian et al., 2014; Kiamba, 2008). While South Africa ranks 17th out of 153 countries on the global gender gap listing, the absence of Black women in the upper echelons of organisational structures casts a shadow over that achievement (World Economic Forum, 2019). White men and women are still dominant in the upper levels of employment, at 65.6%; however, they account for only 8.7% of EAP, with Black people at 31.1% for top management positions while they constitute 91.3% of the economically active population (EAP) (Department of Labour, 2020). This situation is similar at the senior management level (Department of Labour, 2020).

Representation for coloured women in leadership showed a slight increase from 2017 to 2019 from 1.9% to 2.1%, but they are still considerably underrepresented considering their EAP.

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The scenario is the same for Black African women, while White women seem to have secured many upper-level management jobs. Several reasons can be produced for the absence of Black women in the upper echelons of organisations, one of which is that it appears that the intersection of race and gender at top management seems to slow down the advancement of coloured and Black African women in leadership (Department of Labour, 2020). Another reason may be that due to racial discrimination during apartheid, the quality of education was different for all races, and career opportunities for coloured women were limited to teachers, nurses, and administrative clerks (Healy-Clancy, 2017; Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012). Those who were not so lucky to get an opportunity to further their education ended up as farm labourers, domestic workers, and factory workers (Healy-Clancy, 2017; Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012).

2.2.6 Discrimination

With the inauguration of the new democratic government in South Africa, they introduced several laws to ensure employment equity and gender equality in the workplace (Mbajiorgu, 2017). These laws include the Employment Equity Act (Act No. 55 of 1998) (Department of Labour, 1998), the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (Act No. 53 of 2003) (Bbbeea, 2003), and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (Act No. 4 of 2000) (Kok, 2017; Mbajiorgu, 2017). The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act forbade unfair discrimination and promoted fair discrimination (Kok, 2017). Discrimination is described as favouritism towards or prejudice against a person, which is generally based on the grounds of a person's race, gender, sex, religion, language, culture, marital status, etc. (Claassen, 2019). In the workplace, discrimination is usually exercised by an employer or a colleague and can be a direct or indirect biased action (Claassen, 2019).

Discrimination, however, is considered fair if it is in line with the law, and in the case of South Africa, it justifies bias towards previously disadvantaged groups. Claassen (2019) provided the following examples of fair discrimination: (1) affirmative action – to increase Black people's participation in the labour market; (2) productivity – salary increases based on employee efficiency;

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(3) job requirements – for example, an applicant needs a driver's license to drive a truck; (4) age restrictions – children under a certain age are not allowed to obtain fulltime employment; (5) maternity curtailment – women should at least have maternity leave four weeks before birth and should not return to work for at least six weeks after the birth of a child.

Discrimination can take many forms but is often found within structural and institutional rules that inhibit access to opportunities and resources for certain marginalised groups (Green, 2003). Being the highest qualified female in a male-dominated environment is not a guarantee for non-discrimination. An example from the available research is situations where women are expected to take minutes in a meeting where all other counterparts are male (Idahosa & Vincent, 2014). Direct discrimination is easily identifiable, for example, the wage difference between men and women, whereby men receive higher remuneration than women for performing the same job (Claassen, 2019). On the other hand, indirect discrimination is more subtle and not easily recognisable but is considered to cause considerable emotional harm to the target (Claassen, 2019). Recent studies began to highlight the prevalence of indirect discrimination, such as microaggression (Basford et al., 2014; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007), gaslighting (Sweet, 2019), and second-generation bias (Ely et al., 2011) in the workplace as a subtle yet significant contributing factor to the challenges of women in leadership (Faniko et al., 2017).

2.2.6.1 Microaggression. In America, discrimination in the workplace has reportedly become more subtle and ambiguous (Basford et al., 2014). Scholars define racial microaggression as fleeting, everyday, destructive racial insults aimed at people of colour (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2007; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007; Torres-Harding et al., 2012). Furthermore, irrespective of the intentions, these behavioural slights are often automatic and unconscious but potentially harmful with possible distressing psychological impact on the target group or person (Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2007). Microaggression usually presents itself when there is human contact between people from different races (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). It is reported that people of colour experience microaggression in various forms and at different levels, for example, being

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treated as a second-class citizen, assumed behaviour based on negative stereotyping, and feelings of invisibility (Lewis et al., 2016).

Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) proposed three classes of microaggression. These classes range from deliberate to subtle, unintentional actions, described as follows: Micro assaults are planned, deliberate attacks on people of colour. A microinsult is unintended hurtful behaviour. Examples include: assuming intelligence as determined by race; being treated as a group of lesser value; the values and ways of communication of a particular race group are viewed as unorthodox and presumed to be people inclined to participate in dangerous, criminal activities. Lastly, micro validation is an unintentional action obliterating the experiential realities of people of colour by regarding their experiences of racism as exaggerated or imagined.

Microaggression in the workplace is more often directed towards women and, in most cases, with undertones of gender microaggression, which ultimately results in unsatisfactory work performance (Basford et al., 2014). Some scholars argue that racial and microaggression are specifically aimed at people of colour, more so women of colour (Snyder, 2014). Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) use the example of a Latino couple sharing their experience of racism with White friends, and the friends dismiss it as over-sensitivity or imagined. These kinds of scenarios can apply to any other person of colour. Furthermore, microaggression does not occur through human interaction alone but is also conveyed through settings whereby specific reactions are assumed (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). The dominant person will consciously attempt to eliminate these assumed reactions, e.g., by excluding certain artefacts or books representing a particular racial group, thinking that it may offend the persecuted person (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007).

Unique aspects of microaggression include women's struggle for respect when their authority and intellect are questioned or challenged in the workplace; feelings of invisibility and marginalisation; and expectations based on stereotypical behaviour (Holder et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2016). Confirming the above, a study examining the impact of microaggression on Asian American women reported that practices of microaggression made the women feel "trapped,

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invisible and unrecognisable" (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2007, p. 78). It also aggravated feelings of anger, belittlement, loneliness, frustration, causing these women to continuously question their worth (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2007). The "micro" in microaggressions does not equal slight or little (Schmidt, 2018). Microaggressions might appear harmless, but these subtle remarks and insults accumulate over time, inducing lasting psychological damage to the target (Schmidt, 2018; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2007).

Emerging research on gender microaggression highlights subtle sexist remarks aimed at women, both consciously and unconsciously (Lewis et al., 2016). Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) argued that the effectiveness and harmful nature of microaggression are rooted in the invisibility thereof, which is often not recognised by neither the perpetrator nor the recipient. In many instances, people of colour would express feelings of hidden racism towards them, but they were unsure if it was their imagination or if they were just oversensitive (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). To complicate matters further, perpetrators usually think of themselves as upstanding citizens who believe in equality and a non-racial society, making it difficult for women in the workplace to speak out about racism and confront the issues (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007).

2.2.6.2 Gaslighting. Furthermore, within the sphere of social and gender inequalities, women of colour also risk dealing with racial gaslighting (Sweet, 2019). The term "gaslighting" was made popular by a film from 1994 called *Gaslight*, whereby a husband attempted to control his wife by manipulating his home environment, which caused his wife to doubt her perceptions and sanity (Davis & Ernst, 2019). In the process, she isolated herself from family and friends and, in doing so, unknowingly handed over complete control to her husband (Davis & Ernst, 2019).

Racial gaslighting is a process of political, social, economic, and cultural behaviour through which gender-based stereotypes are normalised, and those in resistance are being pathologised through manipulation of their realities (Davis & Ernst, 2019; Sweet, 2019). How humans perceive the world and their social standing within, and whoever manipulates that reality holds immense power over how they see themselves and the world in which they operate (Davis & Ernst, 2019). In

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the past, psychologists used the term to define abusive relationships (Davis & Ernst, 2019). In contemporary times, racial gaslighting is defined as a type of psychological abuse aimed at creating a perplexing environment by employing mind-manipulating strategies; hence, victims feel entirely deranged (Sweet, 2019).

Practices of gaslighting function well in environments of gender inequality, e.g., when deep-rooted patriarchy and stereotypes deny women the understanding of their reality and they are manipulated to accept the reality as constructed by men (Anderson, 2010). This phenomenon is especially harmful to women of colour who are already in a vulnerable position dealing with other forms of discrimination as well as intersectionalities of gender, race, and class (Sweet, 2019). While governments no longer deny people of colour basic human rights, systemic racism within society is still prevalent in more covert forms of discrimination and racial inequalities (Jamil, 2020). Microaggression interrogations such as "What are you?" effectively make people of colour feel like they are some kind of creatures and not human beings (Jamil, 2020, p. 1). These types of microaggressions are usually followed by racial gaslighting, whereby feelings of anger and frustration are diminished and dismissed as emotional over-exaggeration (Jamil, 2020).

2.2.6.3 Second-generation bias. Another type of subtle discrimination introduced by researchers is second-generation bias, whereby cultural and organisational structures create invisible barriers for women advancing to the upper echelons of the organisation but benefit the progress of men (Ely et al., 2011). Examples of second-generation bias include hostile organisational environments unfit for female personal life responsibilities, weak social network opportunities, and the double bind of balancing societally accepted leader behaviour versus "typical" feminine characteristics (Ely et al., 2011). Hurst et al. (2016) argued that organisational structures indirectly favour male workers. The ideal worker is portrayed as an employee who prioritises work commitments above all else, including personal and family responsibilities (Hurst et al., 2016). The upholding of the perfect worker—working long hours and rarely taking time off to

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see to the family— places women in a disadvantaged position and penalises them for complying with societal gender-role divisions (Watts, 2009).

It is argued that women of colour experience more stress, feel more isolated, and are under constant pressure to conform to institutionalised norms and standards for leaders (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017). To cope with hostile organisational environments, especially in racialised contexts, Black women tend to deliberately alter their behaviour or self-image (Gamst et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2016).

2.2.7 Shifting

Scholars have termed these patterns of changing self-presentations in various ways, for example, shifting (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017), role flexing (Balaji et al., 2012), and cultural frame switching (Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2002). For this literature review, the term “shifting” will be employed to explain the phenomenon whereby women of colour shift their identities to adapt positively to their professional environment (Dickens et al., 2019; McCluney & Rabelo, 2019). For example, Black women in leadership may believe that they consciously alter specific behaviour patterns in how they present themselves to cope with social demands (Gamst et al., 2020). However, contrary to what they believe, behaviour change is directly linked to deep-seated practices of homogeny and unconscious conformity to what society perceives as professional behaviour (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017).

Identity shifting can be taxing on the emotional well-being of women of colour (Dickens et al., 2019). It can produce negative or positive outcomes, but the results are mostly negative (Dickens et al., 2019). The negative perceptions of Black women urge them to reflect upon and identify the aspects of their identity that are valued and which are seen as threatening or unfit for their professional environment (Gamst et al., 2020). Hence, they would feel it necessary to change the tone of their voice, behaviour, or personal appearance in response to feelings of inferiority and to reduce stereotypical discrimination (Dickens et al., 2019; Gamst et al., 2020). In a study done by Armstrong and Mitchell (2017) on race and gender intersections in Canada, participants reported

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that they were persistently shifting between two leadership identities. One identity was more prominent and constructed around the administrative duties of their job. As a result, it was easier for them to navigate this particular identity. In contrast, the second identity, also called the "shadow identity", was built around race and gender expectations, making navigation more complicated.

The process of shifting demands the subduing of certain aspects of primary identities that might be perceived as threatening or "out of place" and in conflict with normalised institutional identity expectations (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017). Also, to reduce negative stereotyping, for example, the image of Sapphire (Black women perceived as domineering, hostile, loud, and aggressive) (Thomas et al., 2004), women in leadership positions may forge a submissive role and hide in the background, compromising their value as leaders in the process (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017). Consequently, this may lead to increased stress levels and feelings of humiliation, placing their overall well-being at risk (Donovan & West, 2015; Gamst et al., 2020). However, the employment of shifting as a positive coping mechanism may reduce stereotype threats that ultimately build stronger relationships with others, provide opportunities to negotiate power, and open doors to access essential resources (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017).

Shifting one's identity is usually not well received in South Africa, particularly amongst Black African and coloured communities (Rudwick, 2010). Hence the production of derogatory terms, such as "coconut", to describe individuals who are shifting their identities to "fit" into specific social environments, particularly adopting certain aspects labelled as White people's mannerisms (Rudwick, 2010). As a result, these individuals are labelled as "Black or Brown on the outside" (referring to one's identity/race) and "White on the inside" (referring to the adoption of a so-called White culture), which creates negative sentiments about the person (Rudwick, 2010).

Being perceived by others as a "coconut" can result in shame, especially if the motivation for shifting, through altered patterns of communication and leadership behaviour, is to "fit" into institutionalised structures (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Rudwick, 2010). Shifting produced in that way can then be understood as a tool women in leadership employ to cope with challenges within

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an existing organisational culture (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Rudwick, 2010). However, the shame of shifting, even if people employ it as a means of survival, should be understood against the backdrop of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa and its inherent socioeconomic marginalisation of people of colour (Nahomie, 2014; Rudwick, 2010; Wilmot, 2014). Hence, adopting so-called "White" behaviour can be perceived as rejecting one's own culture and values to side with the persecutor (Rudwick, 2010).

Tensions have flared up in South Africa in recent days because of an advert of one of the beauty stores portraying Black women's hair as "dry and damaged" and "frizzy and dull" (Zuzile, 2020). In contrast, the advert depicted White women's hair as "fine and flat" and "normal" (Zuzile, 2020). These stereotypes reproduce perceptions of Black inferiority against White superiority (Rudwick, 2010). Furthermore, it reinvokes images and feelings of an inferior culture brought about by the "pencil test" during apartheid, when people were assigned to a specific ethnic group based on the texture of their hair (Posel, 2001). As much as everyone was expecting to live as a rainbow nation after the demise of apartheid in 1994, many Black South African women are still dealing with inferior stereotypes emanating from apartheid (Nahomie, 2014; Wilmot, 2014). These stereotypes indirectly labelled them as not good enough to sit in the boardroom and were further reinforced through their status as cleaners, farm labourers, and factory workers (Healy-Clancy, 2017; Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012).

Considering the obstacles women have to overcome to move up into the upper echelons of organisations, it is often assumed that women who advanced past the glass ceiling in a male-dominated environment will advocate for other women (Kaiser & Spalding, 2015). Yet, research indicates that sometimes it is just the opposite, and women in top management positions are not always prepared to assist other women (Kaiser & Spalding, 2015). One phenomenon frequently associated with women leaders' hesitance to help other women moving into the upper echelons of organisations is the "queen bee phenomenon (Derks et al., 2015).

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2.2.8 Queen bee

Research findings reported on some of the reasons motivating the display of the queen bee behaviour, which include that women in leadership may want to avoid being re-labelled and again be evaluated in terms of gender stereotyping, which portrays females as weak and vulnerable (Derks et al., 2015). They may also feel that other women should make the same sacrifices they made to get to the top (Faniko et al., 2017). Above all, they may think they belong to an elite group because they have managed to smash the "glass ceiling" (Derks et al., 2015).

It must be emphasised that women generally do not display queen bee behaviour as a direct result of personality but instead as a survival response to environmental threats, such as gender bias in the workplace (Derks et al., 2015, 2016). Furthermore, individuals portraying such behaviour may either have a strong or weak display of the several queen bee responses, depending on the situational threat (Derks et al., 2016). In response to counteract negative stereotypes, queen bees simulate male leadership characteristics and behaviour, hoping that evaluation will be based on them as a person and not on their gender (Hurst et al., 2016).

However, this behaviour seemingly makes the person unreachable, which is detrimental to the career advancement of junior women leaders needing mentor support and may hamper their advancement opportunities (Derks et al., 2016; Ellemers et al., 2012). Furthermore, queen bee behaviour reinforces gender discrimination through actions that may be perceived as denying the existence thereof (Derks et al., 2016). As reported by Derks et al. (2016) and Faniko et al. (2017), these actions tend to perpetuate negative stereotypes of lower-rank women, denying that women are disadvantaged and not supporting efforts to address gender inequality.

Johnson and Mathur-Helm (2011) explored the queen bee phenomenon amongst 25 women in executive leadership and senior management in five major South African banks. They found that the women were not always willing to assist women in lower levels of the company. The participants expressed that a senior female manager had tried to barricade advancement opportunities for them at some point in their careers. Furthermore, they had to learn to navigate

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obstacles such as gender discrimination in the workplace, questioning of their leadership capabilities, balancing work-family responsibilities, and male colleague intimidation (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011).

Similar to findings by Faniko et al. (2017), these women reported that they had to sacrifice many things to reach the upper levels of the company. Therefore, they expect other women who aspire to be successful in leadership to do the same. As reported by Johnson and Mathur-Helm (2011), the main reason for the queen bee behaviour displayed by the participants was that they felt threatened by upcoming female leaders and would choose not to train them. They believed that if they refrained from coaching them, they would secure their positions as senior leaders in the organisation for much longer.

