

**Curtin Business School**

**Sustaining Career Success: Senior Management  
Women Careers in the Resources Sector of  
Western Australia**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Business Administration  
of  
Curtin University**

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## **Declaration**

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

### **Human Ethics**

This research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number #GSB17-12.



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**Tracy Hui Ling Hopkins**

12 December 2017

## Abstract

Historically, women have been an underutilised resource in the workforce. Until relatively recently, their absence has been a part of a product of gender discrimination. Gender equality initiatives have provided more opportunities. However, certain sectors still show a strong gender imbalance. This study explores the work experiences of successful women in senior management roles in an historically male-dominated sector of Western Australia. The main research question underpinning this study was, ‘How do women in senior management positions sustain and develop their careers in a male-dominated sector?’ To answer this question, in-depth semi-structured interviews with thirty-one top executive women in the resources sector were conducted. Findings revealed that participants perceived career success in their male-dominated workplaces to be contingent on a) believing in oneself, b) the belief of others in you, and c) overcoming barriers. Participants valued the availability of three particular opportunities for navigating their challenging workplace: mentoring, professional development and networking. Participants perceived these complementary opportunities as crucial for career advancement. Career success in male-dominated workplaces is depicted in the Weaving Model. The Weaving Model has the potential to offer guidance for professionals in a position to support the career development of women in male-dominated environments. This study concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for employers, women and further research.

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## Abbreviations

<b>BBC</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CME</b>	The Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia
<b>FWA</b>	Flexible Work Arrangements
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PD</b>	Professional Development
<b>SACS</b>	Social and Community Services
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>WGEA</b>	Workplace Gender Equality Agency

## List of Iterative Testing

The following articles, newspaper articles, radio interview and conference presentation are part of the iterative research process as part of the testing of the findings.

### Journal articles

Teo, <sup>1</sup>Tracy, Linley Lord, and Margaret Nowak. 2014. "Career Success: Leadership of Women in The Resources Sector of Western Australia." *World Review of Business Research* no. 4 (2):160-75.

### Newspaper articles

Teo, Tracy, and Kate Emery, 2015. "Work discrimination: Mine Women have to dig deep." *The West Australian*, August 4, 2015, 3. Source: <https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/wa/a/29171142/women-have-to-fight-harder-than-men-for-mining-careers/#page1> )

### Radio Interview

Teo, Tracy. 2014. "*Women in leadership with reference to the resources sector.*" FM89.7 Radio Interview by Clive Haddow. Perth W.A., June 4. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGaah1H56R4>

### Conference presentation

Teo, Tracy, 2013. "*Women's Careers Crossroads in the Resources Sector of W.A.*" The International Leadership Studying Conference - "Leadership at the Crossroads". 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> December, Curtin Business School, Perth W.A.

Teo, Tracy, Linley Lord, and Margaret Nowak. 2013. "*Sustaining successful leadership careers: Top management women in the resources sector in W.A.*" 4<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Business Research Conference, Research for Development, 30<sup>th</sup> September – 01<sup>st</sup> October, Singapore.

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<sup>1</sup> During the course of my Doctorate of Business Administration journey, I remarried. I changed my name from Teo to Hopkins in September 2015.

## **Industry Presentation**

Hopkins, Tracy, 2017. "*Building an inclusive culture through mentoring and sponsorship*" BHP Diversity and Inclusion Board Meeting. 8<sup>th</sup> November, BHP, Perth W.A.

Hopkins, Tracy, 2017. "*Building and Sustaining Careers: Stories from Women in the Resources Industry.*" Women in Mining Western Australia (WIMWA) Networking Event. 17<sup>th</sup> February, Curtin Graduate School of Business, Perth W.A.

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To the 31 women in this study who allowed me to be a part of their lives and spoke with such passion about their careers, I thank you. Without your stories, this study wouldn't have come to life. Your words are powerful as you shape, mould and impact young men and women of the future. It is because of people like you that continue to make a difference in this world that others gain inspiration.

To finish off, I leave you with this phrase from a card my daughter Michelle gave me:

*"Success is when you have your feet on the ground."*

# **Chapter 1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Researcher's background and purpose of the study**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the researcher's background and her purpose for conducting this study.

I was the founder and CEO of a Training College that I established in 2003 and sold in 2017. I was selected as a finalist in the Western Australia Telstra Business Women's Awards in 2010, the organization was also honoured as a finalist for the same awards in 2011.

As the CEO for 15 years of my own rapidly growing organisation, I have often wondered how other women in similar executive and senior management roles ascended to their positions and sustained a passion for their work as I found it challenging in my own experience. I was also curious whether they enjoyed their current high-ranking positions. Based on my time spent at the Telstra Business Women's Awards, it was clear that each of the women being honoured had inspiring backgrounds. Through this study, I aimed to learn from these women and share their lived experiences of attaining and sustaining their success (Haddow 2014). Thus understanding how senior women conceptualised their success and maintained their passion for work was my motivation for this research.

I can confirm that I have taken appropriate steps to ensure that any biases have been addressed as part of the research process as indicated below and discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter. The company I was involved in was a Vocational Education Training Industry and I have no connection to the resources sector. Thus, I confirmed that I do not have any strong feelings or biases towards the study.

## **1.2 Women's Success Celebrated**

The 2010 Telstra Business Women's Awards<sup>2</sup> luncheon was an event I will never forget. The room was filled with women who were highly driven to excel in their careers, despite the challenges they confronted. The luncheon enabled my fellow honourees and me to share our trials and celebrate each other's achievements. I was truly energised by the group of women that I stood amongst as a finalist for an award.

On the eve of the luncheon, all finalists attended a workshop where we shared stories from our developing careers. As driven business women, we shared a common goal to advance in our industries and be role models for younger generations of women in business. The fact that we came from many diverse industries did not matter.

During the awards luncheon, the state winner from the resources sector was announced. In her speech, she indicated that there were only a handful of women leaders in her sector. I instantly became curious about what the professional lives of these women had been like because, so few reach the senior management level. How did they sustain and develop their careers in a predominately male industry? What were their obstacles and what enabled them to succeed? How did they define career success in a male-dominated industry?

Meanwhile, I felt troubled that I had not heard about the success of the few executive-level women in the industry before. Why was such success overlooked rather than widely celebrated? I resolved that I needed answers to my questions. At this point, I decided to undertake research on women in senior management roles in the resources sector.

## **1.3 Reasons for the Study**

My decision to study the resources sector coincided with a critical shortage of skilled workers in the resources sector (Deloitte Access Economics 2016; Department of Local Government and Communities 2016; Eggleton 2011, The Chamber of Minerals 2015). For the purpose of this study which is focussed on Western Australia,

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<sup>2</sup> The Telstra Business Women's Awards program is Australia's longest running and most esteemed women's awards program. Recognising and rewarding the courage, leadership and creativity of Australia's and Asia's most inspirational business women, the awards empower women to take pride in their achievements and encourage them to set bold new goals for the future.

the resources sector is defined under Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) in Division B Mining with subsection that include coal mining, oil and gas extraction, metal ore mining, non-metallic mineral mining and quarrying and lastly, exploration and other mining support services (ABS 2013).

In his review Eggleton estimated that by 2015, the resources sector in Western Australia would open up 94 resource projects requiring at least 250,000 workers to fill the vacancies at the time. Moreover, he estimated a capital expenditure of \$173.5 billion by the same year (Eggleton 2011). These forecasts did not come to pass. During the final stages of writing this study, the resources sector took a downward turn. Commodity prices of natural resources including coal, gold, and iron ore began to decline in 2014 as China's economic growth slowed. Iron ore went from trading at \$180 per tonne in 2011 to a value of only \$50 per tonne in 2015, while thermal coal declined from \$150 to \$60 per tonne (Critchlow 2015). Layoffs and pay cuts inevitably followed this sharp decline in an industry that had once accounted for 65 percent of the country's foreign trade (Critchlow 2015). By November of 2015, Western Australia faced its highest unemployment rate in 13 years at 6.4 percent (Perpitch 2015).

Before this downturn, women were recognised as an underutilised resource. Thus, women filled some of the skill shortages in resource projects (Eggleton 2011). It was proposed that, with more women in the workplace, business goals would be met. Specifically, several researchers posited that this would in turn lead to a highly productive, balanced, and dynamic workforce (Eggleton 2011; Morrissey 2011, Wynn 2011). Finally, they suggested that Western Australia's economic success and competitiveness would be sustained as a result (Eggleton 2011; Morrissey 2011; Wynn 2001). Following the downturn, employment in the industry did decline. The Department of Mines and Petroleum in Western Australia stated that, in 2015, the mining industry employed 105,922 people compared to its peak of 108,975 in 2014. In terms of this research, the data collection phase predated the downturn. The impact of the downturn on the gains made by women in senior roles in the industry is not considered in this thesis.

This research will help current and emerging women leaders in the resources sector and contribute to knowledge about women in senior management roles. As discussed in Chapter 2, while there is considerable research on the barriers faced by



women in the workforce, relatively little has been undertaken into the contributing context and individual agency exercised by women who have achieved senior roles, how they sustain themselves in senior management and what the success means to them. This side of the story is important because not only does it add to existing research, but it could alter the narrative that being a woman in a male-dominated sector is difficult by explaining how and why the struggles for success are worth it. This contribution can help support women in their careers by providing a better understanding of what can be expected and most importantly how to prepare for the challenges. It also has the potential to help organisations address some of the structural and cultural barriers that have, and which continue to impede women's career success.

## **1.4 Overview of Women in the Workforce**

This study focuses on how women in senior management roles develop and sustain their careers in the Western Australian resources sector. To understand this context, it is necessary to first consider some of the key aspects that have helped shape the Australian labour market. The following section discusses gender segregation within the Australian workforce, how women are impacted economically, the lack of promotion to leadership roles and a lack of diversity in decision making (Australian Human Rights Commission 2017).

This is followed by discussion of past gender inequities involving women in the workforce including workplace and workforce segregation. The segregation of women within the workforce has taken several forms, including occupational segregation, horizontal segregation, and vertical segregation. Each of these forms of segregation is discussed in the following sections with a particular focus on the implications for women in senior management.

### **1.4.1 Senior Management Roles**

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) is an Australian Government statutory agency. It was established under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* and has responsibility for promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces.

The Act covers registered higher education institutions and organisations that employ 100 or more employees in Australia. These organisations are required to report to the Agency on their actions and outcomes to achieve workplace gender equality. As part of their reporting requirements WGEA identifies and defines five standardised occupational categories. These are

- a. CEO or equivalent
- b. Key management personnel (KMP)
- c. Other executive or general management
- d. Senior managers
- e. Other managers.

WGEA also state that “a manager does not need to be responsible for people to be defined as a manager” (WGEA 2017, 1).

For the purpose of this study senior manager refers to WGEA’s first four categories which cover managers and leaders whose responsibilities can include both strategic and operational functions.

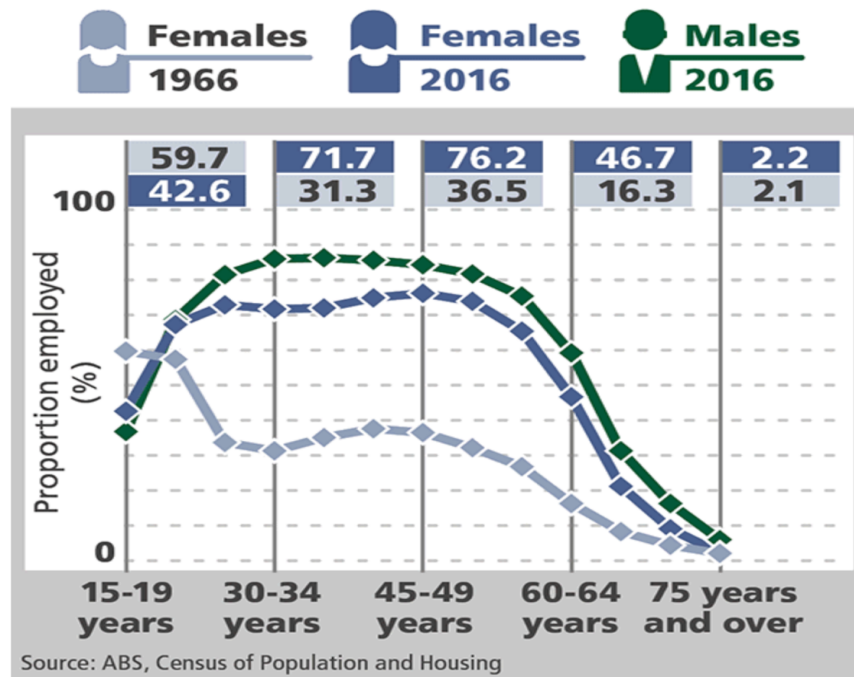
Thus, the women interviewed in this study held roles which were either senior management/executive roles or senior technical roles: the latter did involve responsibility for projects, equipment and other employees. For the purpose of this study as noted above, the nomenclature used throughout to describe the roles of the women interviewed is ‘senior management’.

#### **1.4.2 Australian Labour Market**

Labour economics is defined as “the study of the labour market where the buyers and sellers of labour interact to determine the wage and the quantity of labour bought and sold” (Norris et al 2005, 2).

Australian Bureau of Statistics data show the dramatic changes, in women’s participation in the workforce in the 50 years since 1966. Figure 1.1 below shows the proportion of people employed in the different age groups. Women’s employment has changed from 1966 to 2016 across the life span. The 1966 data shows that women’s employment peaked at in the 15-19 years bracket with just under 60 per cent in the workforce. This had dropped to just over 31 percent in the 30-34 age bracket, this

decrease in workforce participation is usually associated with child bearing. Whilst there is some increase again in the mid-forties age brackets participation again fell sharply as women approached 60+ years. This pattern was very different to men's pattern of workforce participation. The 2016 data shows a very different picture with women's participation following men's pattern much more closely (ABS 2017).



**Figure 1.1** Proportion of male and female workers in the workforce from 1966 to 2016.  
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017, Census of Population and Housing, Australia.

### 1.4.3 Inequality in the workplace

As shown in Figure 1.1 above the labour market in Australia seen a marked increase in women's participation.

However, despite the introduction of equal employment opportunity legislation at both a national and state level designed amongst other things to improve employment outcomes for women, workplace discrimination has persisted (Busch and Holst 2011; Kunze 2008). Women remain underrepresented in senior management roles and continue to earn less than their male counterparts (Hegewisch and Hartmann 2014; Skates 2014; Todd and Eveline 2004; WGEA 2017).

Discrimination occurs when employees working in the same job role are not provided equal opportunity to develop their skills or knowledge or are financially

rewarded differently (Norris et al. 2005). Gender segregation also occurs when there is the unequal access to certain job types or industries (Norris et al. 2005).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>3</sup> provides various metrics on labour trends worldwide (2017). One of its metrics ranks countries by its percentage of women on board in publicly listed companies (see Error! Reference source not found.). The OECD's 2017 report indicated that Iceland and Norway outperformed the OECD countries, while Japan and Korea were at the bottom. Australia ranked in the middle of the country comparison at number fifteen, on the border for OECD average. These rankings reveal that several highly developed countries, Australia included, are gender segregated. The report also shows that Australia lags most in vertical segregation (see Section 1.5.2), indicating clear room for improvement.

## **1.5 Occupational Segregation**

Occupational gender segregation has been more pronounced post-industrialisation when labour in factories and manufacturing was clearly divided by gender roles (Gonäs and Karlsson 2006; Siltanen, Jarman, and Blackburn 1995; Walby 1988). Occupational segregation is an important aspect of gender segregation that occurs when industries, or positions in the labour market, are disproportionately dominated by one gender (Dockery and Buchler 2015; Grey-Bowen and McFarlane 2010; Hegewisch and Hartmann 2014; Rawstron 2012). For example, nursing has historically been dominated by women, whereas construction work has been dominated by men. Most importantly, women have been historically limited in their choice of work, restricted to only a few types of jobs that were made available to them. Occupational segregation generally takes one of two forms: horizontal or vertical segregation (Dockery and Buchler 2015). Each is discussed in the following sections.

### **1.5.1 Horizontal Segregation**

Horizontal segregation occurs when particular categories of employment are culturally assessed as belonging exclusively to one gender and a lesser or higher value

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<sup>3</sup> The Organisation for Economic Development (OCED) was formed in 1960, with 18 European countries, the United States and Canada to create an organisation dedicated to economic development. Currently, there are 35 Member countries globally (see <http://www.oecd.org/about/membersandpartners/>).

is accordingly attributed to that occupation (Dockery and Buchler 2015; Harrison 2004). Stereotypically segregated women's occupations include cleaning, nursing, school teaching, basic retail, and childcare (Cahn 1994; Griffiths 2006). Occupations dominated by women have attracted lower wages than those dominated by men (Cassells, Duncan, and Ong 2016; Reeson, Measham, and Hosking 2012). This occupational separation contributes to an attitudinal bias that interferes with women's achievement by furthering the discriminatory perception that female roles are of less value than male roles (Dockery and Buchler 2015).

### **1.5.2 Vertical Segregation**

Vertical segregation occurs when both genders work together in similar roles, but advancement opportunities are significantly less for women (Blackburn, Bradley, and Jarman 2001; Bourdieu 2001; Dockery and Buchler 2015; Reskin 1993). For example, a man and a woman might both hold mid-level management positions at a given organisation. The man is more likely to be offered opportunities for professional advancement and to move into a higher management position than his female counterpart (Pattenden and Brereton 2015). This has the effect of assuring that the higher levels of executive management are dominated by men in many industries. Vertical segregation is particularly salient in the resources sector where the labour force is traditionally male dominated (Dockery and Buchler 2015; Pattenden and Brereton 2015). Such segregation also contributes to the gender pay gap given that women are not equally represented in higher-ranking, full-time positions and as such continue to earn lower wages than men (Hegewisch and Hartmann 2014; Hegewisch, Williams, and Henderson 2011; Thompson 2016).

## **1.6 Australian Trends in Occupational Segregation**

According to a study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in the mid-1980s, Australia had one of the highest levels of occupational gender segregation among industrialised countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2012).

A 2012 study by Rawstron in Australia found evidence of persistent gender-based discrimination and occupational segregation. Trends in employment between the mid-1980s and 2010 showed an increase in female participation in occupations

which were considered predominantly female and a decrease in the number of women workers in predominantly male occupations.

Vertical segregation is particularly prevalent in Australia. While women in Australia comprise 45.9 percent of the full-time labour force (ABS 2015a), only 3.5 percent of CEOs of ASX500 companies are women (Cassells, Duncan, and Gao 2014; Teo, Lord, Nowak 2014). The experience of women in these positions is therefore of much interest given their significant minority status.

It is clear that horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the Australian workplace negatively influences the careers of women. Research has found that vertical segregation often results in female employees being subject to a number of disadvantages (Blinder 1973; Busch and Holst 2011; Kunze 2008). These disadvantages are further confounded by and intertwined with the gender wage gap so that women are more likely to experience barriers and obstacles that impact on their career opportunities and career success and the remuneration they receive.

### **1.6.1 The Gender Pay Gap in Australia**

Australia's persistent gender pay gap is deeply rooted in the nation's history of wage legislation. Gendered wage determination was first legally mandated by the Harvester judgement in 1907. The court decision, which ruled that employees' wages should be determined based on their financial needs, essentially dictated that a man needed to provide for his whole family while a woman only needed to provide for herself (Norris 1993). Women were thus mandated to be paid 54 percent of a man's wage. Since these gender-differentiated pay rates were attached to occupations instead of individual employees, those in male-dominated occupations received the highest rates while those in female-dominated occupations were paid the lowest rates (Todd and Eveline 2004).

The Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission<sup>4</sup> made several rulings in the late 1960s and early 1970s related to wage determination based on gender. In 1969, the first ruling mandated equal pay for equal work, but it only applied

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<sup>4</sup> The Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission was established in 1973. It effectively replaced the functions of Commonwealth Conciliation & Arbitration Commission.

to those women working in male-dominated industries or occupations that were classified at the highest pay rates. This ruling impacted a mere 18 percent of the entire population of female employees (Deery and Plowman 1985). In 1972, the Commission extended the 1969 ruling and eliminated the gender-based occupational classifications, thus mandating equal pay across all occupations and industries (Todd and Eveline 2004). However, when the pay rates were changed for female-classified occupations in order to follow the ruling, they were often relegated to the lower salary ranges relative to the pay scales for male classified occupations. This practice therefore perpetuated the wage gap.

Subsequent rulings in 1973 granted an equal minimum wage for Australians regardless of gender and, in 1974, the designation of "breadwinner" in the male wage classification was eliminated. According to the Australian Workers' Union, despite these additional judgements, the wage gap still hovered around 17 percent in 2012. The Fair Work Commission (previously Fair Work Australia), a national tribunal for workplace relations, was established in 2009. The Tribunal issued its first equal pay ruling in 2012, which mandated a pay increase of up to 41 percent in industries that were historically female occupations. The ruling mainly applied to those in the social and community services (SACS) sector, which the Tribunal argued was associated with "care" work that has traditionally been categorised as female. After the passage of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Commonwealth Consolidated Act), the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) now requires annual reporting from every organisation with 100 or more employees regarding their efforts to narrow the wage gap and minimise gender inequality in the workplace (Commonwealth Government of Australia 2012).

Despite ongoing governmental efforts, the social norms of gendered wage determination are so deeply entrenched that its legacy persists today. Todd and Eveline (2004) suggested that the Australian Federal government's continual depiction of the typical woman worker as a part-time income earner "does nothing to encourage the parties involved in pay setting to think otherwise" (34).

It is notable that as of 2015 the pay gap appears to have increased slightly where comparing the average full-time weekly wages of men and women as reported by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). According to the 2015 figures,

the gender pay gap in Australia is approximately 17.9 percent. This roughly equates to women earning 84 cents for every dollar earned by men (Chamberlain 2016). Research also found that full-time Australian male employees received higher pay than full-time female employees in every area of employment (Cassells et al. 2009; Miller 2005; Preston 2003). Finally, data indicates that the pay gap was even more amplified in management roles (ABS 2015b; Cassells, Duncan, and Ong 2016). This is discussed more in depth in Chapter 3.

### **1.6.2 Western Australian Women's Pay Gap**

As noted above (in Section 1.6.1), Western Australia, has a much more pronounced gender pay gap than the national average. In 2014, Western Australia had the largest pay gap in the country at 25.4 percent. This equates to Western Australian women earning approximately 75 percent of men's weekly average wages (Department of Local Government and Communities 2016). This gap is mainly attributed to the greater prevalence of male-dominated, higher-paid industries such as mining, as well as male predominance in higher-paid roles within these industries (Department of Local Government and Communities 2016; Fitzsimmons and Callan 2015).

The vertical segregation in Western Australia is particularly notable, because it has the lowest number of women in senior management roles in the country. Women only occupied 7 percent of directorships, 1.6 percent of CEO positions, and 1.3 percent of Board chairs in organisations within the state (Skates 2014). This is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Within this context, thus, an exploration of the experience of women who have challenged the occupational and vertical segregation within the resources industry has the potential to provide important insights on how women who are in senior management sustain career success.

## **1.7 Research Aims and Objectives**

The levels of gender inequality in Western Australia, and in the resources sector in particular, highlight the unique positioning of women occupying senior level positions in the sector. Although much research on women's leadership and career barriers has been conducted over the past five decades, there remains more limited



literature regarding how women in senior management roles actively sustain their careers in the resources sector (Bagilhole and White 2011; Chapman and Luthans 1975; Eagly and Carli 2007a; Envick and Langford 1998; Joshi et al, 2015; Peterson and Runyan 1993; Teo, Lord, and Nowak 2014, 160). Eagly and Carli (2007a) note that women face significant challenges and are less successful in progressing into senior management roles especially in male-dominated work environments. Current research suggests that women appear to get stuck at the middle management level and face difficulties obtaining further promotions (Eagly and Carli 2007a; Teo, Lord, and Nowak 2014, 160).