However, a study by Dinelfo et al. (2012) suggested that not all women in leadership suffer from the queen bee syndrome. Dinolfo et al. (2012) argued that, compared to men, women in leadership positions are more inclined to assist other women in climbing the ranks. They further note that those female managers, especially senior executives who had sponsors or assistance from others, are also more likely to develop others.

2.3 Navigating success

While researchers have given much attention to the challenges and barriers women face in the workplace, less is understood about the factors that shape the coping strategies and success of women who thrive against significant odds (Glass & Cook, 2016). Societal perceptions and stereotypes underpin most barriers that confront women in leadership. These barriers include but are not limited to the "glass ceiling" (Storey, 2019), the "glass cliff" (Chekenya & Sikomwe, 2020), gender discrimination (Wood, 2019), microaggression (Basford et al., 2014), the queen bee phenomenon (Derks et al., 2016), etc. However, the experiences of women of colour are unique in that they have to deal with obstacles relating to their gender and face additional challenges emanating from race-based stereotyping (Dickens et al., 2019; Rosette et al., 2016). Having to navigate gendered leadership expectations coupled with the challenges of being female and a person

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of colour can negatively impact their career advancement and lead to severe emotional stress (Brescoll, 2016).

To avoid victimisation and discrimination resulting from the patriarchal and prejudiced society women find themselves in, some women may retreat to the margins and decide to be less ambitious and not pursue their goals (Idahosa & Vincent, 2014). There are, however, women who continue to pursue their goals and become leaders despite all these obstacles.

A study done by Christman and McClellan (2008) explored how female administrators in America have succeeded in continuing their leadership roles as departmental heads of education facilities. The researchers reported that supportive relationships, the ability to negotiate societal obstacles and adapt to adverse situations shaped these women's experiences and success in the corporate environment (Christman & McClellan, 2008). Other researchers posited similar findings about women’s success in organisational leadership, namely social support, a strong value system, hard work, commitment, adaptability, and a conscious decision not to be marginalised (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Morrison & Conradie, 2006).

2.3.1 Supportive relationships

Supportive relationships, both within organisational and social structures, are reported to be one of the most critical factors that contribute to the success of women in corporate leadership (Cho et al., 2015; Doubell & Struwig, 2014). The lack of role models and access to female mentors is repeatedly quoted as one of the barriers inhibiting women's advancement in leadership (Stainback et al., 2016). Women have frequently emphasised the importance of having access to female mentors, which would allow them to unpack shared experiences and receive advice from a female perspective (Ngunjiri, 2016). Mentoring is a mutually beneficial relationship and occurs within a trustworthy, encouraging environment that fosters a culture of learning whereby individuals are motivated and guided to reach a particular goal (Sharma & Freeman, 2014).

O’Neil et al. (2015) emphasised that mentoring is not about “fixing” what is wrong with an individual but rather a focus on learning and development by assisting individuals in identifying

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opportunities for self-reflection and increased self-awareness to improve their leadership strategies. Furthermore, it has been reported that upcoming women leaders prefer female mentors because they believe those mentors may have experienced similar leadership barriers and might be the most suitable people to assist them (Jenni, 2017). Balancing work and family responsibilities, in particular, is a primary concern for many women in leadership (Cho et al., 2015; Watts, 2009).

Competing career and family responsibilities often jeopardise career commitments (Fiksenbaum, 2014). Organisational realities demand the separation of career and family life (O'Neil et al., 2015). The impact of these demands has often been used as the justification for excluding women from leadership but also by women to reject positions in leadership (Cho et al., 2015). For women leaders to be able to focus on their career and ensure that their family is taken care of, they heavily rely on support from personal sources such as a spouse, a mother, a mother-in-law, or close friends and family (Cho et al., 2015).

2.3.2 Emotional wellbeing and mindfulness

It is reported that disasters, such as famine, war, natural disasters, and disease outbreaks, have a significant impact on women's ability to cope and recover emotionally (Bradshaw & Fordham, 2015; McLaren et al., 2020). Despite multiple role management and added responsibilities for women during times of crisis, little consideration is given to their emotional wellbeing (Beland et al., 2020; McLaren et al., 2020).

Accepting that stress and problems are a way of life has become the norm, and many times it does not receive the necessary attention required (Fries, 2009). Unstable organisational environments associated with patriarchal gender-driven practices make women in leadership vulnerable to health-related problems, especially increased stress levels (Muhonen, 2011). Intense levels of scrutiny and negative job appraisals are recorded as contributing factors to lower job satisfaction, increased feelings of depression, withdrawal, and high turnover amongst women in leadership (Glass & Cook, 2016; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Muhonen, 2011).

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Mindfulness has been identified as an essential tool for women to cope with leadership challenges (Katz & Toner, 2013; Phillips & Grandy, 2018). Although researchers describe mindfulness in different ways, they all agree on the overarching meaning of mindfulness: to be present in the moment, fully aware of what is happening at that moment, and focused on the current issue at hand with no thoughts of what may or might not have happened (Fries, 2009). Another important element of mindfulness is that your thoughts should be without any judgement (Fries, 2009).

However, the real value of mindfulness is that it guides a person to be aware of triggers and how to react in certain situations, and it allows you to be in control of any situation instead of acting impulsively (Fries, 2009). Researchers posited that mindfulness has several benefits for leadership success, namely: leaders will be able to better cope with hefty workloads, they will be able to adapt more easily to changing circumstances, and it will lead to an increase in professional and private life satisfaction (Fries, 2009). Further advantages of mindfulness are improved concentration, improved job performance, self-care, and increased ability to prioritise (Wasylkiw et al., 2015). Mindful leaders are more attentive and display a kind of authenticity (Leroy et al., 2013) that would appeal to followers and put them more at ease (Hülsheger et al., 2013).

2.4 Leadership explained within a social constructionist framework

The social constructionist theory informed this study. Social constructionists seek to answer how and why humans construct realities in a certain way (Burr, 2015). The theory of social construction outlines how individuals understand their realities and how these realities are dependent on several internal and external influences (Bullough, 2008; Fine, 2015).

However, the fundamental belief of social constructionism is that subjective human thinking plays a vital role in how individuals construct their version of reality (Burr, 2015).
Gergen, one of the first researchers to question social construction, believed that social interactions amongst individuals give rise to how people make meaning of personal experiences, given their cultural, economic, and political environment (Gergen, 1985). Burr (2015) agrees with Gergen that

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realities can never be objective and have different interpretations that are subjectively constructed by human beings (Burr, 2015). Social constructionists reject the idea that knowledge is universal and objective (Burr, 2015; Harris, 2006). Instead, they argue that realities have multiple subjective meanings dependent on personal interpretation and circumstances (Burr, 2015). Furthermore, they believe that cultural, historical, and social contexts influence how humans understand and interpret individual experiences (Harris, 2006).

The social constructionist approach provided a framework within which the intersubjective influence of culture, history, and social context on the meaning-making of the experiences of coloured women in leadership in the Western Cape could be understood. Hoffman (1990) reported that intersubjective influences of culture, history, and social context play a substantial part in how women in leadership may interpret and construct the meaning of the barriers and facilitators to their success and maintain leadership roles in a socially constructed, male-dominated environment. Social construction is based on the understanding and knowledge of personal social realities and a sense of oneself through interactions with others (Cunliffe, 2016). Social constructionists, however, warn against embracing personal realities as the only true version as it may interfere with the acceptance of realities formed by individuals belonging to other cultures (Burr, 2015).

Against this backdrop, it is argued that the formulation of the coloured identity and meaning-making of experiences for women in leadership is dependent on complex interactions of social, cultural, political, and, very importantly, historical events (Beyers, 2009). The construct of meaning plays an essential role in how coloured women in leadership interpret and navigate the organisational environment, considering the colonial and apartheid history of South Africa (Adhikari, 2006). Poltera and Schreiner (2019) claim that leadership behaviour cannot be examined without considering the complexities of the context in which it develops. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how the intricacies of race, prompted by the socio-cultural history of South Africa, influence the leadership experiences of coloured women (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004). Furthermore, it also influences how other people perceive coloured women leaders, which may affect their

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authority and value, and ultimately barricades further leadership advancement (Carton & Rosette, 2011; Festekjian et al., 2014; Sy et al., 2010).

In South Africa, coloured identity is an ongoing debate that continues to be valued in terms of patriarchal notions where racial identification is determined by the father's ancestry (Adhikari, 2004). As mentioned before, the understanding of race as different and within a hierarchal structure, came into fruition with the Population Registration Act of 1950 coupled with the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Adhikari, 2006; Healy-Clancy, 2017). Before the Population Registration Act and Group Areas Act, race boundaries did exist, but they were less confined and prescriptive (Trotter, 2009).

The Population Registration Act's hierarchical structure placed the coloured people between the ruling White minority and the Black African majority (Adhikari, 2006). The "intermediate status" (Adhikari, 2009b, p. 15) of coloured people placed them in a vulnerable position (Beyers, 2009). It created a sense of inferiority passed on by White people and resentment by Black Africans as they believed that compared to them, coloured people were less oppressed during the apartheid government (Beyers, 2009). The complex nature of holding an intermediate status affects all areas of interaction, including the workplace, and it is believed to have heightened coloured people's awareness of racial issues (Adhikari, 2004).

The study by Armstrong and Mitchell (2017) on the shifting identities of Black female Canadian principals reported that the women in the study felt the need to develop a "racial sixth sense" as part of their "survival toolbox", which allowed them to navigate anticipated racial challenges. The "racial sixth sense" may hold value for coloured women in leadership as they continuously have to reflect and be aware of undertones of racial suspicion, taking into account the dual status as intermediate race and second-class citizen (being a female) imposed on them (Beyers, 2009; Dankwa, 2018).

Furthermore, the racial markers post-apartheid are very contradictory and, at times, complicated, which is evident from the available research studies on women leadership in South Africa. Researchers refer to coloured women as either "mixed-race" (Mayer, Viviers, et al., 2017),

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Black, "so-called" coloured or women of colour (Holtzman, 2018; Snyder, 2014). These confusing terms reinforce, and cement perceptions that coloured people are "racial hybrids" with no culture of their own, which may further devalue their authority and status in the workplace and the broader societal context (Adhikari, 2006, p. 151).

It is, however, argued that ethnicity and the meaning associated with the term "coloured" are forever evolving, and therefore it is considered to be nothing more than a social construct of a nation's reality (Bosch, 2014). In South Africa, the term "coloured" is continuously disputed as an apartheid-era construction of social identities and racial categories, signifying the problematic nature thereof (Bosch, 2014). The conceptualisation of the coloured identity in South Africa differs during the apartheid and post-apartheid era. During the apartheid era, coloured people identified themselves as coloured, Black, or South African. Two additional categories were added post-apartheid: "brown Afrikaner" and Khoisan (Bosch, 2014).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the coloured identity in South Africa is considered fractured and confusing, resulting in a total rejection of the coloured identity by some members while others identify with African or anti-racism global citizen (Adhikari, 2004). Another group is trying to reclaim their Khoisan identity, and a fourth group is embracing their exclusivity as coloured people (Adhikari, 2004). The latter group's motivation may be found in the construction of their self-identification as coloured people and a sense of belonging and collectiveness (Adhikari, 2009b). Adhikari further posits that mostly professional, more educated individuals within the coloured communities reject the term "coloured" and assume terms such as "global citizen".

Social identities are formed by people based on perceptions of who they are and are unstable by nature (Adhikari, 2004). These perceptions are continuously reflected upon and revised depending on their circumstances (Adhikari, 2004). How individuals perceive things is part of their everyday life and something they cannot escape. This reality has been shaped over time, and past experiences may influence behaviour (Pittaway et al., 2018). Influences on the choice of behaviour may be unique to each individual and the social context in which behaviour occurs (Pittaway et al.,

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2018).

The intersecting diversity markers, of which race, gender, social class, and social status, as determinates of how a sense of personal identity emerges, inevitably impact the aspirations of coloured women in leadership (Mayer et al., 2018). Mayer et al. (2018) explored diversity conflict intersections within a social constructionist framework. It highlights how different the sense-making of coloured women in higher education is from other races. Mayer et al. (2018) noted that racism was an issue that they had to confront at all levels within the organisation, while conflict was aimed more at the age of the Black African women, and White and Indian women had to deal with language. The study illuminated the different experiences and sensemaking of different races within an ever-persistent hierarchal power structure (Mayer et al., 2018). White participants reported no negative experiences with gender and race intersections, while the Indian, Black African, and coloured participants were all affected. Mayer et al. (2018) highlighted essential outcomes from the study that illustrate how a person's social construct of realities can profoundly impact personal sense-making of experiences.

Leadership identities of women are dependent on personal experiences and perceptions (Cho et al., 2015). In the process of becoming leaders, leadership behaviour is influenced by personal values and beliefs (Jenni, 2017) while at the same time developing a unique sense of purpose (Ibarra et al., 2013). Jenni (2017) reported that successful leaders exhibit high levels of self-awareness, personal and professional values, and virtue. It determines how women perceive and approach leadership, resulting in either determined ambition to get to the top or contentment with working under the glass ceiling (Jenni, 2017).

Furthermore, leadership perceptions may also negatively influence women, preventing them from aspiring to a career path in leadership because their understanding of success is through the lens of a male-dominant environment, which makes the idea of successful women leaders unimaginable (Festekjian et al., 2014). This notion is supported by Madsen and Andrade (2018),

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who indicated that women in leadership experience more indirect gender prejudice, whereby subconscious bias harms leadership success.

How coloured women practice leadership is essentially a product of co-constructed interpersonal and collective meaning-making, influenced by socio-historical events and negotiated within the boundaries of organisational culture (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010).

2.5 Conclusion

Despite legislative attempts to eliminate gender inequality, socio-cultural stereotyping and patriarchal structures are deeply embedded in our society (Basford et al., 2014; Haines et al., 2016; Zuiderveld, 2014). Even with an increase in women's presence and status in management positions in organisations, gender inequality and gender stereotyping still constrain their efforts to be successful in their careers (Brescoll, 2016; Penciliah, 2005). Furthermore, despite being educated and employed full-time in paid jobs, women's role in society is still typically assumed to be a carer and homemaker (Kiamba, 2008).

Gender equality and increased female representation in leadership have been championed for many years, yet the narratives of women in leadership, especially women of colour, convey their disillusionment concerning promises of diversity in organisations because unfavourable organisational cultures and sociohistorical influences continue to hamper their escalation up the career ladder into the upper echelons of organisations (Kamberidou, 2010; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Furthermore, notwithstanding the evidence in the literature that women can be as effective as men in leadership, society continues to reinforce hegemony as the preferred leadership style; further perpetuating the struggle of women with discrimination, stereotyping, and negative preconceptions about women’s organisational leadership skills and competence (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Elmuti et al., 2009).

Leadership positions are usually presented as positions that require hard work, long hours, and time away from family (Watts, 2009). Also, women in leadership face intense scrutiny and unfavourable job assessment prejudice (Ingersoll et al., 2019) and often feel they have to prove

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themselves (Ely et al., 2011). In the process of having to prove their worth and trying to meet the requirements of a leader as constructed by males, women tend to work harder than their male colleagues (Cho et al., 2015). Inevitably it leads to longer hours at work and less time at home, placing women in a double bind as society still expects them to prioritise family above anything else (Faniko et al., 2017).

Women who invest in career advancement risk sacrificing social support networks and being isolated (Faniko et al., 2017). Social support networks have been reported as major contributing elements to women's leadership success (Fiksenbaum, 2014). Women in leadership are often caught between competing for acceptance in a male-driven environment but, at the same time, have to adhere to societal accepted female behaviour (O'Neil et al., 2015). It ultimately leads to internal stereotyping, making women cautious about stepping up in leadership (Kiamba, 2008). Thus, it comes as no surprise that the social cost of leadership might be too high a price for many women (Kiamba, 2008) as they doubt its achievability (Cook & Glass, 2014). They may also feel the position is not worth sacrificing their family life (O'Neil et al., 2008). Societal and organisational challenges for women in executive leadership significantly impact their advancement and leadership success—more so for women of colour (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016).

Although women of colour encounter similar problems such as gender bias, the glass prison, discrimination, and conflicting work/family responsibilities, the experiences are very different across the different races (Mayer et al., 2018). Various external factors, such as societal, economic, political, and educational, influence their leadership identities (Bullough, 2008). Their leadership is based on experiences, and they adopt specific strategies to cope with adverse situations and develop their careers (Cho et al., 2015).

The underlying narratives of women in leadership studies are that "opportunity is not the same as equal opportunity, and having a more inclusive playfield does not mean the field is level for all players" (Ryan & Haslam, 2007, p. 566). In the face of all this, the prospects of women of colour to prove themselves as capable, skilled leaders are minimal, creating the danger that the confidence

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they so desperately need to be more representative in leadership will erode over time (Cook & Glass, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to document the experiences of coloured women in leadership in South Africa. Furthermore, it may serve as a reference for coloured women in South Africa aspiring to climb the corporate ladder and contribute to female diversity leadership research.