A study of the lived experiences of successful women at the senior and executive levels of a male-dominated sector could elucidate the nature of the barriers they have faced and of the agency they have exercised to achieve success at comparable levels to men. It could also help both men and women understand how a more equitable work experience can be created and sustained going forward. As such, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of women in senior management roles in the resources sector in Western Australia. Accordingly, the main research question for this study is:

**How do women in senior management sustain and develop their careers in the resources sector of WA?**

Three specific questions are:

1. How do women in senior management roles define their career success?
2. What are the barriers and opportunities affecting their career success?
3. How do women in senior management roles sustain and develop their careers?

## **1.8 Limitations**

The objectives of this study provide an understanding of how women in the senior management of Western Australia define their career success and how they sustain and develop their career. During the study, limitations to the study were time and financial constraints limited the study site to the state of Western Australia. The results may not be generalizable to other male dominated sectors within Western Australia or more broadly. The participants self-selected and may not represent the full

range of senior management women's experience in resources sector. Such limitations provide an opportunity for further research in the future. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth discussion on other limitations.

## **1.9 Outcomes**

This thesis aimed to contribute to the existing research gaps about how women at senior levels in the resources sector define success and how they actively sustain and develop their careers (Teo, Lord, and Nowak 2014, 160). The results of this study may provide women who, in the future, seek to advance their roles, with some guidance and role models to support their journey as well as provide organisations in the resources sector and stakeholders with a better understanding of the challenges faced in attracting, developing, retaining, and advancing women in the resources sector (Teo, Lord, and Nowak 2014, 160). Furthermore, through further research the findings may be broadened to women in other sex segregated industries.

## **1.10 Outline of the Thesis**

**Chapter 2** presents the literature review. I explore existing research related to women's careers, how they are conceptualised, and key theories that are used to discuss women's careers. I first discuss career development theories in general. Then I discuss the meaning and definition of career success and its composition. Next, I discuss career success for women and the impact of gender and workplace culture for women. The chapter continues with a review of career barriers, human capital and social capital and career theories with a focus on the implications for women. Next is an examination of career advancement for women and the barriers encountered in male dominated workforces. I also examine the purpose and impact of career metaphors that particularly relate to women's careers. Lastly, I discuss women in senior management and the enablers of women's careers; the elements that help women in management sustain their careers.

**Chapter 3** explores the context of women in senior management in the resources sector of Western Australia. I begin this discussion by first reviewing the Australian Resource Sector and then presenting an overview of women in the Australian resources sector and then women in the senior management's career success.

I establish that there is limited existing research found in this area and illuminate the gaps in the literature that this study aims to address.

**Chapter 4** presents the research methodology I employed. I first discuss the research design, exploring the nature of qualitative research, the underlying philosophical assumptions of such research and its limitations. Then I describe the approach used to design the interview questions for the study, present an audit trail, and summarise the pilot interview process. I discuss the sampling and data collection procedures, followed by the data analysis process for transcribing and coding interviews to illuminate salient themes among the participants. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the ethical considerations of this research study.

**Chapter 5** presents the findings of the study. First, I provide an overview of the participant demographics, and then discuss the approach to conceptual mapping employed to define my findings. Then I explore the three main themes that emerged from the study related to the concept of women's career success, in addition to related concepts that are associated with the process of building career success. Direct quotes from participants' interview responses are presented in relation to the relevant themes and concepts in order to represent their lived experiences as women at the senior level in the Western Australian resources sector.

**Chapter 6** presents the discussions in relation to my contribution to the literature. I present the 3C's Weaving Model developed from the study's findings to reconceptualise career success for women at the senior level in non-traditional and male-dominated fields. I then discuss each element of the Weaving Model and relate it back to the study's findings.

**Chapter 7** concludes this thesis. I explore the study's implications for practice and provide specific recommendations for women in senior management, organisations and human resources management divisions. I provide recommendations for future research. Finally, I conclude with some self-reflection regarding my own experience conducting this research study.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction to Career Development**

Career development and career success have both received considerable attention in the management literature and related disciplines. In this literature review, I examined how the theory of career development has emerged and then consider specific issues for the development of women's careers. While most of the earlier career development models were male-oriented, a substantial body of research on career development as it specifically pertains to women has been the focus of much academic work in recent years. However, women's careers in persistently non-traditional areas for females such as the resources sector, which is the focus of this research have only been very recently explored.

Career success has generally be seen to be upward career mobility. However, given women's generally different and varied career paths such measures may not be as relevant for women. Women may have career breaks, shifts, or negotiations to fit in their professional careers.

This literature review discusses the current literature with a focus on key seminal literature and more recent literature published in the past decade, on the development of career theory, the different kinds of career barriers that have been identified as particularly relevant to women's careers especially in traditionally male dominated fields and enablers that have been identified in the literature that help women to develop skills and their sense of fulfilment. The concept of career success is explored particularly in relation to women's career.

### **2.2 Career Development Theories**

Career development theory has a long trajectory of development and is perceived as important as it has guided career interest globally.

In this section, I discussed the man who initiated career choices, Frank Parsons. Then I discussed the big Five Career Theories are discussed to provide an insight to the ground work and history of career development. They are as follows:

1. Theory of Work-Adjustment (TWA),
2. Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities in Work Environment,
3. Super's Self-Concept Theory of Career Development
4. Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise
5. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT).

(Leung 2008)

### **2.2.1 Parson's Choosing a Vocation (1909)**

The first person who took an interest in the way people made their career choices was Frank Parsons. In 1909, Parson's work marked the beginning of the vocational guidance movement in USA (Baker 2009). He developed principles for vocational counselling to provide career guidance to assist young people in choosing the career that best suited their talents and personalities. Parson's work also helped to foment the idea that a career can bring significant levels of individual satisfaction. This early notion of career development was based on the idea that people should chose the career they are best suited to in terms of their individual traits (Baker 2009).

### **2.2.2 Theory of Work-Adjustment (TWA)**

The Theory of Work-Adjustment was developed by Rene Dawis, George England and Lloyd Lofquist in 1964 in USA (Brown and Lent 2012). This theory refers to job satisfaction that the individual holds and is listed under six values which provides general dimensions namely; achievement, comfort, status, altruism, safety and autonomy (Brown and Lent 2012). When the individual is satisfied in her or his working environment then he or she is in a 'state of harmonious equilibrium, it is said that work adjustment is achieved ( Brown and Lent 2012, 34). For example, A is satisfied in her work and work well with her supervisor or colleagues, she is likely to stay in the organisation (Brown and Lent 2012). TWA discussed that sometimes the individual or the organisation may not suit due to factors such as the individual wrong fit for the organisation or may have outgrown their role overtime causing dissatisfaction at work and leading to disequilibrium and thus 'adjustment behaviour' which consist of four types namely; flexibility, active adjustment, reactive adjustment and perseverance (Brown and Lent 2012).

### **2.2.3 Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities in Work Environment**

Holland, another important career development theorist, viewed career choice as an extension of a person's personality (Leung 2008). Holland proposed a career choice typology that was linked to a person's personality. He identified six categories and suggested, and people should choose careers that suit their personality. The categories he identified are realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional (Leung 2008). A person who is highly social and extroverted, for example, would best suit a work environment that allows them to have high levels of interaction with customers, colleagues or peers. Holland proposed that a close match between personality and career choice brought about the highest levels of satisfaction and performance (Holland, Powell and Fritzsche 1985).

### **2.2.4 Super's Self-Concept Theory of Career Development**

Another well-recognised theory of career development that has had a major influence on career development theory was Donald Super's theory of vocational development focusing on how an individual change over their lifetime (Super 1953, 1957). Super is known for putting forward a model of the developmental stages of work and a person's career that include the following stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline (Leung 2008). Super's position was an advance on Parson's as it emphasized that a career is based on a series of decisions or choices that develop cumulatively, and a career builds through various stages of change (Super 1953; 1957).

### **2.2.5 Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise**

Similar to Holland theory (Section 2.2.3), it explains the reasons for individual's choice for choosing professions and it is also developmental which has the same element as Super's theory of self-concept of career development (Section 2.2.4) (Gottfredson 1981). This theory stresses the importance of self-concept and how each individual profession are developed from preschool (3-5) to the High School (14) years through elements such as gender, socio-economic background, intelligence, skills, knowledge and attitudes (Gottfredson 1981).

## **2.2.6 Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)**

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is developed by Robert Lent, Steven Brown and Gail Hackett in 1994 based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977). The theory examined career development the relation to academic and career choices, how these choices are made and how they are obtained. Basically, when people are interested in a career and academic, they will pursue them leading to an outcome that they aim for (Brown and Lent 2012).

## **2.2.7 Early Theories Career Development Summary**

These early theories on career development appear relatively straightforward and have an intrinsic value because they emphasize how people should find their work rewarding and how they can get more personal satisfaction by finding a career that suits their personality and their passions. Such approaches have however attracted criticism because amongst other things, they depend highly on the male life course as an underlying framework, particularly the white, educated male who steadily works his way up in the hierarchy of a company and builds cumulative career success (Mavin 2001).

Traditional frameworks such as those highlighted above, clearly emphasized how individual characteristics play into the specific career choices that people make and how they perform at certain careers. However, the workplace has become increasingly diverse since these career theories were developed. In the decades following World War II to the present day, the number of women and minorities have increased in the workforce. The traditional models were increasingly inadequate for explaining how women seek out and develop a career (Duberley, Carmichael and Szmigin 2014; Kirchmeyer 1998; Mavin 2001; Ornstein, Cron and Slocum 1989; Sugarman 2004).

Researchers also began in the 1990s to explore not just the notion of career development but also that of career success, a concept that is more ambiguous (Da Costa and Oliveira 2016; Gunz and Heslin 2005). The notion of career success as linear progression is becoming more subjective as employees do not stay with the same company for their entire career (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley 1990; Judge, Cable, Boudreau and Bretz 1995). As Gedro (2017) suggests career success is subjective and the 'meaning of career success is not only individually but also collectively constructed' (Kase et al. 2018, 19).

As will be discussed in further detail, scholars have been advocating for the need for new concepts regarding career development to better reflect changing organizational landscapes and to adapt to the changing labour market at different moments in their work trajectories (Hall 1976; Sullivan and Arthur 2006).

### **2.3 Academic Explorations of Changing Labour Markets and Career Success**

This section will discuss how career success evolved to incorporate many subjective aspects leading to new career development theories that reflect the increasing flexibility and change in organisations. The pace of change in labour markets and the business world has increased rapidly since the mid-1970s and 1980s (Arthur and Rousseau 1996; Hall 1996). More workers started moving between companies more often, and the era when someone could build a lifelong career at just one company was starting to become a thing of the past (Hall 1996; Mainiero and Sullivan 2005). There has been a move to increased individual agency where individuals rather than organisations were seen as increasing in control of and in charge of their own career. Three of the most prominent recent models of career development that reflect this change are discussed below.

### **2.4 Protean Theory**

One response to the increasing pace of change and flexibility in the labour markets in career development theory was developed by Douglas Hall. He described a protean career as the person in the organisation who is managing the process. For Hall (1976), it consists of all of the person's varied experiences in education and training, as well as how people work in several organizations and experience changes in occupational field over their lifetime. The protean career person's own personal career choices and search for self-fulfilment are the unifying or integrative elements in his or her life (Briscoe and Hall 2006). The criterion of success is “internal (psychological success), not external.” (Hall 1976, 201). Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth explain that protean career development and any subsequent notion of career success in a protean context focuses on the subjective rather than the objective determinants of success because protean careers are largely self-directed (Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth 2006).



### **2.4.1 Boundaryless Career**

Another influential shift in understanding career development was proposed by Michael Arthur and Denise Rousseau who developed the notion of a boundaryless career (Arthur and Rousseau 1996). Sullivan and Arthur (2006) have subsequently pointed to two dimensions of mobility in the boundaryless career: (1) physical mobility and (2) psychological mobility. The first highlights how contemporary workers move physically between different organizations throughout their careers and the second encapsulates the change in attitudes and beliefs that have led many to transcend traditional career barriers. Briscoe, Hall, and DeMuth explain that boundaryless careers combine considerations of salary and promotions with the more subjective dimensions of career satisfaction and de-emphasize reliance on any one organization or source of external validation (Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth 2006). It posits an ability to cross over organisational borders or employment spheres, to be sustained by external networks, or even to reject typical career opportunities for the sake of investing in personal or family dimensions in the interest of finding more intrinsic notions of satisfaction (Arthur and Rousseau 1996).

Protean and Boundaryless Career models seek to account for the shift that has occurred in the way that individuals – both men and women – have begun to take responsibility for their own career futures (Inkson 2006). Both ‘protean’ and Boundaryless career models embrace motifs of movement, boundary-crossing, and fluidity, and define success based on the notion of transferability, hybridity and innovation (Inkson 2006).

### **2.4.2 Kaleidoscope Career**

Another concept of career development that has been proposed to help account for the way that careers are changing is Mainiero and Sullivan’s (2005) kaleidoscope career model. The authors argue that there has been a major paradigm shift in how people (both men and women) go about constructing their careers. The concept of a kaleidoscope career emphasizes how a person might rotate through various career arrangements during the course of their lives. It suggests that today, career pursuers are more likely to make changes in their careers throughout their lives to suit themselves and their lifestyles. They make choices revolving around three

different parameters – authenticity, balance, and challenge. The person pursuing a career finds the alignment that is most satisfying and applicable to their career stage (i.e., early, middle, late). Therefore, they define their success based on their ability to find this satisfying and rewarding alignment (Mainiero and Sullivan 2005).

The new career pursuer cycles through each factor in order to find a collective patterning which matches their needs best, given the phase of life they are in (Mainiero and Sullivan 2005). At the heart lies the idea that people organise their lifestyles and make decisions about their careers in a relational way. That is, increasingly both men and women understand their professional success according to the impact their decisions will have on others across both work and non-work realms. Mainiero and Sullivan do point out in their 2005 article that women’s career paths, in particular, tend to follow this kaleidoscope-like pattern. The women surveyed indicated that they were more likely to have non-traditional careers, characterized by various career interruptions that required attention to non-work needs, rather than the traditional linear careers described by the men.

These nonwork needs went beyond childcare concerns and encompassed many needs including the quest for spiritual fulfillment and the need to be true to oneself” (Mainiero and Sullivan 2005, 100). Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) found that women followed non-linear career paths more than the men in their research sample, although, at the time of their study they noted that men were following less linear career paths than was common in the past.

Sullivan and Baruch (2009) examined a review on career concepts of the 1990s including the protean, boundaryless and kaleidoscope. The change of today’s work environment has represented a mixing of career concepts which they called the ‘integrative frameworks’, suggesting that careers have become nonlinear and paying greater attention towards cultural differences and nationalities as people are moving outside their boundary to a boundaryless world (Sullivan and Baruch 2009, 1554).

## **2.5 The Difference between Subjective and Objective Career Success**

Working with the notions of career development that are more open to change has become the focus of more recent research and Gunz, Mayrhofer and Tolbert

suggest this also necessitated a re-examination of how we view career success (Gunz, Mayrhofer and Tolbert 2011). According to Gunz, Mayrhofer and Tolbert (2011), career success was often operationalized in many earlier studies without defining it. The authors propose that the first consensus to really emerge in the literature that specifically discusses career success is that there is a distinction between an individual's success as perceived by others (objective career success) and career success as perceived by the individual themselves (subjective career success). This distinction between the different forms of career success that was first pointed out by Everett Hughes (1937; 1958) and it has become a widely accepted distinction in the scholarship on career success.

The objective career components are those that are measurable and verifiable, like the amount of remuneration an employee receives and the quality of their promotions (Seibert and Kraimer 2001). In contrast, subjective career success is focused on how the person themselves experiences their career and lifework. Seibert and Kraimer (2001) use a different terminology for these same categories of career success. They call factors such as promotions and salaries extrinsic success factors, while a person's own self-perception is based on intrinsic success factors (Seibert and Kraimer 2001).

To date, the greatest emphasis in career success studies has been focused on the objective or extrinsic dimensions. In a survey of interdisciplinary journals published in 1996, Arthur and Rousseau (1996) noted that more than 75 percent of the career-related articles between 1980 and 1994 focused on objective notions of career success (Heslin 2005). Heslin (2005) criticized four assumptions in the career success literature that included the observation that salaries and promotions are criteria for success with managers, but other kinds of employees might not emphasize the same criteria. As Heslin demonstrates in his study, a more careful examination of each person's sense of success shows they use both self-referent and other-referent success criteria, making a general construction of career success that applies to everyone and to every industry more difficult (Heslin 2005).

Based on the current literature, subjective or intrinsic notions of career success are most commonly operationalized as job satisfaction or career satisfaction. For example, Judge, Higgins, Thoresen and Barrick (1999) held that job satisfaction

was the most salient aspect of subjective career success. Many other studies have also used job satisfaction as a proxy for subjective career success (e.g., Boudreau, Boswell and Judge 2001; Judge and Bretz 1994; Judge et al. 1995; Murrell, Frieze and Olson, 1996; Tsui and Gutek 1984). In the literature throughout the 1990s and 2000s, career satisfaction was often assessed using the widely adopted (e.g., Boudreau et al. 2001; Judge et al. 1995; Seibert and Kraimer 2001) career satisfaction scale (CSS) developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990). This instrument measures career success using the following five items:

1. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career;
2. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals;
3. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income;
4. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement;
5. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.

This instrument was used to measure career satisfaction in a number of studies as a stand-in that measures what are considered the intrinsic or subjective dimensions of a person's career (Hofmans, Dries and Pepermans 2008; Siebert and Kraimer 2001; Spurk, Abele and Volmer 2015). I will discuss some salient examples of this research below.

## **2.6 Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS)**

A number of scholars have explored subjective career success understood or measured as career satisfaction. In their article that explores the relationship between personality and career success, Seibert and Kraimer (2001) used the Greenhaus et al's (1990), Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS) as their proxy for measuring subjective career success (2001). Out of the big five personality traits, extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness, the authors found that extroversion was the only trait of the big five personality traits to be positively correlated with both extrinsic and intrinsic career success.

The other big personality factors each impacted objective and subjective career success differently, with some affecting extrinsic or objective career success positively, but having a negative relationship with intrinsic or subjective career success. For example, in the Seibert and Kraimer study those who scored high on agreeableness were less satisfied with their careers (2001, 13). However, in the case of professionals and skilled workers agreeableness was positively related to job performance in what they call “non-people oriented” or non-managerial positions. The authors conclude that personality impacts career success, but how depends on intervening factors like the kind of work one pursues, and that further research is needed (Seibert and Kraimer 2001).

Seibert, Kraimer and Crant (2001) also measured the effects of specific behaviours and beliefs that can account for proactive personality and successful career outcomes. They noted that proactive behaviours like innovation and managing your own career create favourable tendencies for both extrinsic and intrinsic forms of success (Seibert, Kraimer and Crant 2001). It is evident that career success is intricately related to the notion of career development, but the notion of career success is often conflated with satisfaction levels at a job in many academic studies (Gunz, Mayrhofer and Tolbert 2011; Heslin 2005). Understanding the factors is paramount as it helps to broaden the concept of subjective career success beyond job satisfaction.

### **2.6.1 Subjective Career Success Findings**

A number of researchers have started trying to explore the notion of subjective career success more deeply as they have come to realize that subjective or intrinsic career success means more than just career satisfaction. For example, Spurk, Abele and Volmer (2015) found that the different aspects of career satisfaction, as conceptualized by the different items of the CSS (e.g., income, advancement, and overall success) do not have the same relative importance across the occupational groups they tested. They tested different responses from a sample of N= 729 professionals, fifteen years after their graduation; physicians (43.8 per cent women), economists (36.8 per cent women), engineers (8.6 per cent women), and teachers (62.9 per cent women), and they note that four of the five items on the CSS varied considerably for these professions, and three of the four occupations interpreted at least 1 item differently than the other occupations with no report specifically on women.

There are also other studies that question what is included in career satisfaction scales. Finegold and Mohrman's (2001) found that among 4500 knowledge workers and managers from eight countries, work-life balance was rated as the most important out of the many facets of a career. However, work-life balance is not represented in the 5 items on the CSS. Heslin also makes the point that there are other aspects of career success that are not represented, including contract workers who may be less focused on hierarchies or the self-employed who may have different priorities and called for more research on the conceptualisation of career success (Heslin 2005).

There is evidence that career success is not just measured by satisfaction with the vague notions of progress and advancement, nor is money always the be-all and end-all of career success (Gattiker and Larwood 1988). In a number of existing studies, external, objective factors alone do not fully explain managers' feelings of accomplishment (Gattiker and Larwood 1988; 1990; Poole et al. 1993). In research conducted by Sturges (1999) only a minority of the successful managers interviewed (19.4 per cent) viewed success in the tangible, orthodox terms of money or personal recognition. When individuals are asked in interviews to evaluate their own success, they often use criteria that are more subjective and not based just on objective, external rewards (Gattiker and Larwood 1990; Judge et al. 1995). Thus, deeper and more specific explorations of the notion of career success began to enter the literature as researchers started embracing the notion that employees can be active and not merely passive in shaping outcomes at work and in their careers (Bell and Staw 1989).

## **2.7 The meaning of Career Success**

Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2007, 60), for example, define career success as "the real or perceived achievements individuals have accumulated as a result of their work experiences".

Another conceptual definition of career success is from Michael Arthur et al. (Arthur, Khapova, and Wilderom 2005, 179) who states that "career success may be defined as the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time". As the perspectives on career development became more inclusive and began to weigh the significance of non-traditional, changing and career forms, there was also recognition that career pursuers were

changing how they measured their own career success to include parameters that are not just about salary level and acquiring power and influence over others (Akkermans and Kubasch 2017).

### **2.7.1 Definitions of Women's Career Success**

There are a number of researchers, however, who push the critique of the career success model further and who challenge the existing notions of career success because they see it as modelled on the careers of white middle-aged men (O'Leary 1997; Mavin, 2001). Women's careers not only lag behind and fail to measure up to men's careers as emphasized by Abele (2014) above, the critique by these scholars is even more paradigm changing because they point out that the careers of women may be highly different because women have their own life experiences that are different than men's (Flanders 1994; Gutek and Larwood 1988; Mavin 2001; Still and Timms 1998). Powell and Mainiero note that women and more established, older managers (who are both women and men) appear to define career success for themselves in non-conventional ways (Powell and Mainiero 1992).

Kirchmeyer (1998) found that even women who earned less in terms of salary than their male colleagues saw themselves as equally successful. In another study by Keys (1985), women rated themselves as successful despite their lower levels of pay and their reduced expectations of advancement.

Indeed, many definitions of career success may depend on the context and the industry and which parameters are used (Kase et al. 2018). Contemporary discourses about careers in business, government and academic circles in many countries around the world increasingly use the notions of choice and work-life balance, creating a language that is more flexible and less universalizing of women's experiences (Hogarth et al. 2000).

A qualitative research approach to understanding women's career success is frequently adopted by researchers because women tend to define their own success in subjective terms, not objective terms. Awkward (2005), Rodriguez (2011) and Tschetter (2009) each used a qualitative approach where their research participants were asked about the meaning of their career experiences. Awkward used a phenomenological research approach coupled with semi-structured interviews and a

learning circle to understand how 16 business women who had at least 10 years professional work experience described career success. Awkward found the women attributed their career success to being self-aware and developing a voice (2005).