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Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This study sought to explore the experiences, barriers, and facilitators to the success of coloured women in organisational leadership in the Western Cape. Qualitative research methods were employed to generate a detailed and rich understanding of the experiences of coloured women in organisational leadership. Qualitative research aims to provide an understanding of complex psychosocial issues and assist in answering the "why" and "how" questions (Marshall, 1996). This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodological approach followed in this study, including the research design, data collection, data analysis, reflexivity, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Qualitative research design

This study adopted a qualitative approach that enabled me to gain more insight into how coloured women in leadership construct and interpret their experiences in corporate leadership and the factors that influence their coping strategies within their working environment. Qualitative methods recognise that knowledge and interpretation are constructed by the world we live in (Davidsen, 2013). It allows the researcher to make sense of the participants' worlds and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences from their perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

I followed an interpretative phenomenological approach as the method of qualitative inquiry. This method allowed me to gain more in-depth insight into leadership realities as experienced and constructed by coloured women. Defining features of the phenomenological approach are the study of individuals who have shared experiences of a specific phenomenon and gaining a deeper understanding of the essence of those experiences (Creswell, 2013).

When applying the interpretative approach, impartiality is almost impossible because the researcher comes into the study with a preconceived idea of the phenomenon at hand (Reiners, 2012). There is no one true meaning produced in interpretative studies, but rather such studies reflect the definitions of personal experiences as perceived and constructed by the participants (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Maree, 2007). Thus, Littrell and Nkomo (2005) reported that coloured

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women expressed different preferences in leadership behaviour compared to Black and White women. The interpretive approach allowed me to report on the subjective experiences of coloured women in leadership as perceived and constructed by them.

3.2 Interpretative phenomenological approach

As stated above, I followed an interpretive phenomenological approach as the method of qualitative inquiry. Phenomenological approaches are commonly used in investigating individual experiences within a specific context (Davidsen, 2013). The phenomenological approach explores and investigates individual perceptions and the meaning-making of specific events within a given context (Davidsen, 2013). Therefore, this approach was chosen as the most suitable to conduct an in-depth investigation into the personal experiences of coloured women in leadership in the Western Cape.

Phenomenology embodies many different approaches, including Husserl's descriptive approach and Heidegger's interpretive approach (Davidsen, 2013). The difference between descriptive and interpretive phenomenology is in the collection of data and the application of findings (Davidsen, 2013).

3.2.1 Husserl's descriptive approach

Husserl is known as the founder of phenomenology (Davidsen, 2013). An underlying assumption of Husserl's approach is that a specific group of people share the same experiences irrespective of culture, society, and context (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Husserl believed that human actions are motivated by what they perceive to be real and that culture, society, and context do not affect people's perceptions (Lopez & Willis, 2004). He also argued that the researcher must put aside his/her preconceptions and bracket the validity thereof (Davidsen, 2013). Bracketing is a method used to identify and eliminate preconceived ideas and experiences of the phenomena at hand that may influence the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

3.2.2 Heidegger's interpretive approach

Heidegger's phenomenology is grounded on the assumption that description

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inevitably involves interpretation (Davidsen, 2013). Interpretive approaches can produce more than one understanding of the study, but research findings must reflect the realities of participants (Lopez & Willis, 2004). A primary principle of Heidegger was that the world people live in shapes the realities of individuals, hence the emphasis on social, cultural, and political influence (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

For the study, I drew on Heidegger's interpretive approach. Heidegger believed that all human beings are born into a world with pre-existing norms and cultures (Davidsen, 2013). The context of these environments consequently influences the understanding and interpretation of individual experiences, including those of the researcher (Davidsen, 2013). The researcher is part of the world and the environment they function in, and the researcher's personal views inevitably blend with the participants' perspectives (Davidsen, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to ensure the researcher's interpretations of participants' experiences are valid (De Vos et al., 2011). This approach seemed most fit for investigating how coloured women in leadership make sense of their leadership experiences, considering the historical influence of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa coupled with my position as a coloured female in leadership.

3.3 Selection of participants

Eight coloured women in corporate leadership positions in the Western Cape were recruited to participate in the study. According to Statistics South Africa (2018), the highest proportion of the coloured population resides in the Western Cape. Participants included in this study resided in rural and urban areas in the Western Cape. I tapped into personal contacts, work networks, and referrals to recruit the participants for the study. Also, judgement sampling, as well as snowball sampling, was employed to recruit participants. Judgement sampling enables the researcher to choose the most appropriate participants for the study (Marshall, 1996).

Participants were selected based on their gender (female), race (coloured), and organisational leadership position (senior management) they held or are holding in the Western Cape. All women held senior positions in various corporate sectors at the time of the interviews. All

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participants had more than five years of senior management experience, a requirement that I considered necessary to generate a rich understanding of organisational leadership experiences. I approached the women by telephone to obtain their interest and participation in the study and set up interviews. Some of the initial contacts were not available for the duration of the study because of their busy schedules, or they were sceptical about participating in the research. Although they were aware that their identities would be protected, they still feared possible exposure.

Using snowballing, I requested participants to recommend other possible participants that met the inclusion criteria and to ask their permission to share their contact information so that I could approach them to request their participation in the study. A surprising occurrence was that some of the referrals were of women that were already part of the group of selected participants. However, I could not establish whether it was because of a scarcity of coloured women in leadership or a mutual alumnus bond they shared as some of the women had graduated from the same tertiary educational institution. The participants' ages ranged between 43 and 64, and their education from a bachelor's degree as the lowest level of education to a doctoral degree as the highest level of education. All the women interviewed had obtained a higher education degree. Having acquired a higher education degree or being of a particular age group was not a requirement for participation in this study. Additional information gathered through the interviews is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Demographical Information of Participants

Participant	Age	Highest Level of education	Industry of employment	Level of employment
1	56	Doctoral Degree	Education	Professor
2	43	Master's Degree	Health	Deputy Director
3	56	Doctoral Degree	Development	CEO
4	64	Master's Degree	Development	CEO
5	49	Master's Degree	Education	Lecturer

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6	47	Honours Degree	Education	Principal
7	50	Doctoral Degree	Local Government	CEO
8	53	Bachelor's Degree	Local Government	Director

3.4 Data collection

The data collection process comprised semi-structured interviews and field notes. Semi-structured interviews diverge from structured interviews and allow the researcher to engage with the participant by having an interesting and enriching conversation instead of rigorously following a prescribed set of questions (Smith & Osborn, 2007). In addition, field notes allow the researcher to make notes of participants' non-verbal behaviour and the researcher's experiences during the interview process, which an audio recorder would not have been able to capture (De Vos et al., 2011).

Qualitative interviews help the researcher understand how participants make meaning of experiences and construct their reality (Maree, 2007). The data analysis process included eight first interviews, four second interviews, three third interviews, and four second and third interviews combined. A series of three separate in-depth interviews of at least 90 minutes long spaced over two weeks with each participant was followed, as suggested by (Seidman, 2006). The interviews were guided by a pre-designed interview schedule that included questions on the participants' experiences as leaders in a corporate environment, challenges they may encounter, facilitators to their success, coping strategies, and factors that influenced these coping strategies. Semi-structured interviews are guided by but not directed by the interview schedule to establish rapport with participants (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Appendix B contains the interview schedule employed for this study.

I tried to keep to the proposed times and intervals but had to adapt due to the participants' availability. However, adjusting the times and interview intervals did not impact the richness of the stories, as participants themselves suggested that they could do interviews two and three on the

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same day since it would be sufficient time. In agreement with the participants, I combined interviews two and three to accommodate participants. Participants covered most of the questions during interviews one and two while adding additional information to their narratives during the third interview. One participant emigrated and was not available for the third interview. However, the two interviews conducted with her were sufficiently rich to be included in the research data.

Each interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. Interviews were conducted at a convenient place for the participant—either their workplace, house, or a coffee shop. Participants formally agreed that all interviews could be audio-recorded, which allowed me to concentrate on the interview process. Also, it provided a much fuller record of their experiences than merely relying on my notes, as argued by De Vos et al. (2011).

Furthermore, women in the study preferred to have the interviews conducted in English, even though some of them were Afrikaans speaking. However, some of them would express themselves in Afrikaans when they felt more comfortable doing so. Alternating between different languages is known in the literature as code-switching (Ariffin & Rafik-Galea, 2009). Individuals usually employ code-switching as a tool to compensate for the inability to express themselves in another language comfortably (Ariffin & Rafik-Galea, 2009).

3.5 Data analysis

Due to time constraints, all interviews were transcribed verbatim by an external service provider who has signed a confidentiality agreement. The confidentiality agreement is attached as Appendix D. After receiving the transcripts from the transcriber, I listened to the audio recordings and compared them with the transcripts to check the validity thereof. The ATLAS TI 8 software programme was used to help facilitate the data analysis process. All transcripts were entered into the programme. The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method guided the data analysis process, as described by Smith and Osborn (2007).

3.5.1 Interpretative phenomenological analysis

IPA is a suitable approach when exploring participants' personal experiences (Smith &

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Osborn, 2007). It has its roots in phenomenology and aims to gain more in-depth insight into the participants' meaning-making and perceptions of their experiences (Davidsen, 2013). IPA researchers believe that there is no one true meaning produced in interpretative studies but reflects the interpretations of personal experiences as perceived and constructed by research participants (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Maree, 2007). The interpretive phenomenological approach allowed me to report on the subjective experiences of coloured women in leadership as perceived and constructed by them. IPA acknowledges that one's thinking, the outside world (society), and one's immediate context influence one's perceptions.

IPA considers the researcher to be actively involved in a two-stage interpretative process whereby the individuals try to make sense of their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007). On the other hand, the researcher tries to understand how participants make sense of their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This two-stage interpretative process involves an act of empathy whereby the researcher tries to understand the participants' point of view by placing herself/himself in their shoes (Smith & Osborn, 2007). At the same time, the researcher takes an investigative standpoint, critically evaluating and analysing the participants' narratives (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This process of investigation ultimately allows for an in-depth understanding of how participants create meaning in their personal and social worlds (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

In line with Heidegger's approach, impartiality is impossible when applying the interpretative phenomenological approach (Reiners, 2012). Inevitably, it eliminates bracketing as the researcher comes into the study with preconceived ideas of the phenomenon at hand (Reiners, 2012). As mentioned before, the world people live in shapes their realities, including that of the researcher, hence providing a platform for understanding others' views (Lopez & Willis, 2004). On the other hand, the researcher enters the study with prior knowledge and assumptions and, therefore, continuously has to evaluate how these presuppositions influence the interpretation of participants' experiences (Shinebourne, 2011).

IPA aims to understand and interpret meanings and make sense of how participants make

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meaning of their own experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007). It provides a distinct but not prescriptive process for analysing data, and the researcher can adapt this approach as per the research study (Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, qualitative analysis is a very engaging process, and the researcher acts as an investigator throughout the research process (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The IPA method follows a thematic analysis of data that guided the researcher in analysing the participants' transcripts in this study (Smith et al., 2009).

Firstly, I did a thorough reading of the first three participants' interview transcripts, highlighted interesting quotations, and made notes throughout the reading. During this process, I identified preliminary codes of interesting incidents, expressions, or participants' actions prevalent in the four participants' transcripts (Benaquisto, 2008). Coding involves identifying small categories of information that hold relevance to the study, whereby code labels are assigned to each category (Creswell, 2013). I repeated this process twice to ensure that the data was thoroughly understood and compiled a more comprehensive list of codes. I coded all remaining transcripts similarly but were guided by the list of codes generated from the first transcripts.

The final step was to look for patterns and commonalities across all codes related to the study's aim, known as themes (Davidsen, 2013). However, some themes had certain connections and could be grouped (Smith & Osborn, 2007). I continued with this process until a final set of themes were identified. The final set of main themes and subthemes formed the basis for the research findings (Davidsen, 2013). These themes are discussed in detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

3.6 Credibility and trustworthiness of data

To ensure that data represented the participants' reality and not that of the researcher, the researcher needs to maintain a naïve position throughout the study (Yeh & Inman, 2007). Therefore, I followed four concepts proposed by Guba (1981) that helped ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of data. The four concepts are credibility transferability, dependability, and conformability.

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3.6.1 Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility involves two crucial aspects: that the study should be performed in a way that makes findings true and that the researcher should take all necessary steps to ensure that other readers will find the data believable. Member checks are one of the most essential tools to ensure data credibility within qualitative research (Guba, 1981). During the interview process, I continuously checked with the women that their experiences were correctly understood and interpreted to add validity to the analysis process by summarising their ideas, thoughts, and feelings that they verbalised. Qualitative researchers frequently use this method to check the correctness of data interpretation (Creswell & Miller, 2000; De Vos et al., 2011).

3.6.2 Transferability

Transferability speaks to which degree findings can be transferred from one situation to another (De Vos et al., 2011; Morrow, 2005). The researcher must provide sufficient details about the participants and their contexts so that other readers can evaluate whether the findings of the study can be applied to other studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interpretation and analysis of the data represent the personal experiences of coloured women in leadership and does not imply the generalisation of information to other individuals, populations, and settings but instead focus on the experiences of a specific ethnic group in South Africa (Guba, 1981; Morrow, 2005).

3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the reliability of the data over time, and if accessed by another person, the data and findings will correspond with what is presented in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It was important to ensure that I operated within generally accepted research practice (Guba, 1981). To accomplish this process, I kept detailed records of research activities and procedures as well as field notes, as proposed by Morrow (2005). I validated this process with my supervisor (Dr Anthea Lesch) by checking that the research processes were recorded and supported the study's findings.

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3.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability ensure that the interpretation of data is not based on the researcher's personal preferences but consistent with the collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, it is crucial to practice reflexivity during conformability and recognise the researcher's subjectivity (Guba, 1981), considering how the researcher's underlying assumptions and personal experiences can influence the interpretations of the study at hand (Morrow, 2005). As the researcher in this study, I am a coloured female in a leadership position and have encountered barriers and facilitators to leadership success within the work environment. These influences made reflexivity unavoidable in the study. I had to continuously reflect on how my personal views, values, position, and role in the research may have influenced data collection and analysis.

3.7 Reflexivity

IPA acknowledges the researcher's active role, also described as an "insider's perspective", whereby the researcher's conceptions and beliefs could influence the interpretative analysis (Davidsen, 2013; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Analysis of data is inevitably blended with the researcher's preconceived views and views as expressed by the participants (Lopez & Willis, 2004). According to Heidegger's approach, researcher subjectivity provides an important foundation for understanding and interpreting participants' views (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Therefore, self-examination is imperative to demonstrate the integrity of the research process (Goldstein, 2017). I kept a reflexive journal to ensure optimum investigation and understanding of the participants' views. After each interview, I reflected on personal motivations and underlying perceptions and understandings at particular moments during the interview.

Furthermore, I came into the study assuming that all coloured women in leadership continuously have to face many challenges in the corporate environment stemming mainly from a history of colonialism and apartheid. However, I had to re-evaluate my preconceived ideas about the experiences of coloured women in leadership. During the first encounter with one of the

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participants, I was reminded that not all leadership experiences are challenging. Participants' experiences were dependent on their level of maturity, emotional intelligence, and inner self.

Although the women who participated in the study held executive leadership roles in the corporate environment, they were very humble. They emphasised the importance of "putting yourself in others' shoes" to understand why people interpret their experiences in a particular way. The study allowed me to generate different perspectives of how coloured women in leadership make meaning of their experiences and that some experiences are not more valid than others. The fact that I was not much younger than some of the participants made me aware of the fact that I had to guard against assuming how their narratives would unfold.

As a coloured woman in leadership, it was of utmost importance to continuously reflect on my personal bias and how it might influence the research process. One example is that my mother always presented education as the most crucial asset to secure a successful future. Consequently, I expected the women to have a similar perspective and had to guard against my preconceived ideas, especially when it became clear that my opinion about education might be more intense than those of the participants'. Education was essential for them, but they did not view it as the most important tool to succeed in leadership.

I had to eliminate bracketing in the process because, as much as I tried to have a completely objective view of the women's narratives, it was not always possible. Bracketing results in the researcher failing to acknowledge potential preconceptions, which ultimately may lead to a biased account of the phenomenon at hand (Tufford & Newman, 2012). For a meaningful understanding of participants' perceptions, understanding and acknowledging preconceived ideas become a valuable guide for the researcher (Shinebourne, 2011).

Furthermore, I was not expecting the contradictory views from the women regarding their racial categorisation. It made me realise how much politics and the history of South Africa influence racial perceptions and experiences. I had to reflect on my reluctance to emphasise the influence of race on leadership perceptions for fear of politicising my study. However, I had to

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provide a true account of the women's narratives, and it turned out that race and politics significantly influenced the participants' leadership experiences.