Likewise, Rodriguez used qualitative methods and a phenomenological approach to show how the women in her study used innovation, purposefulness, and collaboration to navigate their careers and find success within the system. Rodriguez emphasizes that organizations should be doing more to facilitate the integration of women to make use of their talents and to actively change the existing work culture that contains the negative perceptions that many still hold about women in the workplace (Rodriguez 2011). Tcshetter (2009) carried out research with seven women who were mid-life and had experienced some downsizing or other interruption or upset in their careers. She also found that relationships were important in realizing transformative change. Tshetter also noted that having a sense of purpose as well as using human capital and building developmental relationships were important to career development for the women she interviewed (2009).

Traditional definitions of career success have often been constructed through the standards set by the male worker (O'Connor, Stimson and Daly 2001). Men commonly appraise their career success and status on a hierarchical ladder, where all work experience is seen as building in a continuous and cumulative fashion. The career paths for women, however, are often seen to depart from this norm, and a number of studies have demonstrated that women construct their own definitions of career success, oftentimes in a more subjective manner (Dyke and Murphy 2006; O'Neil, Hopkins and Bilimoria 2008; Sturges 1999). Indeed, women's definitions of success tend to be of a more multifaceted nature, one that exists both within and beyond the workplace. Women often garner accomplishment and self-fulfilment across various domains of their lives. For women at senior management levels this can mean being a good parent and contributing to society (Ruderman et al. 1999), experiencing personal or professional growth (Sturges 1999), maintaining strong family relationships (Parker and Chusmir 1992), effectively integrating the demands of work and life in a satisfying way (Accenture 2013; Cheung and Halpern 2010; Dyke and Murphy 2006), being content and happy with their occupational conditions, and fulfilling their other dreams and goals (Kooskora 2005).



In terms of finances, managerial women often situate their success more in the notion of having financial security rather than the amount of money they make (Parker and Chusmir 1992; Ruderman et al. 1999). In this sense there are many researchers who have observed that women adopt a more holistic notion of success, and they value a synergy of accomplishments in their lives that include more than just their careers. This is consistent with Sturges finding that the satisfaction women garner from their various roles builds their self-confidence and gives them the motivation to progress further within the workplace and their personal lives as well (Sturges 1999). This style of success functions as an intrinsic driver but it is fuelled by a wider range of factors and not just a narrow salary and promotion view of success. As Sok et al. note, this keeps the women pushing towards higher levels of social, relational, and capital gain (Sok et al. 2011). Existing research has also shown that women intertwine work and non-work issues when making career decisions. For example, Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) found that 41.1 percent of women and 24.4 percent men made changes in their careers because of family commitments compared with 40.2 percent of men and 30.1 percent of women who indicated that their family commitments were not a factor. Thus, in Mainiero and Sullivan's study men were less likely to make career decisions based on family. There are now calls in the literature to also start focusing on what Akkermans, Seibert and Mol (2018) call "career shocks," the unplanned or external events both positive and negative that shape what choices or decisions somebody makes about their careers.

Other researchers have explored how women's careers are uniquely different and they reflect a broader number of paths than the career directions followed by men (Huang and Sverke 2007; Hurley and Sonnenfeld 1997; Lepine 1992). In the introduction to the edited volume *Conceptualizing Women's Working Lives*, editor Wendy Patton (2013) suggests that research on women's careers reflects traditional career patterns, e.g., hierarchical advancement and corporate ladders (Lyness and Thompson 2000) but that there are also other patterns including "snake-like" (Richardson 1996), "zigzag" (Gersick and Kram 2002) and "lifestream" career patterns (O'Leary 1997) in addition to the protean, boundaryless and kaleidoscope patterns that were previously discussed. Other studies have evoked yet other descriptors for women's career patterns. For example, O'Neil, Bilimoria and Saatcioglu (2004) found three distinct career types for women – achieving, navigating

and accommodating. For these authors “the achieving (ordered, internal) and navigating (ordered, external) patterns reflected more traditional, hierarchical careers while the accommodating pattern reflected an emergent career pattern. The authors explain that “the accommodating pattern is midway between internal and external career loci reflecting the likely impact of self and other considerations on career choices and decisions” (Patton 2013, 77).

Akkermans and Kubasch (2017) have noted a number of different trends in regard to the literature on gender and careers. Most studies have focused on how women can achieve success and what barriers exist (Ezzedeen et al. 2015). Also, researchers have begun exploring the role of other actors such as headhunters (Doldor et al. 2016) or instituting anonymous application procedures so women face less barriers at hiring (Aslund and Skans 2012). Other recent research explores the differences between leadership by men and women (Eagly 2016; Post 2015). Finally, there are also calls not view gender diversity as exclusively a women’s issue. Researchers should take a perspective that also explicitly considers the role of men (Joshi et al. 2015).

In their review of core career research journals Akkermans and Kubasch identified that agency and career self-management were important trends in how career development has been researched and conceptualized in recent years (Akkermans and Kubasch 2017). There have also been recent investigations into cross cultural notions of career success and qualitative explorations of subjective career success (Mayrhofer et al 2016; Schockley et al. 2015).

## **2.8 Career Success for Women**

This leads us to ask more directly how these notions of career success and career development apply more specifically to the careers of women. The approaches in the literature about career success for women are also highly varied. There are many studies that have critiqued the traditional career development paradigms because they are based largely on the pattern of men’s lives, without taking into sufficient account how women’s life trajectories are different. Mavin (2001) notes that “in relation to career in theory and practice there are two important issues to consider; first that the traditional working pattern of education, full-time career, retirement, is based on the

typical working lives of men and, second, that there is no single typical working pattern for modern women” (Mavin 2001, 183). The bias that underlies traditional career thinking is pernicious because researchers will “tacitly” reinforce the traditional and male career model and often treat women like temporary or casual workers when compared to the career trajectories of men, especially if they are married or have children (O’Leary 1997). Women’s self-perceptions can also be shaped by these notions; as Martin and Barnard (2013) explains, the discomfort or feeling of inadequacy that women feel on the career track are because the stated goals are based on behaviours from masculine paradigms.

## **2.9 Gender and Workplace Culture**

Feminist researchers have challenged the unspoken gendered assumptions that lead many workplaces to favour male over female employees and which puts women at a disadvantage in developing careers for example tokenism (Kanter 1977), pregnant women and mothers (Cahusac and Kanji 2014). There are generally two contrasting views about the way to challenge masculine paradigms at work, the contrasting perspectives of ‘equality feminism’ and ‘difference feminism’ (Guerrina 2001; Hughes 2002; Sinclair 2000). Equality feminism sought equal opportunities for women in allowing them space in the male dominated environment and for equal pay and calling attention to discrimination in hiring practices, for example. This puts forward the idea of a level playing field (Evans 1994; Hughes 2002). But this perspective has also been critiqued because “equal opportunities discourses of women being the ‘same as men’ have, however, been criticized for silencing women: they cannot speak out about their difficulties, as this highlights their difference and their lack of suitability for the work or need for special ‘help’ (Smithson and Stokoe 2005, 148). Liff and Cameron (1997) argued that initiatives that focused on creating equal opportunities for women fail to really challenge the gendered nature of organizational practices. This theme of women succeeding when they act ‘like men’ is a recurrent one in feminist organizational analysis (Dryburgh 1999; Eagly and Wood 2012; Singh and Terjesen 2008).

The other feminist argument about organizational practices and gender highlights women's different needs, especially in terms of biological differences from men in terms of motherhood and maternity rights (Bryson 1992; Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1994; Lewis and Lewis 1996). This alternative argument is also based on the

awareness that women still do take on most responsibility for domestic work and childcare. Here there is an attempt to recognize the reality of many women who do have extra responsibilities despite the feminist ideal that men should also share at least equally in housework and childcare (Smithson and Stokoe 2005). However, the ‘difference’ approaches have been criticized because they are overly deterministic about the biological roles for women and they equate the many forms of caring with mothering (Evans 1994; Guerrina 2001). They also tend to over-generalize about the experiences of women in dealing with work and home life (Butler 1990).

Abele (2014) notes that much like the objective and subjective aspects of career success for women, there are outside and inside realms in understanding the careers paths of women. The outside perspective refers to the social categories of gender and the inside perspective is how people view themselves and their own self-concept in terms of gender. Abele (2014) noted that women’s careers can be discontinuous with overall lower objective career success because of family responsibilities and this makes them seem less successful overall when compared to men (Abele and Spurk 2009; Gattiker and Larwood 1990, Melamed 1995, 1996; Tharenou, Latimer, and Conroy 1994). It is worth noting that Abele also used Greenhaus et al.’s CSS instrument discussed above to measure career success. In her 2014 article titled *How Gender Influences Objective Career Success and Subjective Career Satisfaction*, Abele used a sample of German professionals to show that women were expected to provide childcare and be more flexible, whereas men were expected to earn money and support the family financially (Abele 2014). These are the kinds of barriers that are taken-for-granted and affect the workplace dynamics for many women.

## **2.10 Career Barriers for Women**

From the 1980s and the early 1990s there was a lot of attention in the literature concerning the different nature of women’s career paths, but there was not a lot of identification of the barriers that women face in the workplace. This discussion of the structural factors and specific inconsistencies in organizational practice that were functioning as barriers to career advancement for women began to enter the literature at the end of the 1990s.

### **2.10.1 Human Capital Theory**

Human capital theory was first developed by Mincer (1958) and Becker (1962). It includes a person's "qualifications, experience and geographical mobility," or the building blocks that job candidates use to build careers (Huppatz 2015, 181). The theory suggests that the more experience you gain in terms of human capital, the more qualifications you build, the more work you will gain. Women have more difficulty building human capital because of their lack of access to the same opportunities as their male counterparts, the devaluing of their human capital and because more women work part time and often have caring responsibilities that can limit the time they have available to build it (Fine 2005).

As a result, they are considered less productive in this framework as they dedicate more time to their families (Huppatz 2015). Indeed, in a 1995 study among British employees, Melamed examined the "gender gap" in career progress and showed how women faced sex discrimination but also needed greater human capital to counter the sex discrimination to advance in ways that were not demanded of male candidates (Melamed 1995). Tharenou's (2001) also shows that women need more of the job specific skills that are part of human capital, as well as more of other traits to help them advance in their careers. Tharenou noted that traits like career aspirations, masculinity and interpersonal support could predict the advancement of personnel through the management ranks (Tharenou 2001).

### **2.10.2 Social Capital**

Another concept frequently discussed in the literature to help understand the barriers to career development for women in the workplace is social capital. Social Capital is the collective value of social networks and the reciprocity which arises from such networks (Sander, 2015). Interaction or networking, particularly with other women, have been found to make a strong contribution to women's career advancement (Ibarra, 1993; Sander, 2015). This was found by Singh, Vinnicombe and Kumra (2006) to be true also of other networks that provide social support.

### **2.10.3 Social Capital and Human Capital for Women**

As O’Neil, Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008) note, however, women have steadily increased both human capital and social capital in recent decades as women are now holding more bachelors’ and masters’ degrees than men, but “women’s human and social capital augmentation has not defeated the glass ceiling” (Patton 2013, 67). Work by Rosner (1990) and Fondas (1997) has also shown that the contributions women make to organizations are systematically under-recognized and do not receive the same levels of recognition as the accomplishments of men (Rosner 1990; Fletcher 1998; Fondas 1997). Other barriers identified that reduce the effectiveness of women’s human and social capital are the fact that many women do not feel compelled to negotiate or to ask that their talents are recognized to the same degree as men (Babcock and Laschever 2007; Small et al, 2007; Reuben, Wiswall and Zafar 2017). Researchers have also found that women are also at a disadvantage because of the use of what is perceived as ineffective language and dialogue (Prahalad 2005; Scharmer 2009) and limited socialisation practices that allow for networking (Tisdall 1995).

### **2.10.4 Preference Theory**

Recent research has also pointed to how career choices have changed for many women, and they have gained a modicum of agency and power over their career paths, at least in many developed economies. This has led theorists to try to conceptualize the significance of these changes (Hoobler, Lemmon et al. 2014). One example is the work of Catherine Hakim who developed what she calls preference theory, to account for what she argues is the increasing control that women have over their own lives and career decisions. For Hakim, there are three types of women in economies such as Britain and Holland: those who completely devote themselves to work, those who are devoted to family and those that tried to make some accommodations to have both (Hakim 2000). According to preference theory, when women decided to ‘opt-out’ (Belkin 2003) or take the ‘mommy track’ (Kingson 1988), the women are actually taking advantage of the opportunities historically provided to them in order to pursue their own desires. This theory states that there was no single ideal path for working women and that the multitude of possible career and family trajectories reflect the personal goals of individuals (Leahy and Doughney 2014). However, critics of this model point to shortcomings. Although a woman may have a

preference for a specific lifestyle, this does not mean she will have the ability or opportunity to choose this lifestyle and overcome the barriers and address issues that could prevent her from achieving it (Leahy and Doughney 2014; McCrae and Costa 2003, Morehead 2005; Pocock 2003). Moreover, for preference theory to be applicable, certain socioeconomic standards must be met (Hakim 2002). Many countries do not meet these requirements, precluding the theory from applying to women in those countries. Interestingly one such country is Sweden which, although known for its gender equity policies, according to Hakim (2002), had not created jobs for secondary earners or placed enough importance on the attitudes, values, and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of individuals.

While focusing specifically on women and employment opportunities in Australia, Doughney and Leah (2006) identified another key limitation of preference theory. Their research found that women in Australia earned significantly less than men and were less likely to hold full-time or managerial positions (Doughney and Leah 2006). In addition to this gender gap in employment, Australian societal expectations hold that good workers put in long hours and prioritise work over family and household responsibilities (Doughney and Leah 2006). There are thus many structural factors that still underlie work conditions for women and create unseen or taken-for-granted obstacles for them. Doughney and Leah also found that women were much more likely to engage in unpaid, caregiving work in the home (2006). Consequently, women often had to compromise their careers and paid jobs or work "double shifts" to take care of their family responsibilities (Doughney and Leah 2006). These women could not just follow their own personal preferences in regard to a career or motherhood because they also had to consider the external societal expectations and family obligations placed on them (Lewis and Cooper 1996). Thus, because of its limited applicability and inability to consider forces such as societal expectations and gender roles, critics of preference theory have warned against its idealistic conceptualisation of why women make certain choices regarding motherhood and careers.

### **2.10.5 Age-Linked Career Model**

Another approach that seeks to capture the distinctiveness of women's career trajectories is the age-linked career model. O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) segmented a woman's career path into three distinct phases based on age. Idealistic achievement is

the first phase. This stage is applicable to young women aged 24-35 who made their career choices largely with the goal of achieving success in their jobs. This group is achievement-oriented and view their career success as a pathway to personal satisfaction and happiness. According to O'Neil and Bilimoria, the women in this phase are generally childless but are beginning to be concerned about the lack of institutional support for women who want both a career and family. Phase two, pragmatic endurance, applies to women aged 36-45 who manage a multitude of personal and professional demands. Women in this phase tend to be dissatisfied with their careers and they struggle against the institutionalised patriarchy and discrimination they encounter in the workplace. They value fulfilment in their personal and family lives, and they worry about the "ticking of the biological clock" (O'Neil and Bilimoria 2005, 184). The women in this stage reflect more on their past career and life choices. The third phase, reinventive contribution, covers women aged 46-60 who once again re-focus their careers as a source of personal fulfilment. These women want to make a difference through their jobs and view success as achieving the recognition and respect of their peers.

Based on these phases, O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) suggest that companies should employ adaptive strategies to encourage success among women in different phases of their careers and personal lives. For example, offering women in phase two more flexible hours or restructuring their job responsibilities to accommodate their personal demands would help them maintain their professional success during this stressful phase. Women in phase one might require more challenging projects and good mentoring to develop their professional skills, while women in phase three could act as mentors to others by sharing their experience with more junior colleagues. Ultimately, O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) found that women at different stages of their careers viewed their personal and professional lives differently and thus required very different kinds of support from institutions and organisations to succeed as both mothers and professionals.

There are critics of the O'Neil and Bilimoria model. Fernando and Cohen (2013) point to the underlying assumption in the age-linked career model that all women in a certain age group have similar interests and life-goals. The authors say in their own research they have found a lot of variation in what women want at different life stages. Fernando and Cohen argue that existing women's career models need to



look at the developmental aspects like training and education and work experience, not just their preoccupations and interests. They should also consider the material constraints that women face and the tacit biases that make it more difficult for women to advance in a career. The existing models about a women's career also ignore the sectoral differences (Kaulisch and Enders 2005), the national labour market in which women are working (Burke and Nelson 2002) and other economic factors. Fernando and Cohen say there are developmental psychological approaches that focus on the personality characteristics of the women themselves. What Fernando and Cohen (2013) advocate is taking a more social constructivist approach where the contexts described above are considered in addition to the developmental perspectives.

## **2.11 Career Advancement Prevention**

There is also significant literature that has addressed the role of men in preventing the career advancement of women (Adapa, Rindfleish and Sheridan 2016; Faludi 199; Cockburn 1991; Ragins and Sundstrom 1989). Many of the actions and decisions of male leadership within organisations that cause women's career stagnation are subconscious due to gender norms engrained by mainstream societal values or out of a fear of losing their own power (Cockburn 1991). However, just as men have been conditioned to regard women's roles in a certain way, so have women. A study of science faculty in the U.S and Canada. revealed the presence of implicit gender barriers for female students among women faculty as well as men (Adamo 2013). Such research demonstrates how a patriarchal paradigm has conditioned many women to regard other women differently and as less competent than men. Mavin, Grandy, and Williams' (2014) research into intra-gender micro violence between women in the workplace showed other trends in women's same-gender interactions act as barriers to their success. The authors suggested that "the masculine symbolic order shapes and constrains women's social relations with other women" (Mavin, Grandy and Williams 2014, 452). The authors identify three types of micro-aggression that women face in the workplace: disassociating, suppression of opportunity, and what the authors call abject appearance, or being judged on your physical attributes (Mavin, Grandy, and Williams 2014, 13). It demonstrates the way patriarchy manifests in the interactions between female co-workers and often makes them feel threatened by other women's success within their organisation (Mavin, Grandy, and Williams 2014). These studies

demonstrate that women's career barriers are both imposed upon women, but they can also be enacted by the women themselves, whether consciously or subconsciously. Women sometimes make choices that curtail their own professional success or advancement when faced with the need to choose between their family and their career because they have also internalized many assumptions about gender and work.

## **2.12 The Barriers in Male Dominated Workforce**

Most scholars studying career development and the gender differences that emerge tend to focus on career sectors that have been historically dominated by women (teaching or nursing for example) or sectors that have had relative success at incorporating women in substantial ways such as the legal profession and some creative industries (Masterson and Hoobler 2015; Pocock 2003) What remains to be explored in depth are the career patterns of women working in male-dominated sectors, where the percentage of women in all ranks of employment is traditionally small. These areas, including the resources sector that is the subject of this thesis, rely heavily on the full-time continuous employment model built around a lifetime of non-disrupted work patterns as the accepted and dominant career structure (Bennett, Davidson and Galeand 1999; Miller 2004).

For example, Bennett, Davidson and Gale examined women in the construction sector in Britain because it is the sector where women are least represented. They found that professional women were the most positive about their own skills in the male dominated sector of construction, whereas non-professional women and men at all levels were less positive about professional women's skills in the construction sector (Bennett, Davidson and Galeand 1999). Most of the current literature on the construction industry and gender deals with attracting female students and retaining female workers as possible approaches for increasing the representation of women in construction (Adogbo, Ibrahim, and Ibrahim 2015; Bigelow et al. 2015).

Bennett, Davidson, and Gale (1999) cite the work of Hede (1995) who looked at managerial roles for women in Australia in the construction sector. Hede explained there is a tendency for women to minimize the barriers they face themselves and minimize their effects; although Hede estimated it will take 70 years (from the

time her article was published in 1995) for women to gain equality in managerial positions in Australia.

There are only a few studies that directly look at questions of gender in the resource sectors in Western Australia. For example, Larissa Brouggy (2010) wrote a bachelor's thesis on human resources management and the retention of women in the mining industry in Australia using semi-structured interviews. She found that the retention of women in the mining industry was hindered by structural and cultural barriers including a low level of flexible working arrangements, gender biased work practices and processes, a work environment that is incompatible with raising a family. There was also a prevalence of men's networks and the pressure to conform to masculine stereotypes (Brouggy 2010).

In another source on the mining sector in Western Australia, Bobana Kljajevic's (2015) master's thesis uses a sociological perspective to explore how gender categories are reproduced in the mining sector in Western Australia, where the women she surveyed and interviewed spoke of how care for children and other family members relegates them to part-time work, making women put their careers on hold, while the same gender categories leave the working lives of men undisturbed for such life events. This creates an extra burden on women who have to navigate both home gender expectations and work expectations. Kljajevic uses feminist theory and gender analysis to show that organizations like the mining companies in the resources sector in Western Australia reproduce the notion that family work is separate from paid, productive work because "while men have taken up more of certain unpaid tasks, there is little evidence that gender equality in unpaid domestic labor will be achieved in any imaginable future" (Acker 2012, 222). According to Connell (2005, 77), hegemonic masculinity can be explained as the "legitimacy of patriarchy and a guarantee of dominance of men and subordination of women". Hegemony refers to a process in which cultural authority is negotiated and contested, resulting in such authority being accepted as "normal" and common-sense by non-dominant groups. As Connell explains, such conceptions lead to the idea that men are not expected to play both home and work roles in the same way that women are; men are construed as the "ideal" worker who is a highly desirable model within organisations.

## **2.13 Metaphorical Cages: Barriers to Women's Careers**

This section considers the metaphors that often appear in the literature in association with women's careers and the barriers that women face when trying to achieve greater standing in the workplace. In particular, such metaphors can be grouped into the following main categories that include: (1) those which are related to the idea of 'glass,' such as the 'glass ceiling,' 'glass elevator,' and 'glass slipper'; (2) the idea of a 'sticky floor'; (3) and the 'queen bee phenomenon'.

### **2.13.1 The purpose of metaphors**

Scholars who have studied the significance of metaphors argue that metaphors are an analytical tool that is used "to unravel multiple patterns of significance and their interrelations" (Morgan 1986, 342). Vivid representations of experience and emotional topics often become represented in metaphors so we can convey their meaning evocatively (Averill, 1990; Grisoni and Page 2010).

While no single metaphor can truly capture the varied nature of women's experiences in business settings, some metaphors work more effectively than others to support efforts for pay and status equity in terms of promoting, understanding, and guiding policy change (Bowdle and Gentner 2005). Bowdle and Gentner (2005) point out that metaphors are useful in everyday life and language because of their ability to organise complicated theoretical constructs into simple, associable, and highly consumable ideas. Metaphors help to re-envision complex concepts, rendering them more comprehensible and easier to circulate in academic, professional, and public discourse. As a consequence, metaphors are highly pervasive in management and organisational theory, and they are frequently used to explain issues related to the workplace, its inhabitants, and its structures of inequality (Cornelissen and Kafouros 2008).

Thus, it is unsurprising that a wide range of metaphors have been used to address the many barriers women encounter when vying for senior management positions. Such metaphors hinge on motifs of division, obstruction, and hindrance. Metaphoric language ebbs and flows in its importance, but while certain metaphors may become outdated or irrelevant over time, others persist and guide thought (Inkson, 2006).

For example, the concept of the 'glass ceiling' is a metaphor that was first used predominately in academic sources but it is now used frequently in everyday contexts (Hymowitz and Schellhardt 1986, U.S. Federal Government 1995) to symbolize why women have trouble gaining authority and moving up in the hierarchies in many organizations (Barreto, Ryan and Schmitt 2009; McLeod 2008; Weyer 2007). Metaphors also can become like 'buzzwords' (i.e., popularised jargon) that both attract attention and drive conversation surrounding certain subject matters drawing attention to new ways of framing social problems and problems in the workplace (Landau, Meier et al. 2010).