3.8 Ethical considerations and procedures for gaining approval to conduct the research

This study was conducted only after approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at the University of Stellenbosch – project number 0446. Appendix C provides the Approval letter received from the Research Ethics Committee. It was crucial to protect the research participants (Josselson, 2007). Some of the fundamental rights of a participant, as described by Mouton (2001), are the right to confidentiality, the right not to be harmed in any manner, the right to privacy, and the right to informed consent.

3.8.1 Confidentiality

Participants have the right to remain anonymous (Mouton, 2001). Therefore, I used pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants, and their workplace was not mentioned. To ensure that data were trustworthy, I used a codebook to link names and places. This codebook and the data collected are stored separately.

3.8.2 Mitigation of risk

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time (Seidman, 2006). Furthermore, the participants were free to interrupt interviews if they experienced emotional distress and would continue once they felt comfortable doing so. However, none of the participants felt the need to interrupt interviews for this particular reason. The participants also had the option of counselling, if needed. I offered assistance in referring participants to Lifeline or FAMSA, organisations in the Western Cape that provide free counselling services, if necessary.

3.8.3 Data storage

All recordings, field notes, transcriptions, and the codebook are locked in a safe place where I will store it for at least five years. Participants were aware that I would share material only with people involved in the research project but only after removing or disguising all names, places, and

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identifiable information (Josselson, 2007). The electronic version of the transcripts, research report, and other study documentation are stored on a password-protected computer to which only I have access.

3.8.4 Informed consent

Participants in the study provided written consent by signing an informed consent form whereby they agreed to partake in the research and recording of the interviews. Appendix A provides the consent form. A consent form is an invitation to participate in the study and informs the participants of all possible information regarding the investigation (De Vos et al., 2011). They were made aware of their rights, the expected duration of their involvement, the procedures to be followed, the potential advantages/disadvantages of the study, my credibility, and the confidentiality of their records and details (De Vos et al., 2011; Seidman, 2006).

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Chapter 4

Results and Discussions

This section provides an overview of the participants as well as a detailed description of the results after a thorough analysis of the data guided by the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). To provide a rich account of the data, this section was divided into five main themes, reflecting the experiences and realities of coloured women in organisational leadership in the Western Cape. The first theme provides an introduction to how the sociocultural environment influences their meaning-making in leadership. The second theme is an account of their leadership barriers, and the third theme focuses on the facilitators that helped develop their leadership success. The last two themes entail the external and internal factors that shape their coping strategies in a male-driven environment. The five themes with their respective subthemes are as follows:

1. *"Weaponisation of race"*
   - "I don't want to prove I'm black"
   - "Know your place"
2. *"Battle of war"*
   - Patriarchy
   - Societal prescribed gender roles
   - Gender stereotyping
   - Intersection of race and gender
   - Loneliness
   - Self-doubt
   - Affirmative action
3. *"We are being moulded"*
   - Leadership formative years
   - Education and social cohesion
   - History and culture

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- Sacrifices
- Learning

4. *"Finding people who believe in you"*

- Mentoring
- Positive environments

5. *"It's very easy to slip up and say I can't do this"*

4.1 "Weaponisation of race"

The politics of the categorisation "coloured" has been an ongoing debate in South Africa (Adhikari, 2004). During apartheid, the government assigned racial categories to individuals based on their physical appearances (Posel, 2001). After apartheid in 1994, the new ruling party continued to use these markers of racial identification (Rudwick, 2010). It was motivated by one major reason: to reduce racial inequalities and provide a platform for previously disadvantaged groups to benefit from employment equity programmes (Smith, 2014). However, within a newly democratic country, it did not sit well with all people. It especially created much confusion amongst coloured people as government documents still required them to identify their race in terms of Black African, coloured, White, and Indian (Rudwick, 2010), but in terms of affirmative action and employment equity policies, they are referred to as Black.

This confusion was particularly evident during the interviews when participants in the study alternated between referring to themselves as Black and coloured women, depending on the context of definition. For example, they would refer to themselves as coloured women when they talk about their personal experiences but would use the term Black when discussing challenges all previously marginalised groups experience in the workplace. Furthermore, participants were not in agreement with the continuation of racial categorisation in a democratic South Africa.

P4 was actively involved in the fight against apartheid in the 1980s, and her perception of the reason behind racial identification was as follows:

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Extract: 1

> P4: I don't like labelling. And I think mine is kind of a reaction of how you were labelled in the past in order to determine who you are, and then in the néw South Africa, we use labelling again to shut people up. And, so, labelling has had negative connotations befóre 1994, and now…, it's used as a weapon. I call it the weaponisation of race [drops pen on table to emphasise her point]….and the weaponisation of race is a very destrúctive thing in the South Africa, where we have a constitution [taps with pen on table] that guarantees equality [taps with pen on table]….and if you use race [taps with pen on table] as a weapon to get [taps with pen on table] what you want, or, to…, shut people up, or to seek privilege, then I consider that a very dangerous path for the new South Africa.

P4 emphasised almost every word while tapping with a pen on the table to further stress the importance of her view. It was clear that her response was full of disappointment and disillusionment in what she expected the "new South Africa" would look like after apartheid. For her, racial categories in a democratic South Africa were no less different from what they were during apartheid. Her sentiment resonates with Rudwick (2010), who mentioned earlier that racial categories remained prevalent in South Africa even after apartheid. The nature and history of racial identities in South Africa further complicate the current racial markers used, which is evident from the participants' narratives.

4.1.1 "I don't want to prove I'm Black"

From a social constructionist point of view, the meaning of coloured identity as articulated by the participants was mainly related to the apartheid history and culture of South Africa (Fine, 2015). During apartheid, when they all fought for freedom, according to P4, they all *"identified as the Black oppressed."* Post-apartheid, it seems that coloured people have to shift between different identities (Rudwick, 2010). *"I don't want to prove I'm Black"* is a statement made by P4's daughter.

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Extract: 2

> P4: My daughter… was brought up completely oblivious to race, hm, her whole life she mixed with all kinds of people, and that is the legacy that Í wanted to give hér. She went to study overseas, and she says: "I dón't want to come báck because I don't want to prove I'm Black."

This comment exemplifies a struggle for many coloured people, as Adhikari (2004) reported in an article titled "Not Black Enough: Changing Expressions of coloured Identity in Post-Apartheid South Africa." The nature of the term coloured as an identity highlights the degree to which it has become more apparent that the identity is merely an artificial social construction of people who were grouped based on certain similarities (Bosch, 2014). These similarities were based on outward appearances, such as skin colour, and continue to be the marker against which people are classified today, as is evident from the discussion with P4 when she stated the following.

Extract: 3

> P4: Yes, yeah, yeah. I have a friend, who is coloured, he's fair skin. He applies for a job and doesn't get it because the assúmption is that he is White. And, so, he, he often in an interview tries to find a way to say… I wasn't privileged in the past.

Liberation and freedom should have provided coloured people with the opportunity to identify whichever way they felt fit, but yet again, the same racial classification is used to identify people in South Africa (Adhikari, 2004; Rudwick, 2010). When I asked participants if they identify with the coloured ethnicity, they had very strong, mixed reactions. These reactions are presented in the extract below.

Extract: 4

> P1: I think that it's unfortunate that when the Employment Equity Act came out, after all the debates, the government use this very same racial categories in order to rectify the ills of the past. And the question was, "How else are

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you actually going to do this? If you can't even identify the people, how are you going to fix it?" so, for all reporting purposes, I would be a coloured as a result of that classification. And it's difficult for me.

P2: I am a coloured person. The question usually… the debate is, what do you define as a coloured? So, I define myself as a South African female.

P3: I would say, I recognise, that's how my family were historically classified. And I recognise now, for reporting purposes, when I'm asked to give my designation, I do indicate coloured. I see myself as South African, and African, and as a global citizen.

P4: No, and yes. I don't even identify with anything at the moment. My rebellion against this country. We were all forced to take on the coloured annotation and the struggle we all fought for non-racial South Africa. So, we identified as the Black oppressed. I actually see myself as somebody fighting fór coloured people's rightful place in the new South Africa, while I uphold the notation, coloured. So, that is my ambivalence.

P7: For me, what is very important is that I was always a human rights activist. So, it's for me sad if I must put myself in categories. I see myself as a disabled woman that has been disadvantaged in the context of apartheid. I also see myself as a woman, that is, because all of us who were Black, coloured, or Indian have been disadvantaged in this. Now, I can, I can tell you nów, I dón't identify myself as a coloured woman.

The participants ' narratives highlighted the argument that coloured identity in South Africa is a fractured and confusing concept (Adhikari, 2004). The views that Adhikari (2004) expressed seem to still hold value when he reported that coloured people were very different in whether they identified as Black, Black African, coloured, Khoisan, slave descendants or chose to have no affiliation in terms of race (Adhikari, 2004). Participants expressed mixed feelings about identifying

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as coloured, but they were empathetic about why the coloured race category is still necessary for South Africa. For example, some participants felt the term "coloured" holds a negative connotation and has no place in the new democratic South Africa. In contrast, others agreed that racial identification is necessary to right past wrongs by escalating growth opportunities for previously disadvantaged people. They further expressed how they fought for a non-racial South Africa and therefore are sad to be labelled or, as conveyed by P1: *"put in a box."* Some participants preferred to be called something universal, such as South Africans or global citizens.

4.1.2 "Know your place"

Adding to the identity confusion in a new South Africa, coloured women in leadership are reminded of their place in the racial hierarchy. As mentioned previously, it is believed that coloured people hold an intermediate status within the so-called "racial hierarchy" (Adhikari, 2009a, p. viii). This position appears to make coloured people vulnerable, mainly because, as a minority group, they have always lacked political and economic power (Adhikari, 2006). The frustration and feelings of belittlement that go along with it seem to contribute to the disillusionment of a rainbow nation to coloured women in leadership, as expressed by one participant in the following extract.

Extract: 5

> P4: It's funny that the White liberals don't know what to do with an intellectual coloured person … or Black person. They don't know what to do. And, in a way, they're patronising, they want you to know your place, and if you don't know your place, you'll be púnished and, you either shrink and you go into yourself, but that has made me even stronger.

Moreover, it is also believed by people classified as Black Africans that coloured people have benefitted during apartheid, and they may unjustly be resented for it (Beyers, 2009). P4 expressed this view: *"One of the most powerful Black women in this country turned on me and said: you know what is your problem? You don't know your place in the racial hierarchy."* P4 further conversed how she perceived the hidden secondary messages behind those words: *"I must*

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know my place, as a coloured. We were sell-outs, we were traitors, we were part of the Tricameral Parliament, we benefitted from the apartheid." Having identified as the Black oppressed during the struggle for a non-racial South Africa, the participant was disillusioned and disappointed when she was informed that there is a so-called racial hierarchy and different races hold different rankings within that hierarchy.

Also, concerning having to "know your place" in the racial hierarchy, coloured women in leadership have to "know their place" in the gender hierarchy. The gender hierarchy emanates from deep-rooted patriarchal practices within our society that reduced women's value to a second-class commodity compared to men who are respected as the head of the house (Dankwa, 2018; Doubell & Struwig, 2014; Kehler, 2001). Gender discrimination, which determines the place of women in society, has well-established roots within the homes of communities. An example was provided by P3 when she expressed that during her childhood days, her mother was expected to perform household duties after returning from her work: *"Both my parents worked, but she also came home and did the cooking and the cleaning."* This comment illustrates the clear division of gender roles where household duties such as washing the dishes, laundry, and cooking were automatically assigned to the women in the family. Even though more women have entered the corporate environment, household dynamics and societal views of gender roles have not shown any significant change (Cho et al., 2015; McLaren et al., 2020).

Society still perceives women as the household's primary caregivers, despite them being in full-time paid employment (Farré et al., 2020). Other research studies confirm the burden that society places on women to prioritise their role as mothers above anything else (Cho et al., 2015; Farré et al., 2020; McLaren et al., 2020; Naidoo & Jano, 2002). Society perceives women as caregivers who, according to P4, should *"know your place"* while men, according to P6, are regarded as *"die patriarg"* (translation: the patriarch). The participants' narratives below reflect how society reminds women to know their stance in society.

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Extract: 6

> P1: Patriarchy and the dominance of males in our society is still, is hooked into an old culture and set of behaviours that says, men are the head of the house and, you know, and the roles are determined and genderised, based on that.
>
> P2**:** I think society has this boxing of roles, of, thís is a mán, so, therefore, x, y, z, this is your róle. If you're a female, x, y, z, this is yóúr róle. And, hm, and sometimes when you move óút of that little box, when you're not part of that box, it becomes difficult.
>
> P3**:** … there was a role for my mom when I was growing up, and there was a role for my dad.
>
> P4: … the sexual division of labour is deeply embedded in our society.
>
> P6**:** Being a woman, it was very difficult because I was the first female deputy principal of the school. We started a principal forum … two years ago. And I'm the secretary of the forum.
>
> P8**: …** although one of the functions was, I did the minutes, and up till today I did the minutes of the senior management … because it's all male persons.

4.2 "Battle of war"

Women in leadership continuously are caught in different kinds of fights. For example, they have to fight for their space in leadership, as conveyed by the participants that the upper echelons in organisations are not easily accessible to women. They did, however, stress the need to have more women in leadership. Although women have gained momentum in moving up the corporate ladder, they are still immensely underrepresented and invisible in organisational leadership (Chandler, 2011; Freischlag & Silva, 2016). P1 expressed, "*The numbers also indicate that there are too few CEOs, too few chairs that are women, too few women who get to the top of the pyramid*." Various research reports highlight the continuous underrepresentation of women in the top management

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levels of organisations (e.g., De la Rey, 2005; Derks et al., 2016; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Doubell & Struwig, 2014; Faniko et al., 2017; Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016).

Furthermore, women in leadership tend to fight for others and are generally concerned with how their behaviour affects others (Mayer, Oosthuizen, et al., 2017). They focus on more constructive, inclusive, advantageous working environments (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017). P2 agrees that women in leadership consider their followers' needs and conveyed as follows: "*When women are in leadership positions, they have a larger impact on their families and on their broader community, and on society in general. There's a nursery element, there's an element of community*." The statement by P2 has an underlying message of protection and survival. It implies that most women in leadership develop survival methods and find ways to protect and nurture others to have an equal chance of survival. Scholars believe that feelings of protection and nurturing are generally associated with female leadership behaviour, known as transformational leadership (Duehr & Bono, 2006).

Protection and survival sometimes contain an element of fighting, whether verbal or physical. Participants in the study used terms like P1: *"we're the ones that are going to fight," P3: "you got to pick what you wanna fight about,*" and P8: "*many times I had to fight for my space,"* which is evident of the direct linkage of war and fighting. They described their corporate leadership experiences as being in a *"battle of war."* Extract 7 below provides an account of the experiences as narrated by the participants.

Extract: 7

> P1: Because often, we're the ones that are going to fight, not our own, battles we didn't create. So, I think the battle needs to be defined as, how do you wage war on and take a zero-tolerance approach to not progressing women in the workplace, not recognising women's contribution. It's a battle run because we are, we are victims here. Sometimes you just got to wait to play your cards carefully.

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> P3: You can't win every battle. You've got to pick what you wanna fight about because you want to win the war, you know? Because there's some people who wanna fight every battle, you can't do that either.
>
> P7: I feel that women and I really experience, don't go to war, they go for peace.
>
> P8: … there were times in senior management, many a times that I have to fight for my space.

Participants, however, conveyed that they had not entered into this "battle of war" of their own accord. Instead, it emanates from a long-standing system of gender inequality underpinned by patriarchy and stereotyping (Wood, 2019). Even though they might be seen as victims, these struggles have forced them to develop tools and acquire the necessary skills to leave their footprint in organisational leadership. Over the years, however, they were able to navigate perceptions and stereotyping and managed to break through the glass ceiling. Participants in the study conveyed that they picked their battles carefully and preferred a more subtle approach instead of a violent, vocal approach. The subtle, compassionate approach to conflict is typically associated with female leadership (Ryan et al., 2011). Contrary to women, successful leadership for men is associated with strong, decisive, aggressive decision-making behaviour (Ibarra et al., 2013).

Although society evaluates successful leadership in terms of agentic, male behaviour, women are penalised for displaying similar behaviour (Ingersoll et al., 2019). P6 conveyed: *"Why must we always próve ourselves? Because, when, when a mále sits in this chair, and many people, they want a male, but sometimes they will talk about previous principals. I have a different approach to things. I'm not that harsh man that was those days. The only way for a principal was to be autocratic. The other day I told a teacher, nou gaan ek onbeskof raak…* (translation: now I am going to be rude)*, and she responded to me, 'please no, you're nót like that."* This type of gender discrimination is evident in the prescriptive nature of gender behaviour in society (Kiamba, 2008). However, every small battle won ensures that women in leadership are a step closer to winning the war for females fighting for their place in a pro-male society. These battles include but are not

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limited to patriarchy, societal prescribed gender roles, stereotyping, intersections of race and gender, loneliness, self-doubt, and stigma of affirmative action in organisational leadership (Faniko et al., 2017; Freischlag & Silva, 2016; Lewis et al., 2016; Martin & Barnard, 2013; Zuiderveld, 2014). P1 conveyed, *"... there are plenty of challenges, and it's complicated by race, by class, by culture, by all sorts of barriers."* Drawn from the narratives of the participants, their challenges are discussed below.