Smith, Caputi, and Crittenden (2012a) and Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) also point to some possible negative effects from the use of metaphors. These authors point out that metaphors associated with women and the career barriers they face may detract from the specific hazards they face in the workplace by detracting from the problem and obscuring the challenges women face (Hymowitz and Schellhardt 1986, U.S. Federal Government 1995, Smith, Caputi et al. 2012a). This leads to the oversimplification of the challenges that women encounter during their careers. Peters 2013 and Smith et al. 2012 are critical of such language because it may fail to bring about actions which actively counteract these obstacles, instead contributing to women's absence in leadership within the organisational setting (Smith, Caputi et al. 2012a, Peters 2013). As other authors note, when metaphors like "glass ceiling" are used in the media, they enter the public consciousness and can inadvertently contribute to ossifying the very inequalities and divisions that they are designed to expose (Eagly and Carli 2007, O'Neil, Hopkins et al. 2008, Smith, Caputi et al. 2012b, Peters 2013).

There are other scholars who emphasize some of the negative and overgeneralizing dimensions of metaphors. Eagly and Carli (2007b, 2), for example, explain that "Metaphors matter because they are part of the storytelling that can compel change" (2007b, 2). Thus, this language must be thoroughly considered in relation to its potential effects upon women in the workplace. Eagly and Carli (2007) note that many of these terms actually misdiagnose the problems that women often face in these environments because they overgeneralize the experiences.

Another characteristic of the metaphors for women's careers that is critiqued by a number of scholars is that they view women's careers through the same moulds

as their masculine counterparts. Burke and Mattis (2007), for example, explained how instead of using a language and a framework which identifies the distinction between genders in the workplace, the use of the metaphors helps to perpetrate the idea that women need to act more like men to attain career success (Tharenou 2005). While salient in male-dominated occupations, this tendency to compare women to the male career yardstick is counterproductive according to Fitzsimmons, Callan, and Paulsen (2014), who point out the diversity in career pathways which women can and do follow, evolving different kinds of trajectories which also influences their rise to senior positions (Fitzsimmons, Callan et al. 2014). In order to elucidate some of these complexities and contradictions, the most prevalent women's career metaphors are discussed below.

### **2.13.2 Glass-Based Metaphors**

Since the introduction of the 'glass ceiling' concept in the 1980s (Hymowitz and Schellhardt 1986), other metaphoric 'glass' infrastructures used to describe the barriers women face in the workplace have followed. In their analysis of metaphors utilised to effectively describe the difficulties that women face in business environments, Eagly and Carli (2007b) noted that the use of glass conjures a particularly pernicious image. They explained that, specifically, the image of the 'glass ceiling' depends largely upon the previous metaphor of the 'invisible ladder' to describe progress through business (Eagly and Carli 2007b). The image of the glass ceiling helps to reproduce the idea that women are promoted effortlessly until they reach this top barrier (Eagly and Carli 2007b). Such an image suggests that the rest of their career path is relatively barrier free and they do not experience problems until they reach the highest points on the ladder. Thus, 'the metaphor implies that women and men have equal access to entry- and mid-level positions,' whereas, in reality they do not (Eagly and Carli 2007b, 2). The continued use of such language helps to reproduce the unspoken cultural norms that underpin discrimination against women in the employment sphere.

Furthermore, the use of the glass-based metaphors suggest that such barriers are fragile because, if the obstacles keeping women from upper leadership positions are merely constructed of glass, then they can surely be broken (at least metaphorically). Yousry (2006), in particular, points out that in such a metaphor, the

ceiling should not be described as glass but, rather, concrete. This material change is significant in that concrete cannot be easily destroyed.

In essence, glass-based metaphors suggest that women simply are not trying hard enough to reach the upper echelons of business despite seeing the correct behaviours and practices exhibited by their male counterparts above the boundary. Furthermore, such glass-based images, as well as that of the concrete ceiling, are inherently violent; something must be destroyed in order for women to succeed (Bendl and Schmidt 2010). Among these metaphors are the ‘glass ceiling’, ‘glass cliff’, ‘glass slipper’, ‘glass escalator’, ‘glass door’, and ‘glass wall’.

### **2.13.2.1 Glass ceiling**

The introduction of the ‘glass ceiling’ metaphor can be rightly credited with starting a reign of popular metaphors within women’s management studies that use the notion of glass to evoke barriers for women in the workplace (Smith, Caputi et al. 2012b). First described in an article in *Adweek* magazine (Bryant 1984), the glass ceiling term was popularised after appearing in *The Wall Street Journal* in 1986 (Eagly and Carli 2007b) before being officially formalised by the US Department of Labor in 1991. In this official definition, the ‘glass ceiling’ was described as an artificial barrier that prevented qualified people from being promoted to the next level in management in the organisation. (Martin 1991). Focusing on women and minorities, the ‘glass ceiling’ symbolizes the overrepresentation of men, especially white men in the upper echelons of management where, for some reason, women and minority candidates are frequently marginalized despite having the human capital or social capital to qualify for such positions (Singh and Vinnicombe 2004, Haslam and Ryan 2008). The metaphor symbolizes prejudicially-driven practices, such as situations in which women deserve promotion to higher positions or better salaries, but are passed over for such opportunities in favour of male colleagues (Cotter, Hermsen et al. 2001).

### **2.13.2.2 Glass Ceiling Study**

In 2012a, Smith, Caputi, and Crittenden conducted a cross-sectional study of 258 women working in Australian organisations to analyse the effect of belief in the existence of a glass ceiling. The study grouped the participants based on their understandings or attitudes towards the idea of a glass ceiling. Some study participants

denied the existence of such a barrier, while others were resigned to its existence. There were also some who were resilient and even accepting of such a notion. The study also examined the effects of such beliefs on subjective career success, including levels of happiness, satisfaction with one's career, psychological well-being, engagement with work, and physical health (Smith, Caputi et al. 2012a). Smith, Caputi, and Crittenden (2012a) notably found 'denial' to be associated positively with subjective career success. However, 'resignation' had a negative association where the more resignation one experienced, the less career success was observed. While unable to ascertain causality due to its cross-sectional design, the study provides valuable information regarding the impact which the glass ceiling metaphor has had upon women's outlook regarding their careers (Smith, Caputi et al. 2012a). Ultimately, Smith et al. posit that this metaphor may actually hinder a woman's career advancement when internalised.

### **2.13.2.3 The impact of Glass Ceiling Metaphor**

Regardless of whether or not the 'glass ceiling' metaphor holds true, the impact of the concept on women over the last 30 years is undeniable (Akpinar-Sposito 2013). The metaphor is used frequently in discussing the career pressures on female executives and it can foster a fatalistic attitude towards career progression for women. Such a phenomenon is so ubiquitous that it has earned its own label: 'the glass ceiling syndrome,' (Akpinar-Sposito 2013). This syndrome was first mentioned in Akpinar-Sposito's (2013) study of French and Turkish female executives, and it reflects the internalisation of the 'glass ceiling' and the consequent effects of that internalization. Thus, even if a company were to institute policies that might otherwise be effective in terms of promoting female advancement such as affirmative action measures, women have internalized the societal standards that keep them from filling such roles and it may prevent them from even applying for such positions in the first place (Akpinar-Sposito 2013). In this manner, women are effectively kept in lower level positions not by others, as they may have been through 'glass ceiling' approaches, but instead by unseen cultural norms they have internalized (Foucault 1977), effectively helping to perpetuate the status quo themselves.



#### **2.13.2.4 Glass cliff Metaphor**

Another metaphor that evokes a career barrier or risk for women is the ‘glass cliff’ (Ryan and Haslam 2005, Ryan and Haslam 2007) which emphasizes the idea that the workplace is perilous and dangerous for women; the workplace is described as a precipice that makes executive tenure precarious and more sensitive to demise during times of organisational crisis or downturn. More specifically, it refers to the trend where women are appointed to executive positions more often during such uncertain periods. As a result, they are forced to contend with tumultuous environments wherein their risk of failure is considerably greater and the judgement they receive more critical (Schein, Mueller et al. 1996; Ryan and Haslam 2005; Ryan and Haslam 2007). Before becoming a 2016 candidate for president in the Republican primaries, Carly Fiorina experienced such failure following her appointment as CEO of Hewlett-Packard (HP) in 1999 in the midst of a precarious and divisive period for the technology giant. The company’s subsequent mass layoffs and Fiorina’s forced resignation by the board led many to conclude that her gender was at least an implicit factor in her initial hire by HP (Hewlett 2008).

This metaphor is similar to the ‘think crisis, think female’ turn of phrase that alludes to the corresponding saying in the business world, ‘think manager, think male’ (Ryan, Haslam et al. 2011). This dynamic may favour the appointment of women as a strategy for company overhaul, crisis management, or damage control, but it also posits male superiority in terms of providing stable leadership (Schein 1973; Ryan, Haslam et al. 2011).

Female managers are placed in positions of leadership during precarious times, with the understanding that they are far more likely than male counterparts to accept blame should a company fail. This is within a context which already minimises female leadership. Female traits are perceived as the most suitable attributes for an effective manager, embodying a class of behaviours which were passive and maintenance-oriented rather than aimed at taking risks and making bold decisions to improve company performance. Such results depict underlying cognitive processes which may fuel the occurrence of a ‘glass cliff’ phenomenon for women (Ryan et al. 2011). All of these factors contribute to an environment which initially might be seen

as success for women, but which is one in which female managers in crisis situations are often predestined to failure (Ryan et al. 2011).

#### **2.13.2.5 Glass slipper Metaphor**

Perhaps the most poetic metaphor used in management and workplace discourse, the term ‘glass slipper effect’ relates to the ornate glass footwear featured at the centre of Charles Perrault's well-known story, *Cinderella*. In 2003, Rudman and Heppen researched this concept, drawing the motif of a ‘glass slipper’ into the realms of scholarly literature. They used this term to describe the reduced interest in personal power that women may experience should they hold implicit romantic fantasies about men, chivalry, and the heroic ideals which are perpetuated in fairy tales.

Support for this notion was presented by Rudman and Heppen (2003), who found that women possessing implicit male fantasies displayed lower projected incomes, lower educational goals, and less desire for high status jobs, as well as less interest in pursuing leadership positions as a whole. Such a gendered dynamic hinders these women’s motivations to move forward, take on professional identities, or pursue institutional success (Rudman and Heppen 2003).

Beyond this initial research, however, little empirical evidence is given to support the existence of such a phenomenon. Ashcraft (2013) also tried to use the notion of a ‘glass slipper effect’ to refer to the idea that social identities can entitle certain individuals to particular occupations—whether the shoe ‘fits’ or not—and that women may find themselves more often granted occupational roles that are perceived as stereotypically more suitable for womanhood (e.g., domestic services). Such a hiring model, however, may also effectively restrict women from leadership positions that are deemed to be more masculine and thus ‘less fitting’ (Ashcraft 2013).

#### **2.13.2.6 Glass escalator Metaphor**

The alternative imagery of the ‘glass escalator’ represents the accelerated advancement of men to senior positions within female-dominated professions. Between 1985 and 1991, Williams (1992) conducted 99 in-depth interviews with men and women working in four professions stereotypically perceived as feminine: nursing, elementary school teaching, librarianship, and social work. Themes emerged related to both the

discrimination and advantage men may experience due to their gender rather than their personal qualifications. Williams speaks of an underlying mechanism, a ‘glass escalator,’ which appears to enhance men’s positions. Correspondingly, the glass escalator also exposes the absence of discrimination and hostility that men experience when they enter female dominated professions and navigate their careers (Williams 1992).

This metaphor draws attention to the fact that men have easier access to advancement across seemingly all domains, while women not only experience hardship when entering male-dominated occupations and roles but continue to do so within environments where their gender is in the majority and their presence is expected (Williams 1992).