4.2.1 Patriarchy

Race and gender prejudices have their origins in deep-rooted patriarchy and stereotyping systems inherited from an era of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa (Mokoele, 2017; Ngunjiri, 2016). This deeply embedded patriarchal system that is prevalent in society is one of the most significant challenges for women in organisational leadership. It is visible in all spheres of society and creates an uneven playing field for women in corporate environments. Furthermore, it has its roots at home, which participants substantiated as follows: P1: "*… there's still a deep patriarchy that exists in our society"* and P2: "*… man is the head of the household."* It sprouts out into the bigger society, which inevitably encompasses the workplace. Prevalent at all levels in our society, patriarchy is, according to P1, "*an ever-revolving system,*" and it has transferred across generations.

P7 feels that our society's patriarchal system makes women fall victim to being *"tripled abused."* Women in organisational leadership are corporate leaders, mothers, females, and in all three roles, they are subjected to socially defined roles and expectations. Moreover, responsibilities for women in organisational leadership do not end when they leave the office. Their responsibilities continue into the household, where they are expected to run an effective home, prepare meals, clean the house and do the laundry. The deeply embedded patriarchal systems in our society are evident from the participants' narratives in Extract 8 below.

Extract: 8

P1: There's still a deep patriarchy that exists in our society, and I think, all

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the way from our homes to our communities, to our business organisations, to our national, kind of definition, of where women need to be in this world. I was already 28 by then. So, I was very late in life, and people start to worry about: 'Are you on the shelf now, or what's going on?'

P2: …. where you're always considered as the submissive, the man is the head of the household; you're a wife, you need to cook for your children, you can't work that late.

P3: I was socialised in a particular way, and my parents actually said, why do you want to go and study? You can get married, and all of that, but these issues are incredibly deep, deep, deep-rooted.

P4: Girls are expected to do the dishes, and the girls are expected to help with the washing and all of that. The boys go out, and they play soccer.

P5: … the sexual division of labour is deeply embedded in our society. My parents said to me, you're a girl, a boy MÚST, it's important for a boy to have an education because he must support his family.

P7: To understand, listen here, we are in a patriarchal, but how do you play this game so that you can get that position? Then, the patriarchal system, it's on all levels.

The participants stated that the education of females was not a priority in the coloured communities. The notion was that women should get married, have children and care for the family. On the other hand, families perceived men as the breadwinners, and therefore education was imperative to provide for the needs of the family. These kinds of stereotypes have not changed much over the years. Although more women are actively involved in the labour market, society still expects them to carry out their duties as the primary carer of the family (Cho et al., 2015; Farré et al., 2020). Stereotypes of women as carers hold relevance to women as child-bearers and wives (Mbajiorgu, 2017). Being a woman in leadership in a patriarchal society is challenging, but being a

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mother adds another dimension of difficulty (Cho et al., 2015). It is not always easy to balance the two, especially if a board consisting of mostly males approves employment policies, as conveyed by participants in the following extract.

Extract 9

> P1: … policies haven't changed, you know, it's not making it easy for them to be mothers and to be … high-performing executives, because the policies and processes are designed in such a way that it makes it impóssible for you.
>
> P3: I strongly believe; if it's a male dominant sitting above your head and they're writing the policies etcetera, it would be through their lens and nót considering, or thinking of, a female, environment. For example, when you design a building, súrely you must have breastfeeding facilities and making it accessible, but we don't have those options and being able to be flexible in your working hours.

Emanating from this, women are sometimes forced to make career choices and take less demanding jobs, usually in lower management, to care for their family, as conveyed by P3: *"So, I've resigned, so that I can have a less demanding job in terms of travelling and be more with my children."* The motherhood versus career conflict has long been employed to justify women's underrepresentation in leadership (Cho et al., 2015). Organisational cultures are slow to adapt to the needs of a female leader and still place high demands on women leaders (Kiamba, 2008). Such demands include organisations offering women promotions that involve relocation, expecting women to work long hours, or doing a lot of travelling that interferes with care responsibilities (Kiamba, 2008). Unfavourable organisational cultures may be seen as the "gatekeepers" that keep women on the peripheries and ensure that the top structures continue to be dominated and controlled by men (Kamberidou, 2010; Yaghi, 2017).

The participants in this study reported how men in organisations continuously challenge the authority of women in leadership because they still perceive women as followers and not as organisational leaders, as conveyed by P6: *"for the ladies, I think they have to wórk or próved*

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themselves, And, we accépt authority easier, easier than, than men, because I can give them an instruction and then they will do it, like, without even thinking about it. Where the máles, not that I bad mouth them, but they will always challenge you." These findings are similar to a study by Glass and Cook (2016), who investigated the experiences of 52 female chief executive officers (CEOs) employed in some of America's largest companies. Their study focused on CEOs' crisis appointments, their power and influence, and their companies' female CEO turnover. They reported that the study participants experienced resistance to their authority, particularly with older men who blamed them for replacing male CEOs. Consistent with Glass and Cook (2016), participants in the study provided their views on gender power struggles within the workplace.

Extract 10

> P5: … males reporting to me, will always, pushing the envelope with me.
>
> P6: … also, males they immediately get the respect because it's difficult for men to take orders from a lady.
>
> P7: … coloured men and Black men don't want to report to a woman.
>
> P9: … where the males, they will always challenge you; how they struggle actually, to take my leadership.

Also, concerning the general resistance from males in the boardroom, participants had power struggles with men at a lower management level, as conveyed by P5: *"males reporting tó me, will always, you know, always pushing the envelope with me."* Participants believe that society tends to respect men unconditionally, whereas women have to prove their worth to gain respect from colleagues. Participants expressed that this kind of behaviour is especially prevalent among Black African and coloured men. These power struggles are evident of the deeply rooted patriarchy in a society where men are seen as the head of the house and women as the stay-at-home caregivers (Kehler, 2001).

4.2.2 Societal prescribed gender roles

The participants in the study reported that societal gender roles played a significant role in

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the lack of advancement of women. For example, men are praised when they contribute to household duties, irrespective of how minuscule the contribution is, while women generally do so without recognition (Farré et al., 2020), as conveyed by participants in Extract 11.

Extract11

> P3: Yes, so, yes, society has a specific role, but you're a wife; you need to cook for your children…you can't work that late.
>
> P6: So my mother would, like, so what are the children going to eat? She perceives me as the provider; I need to provide the food, I need to cook the food; a man can't see to the kids' needs, but my husband is excellent.
>
> P7: … there's always an excúse for males if they do something—people will always applaud them if théy have the baby … or look after the baby, or do washing, or cooking, then they will get the applause. Women won't get it … it's just, they just need to do it. It's their jób.

It reiterates the gender-role divisions that society continues to uphold in modern days. Moreover, women are caught between balancing their dual roles as mothers and career women successfully (Cho et al., 2015). Furthermore, the unequal distribution of household duties between men and women adds to the stress and frustration of women. The underlying frustrations are evident from the following narrative articulated by P7: "*There will be males that say they're feminist, but their actions are totally opposite. They will say, oh, I'm going to look after the children, but it's for an hour. Look after the children for the whole… day!"* Recent research during the COVID-19 pandemic presents further evidence of women's frustration and stress because of the added household burdens with minimal assistance from their male counterparts (Etheridge & Spantig, 2020; Farré et al., 2020).

Despite conscious attempts to eradicate the inequalities that hold women back from reaching the upper echelons of management, gender inequality is still at high prevalence in society (Department of Labour, 2020). The practices of gender inequality continue to harm women's

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advancement in leadership (Egbuta, 2020). Furthermore, societal stereotypes and prejudices still determine how men and women are perceived by others (Brescoll, 2016). Gender identification emanates from cultural and social ideas of how men and women should behave (Meyer, 2016).

Participants acknowledged that a deeply rooted culture of prescriptive gender roles for men and women contributes to gender inequality that continues to keep women on the peripheries, as expressed by P2: *"Unfortunately, despite all the fighting of all the years, we still often find ourselves on the periphery as women."* It will require a real commitment, patience, and reconditioning of prejudices to facilitate change in society (Andrews, 2001; Egbuta, 2020). Not only in terms of what is typically prescribed as female and male responsibilities but also in how the different societal structures are perceived in modern times. Change in the construct of perceptions should start where it all began, as expressed by P4: *"… the church, communities have to play the role, and the schools."*

4.2.3 Gender stereotyping

Participants expressed that sexism still exists in the workplace, and they continuously have to deal with comments such as, P2: *"... it's a fémale thing, or females will do x, y, z ..."* and always have to prove that they are good enough to run a company. As a result, they felt they constantly had to go the extra mile to be considered equal and as valuable as their male counterparts in the workplace and society. Participants described their experiences in various ways, as presented below.

Extract12

> P1: you've always got to work hard to get in and stay in, but there's always this pressure that forces you out, [laugh], you know, … that wants to, wants to expel you from it, somehow, because you're not good enough, you know, you still got so much to learn.
>
> P2: You have to put in much more than your male counterparts.

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P5: I felt that I had to prove myself almost two hundred percent, versus others and I had to, even though I hád the competency, I would have to work over sixty hours a wéék in the office, and I found my experience works against a woman with a family.

P6: I feel I need to prove myself all the time.

P7: You have to prove yourself; I had to work my finger to the bone.

P8: And I feel many a time, as a woman, you have to work harder to achieve more. Uhm, and you have to show people that you also have the competencies and skills to do the job. When I started as senior manager, Uhm, where they were trying me, you know, in terms of like I was saying, then you think, okay, this guy is not listening, usually when you grow into something, like grow into management and into the post and then, when you start talking, now people are listening and say, okay the thing that you say can add value.

These quotations indicate the pressures that women still experience as a result of the deeply embedded patriarchy and stereotyping in our society. These findings show similarities to other research studies that women tend to undervalue their leadership because of the perception that men are superior to them (Doubell & Struwig, 2014). Therefore, they feel the need to work twice as hard to prove that they can be as successful in leadership as men (Cho et al., 2015).

As a result of stereotyping, women are inclined to limit personal goals and expectations (Festekjian et al., 2014). For example, attending a university was out of reach for many coloured women and therefore was not at all imaginable, as conveyed by P1: "*I wasn't supposed to go to university to start with, we need to go find a job to get on with it. As you know, that's the way it always is in our homes."* Those that were fortunate enough to attend university had limited career options. Career guidance at most previously disadvantaged schools was not well supported, and choices were mainly between *"a nurse, teacher, or policeman*", as expressed by P2. Participants in the study conveyed that growing up in these socio-economic environments contributed to their self-doubt, and they grew up believing that they should not want more.

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Similarly, fear of failing was another contributing element to the limited dreams they had for themselves, as conveyed by P4: *"... to, improve my maths, so that I can get university exemption. SOMEHOW, that was the vision that I had, I didn't see further… I probably just wanted to finish matric, 'cause otherwise I would feel like a failure."* In addition to the fear of failing, it would also have signified a wasted year during which they could have worked and provided financial assistance at home, as reported by one participant in extract 13 below:

Extract 13

> P1: My parents díd say to me that we don't have enough money for you for this, and we don't have four years for you to be at university. Uhm, if you're gonna do this, you're gonna have to work. And if you fail, you must just forget about it because we can't have you floundering, and…you should go work.

This fear of failing inevitably also transfers to the workplace, and P3 was of the view that "*… for a male to fail, it's nothing; for a woman to fail it's a HÚGE thing, and the criticism is more on you being a woman."*

For one participant, the motivation to achieve a tertiary education came from teachers in high school who believed she had the potential to be successful. P1 conveyed, "there *were two teachers who actually said to me that I've got the potential to do a lot more that I think I can; then I slowly started to learn the impossibilities were somewhat possible."* However, obtaining a tertiary education did not come without any challenges, as conveyed by the participants in extract 14.

Extract 14

> P4: So, I did a master's in Anthropology, but I never graduated, I never finished it, because of the struggle, because of the boycott and all of that, we kept being called away from our studies.
>
> P5: ...but during high school, I couldn't commute, because there was a boycott in terms of transport, so I couldn't even take a taxi, or a bus school. So, for long periods of time I

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> couldn't commute really to school, and I wasn't promoted in standard nine, which is grade eleven, and I had to repeat it.

As a result of these narratives, the career paths of the participants have been disrupted several times, and it took them many years to finally follow careers that complemented their dreams and their family needs. Although it took these women longer than anticipated to reach their goals, they believed it had some positive unintended consequences. They learned valuable life skills that helped them face adversities and practice successful leadership in corporate environments. P3 felt that her independence and resilience were built during that time and conveyed, *"I think the resilience grew over time, and I developed an independence and just that I knew, I'm gonnna push myself."*

Furthermore, many of the participants' career choices were influenced by their socio-economic backgrounds and political environment. As a result, their career options were limited. They either had to work full-time while studying part-time, acquire financial assistance through a state bursary that was available for specific professions or enter careers they otherwise would not have followed. For example, P1 expressed:

Extract 15

> P1: The most important goal that I set for myself as a young child was to finish my matric. I didn't really want to be a teacher, but actually, I didn't know what I wanted to do because I wasn't supposed to go to university to start with," and P6 "… never, ever a teacher. I don't wanna be a teacher. I wanna become a air hostess. And you know with the apartheid … It was tough for us to get into that industry.

Also, participants felt that women in organisational leadership sometimes give up because roles are determined and, as conveyed by P1: *"genderised"* within the constructs of stereotyping. For example, society expects men to be the head of the organisation and females to be the secretary or receptionist, as expressed by P6: *"... they sometimes mistake me as the secretary because they*

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see a woman must be the secretary …" and when these roles are reversed, the competence of these women is questioned.

These findings are similar to those reported by Idahosa and Vincent (2014) that organisations still expect women to take minutes in a meeting where all other counterparts are male. P8 further substantiates this notion: *"… up till today I did the minutes of the senior management because it's all-male persons."*

4.2.4 Intersection of race and gender

Coloured women have to navigate a double-edged sword; being Black and female. P3 conveyed, *"... our situation is very much complicated because it's race and gender. There are prejudices against women, whether they are good leaders, and there's prejudices against Black people."* Many studies reported on the intersections of gender and race as a challenge in women's leadership as one of many reasons why the pace of women, particularly Black women, climbing the corporate ladder is so slow (Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016). Coloured women have been burdened by the intersection of gender and race through a long history of racial stereotyping and apartheid in South Africa (Cole, 2009).

As previously discussed, the racial identifications of individuals impact many areas of a person's life. Most importantly, it compartmentalises people and based on the characteristics assigned to those compartments, people are stereotyped, mostly in a negative way (Auster & Prasad, 2016). Negative stereotypes have been reported to impact the way women in leadership are treated and consequently have a devastating impact on further career advancement (Ryan et al., 2007). Participants in the study expressed that they have been at the receiving end of bias and prejudice at some point in their careers as organisational leaders. The perpetrators did not always vocalise it, but they could feel it in subtle gestures such as being ignored in a group discussion or ideas and suggestions overlooked or being passed off as someone else's idea. P5 conveyed the following: *"I had the competency, I had the skills, I started to see the bias. I can also see the dynamics, how the power structures are skewed against people of colour, especially when you're in*

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leadership positions, how you get attacked. So, and I think that is also maybe part of what has inhibited me, maybe kept me back."

The experience of bias expressed by P5 is similar to the findings in a study by Mayer et al. (2018). The authors reported how it was evident that the different meaning-making of the women's experiences in their study was framed within a hierarchal power structure in South Africa. The hierarchal power structure includes not only race but also social status. The study investigated the management of diversity conflict by women leaders in organisations. Some of the women's experiences (coloured, Black, Indian and White) overlapped, but it was very different from each other in most cases. Similarly, the experiences of the participants in the current study differed in terms of individual interpretations constructed by their backgrounds and status in society. Curtis (2017) reported similar results upon investigating the experiences of eight Black women leaders in the UK.

4.2.5 Loneliness

Stainback et al. (2016) reported that the lack of women mentors has contributed to the challenging corporate environment for women leaders. Similarly, participants in the study expressed that organisational leadership can be lonesome. There are usually not many female executives in the same organisation to share experiences or ask for advice. P6 indicated: *"I will ask around, but I don't have a person that I can go to and say, listen, I'm struggling with this, how will you handle it?"* P7 shared this sentiment: *"... sometimes there is not enough support for women in leadership."* In most cases, participants had to rely on their intuition as the advice they received was from a male perspective, and they did not necessarily agree with the recommendations. For example, P6 expressed: *"... he will advise me, and sometimes I feel, no, but it is not my way of doing it, I don't agree; and if it's not a policy, then I go with my gut."*

Furthermore, persistent pro-male organisational cultures allow for the continuation of male-preferred business dealings (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011). These business negotiations typically occur on golf courses or in bars—an indirect method to exclude women from the upper echelons in

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the corporate environment (Glass & Cook, 2016; Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011). Being a female with family responsibilities automatically excludes women leaders from being part of the so-called "boys' club", as expressed by P7 in the extract below. The "boys' club" further adds to the isolation of women leaders, which enhances feelings of loneliness.

Extract 16

> P7: … is só much HÁRDER than being a male that can navigate, I'm going for a drink after work. I dón't go for a drink after work, I don't pláy golf, because where I want to be is at home and to sort out my household. The boys' clubs still SO MUCH exist.

The challenges women experience in leadership can be daunting and stressful, which can harm their health and ultimately impact their productivity (Muhonen, 2011). P1 substantiated this sentiment: *"I've seen a lot of people struggling with their health because of the psychological anxieties that come with this cónstant pushing and pulling".* In addition, researchers argue that depression emanating from unreasonable job expectations is one of the main contributing factors to the high turnover of women in corporate leadership (Glass & Cook, 2016; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Muhonen, 2011).

Another element that contributed to the feelings of loneliness was the socio-economic background of the participants. Being first-generation university graduates placed tremendous pressure on some participants to provide financial support to their families, especially those who came from low-income households. On the road to organisational leadership, they had to turn their backs on friends and family that could not support them emotionally and only saw them as an extra income stream. As P4 conveyed: *"... if you wanna lead the orchestra, you must turn your back on the crowd. You lose friends."*

Furthermore, their parents and family members could not relate to their challenges in corporate leadership and could not always perform their roles as informal advisors. P5 conveyed: *"... you can't even talk to them about discrimination, because in their mind, discrimination is maybe, getting a beating at home, or that type of thing. So, they can't really help you."* Even though

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the successes of these women were celebrated when they were the first ones in the family to obtain a university degree and pursue a professional career, this also resulted in them feeling isolated with no one in the family that understood their fears and challenges.

Another element contributing to loneliness in leadership is what participants view as the *"pull her down syndrome,"* as conveyed by P1. It is similar to what is described in the literature as the queen bee phenomenon (Derks et al., 2016). Consistent with the queen bee phenomenon, women in corporate leadership may feel that they have worked hard to get to the top and that other women should earn their place in the upper echelons. Their behaviour sometimes results in the eroding of confidence and increased isolation amongst other women in leadership (Derks et al., 2016). Extract 17 gives an account of the personal understanding of isolation as a corporate leader experienced by participants in the study.

Extract: 17

> P1: We know there are queen bees; a lot of women still think they have to behave like men in order to be incredible leaders. They see other women as a threat to themselves; begin to block the opportunities; they don't sponsor other women.
>
> P3: … the aspects of having role models. It's missing.
>
> P5: I wouldn't necessarily go and sit in cigar bars and all of those things. I just separated myself, and I still felt isolated.
>
> P6: … it's important to get yourself a confidant because it's a very lonely road.
>
> P8: … it's actually very lonely on top.

The participants' quotations expressed their feelings of loneliness and the absence of female mentors that would otherwise have provided a social network for women leaders (Cho et al., 2015; Stainback et al., 2016). Furthermore, mentors can be a valuable tool for women, mainly because they have the experience and can alleviate some of the doubt that other women leaders are struggling with since they might have experienced it themselves (Cho et al., 2015).

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4.2.6 Self-doubt

Self-doubt can be a very destructive behavioural characteristic for women in organisational leadership (Howe-Walsh & Turnball, 2016). Participants expressed that they believe their self-doubt was formed very early in their lives, and it is connected to societal prejudices that influenced how coloured women saw themselves. Extract 18 conveys this below.

Extract: 18

> P1: … sometimes, we don't believe in ourselves, hm, as much as we really should. hm, and sometimes, people give us those messages but don't even take it in, we don't take it seriously. Because, we, we really don't think that we're worthy. We grow up with inadequacies, we grow up with, you know, a little message that keeps on telling you, don't even think of doing that, don't even try. If you fail, you would look like a fool, you know.
>
> P2: … put in much more éffort, than your mále colleagues would have done, to receive the same recognition. And, hm, and now I'm álso in a male DÓMINANT environment. And I feel, gósh, I'm stíll trapped in this, in this place. [extended sigh/breaths out] And you sometimes, challenge yourself, ask yourself … you doubt your own ability.
>
> P4: … my peers were múch brighter than me. Ja, and I can actually, I'm sure I can even imperatively próve to you, that my peers were múch brighter than me.

They always compared their successes or failures to someone else's and didn't think they were deserving of successful careers. P2 conveyed, *"A big barrier for me is also ourselves; we don't believe in our own abilities."* This element of self-doubt transpired clearly in their careers as women leaders, as expressed by P8: *"… there were times in my life that I was saying, how come I didn't stay to be a manager,*" implying that it was more comfortable at a lower level of the organisation. They expressed that if they had chosen to stay at a lower level in the management

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chain, they could have minimised the added pressure of always having to prove their worth in organisational leadership, as conveyed by P8: *"…the buck stops with you, because, that is all my responsibilities. You know, you have to be there in the forefront, and you have to manage the challenges. It's áctually very lonely on top, it's véry difficult."* Instead, they focused so much energy on trying to be accepted that it added to their insecurities and the internal pressures they put on themselves. P3 expressed that all these pressures *"leads to burnout."* The tremendous amount of strain under which women in leadership have to perform, coupled with a lack of sufficient organisational support, ultimately leads to lower productivity and higher stress levels (Glass & Cook, 2016). For women leaders of colour, lower productivity usually is not seen within the context of unfavourable organisational environments but is discriminatively attributed to affirmative action appointments (Leslie et al., 2014).

4.2.7 Affirmative action

Affirmative action encompasses public policy measures designed to address the historical marginalisation of members of certain groups, such as racial minorities and women (Deshpande & Weisskopf, 2014; Hideg & Ferris, 2017). Affirmative action is a term that is often viewed with mixed emotions. The marginalised groups on the receiving end of affirmative action feel that their qualifications and competence are viewed with suspicion by the opposition groups, and therefore they do not receive the recognition or respect they deserve. Black people (Black African, coloured, and Indian people), especially women in the upper echelons of management, are sometimes perceived as unskilled and unfit for the job and, as a result, have to endure the explicit and subtle questioning of their competence (Leslie et al., 2014). According to P3, this perception particularly applies to Black female appointments and not so much for White and male placements: *"I have experienced it when women have been appointed there's many times the questions, why were you appointed? It must be affirmative action. I don't experience a lot of that when it's white and mále."* Yet again, their place in the upper echelons of leadership is compromised, and they have to prove that they belong there and that they are capable of doing the job.

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Although the intentions behind affirmative action policies in South Africa are to correct the wrongs of the past, it has been stigmatised by society and used to add another label to previously disadvantaged groups (Durrheim et al., 2007). This notion is reinforced by pre-existing societal prejudices and stereotypes, as conveyed by *P5: "I think our country's dynamics, our racial history, our colonial history, is very much adding to it."* For these reasons, affirmative action does not sit well with coloured women in leadership. P4 conveyed, *"The reason why I hate affirmative action is that it is patronising to me; When they appoint you here, 'dan moet jy bly wees dat jy ge-recognise word' (*translation: then you must be glad you are being recognised*), it's a favour."* Extract 19 provides the views and experiences of participants in the study concerning affirmative action.

Extract: 19

> P1: Unfortunately, you put people in positions but don't create the culture that allows them to progress.
>
> P3: And I knew that there were people who thought: Why were you appointed? You're probably an affirmative action appointment. But hopefully, people over time understood I brought a range of competencies.
>
> P4: I know that affirmative action can work well if you implement it properly, but if I am known as an affirmative action employee, I don't want that stigma attached to me. I want to come into an organisation as an equal. And you deal with me as an equal. That stigma stinks. 'Jy moet dankbaar wees dat jy daai job gekry het.' (Translation: You must be grateful you got the job).
>
> P5: I think people of colour were brought in so that they could, because of their influence, potential influence with government. I also found that the Black and coloured people did not get the opportunity to get training, certified training, which my White counterparts would get.

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Participants acknowledged that they might have been employed based on affirmative action, but they did not allow it to tarnish their sense of career accomplishment. The women in the study proudly conversed that their career history speaks for itself in most cases, and organisations headhunted many of them for high-profile positions in parliament or predominantly male organisations. P3 expressed that she was headhunted for the most senior position in an organisation where the staff composition was *"very much male-dominated, it's very much Whíte dominated."*

Even though affirmative action prejudices are not always vocalised, women in the study conveyed that they could sense that some of their colleagues thought they were only appointed to redress inequality in the company. Participants in the study also questioned the authenticity of certain affirmative appointments. Their perception was that some companies selected previously disadvantaged groups to secure financial assistance from the government. For example, South Africa has a system whereby the government incentivises companies to employ people of colour (Alessandri et al., 2011). The devaluation of their skills resulted in bias, and participants observed how their White colleagues obtained learning opportunities that could improve their career advancement chances, while coloured people were deliberately excluded from such opportunities.

4.3 "We are being moulded"

When the participants were asked to describe their leadership journey, one described it as the moulding of clay.

Extract 20

> P2: I see it as clay because we are being moulded. And if you put pressure to the one side, it pops out on the other side. And, I think, in today's environment, that we are being moulded quite a lot. And the shape that you come out with is how you respond to that pressure that's been put onto you.

The leadership journey of participants was not without challenges. P5 conveyed that "*it was very difficult, very challenging."* Being a woman in organisational leadership demanded many personal sacrifices, and these leadership demands forced them to develop tools that could assist

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them in navigating leadership challenges. Amidst all these struggles, they refused to be seen as victims based on their skin colour, as conveyed by P7: "*I don't see myself as a victim of colouredness."* They want their contribution to society and female leadership, in particular, to make a difference and pave the way for other women in leadership.

4.3.1 Leadership formative years

The participants used their adversities and crafted tools to help them navigate pathways to successful careers in the upper echelons of the corporate environment. They communicated adverse circumstances that laid the foundation for their leadership journeys in Extract 21 below.

Extract: 21

> P1: … interesting journey for me. It's been a journey that I absolutely didn't in the beginning ever imagine was going to be possible for me, coming from where I come from. I grew up in the Cape Flats, which back then, were under the old regime of apartheid, and coloured people were also pushed to the periphery and put into environments, that were not well supported, lack of access to all sorts of things, including, education health, jobs, and a lot of socio-economic challenges, like gangsters and drugs, domestic violence, rape, lack of hope, lack of opportunity for a large proportion of the people.
>
> P2: You sit sixty people in school, I walk to school … rain, sunshine or weather, there's no playground, there's no grass at your school, you just go and get taught, and that's it. And half of your school career gets disrupted.
>
> P3: I grew up in District Six, lived in Mitchells Plain, lived there. I think it's been quite an extraordinary journey, and I think a lot had to do with the way, also I grew up. I grew up in a home where there wasn't much money, but there was an emphasis that we can achieve.
>
> P4: … my leadership was also formed in my father's church.

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P5: … Because we didn't grow up in a household where you, where you even get money, pocket money, or where you get presents, you don't get that. And I worked from standard, in standard six, I even had a part-time job, at Dischem, for instance, in Athlone. I would work so that I would have money to buy me stuff and when it was Mother's Day or something, I could buy my mom… I was always independent, somehow.

P6: I feel that my parents forced me into directions that I didn't want to go into. But, any case, good thing.

P7: I grew up in a coloured community; that was my formative years.

Extract 21 gives an account of the formative years of their leadership journey. For many of the participants, their leadership journey was unimaginable, mainly because of their socio-economic circumstances and lack of career opportunities for previously disadvantaged minorities. They all agreed that their leadership journey started at home, influenced by their parents and their socio-economic difficulties. Many of them grew up in poor communities, but they were determined to uplift themselves and escape the cycles of generational poverty. All participants grew up in areas previously known as coloured areas, scourged by socio-economic challenges such as under-resourced schools, gangsterism, drugs, domestic violence emanating from an era of apartheid in South Africa (Trotter, 2009).

During the struggle for democracy in the 1980s, many of the women in the study actively participated in the fight. This period marked a turning point not only in their leadership development but also in their education, as expressed by P4: *"I always say to people, there's also a way in which apartheid thrust greatness on people."* Some of the participants placed a big emphasis on the University of the Western Cape (UWC) as instrumental in their career development and shaping their leadership. UWC is a university that was the preferred higher education institution amongst previously disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape.

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4.3.2 Education and social cohesion

Extract 22 indicates how education and social cohesion played an instrumental role in the leadership development of the study participants.

Extract: 22

> P4: Jakes Gerwel came, who was the ultimate vice-chancellor that gave us our voice, and I think that's why UWC is an important institution to give coloured women that presence, 'cause they're not going to get that anywhere else.
>
> P5: … if it wasn't for UWC at that stage, I would never have been able to even afford the opportunity of further studies.
>
> P7: And then I went to UWC; again, I was in student politics. It trained me, the UWC in the '80s was the most wonderful training ground for us to take over as leaders. Because the only place where Black people and coloured people, and Indian people can be was at UWC. So, we were trained in leadership.

The opportunity for leadership development did, however, come at a cost to some of the women in the study. Their newfound leadership opened their eyes to the injustice around them. They developed a sense of responsibility to fight for justice and equal rights in South Africa, as conveyed by P1: *"Because in the 80s, when I became aware of this… discrimination, I really became to understood, how this apartheid system was set up, and embedded, in our society, and in our hearts and in our mind."* The women were involved in the struggle for equal rights and a democratic country to the extent that one participant was imprisoned for several months.

In the 1980s, their education was disrupted in ways that forced some of them to leave the country, continue their education overseas, or find employment. They had to choose between an opportunity to escape the cycle of poverty by continuing their studies abroad or having the comfort of a familiar environment but risk continuing the cycle of poverty. Some of them had no choice but

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to leave their family and study abroad. Those that were not so fortunate had to repeat subjects and dedicate an extra year to their studies. Education was not only disrupted for those actively involved in the struggle but also for those living and attending school in these communities where uprises were the order of the day at the time. One of the participants at the time of the uprises was in high school and had to repeat Grade 11 due to violent outbreaks in communities that disrupted transportation at the time.

4.3.3 History and culture

To diminish stereotypes and prejudices, the South African government implemented several commissions, as stated by P3: *"Constitution and we've got institutions, like the Human Rights Commission and the equality court and the Gender Commission*." Stereotypes and prejudices, however, are so deeply rooted in our society and continuously influence our interactions with others (Burr, 2015). How we see others and interpret situations reflect our perceived reality concerning the reality of society (Cunliffe, 2016). These realities seemingly affect the experiences of coloured women in organisational leadership in South Africa, as expressed by P3: *"Our racial and our sexist, our patriarchal structure, does influence a lot how people view women leaders in society."*

Women in leadership are part of society, inevitably influenced by their environment (Burr, 2015). P7 conveyed, *"You can't talk things in pockets, you cannot talk about female leadership at a workplace if we don't deconstruct our society."* Family, community, and society inevitably influence organisational leadership, as P8 expressed: *"The issues that is in the community will always affect you."* This statement suggests that when individuals enter the workplace, they have preconceived ideas and prejudices about women's leadership (Wood, 2019). Similarly, the social context of women in leadership determines their experiences and behaviour (Burr, 2015). Participants in the study conveyed that leadership is not a silo but is a social, interactive process. P2 reiterated this notion: *"All organisations are made out of people, and people, where do people come from? It comes from society, it's part of, that I'm a person, I'm part of a family, how I grew up, and what Í believe in. That I do take back to the work."* Participants believe that organisational

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leadership is almost inseparable from societal leadership as people carry the same values and beliefs irrespective of where they are employed. How coloured women in leadership make sense of leadership experiences is constructed within a framework of complexities of social, cultural, political, and historical events (Beyers, 2009).

The following narratives indicate the interrelatedness of the outside world and individuals in organisational leadership as perceived by the participants in the study.

Extract: 23

> P2: I think, what gets role modelled in your house environment spills over to you as a person, what gets role modelled in your community spills over, influence you as a person. That you take into your work environment and now it's various influences.
>
> P3: … we are shaped very much by the institution. I think in all cases, you influence the institution, but the institution also influences and, in a sense, you grow together.
>
> P7: … how are you raised at home, how is the gender balance that you're looking at? If you are living in a patriarchal system and if you are, if you grew up in patriarchal systems and in cultural backgrounds, where females are seen … they must be submissive, that's going to play out in the workplace as well.

These deep-rooted societal perceptions and prejudices not only influence how coloured women in leadership manage themselves but also how they manage interactions with role-players in the corporate environment and how these role-players respond to them. The colonial history and racial segregation in South Africa perpetuate the practices of patriarchy and racial prejudices within the workplace, and it will take time for people and organisational structures to change (Mokoele, 2017; Ngunjiri, 2016). P3 poses the following question: *"If you are socialised in a particular way, why do we think that 1994 would change that overnight?"*

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Despite all the policies and laws promoting race and gender equality in South Africa, coloured women in leadership are continuously fighting against predetermined societal stereotypes and socialisation (Healy-Clancy, 2017; Nahomie, 2014; Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012; Wilmot, 2014). P3 conveyed, *"... the colonial history of South Africa is also contributing very much to the challenges that people face in the workplace as leaders."* P7 supports this sentiment as she conveyed that *"if you don't understand the diversity of South Africa and also people, you won't be able to lead your people."* P1 echoed the same feeling: *"... people saying apartheid is over, and we must move on. It's not over. It's still very much alive."*

The following extract reflects how history and culture influenced the choices of the participants to take a stance as leaders in society and fight for an equal and democratic society.

Extract: 24

> P1: But 1980 is about the big, the big educational turmoil that took place. I was a student; I was in my first year. I started to link the dots between the socio-economic, the political and my own social dispensation, and WHÝ started to make much greater sense to me in terms of: What was réálly going on in my community? Why would so many poor people? And why were there so many unemployed people? And, suddenly I realised why are so many people drinking so much alcohol, and why are there so many arguments in people's homes? And I became a little bit of an activist because I mainly realised that we've got to fight the changes. We can't continue to, to live with the scourge, you know? Because of the, all the protestation on campus. And the conflicts, and my parents were worried that I would be put into jail. And I was becoming a little too, you know, outspoken on things and so on. Long and the short, it was that I then had to cancel my registration of my bursary and find work.

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> P3: I became an activist, like many people my age when we were at high school, we already developed a bit of a consciousness, shall I say, gender consciousness, a social consciousness, we already became aware of oppression and exploitation and so forth. I went into detention because of that, and I was in prison for four months and then another five, four and a half months. There were people who were killed around me.
>
> P4: I thought the only way I'm going to get a master's, is by going away because the UWC was topsy-turvy, very volatile, we were all involved in the struggle, but your own life suffered, your own development as an academic suffered.

Participants in the study felt that democracy came at a cost, and it did not deliver the results they expected. They believed that perceptions and racial biases had not changed much since South Africa became a democratic country; women are still fighting to find their place in society, and communities are still in dire states of poverty, as conveyed by P3 in the extract below.

Extract 25

> P3: …there ís something about the past that we wanted a particular society. And there ís some frustration that's sitting with me, that we're not there. We've given so much of ourselves for this country. And then, the reality of young people, the reality in our province is appalling!

Post-apartheid did not bring the expected social and economic changes for coloured people in South Africa (Adhikari, 2009a). Instead, it appears that the marginalised feeling they felt during apartheid continued into the new democratic society and was further perpetuated through the upholding of government racial markers (Adhikari, 2004; Rudwick, 2010).

Being coloured women in leadership in a country with a history of apartheid automatically placed the participants in a position of responsibility. A study by Mayer, Oosthuizen, et al. (2017) indicated the sense of responsibility and Black women's need to be constructive, contributing

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members of their social groups. The participants felt responsible for the well-being of others, especially the vulnerable and the less fortunate. The leadership style of Black women is typically built upon the need to serve and empower others (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2013). This feeling of responsibility for the participants in the study came from a place of fighting for democracy and the freedom of the previously disadvantaged, as conveyed by P4: "*I actually see myself as somebody fighting for coloured people's rightful place in the new South Africa, while I uphold the notation, coloured*." However, she also expressed that South Africa has asked too much of her, and she felt helpless because the fight for democracy did not ensure equal opportunities for all racial groups, as conveyed in Extract 26.

Extract: 26

> P4: 'Ek's moeg vir Suid-Afrika' (translation: I am tired of South Africa). The thing about South Africa is it consumes you, and because I'm alert to what's going on, South Africa won't leave me alone. I have to leave South Africa if I want to rest and if I want to break. We fought for democracy, but we haven't enjoyed it. You keep on feeling guilty that you're privileged, you keep on feeling you have to do something to make the country better. I think I'm past that feeling of wanting to contribute.

4.3.4 Sacrifices

For women, leadership success normally comes at a price (Faniko et al., 2017). It requires them to invest more time fighting the workplace challenges, resulting in less time with family (Faniko et al., 2017). Career women continuously have to navigate between family responsibilities and career success (Kantamneni, 2020). The narratives in Extract 27 reflect some of the participants' sacrifices in their leadership journey.

Extract: 27

> P4: After a year, I walked out because I couldn't stand the corruption that was going on there. So, as sad as it was, I learned a lot in a short time.

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> P5: I've never just studied. I've always worked two jobs. I had two jobs while I was studying. I couldn't even sit with my child, like, I couldn't sit with my child during her primary school years, or her high school years, or her varsity years, and sit with her.
>
> P6: I cried many a night. I cried, I sat up till two o'clock at night. I used to sit with the little one on my lap because she used to wake up because Mommy is not there.

At times, the participants' leadership journeys forced them to make personal sacrifices that were costly either to themselves or their families. It also forced them to choose between compromising personal values and sacrificing high-profile careers that did not align with their moral values. Favourable organisational environments and supportive relationships are vital for women to rise above the barriers that prevent them from experiencing ultimate career success (Doubell & Struwig, 2014).

4.3.5 Learning

Participants believe that female leadership also provides opportunities, such as becoming role models for other women, mentoring and empowering younger women leaders, but above all, breaking down socially accepted stereotypes. Furthermore, successful leadership is usually associated with specific behaviour and achievements. Offermann et al. (2020) argue that upbringing and social environments are the main determinants of women's leadership achievement, while their inclination to succeed is less significant. Participants in the study further conveyed that successful leaders never operate in a silo, as teamwork and social support are critical elements in maintaining leadership success. They embrace collaboration with others and feed off social support for emotional strength.

Successful leadership encompasses a variety of influences that include but are not limited to technical skills, people skills, and management skills, as conveyed by P2: *"… you need technical skills, you need to do report writing, you need to communicate, you need to work a computer. But,*

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it's much more about your ability to influence and enrol people into your idea." However, they agree that leadership is much more about self-awareness and relationships with others.

It requires women in organisational leadership to employ a holistic approach to leadership, as expressed by P7: *"Leadership is not just the business plan that you need to implement; it is actually what do you give leadership to as a wholeness in a company on so many levels."* Taking on the leadership role in corporate demanded these women to shed their prejudices and be open to learning self-awareness and how to control their emotions. Participants placed great emphasis on the importance of learning as a critical component to the success of their leadership as well as mentorship, positive environments, and successful leadership attributes.

According to the participants in the study, education is vital, but the most crucial component to successful leadership is the element of continuous learning, whether it is formal or informal knowledge. Education was influential in the sense that it was a means to escape poverty. It liberated them from narrowmindedness, and it prepared them for advancement opportunities, as expressed by P8: *"... coming from the history of not being exposed to training, I must establish myself."*

P3 believes that knowledge is forever evolving; therefore, leadership requires continuous learning and reintervention. She conveyed: *"we would need to do particular interventions, to help us develop some of the capabilities, that we may have missed out."* Participants valued the importance of continuous learning for several reasons: to stay relevant in their careers, to stay abreast of things, to be of benefit to others, and be able to assess and manage their environment. Being in a leadership position is a learning school by itself and directly affects organisational leadership's success, as conveyed by P6: *"... what you put in, is what you get out*."

According to the social constructionist theory, changes in the environment would influence the women's perceptions in the study (Burr, 2015). Participants conveyed that they cannot be rigid in their thinking and expect things to stay the same. The corporate environment is always changing, and therefore they have to continuously learn, as stated by P2: *"... the self-awareness, the listening to others, it's very important, and being around, being on top of things*." Challenges within the

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working environment provided opportunities to learn to improve their navigation skills. Working as a female within a corporate environment that comprises individuals with different backgrounds and prejudices require women to navigate within that space of diversity, as conveyed by P8: *"… using that environment where you are, to learn …*" and P7: *"You come to understand, diversities is not just about black and white. Diversities is about understanding disability, understanding women and males' needs, and to come to understand how do we fit into the world, in order to give leadership."* Extract 28 accounts for the participants' perceptions of learning as an essential element of successful leadership.

Extract: 28

> P1: I've got to keep the pencil sharp all the time.
>
> P5: I knew I had an affiliation with education. Somehow, it had brought me out of the life I knew, it was the pathway out of life, out of the poverty, or the background where I had come from.
>
> P7: As a leader, if you have arrived in South Africa, then, or in Africa, or in any other place, my good grief, then you must go sit at home and because you learn every single day something.
>
> P8: I have to work on myself. I was saying to myself that 'if you are insecure, then you are not a leader.'

Not only did they have to learn how to work with others differently, but they also had to learn about self-awareness. Several other learning experiences included what made them angry, how to control those emotions, how to realise when societal prejudices influenced their leadership, and how to be more present as a woman in corporate leadership. It corresponds with studies in mindfulness, positing that women leaders need to be attentive and aware of how their emotions impact others. (Leroy et al., 2013). In addition, they believed that self-acceptance and confidence are other crucial elements for successful leadership, as expressed by P6: *"I believe that if women can first find themselves and start to believe in their own competencies and skills, and don't focus*

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*on negative perceptions that people have about you."*Furthermore, having people in their lives that believed and supported them was very significant to their leadership success.

4.4 "Finding people who believe in you"

The women in the study stressed the importance of surrounding themselves with inspirational people; people they can look up to; people that cared about them, as expressed by P1:*"… finding people who believe in you and all of that, that's so important, and so it's part of the success."* Having people in their lives that had confidence in their capabilities and motivated them to be successful provided them with a robust and supportive foundation, as conveyed by P1*: "… happiness isn't all that much about material acquisition. It's really about having wonderful relationships with people.*" This foundation included positive relationships with teachers, spouses, family, and organisational superiors.

4.4.1 Mentoring

Mentoring and supportive relationships have been documented as instrumental in women's leadership success (Doubell & Struwig, 2014; Jenni, 2017; O'Neil et al., 2015). Participants underscored mentoring as an essential element for successful leadership. They expressed that mentorship provided an opportunity to improve their leadership skills, to reflect, and have an open and honest conversation about their strengths and weaknesses. Mentoring is seen as a mutually beneficial relationship that occurs within a trustworthy, encouraging environment that fosters a culture of learning whereby individuals are motivated and guided to reach a particular goal (Sharma & Freeman, 2014). P1 defines mentoring as follows:

Extract 29

> P1: A developmental opportunity for somebody, to learn very specific skills that will enable them to grow and thrive, where you set a learning goal with key objectives that need to be achieved, key activities, looking at all your options, looking at what you're willing, not willing to do.

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Depending on their needs and motivation, individuals usually choose between mentorship, sponsorship, and formal education as an avenue for leadership development. Sponsorship involves support from individuals within organisations that are more experienced and very influential in individuals' career advancement (Sylvia et al., 2010). P1 described sponsorship as follows:

Extract 30

> P1: I look out for you. If there's a position available, I want somebody to know that they must think about you first for that next position. And if somebody says she's not ready, not good enough, I say she is. A sponsor is somebody that really just cares and really wants to see you grow and willing to put themselves on the line for you.

The women in the study expressed the need for female mentors in leadership. It concurs with other women leadership studies highlighting the value of female mentorship (Jenni, 2017; Ngunjiri, 2016; Zuiderveld, 2014). The lack of female mentorship in organisational leadership was one of the challenges the participants encountered. The women conveyed that female mentors would have provided them with the platform to converse about female struggles in the workplace. Those who did have the opportunity to have female mentors in their leadership development saw it as a critical contributing factor to their corporate leadership success. It also motivated them to become role models for other women in organisational leadership and create a more female-inclusive organisational environment.

Although they wished for more female mentors, they acknowledged the importance that both male and female leadership's influence added to the diversity and richness of their leadership development. It allowed them to learn leadership skills socially assigned to both men and women, which added to their versatility as leaders in the corporate environment. Both genders were equally influential in their leadership growth and development, as conveyed in Extract 31.

Extract: 31

> P2: I dó have a male mentor. His role in shaping in terms of who and what I am is related to more of hardcore. So, for me, I think it's important that you

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have a female mentor that can help you, just things that you are better relate to.

P3: I now look at my development, I mean I was shaped by both men and women leaders, you know. I think if I had just been exposed to one gender, if I just had women leaders, I think I might have missed out, I think just to be exposed to one type, is limiting.

P4: I was the young, coloured girl amongst a whole lot of Afrikaner men. The irony was that these conservative Afrikaner men really liked me and gave me the space to develop.

P7: Men are not going to train women, effectively; they're not going to add the other emotional intelligence stuff.

P1 expressed that female mentors were more hands-on in her development, while male mentors gave her more leeway to figure out the answers to her development needs. Having mentors who were confident, competent, and not threatened by the success of their colleagues ensured that these women received authentic leadership development and not a watered-down approach with no transference of essential leadership skills. The study participants believed that it is possible to become successful in leadership without mentorship, but it will be difficult as leadership is all about continuous learning, getting feedback, and working on personal shortcomings.

4.4.2 Positive environments

The women in the study further emphasised the impact of the working environment on their leadership success. According to the social constructionist theory, a key component in shaping individuals' realities is the dynamics of the environment at any given time (Burr, 2015). A more conducive environment motivated the participants to acquire the necessary mastery to move up the ladder and become successful organisational leaders (Doubell & Struwig, 2014). These environments provided a safe space where organisational dynamics exposed them to different skills, and mentors gave them the leeway to determine their leadership destiny. Their leadership journey

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sent them on various career paths, and in the process, they crossed paths with people who were instrumental to their leadership success. Extract 32 provides an account of their narratives.

Extract: 32

> P1: … these teachers said to me, go home, go talk about going to university to my parents. So, I was so excited, so affirmed, and so overwhelmed by the whole idea, and I really wanted to grasp this thing and make it work.
>
> P3: I've got supportive family who are encouraging.
>
> P6: I thought, I'm just gonna do it because I have a husband behind me. He motivates me; he let me believe that I am the best.
>
> P8: When I have an environment where a person believes in me and give me scope to even, whenever I even failed to be successful, but I still have that scope that a person believes in me.

The women in the study expressed their belief that they build trust when building relationships, which was crucial to venture into unknown territories. Moreover, a safe, positive environment was more important than financial wealth acquisition to these women, as expressed by P8: *"… although the salary is not so big, we have great people relationships; I also knew, here I have a very safe environment, I'm happy*." Similarly, a non-supportive relationship can be detrimental to a career in leadership, as expressed by P7.

Extract: 33

> P7: …when you have a problem at home, and you maybe don't have a supportive husband, when it comes to management, you obviously do have more responsibilities, and sometimes you have to work overtime on weekends in some organisations, right? So, when you don't have a supportive husband, it has a huge impact because you're always on edge.

Furthermore, growing up in a nurturing family and having their parents as role models laid the foundation for the participants' overall leadership development. Their parents role-modelled

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high moral values, punctuality, resource management, and compassion for others. These characteristics greatly influenced their desire to exercise the type of leadership whereby they could be of service to others, as conveyed by P1: *"... to show an act of kindness to people every day and as far as you possibly can..."* and P2: *"…* to *be of service, and that has been very high all my life."* Also, it influenced their ability to deal with challenges in the face of adversity. Leadership behaviour and development are greatly influenced by upbringing and deeply embedded within the social environment of individuals (Elliott & Stead, 2008).

These kinds of support systems pushed them on an upward climb, which played a significant role in their leadership success.

4.5 "It's very easy to slip up and say, I can't do this"

Participants in the study articulated that specific personal characteristics and motivations helped them succeed in organisational leadership. It includes elements such as learning, perseverance, mindfulness, and empathy.

4.5.1 Learning

Although the participants did not view formal education as an essential factor in leadership success, they conveyed the benefits of continuous learning. They found that the influence of technology especially has a direct impact on a changing work environment, and what they learned years ago might be irrelevant today. P1 expressed that the *"... world is moving at an incredible speed. Technology and disruption is all around us; you must learn to be on top of our game*." To be successful in leadership, they must be willing to stay current and be adaptable to changes within the corporate environment.

4.5.2 Perseverance

Being a woman in leadership comes with its own challenges. Participants expressed that sometimes they had to fight back the tears, bite their teeth, and carry on, regardless of the humiliation or pain they suffered. They credited their ability to persevere to their upbringing and

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what they learned from their parents. Being able to persevere and persist during these trying times made them stronger and gave them the ability to perform their leadership duties successfully.

However, there were times when they doubted their leadership capabilities, as conveyed by P1: *"... it's very easy also to slip and say, sjo, now, I can't do this."* Researchers posited self-doubt stemming from unfavourable organisational environments as a major contributing reason to the high turnover amongst women leaders in corporate environments (Cook & Glass, 2013). Women in leadership also continuously have to deal with questions concerning their leadership capabilities (Ibarra et al., 2013). Even when others questioned and scrutinised the participants' abilities to succeed at their job, they persevered and achieved various recognitions as exemplary women in leadership.

4.5.3 Mindfulness

As conveyed by the participants, conflict comes with human interaction. They believe that in South Africa, where societal prejudices of different racial groups significantly impact working relationships within organisations, the impact of diversity demands women to deal with conflict effectively and fairly. Participants emphasised the importance of mindfulness in conflict management, as conveyed by P1: *There's always somebody who chips away, you know, and you just need to be mindful of how you respond to that,"* and P2: "*If we can learn to práctice our self-awareness more, práctice mindfulness more, you know, práctice what it means to have presence more, Uhm, so, I think that is the one thing about the aggression and the hostility."* Researchers stressed the value of mindfulness in conflict situations in women's leadership (Fries, 2009). It allows the person to control situations, be aware of conflict triggers, and react appropriately to such situations (Fries, 2009).

P3 conveyed that *"... self-awareness, and awareness of others, and learning to manage and regulate emotions, is a RÉÁL BÍG THÍNG*". They did not want to be put, as stated by P7: *"... in a box by saying that: oh, she's that, she's screaming, she's shouting*" and be labelled as "*stereotypical screaming and shouting women"* because, as P1 conveyed: *"they still think that women, you know,*

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trý, or women are too emótional, or women are too…, if you, speak out too much, you're too bóssy, or you're too assertive, you're aggressive." They had to learn to control their temper so that they did not become irrational or emotional, as expressed by P2: "*I would very, very, very seldom in my long, you know, working life, I've very, I very seldom lose my temper. I do, but I very seldom."*

Being in control of their emotions and temper allowed them to decide how they would react to certain situations and individuals and not allow the situation to determine their reaction. Participants further conveyed that some people's inherent nature is to avoid conflict, and therefore they sometimes let go of an idea they believe in to keep the peace. However, to be noticed as a leader, these women had to learn how to navigate conflict and deal with it accordingly. Participants had to learn to pick their fights according to the necessity and importance thereof. That way, they could influence the environment to be beneficial to their advancement in organisational leadership

4.5.4 Empathy

Participants expressed that they deal with human beings daily, and it is crucial to be sensitive to others' experiences and cultures, as conveyed by P2: *"I often look at people, and I say, 'I wonder why?' That I can deal with people and then try and put myself in their shoes, I understand where you're coming from."* The motivation to try and understand the reasons behind the actions of individuals had its origins in the upbringing of the participants. Many of the participants felt the need to help others, whether it was motivated by personal struggles or the desire to be successful in their careers. However, it can also be ascribed to elements commonly associated with women leaders, such as consideration for others, attentiveness, and being people-oriented (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Duehr & Bono, 2006).

Similarly, participants expressed how important it is for leaders to sometimes take a step back before going on the attack when colleagues do not deliver the expected results, as communicated by P7: *"*I *was intolerant. And then I realise I need to take sometimes 20 steps back. To breathe, to understand, that person don't have the experience of diversity that I have."* Although it is essential to be empathetic to others' situations, it is also sometimes necessary to be vigilant of

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how others could exploit the situation, as conveyed by P7: *"Because I've béén through such a lot, it's also sometimes my downfall, because then I see how people can take advantage. Then I need to have a boundary around me."* For the participants, empathy involves understanding others and understanding how personal decisions impact others around them.

4.6 Conclusion

This study had five main themes" "weaponisation of race", "battle of war", "we are being moulded", "finding people who believe in you", and "it's very easy to slip up and say I can't do this". Participants agreed that their leadership development had its origins at home, reinforced by supportive parents. Their parents role-modelled specific behavioural characteristics that helped them develop their leadership, such as independence, perseverance, resource management, punctuality, kind-heartedness, and good work ethics. They brought these characteristics to their leadership. It was instrumental in their leadership development, and it guided them through difficult times in their life, either personal or work-related. It was also a significant determining factor in their leadership style, which was more collaborative for most of the participants.

Participants in the study further conveyed that a significant factor influencing their leadership journey was the history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. Therefore, the word "coloured" evoked different feelings when asked if they identify as members of the coloured ethnicity. Participants referred to themselves either as coloured or Black. Growing up in "coloured communities", plagued with various socio-economic problems, reinforced their determination to escape a life of poverty and become successful women in their own right.

Stereotyping associated with certain minority groups added to the already existing challenges they have experienced in leadership; therefore, it was crucial to learn how to navigate diversity in the workplace. The introduction of affirmative action in the workplace made them targets of verbal and non-verbal abuse. People questioned their competence and the merit of their appointment and expected them to fail in their roles as organisational leaders. The devaluation of their leadership competencies resulted in the desire to prove their worth as women leaders, and they

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had to work twice as hard as their male colleagues. Consequently, their family lives suffered, and at times they had to sacrifice high-profile jobs to accommodate their family's needs or to avoid compromising their moral values.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

The participants in this study provided a rich account of their experiences as coloured women in leadership. They provided detailed descriptions of their leadership influences, leadership journey, and the challenges they encountered, mainly rooted in societal stereotyping emanating from a history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. This study's findings are consistent with many other studies in South Africa focusing on Black African women's leadership challenges, and the challenges recorded included patriarchy, stereotyping, and intersectionality of gender and race (Festekjian et al., 2014; Mokoele, 2017; Ngunjiri, 2016; Wood, 2019). Intersectionality is a phenomenon where particular political and social discrimination overlaps, for example, discrimination against gender and race, as experienced by coloured women (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Grzanka et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the findings also correspond with studies in America where participants reported that discrimination is not direct but through subtle looks, total disregard of ideas, and being ignored in a group, known as microaggression (Basford et al., 2014; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007; Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). Evidence from the current study proves that people belonging to the same racial group may share similar experiences but interpret them differently, based on internal and external variables, including age, experiences, socio-economic status, and political environment. The political environment and history of South Africa, in particular, played an instrumental role in how the women in the study make meaning of their experiences as coloured women in leadership in South Africa, especially within the context of carrying the status as an intermediate racial group.

This chapter highlights the limitations and implications of research findings in this study, followed by the recommendations for future research on women in organisational leadership.

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5.1 Limitations of the study

The study's most notable limitation was that participants in the study referred to themselves as coloured and Black women. Referring to themselves as Black women appeared to be less of a complication than referring to themselves as coloured. Interestingly, though, when they referred to themselves as coloured women, they talked about personal issues. However, when talking about general topics, they would refer to themselves as Black women. As a result, a substantial portion of their leadership narratives spoke to the experiences of coloured women under the umbrella of being Black. This notion confirms evidence in research studies that a history of colonialism and apartheid created a construct theme called coloured and that it is not a race in itself, creating confusion for people considered to be part of that ethnic group (Bosch, 2014).

The study sample consisted of eight women in leadership in the Western Cape. Phenomenological research aims not to generalise findings but to explore individual experiences within a given context (Davidsen, 2013). Although the sample was small, it generated rich accounts of the participants' experiences in leadership. Moreover, this research was necessary as it contributes to the limited research documenting the experiences of coloured women in leadership. Research suggests similar challenges as experienced by the study's participants for women leaders from other previously disadvantaged groups (Jaga et al., 2018). However, this study could not confirm it since women leaders from other racial groups were not part of the study.

Another limitation was the time lapse between scheduled interviews. Participants were required to partake in three separate interviews of 90 minutes each with one-week intervals. It was not always possible, mainly because of the participant' busy work schedules. Some of the interviews were scheduled for December, but participants postponed until January. Most of the participants took a holiday break in December and felt it necessary to reschedule the interviews. In some cases, there was a two to three interval period between interviews instead of the one-week interval period as proposed. As a result, the interview process took place over a longer period than

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initially planned. Participants had to be taken back to where the conversation ended with the previous interview.

After conducting the first interview, I realised that two interviews would be adequate to generate sufficient data for the study. Furthermore, one of the participants preferred to meet at a coffee shop, which was somewhat noisy and very distracting. The other participants chose to have interviews at home or in the workplace. At times, however, participants were interrupted by their staff or children. As a result, the flow of the conversation was disrupted, and it took some time for them to gather their thoughts after such disruptions. I had to remind two participants where they were in the conversation before the interruptions. These interruptions broke the participants' thought patterns and may have reduced the narrative of that particular discussion.

It is important to highlight that although participants were fluent in English, for some of them, it was not their first language, and at times they would express themselves in Afrikaans. These instances were minimal, but it is important to note as it might have tempered the participants' spontaneous thoughts.

Furthermore, utilising the snowball effect as a method to recruit participants for the study resulted in some participants having a connection with each other. Consequently, they shared specific experiences. For example, they graduated from the same university; they participated in the apartheid struggles during the 1980s, and there were times when they supported each other in their careers. However, I could not establish whether their shared experiences emerged from the social cohesion they found by attending the same university, predominantly represented by coloured people, or because they all shared the same goal: living in a democratic South Africa. The results might have differed if participants from other racial identities or residing in other provinces of South Africa were included in the study.

Participants were also of similar age, except for one participant who was younger than 45 at the time of the interviews. The younger participant did not always share similar experiences as the older participants. For example, she had no reservations about being called coloured and did not

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share the same negative connection to affirmative action. She believed that affirmative action provided her with opportunities she otherwise would not have had. For her, it was much more about having a choice and that people choose their destiny. It must be highlighted that she was the only participant in the study whose mother had a professional career as a teacher, which might have altered her thinking about available opportunities. The other participants came from different circumstances with parents who occupied mostly non-professional positions. The social construction theory outlines how the internal (subjective thinking) and external (social environment) influence individual realities (Burr, 2015; Fine, 2015). However, it was not possible to confirm whether the younger participant's views were influenced by age, social background, or any other variable.

5.2 Recommendations

This study did not include women in leadership from other racial groups; therefore, it would be interesting to compare the experiences of coloured women in leadership to those of other previously marginalised ethnic groups in the Western Cape. Similarly, it would be valuable to compare female leaders' perceptions of a younger group to an older age group.

As mentioned, when I asked the women in the study if they identify with the coloured ethnicity, I received mixed responses to the term “coloured”. As much as the ambivalence emanates from a long history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, it would be valuable to study the emotions the word “coloured” evokes in a younger group of women, especially those born in a democratic South Africa.

At the time of writing the research report, one participant emigrated to live with her only daughter in America. She mentioned it during her first interview, which was why I could not conduct the third interview with her. The main reasons she was emigrating were to spend more time with her daughter and grandchildren and her disillusionment with promises of advancement opportunities for all people of colour by the democratic government in South Africa. Another participant left her job as the only female leader in her district after sacrificing so much to reach the

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upper echelons in her field to start her own business. It would be interesting to learn why women leave leadership after making all the sacrifices and seemingly succeeding as leaders in corporate environments.

It is also recommended that companies adopt female-centred leadership training, especially for new leaders. Moreover, it should have a focus on the collaborative relationship aspect. Participants conveyed that they have experienced that younger leaders typically have a disconnection between business knowledge and human behaviour knowledge. According to the participants, it is valuable to have an education, but it is essential to learn about personal shortcomings, diversity in the workplace, and relationships with other people. The women expressed that their vast experience in different industries and leadership training provided them with the skills to find the balance between the two elements (business and human), which are vital for women to succeed in leadership.

5.3 Conclusion

This study aimed to generate a rich understanding of the experiences of coloured women in leadership positions in South African organisations. The findings of this study correspond with many national and international studies concerning women in leadership. What manifested from the women's narratives was that although headway has been made in advancing women to the upper echelons in organisational leadership, women are still confronted with age-old practices of patriarchy and stereotyping.

These age-old practices influenced how participants perceived events at certain times in their life. However, a negatively perceived environment does not necessarily forecast adverse events. For example, growing up in an environment plagued with socio-economic challenges did not dictate their life journey, but they used it as a platform for success. Furthermore, a support system, such as encouraging parents, family, teachers, or superiors who motivated and believed in them, reinforced their success platform. It determined how they would treat relationships and face adversities later in their careers as women leaders. Therefore, a supportive environment is

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considered the most vital tool for women to succeed in leadership.

Another critical driver that impacts the experiences and, to a great extent, the development of coloured women leaders in South Africa is a history of colonialism and apartheid. Emanating from that, coloured women in leadership are experiencing the impacts of being part of an intermediate race. They are also confused about where they fit into the racial hierarchy, coupled with their disillusionment with advancement opportunities for all previously disadvantaged races in the new democratic South Africa. These influences create unique challenges for coloured women in leadership in South Africa and need more in-depth research.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Participant Consent

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Phenomenological investigation into the experiences of coloured women in organisational leadership in the Western Cape

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Louise Lestrade (BA Hons Psychology), from the department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University. I am a student currently working to fulfil the requirements of a master's degree in psychology. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a coloured woman in organisational leadership in South Africa.

This study has been approved by the Humanities Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Stellenbosch University and will be conducted according to accepted and applicable national and international ethical guidelines and principles.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences, challenges, facilitators to success and coping strategies of coloured women in their roles as corporate leaders.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in three separate face-to-face interviews of 90 minutes each which will be audio recorded. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place most suitable for you.

In the event of emotional discomfort during the interview process, I will stop the interview and will only continue when you are ready and agree to continue the interview process. If you require counselling after the interviews, I will make the necessary referral to Lifeline or FAMSA,

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organisations in the Western Cape that provides counselling services free of charge. Lifeline can be reached at 021-461 1111 and FAMSA at 021-593 8074. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time.

The potential benefit of this study is that it will contribute to the dearth of studies focusing on coloured women in leadership in South Africa and there is no compensation for participation in this study.

Any information that is obtained about this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and there will be no mentioning of your name or place of work. To ensure trustworthiness of the data, I will use a codebook to make connections to names and places. This codebook will be kept separate from the data collected. All recordings, field notes, transcriptions and the code book will be in a locked cabinet in my supervisor's office at Stellenbosch University. The electronic version of the transcripts, research report and other study documentation will be stored on a password protected computer to which only I will have access to. This information will be collected via audiotapes and will only be accessible to me and people working on the research project.

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. All data collected up until your withdrawal, will only be used with your permission. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and remain in the study. I may, however, withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

MS. LOUISE LESTRADE (Masters Student in Research Psychology, Department of Psychology)
Contact details: 073 077 9361
Email: 1160683@sun.ac.za
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Contact details: 021 808 3456
Email: alesch@sun.ac.za
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Matieland
Stellenbosch,
7602
South Africa

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Louise Lestrade in [*Afrikaans/English],* and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

____

Name of Participant

______________________________________ ______________

Signature of Participant **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to __________________ [*name of the participant]* She was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English*]

______________________________________ ______________

Signature of Investigator **Date**

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Appendix B

3-Series Interview Guide

Interview 1: Demographic information and women's experiences as organisational leaders

1. Could you please provide your age and current marital status?
2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
3. In what industry do you work? (Employer type, and how long?)
4. What does the position which you occupy at work entail? (responsibilities and duties)
5. How would you describe your journey to a leadership position?
6. What are your thoughts about women in organisational leadership?
7. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

Interview 2: Challenges and facilitators to the success of women in organisational leadership

1. How do you make sense of traditional gender roles that prescribe what women and men should and should not do?
2. How would you describe your experiences as a senior leader in your organisation?
    1. Probe: barriers, facilitators
3. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

Interview 3: Coping strategies and factors that influence these coping strategies?

1. How do you define successful leadership?
2. How do you deal with difficult situations at work?
3. How do you manage to continue your journey as an organisational leader?
4. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

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Appendix C

Research Ethics Committee Approval Letter

UNIVERSITEIT
STELLENBOSCH
UNIVERSITY

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC Humanities New Application Form

18 December 2017
Project number: 0446
Project Title: Phenomenological investigation into the experiences of coloured women in organisational leadership in the Western Cape

Dear Ms Louise Lestrade
Your response to stipulations submitted on 20 November 2017 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities.
Please note the following for your approved submission:
Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
27 July 2017	26 July 2018

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.
If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (0446) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.
Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.
FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Research rotocol/Proposal	Coloured women in leadership_for REC_29 June 2017	05/07/2017	
Informed Consent Form	Consent Form - REC 2017	05/07/2017	
Data collection tool	Interview Schedule - REC 2017	05/07/2017	
Default	REC Response	14/08/2017	

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If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.
Sincerely,
Clarissa Graham
REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.
The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1.Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2.Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

3.Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4.Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5.Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current
Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6.Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouche within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of

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a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7.Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8.Provision of Counselling or emergency support. When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9.Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions or interventions) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10.On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

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Appendix D

Transcriber Confidentiality

DECLARATION OF CONFIDENTIALITY HELD BY THE TRANSCRIBER

Date: 6 November 2018

To whom it may concern.

I, Julia Handford, herewith declare that I have maintained and will maintain confidentiality with regards to the content of the interview recordings received from Louise Lestrade for the purpose of transcribing the content from .WMA files to MS Word. I have since completion of the project and after confirmation of receipt by Louise Lestrade deleted all copies of the .WMA and MS Word files in my possession.

Yours truly,

JULIA HANDFORD

[MBA | BCom (Fin Acc) | BSc (Hons) | HED]

Signature and credentials of transcriber