### **2.13.2.7 Summary**

While glass-based metaphors remain extremely prevalent in the literature, various other metaphors have also been proposed to explain women’s career trajectories. Among these are the ‘sticky floor,’ and ‘queen bee syndrome,’ discussed next.

### **2.13.3 Sticky Floor**

In addition to being excluded from the professional space, women who are admitted into a work environment may also be walled in or find themselves confined to the bottom rungs of the organisational ladder. This image ushers in Berheide’s (1992) ‘sticky floor’ metaphor, which describes how women in low-wage occupational roles have little opportunity to move beyond the positions for which they are hired (Noble 1992). Essentially initial entrance is granted into the organisation, but upward mobility is denied.

The sticky floor phenomenon was further explored in research by Booth, Francesconi, and Frank (2003), who analysed the interaction between gender, promotion, and pay rate. They hypothesised that while women and men may get promoted to similar positions in the workplace, women are paid significantly less. Indeed, women’s remuneration was found to be significantly lower overall (Booth, Francesconi, and Frank 2003, 296). The authors note that women receive fewer outside offers than men and they have family commitments that may prevent them from being

able to change locations or take a change in schedule to leverage better offers (Booth, Francesconi and Frank 2003). As a result, they remain stuck in their position.

#### **2.13.4 Queen Bee Syndrome**

The “queen bee syndrome” refers to another problem in the workplace that women sometimes experience, which is the discriminatory and even at times malevolent treatment by their female superiors in the workplace (Staines and Jayaratne 1973). Essentially, this metaphor embodies the persona of a singular female with a position of power within an organisation, characterised as the ‘queen bee.’ She is depicted as being far more likely to adhere to gender stereotypes rather than combat them or act in solidarity with junior women (Blau and DeVaro 2007). Similarly, it is argued that such women in managerial positions are more likely to see other women as competitors, leading them to also discriminate against other female employees, doing what they can to prevent their promotions and pay increases (Blau and DeVaro 2007). Staines, Jayaratne, and Tavis (1974) concluded that placing a few women at the top of an organisation does not necessarily increase female representation in such upper business echelons because of this kind of behaviour.

Queen bee behaviour is reactive, operating as a defensive mechanism to ensure that the women who already hold senior positions continue to do so, assuring them authority by undermining potential competitors and hindering their ascension up the professional ladder (Staines G., Tavis et al. 1974). Research (Rindfleish 2000; Mavin, Grandy and Williams 2014) suggests that the queen bee syndrome may be a social phenomenon and not an individual trait; thus, it is not just something enacted by individual higher-level woman who are mistreating inferiors. The organisational context may help to reproduce this kind of tension and antagonistic behaviour on the part of senior women because of historical gender disparities (Mavin, Grandy et al. 2014). Notably, Rindfleish (2000) also pointed out that ‘queen bee’ behaviour is only demonstrated by a minority of women in managerial positions.

Research has also drawn connections between queen bee syndrome and intra-gender micro-violence, a form of subtle hostility which undermines its target (Mavin, Grandy, and Williams 2014). Through semi-structured interviews, Mavin, Grandy, and Williams (2014) analysed how the concept of ‘doing gender’ is tied to the

characteristics and behaviours which women expect their female colleagues to exhibit in the workplace. When these comportments do not match expectations, senior women may punish their subordinates rather than support them. In this instance, concepts such as intra-gender micro-violence associated with the queen bee syndrome may represent an outcome of gender-based factors which continue to impose normative frameworks upon women in business.

## **2.14 Women in Senior Management**

Although many of the conventional career development frameworks claim that terms like ‘manager’ or ‘senior executive’ are gender neutral various studies discussed earlier show that career development frameworks are often implicitly masculine by nature (Collinson and Hearn 1994; Connell 2005; Mavin 2001; White 1995). Collinson and Hearn identify five masculinity frameworks that shaped organisational cultures, particularly in management styles and effectively enable men to dominate the hierarchies of many organisations. These frameworks are authoritarianism, paternalism, entrepreneurialism, informalism and careerism (Collinson and Hearn 1994). For example, frameworks like paternalism refers a strong masculine culture of men in managerial control and that female employees “keep in their established roles” (Collinson and Hearn 1994, 14).

However, Rosner (1990) has noted that there are female attributes that are exemplary of the way’s women lead. She suggests that women are better at some highly valued management skills like developing relationships, collaborating with colleagues and team members and they are better than men at promoting the development of others. These attributes reflect stereotypically feminine behaviours that are fundamentally different from the masculine traits of management skills that were identified by Collinson and Hearn (Fondas 1997).

The resources sector in Australia is particularly charged with the male tropes of management despite a recent push in the media to promote the idea that women are increasingly involved in mining, as pointed out in the promotional material about the mining sector that Mayes and Pini analyze in their article called “the Feminine Revolution in Mining” (2013). McDowell (1997) and Rutherford (2001) note that women mine managers in Australia adopt a position where they are neutralise in

performing in their occupation. The female managers have to degender themselves, as researchers such as McDowell (1997), Rutherford (2001) like merit and monetary reward. The masculinities discussed above pervade the sense of professionalism that separates relationships from work life; they also pervade understandings of achievement that are highly individualistic, and they do not value feminine management skills such as empathy and teamwork as highly.

As McDowell (1997) explains, women in traditionally male workplaces are also made to live up to an idealized and disembodied form of masculinity while they are also marked as irrevocably different due to their feminine qualities and relationship roles that are different from those of their male colleagues.

Other scholars who have also emphasized how the glass ceiling that women encounter is an almost invisible but still impenetrable barrier that prevents women from gaining senior management positions (Davidson and Burke 2000). White (1995) and Mavin (2001) note that women are entering management positions in increasing numbers and so the career psychology of women in particular should be a topic of research and management theory to a greater extent than it receives at present. More and more women are encountering these masculinity frameworks as they try to gain further authority and recognition at work and more research is needed on how women managers circumvent or overcome these kinds of barriers.

## **2.15 Enablers and Sustaining Women's Careers**

A newer dimension in the literature concerning the question of gender and career success and development is the focus on enablers and the elements that help women to successfully sustain their careers. Below is the discussion of the existing research on networking, mentoring, sponsorship and professional development as areas that help to propel women towards and sustain them in senior management positions.

### **2.15.1 Mentoring**

One avenue through which leadership in the resources sector has sought to increase the number of female employees, particularly in the senior management levels of business, is through mentorship. The term 'mentor' has an etymological history. It can be traced back to ancient Greek mythology (Fernández-Cano et al. 2012). The title

was bestowed upon the guardian of Odysseus' son by Homer (Fernandez-Cano et al. 2012). In more general terms, it describes an experienced individual who advises and guides less knowledgeable people, i.e. mentees, in their lives (Fernandez-Cano et al. 2012). When in a workplace, such assistance is usually directed towards developing and supporting the professional prospects of a subordinate (Ragins 2016).

Mentoring utilises either informal or formal delivery systems (Ragins and Cotton 1999). Whilst informal mentoring results from a mutual and natural affinity between individuals (Wanberg, Welsh et al. 2003), formal mentoring is a structured program which selects and matches participants in order to achieve an organisational initiative or objective (Hewlett 2013; Ragins, and Cotton 1999; Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett 2003) . Thus, an informal mentoring culture may be alive and thriving within the day-to-day practises of an organisation, yet not be set up or monitored by the official standards and documentation its formal counterpart would require (Bugeja, Matolcsy et al. 2016).

Also notable is Clutterbuck's (2004) proposed 'semi-formal' mentoring, which is distinguished by the mentee/mentor's ability to choose with whom they build the mentorship relationship . While early research often advocated the use of informal mentoring styles (Chao, Walz et al. 1992; Ragins and Cotton 1999; Allen, Day et al. 2002), recent years have seen the implementation of more formalised programs structured around official partnerships (Ehrich 2008; Bugeja; Matolcsy et al. 2016). Such formalised programs can ensure that favouritism or other forms of passive or active discrimination do not dictate who receives mentorship and who does not. Particularly in non-traditional industries, women can find themselves cut off from informal support networks which prosper within the natural male camaraderie of the workplace (Sturges 1999; Vinnicombe and Singh 2011; Bugeja, Matolcsy et al. 2016). Thus, formal mentoring can be a gateway for women to receive the career support and assistance that men seem to naturally gain to their advantage. Indeed, existing research shows that women who obtain mentors through official means receive more promotions than women who tried to locate them on their own mentors (Bugeja, Matolcsy et al. 2016).

The support function of mentoring can also be divided into two different areas: psychosocial and career-based outcomes (Kram 1985). Psychosocial mentoring can provide counselling, friendship, and role modelling, fortifying the intrinsic

strength of an individual. In contrast, career mentoring can assist an individual by coaching them through difficult situations and helping with challenging assignments, as well as providing exposure, fostering connections, and serving as a source of protection or support (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett 2003). A common argument for this method is that this form of deliberate career support directly leads to organisational advancement, promotions, and an increase in remuneration that is synonymous with success (Tharenou 2005; O'Brien, Pearpoint et al. 2010). Another argument is that women provide and receive more psychosocial types of support than men (Høigaard and Mathisen 2009; Monserrat, Duffy et al. 2009; O'Brien, Pearpoint et al. 2010). Together, these ideas have led scholars to propose that standalone psychosocial support can be detrimental to women's career progression due to its lack of direct career assistance (Tharenou 2005).

In all, the implementation of mentoring can offer women a variety of personal and organisational benefits within the workplace, including boosts to self-confidence and self-esteem (Wanberg, Welsh et al. 2003; O'Brien, Pearpoint et al. 2010; Fitzsimmons, Callan et al. 2014) heightened career satisfaction (Ragins and Cotton 1999; Kay and Wallace 2009), organisational visibility (Vinnicombe and Singh 2011), and a greater likelihood of acquiring global international appointments (Linehan and Scullion 2008). Through these efforts, mentoring is generally viewed as an effective means of accessing the skills and knowledge needed for women to make that final step into senior management roles (Tharenou 2005; Ragins and Kram 2007; Kay and Wallace 2009; Dworkin, Maurer et al. 2012; Fitzsimmons, Callan et al. 2014). Indeed, Dworkin, Maurer, and Schipani (2012) have found that mentorship is crucial to women seeking to succeed in C-suite careers thanks to the training, advice, and exposure to valuable connections that these relationships provide at such an elite level.

Research has started to move beyond studying the procedural elements of successful mentor-mentee partnerships and has begun to look at the mechanisms that influence how women receive and experience mentoring (Wanberg, Welsh, and Hezlett 2003). For example, senior management women are often seen to provide a unique insight into the gendered barriers which females face, as well as a strategic way to overcome them. Therefore, it is often suggested that same-sex dyads will be the most advantageous for women at lower levels (Tharenou 2005). However, Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010a, b) and Dougherty et al. (2013) suggest that the



benefit of a mentor's gender is highly variable depending on the occupational context of an individual.

Indeed, research shows that, in male-dominated industries and departments, women attain more career-related benefits from mentors who are male rather than female, with higher rates of compensation, career satisfaction, and senior executive success being gained from such partnerships. These returns are even greater when the male mentor has a high organisational status (Ramaswamy and Gouillart 2010a, 2010b). As Ragins and Sundstrom (1989) note, men often have the upper hand in such environments due to the long-standing history of male authority and dominance within them, especially in the resources sector. Therefore, it may be difficult to find a female person in a senior role for mentorship - a dynamic which may explain why women seek male mentors. Nevertheless, having a male mentor also tends to increase female mentees' views on the degree of procedural fairness they have in the workplace (Kay and Wallace 2009).

Because there are few women in senior management positions, women often have very limited options for a female mentor, let alone one who has the requisite power and positioning to be an effective career mentor, whether they prefer a female mentor or not (Dworkin, Maurer and Schipani 2012; Fitzsimmons, Callan and Paulson 2014; Vinnicombe and Singh 2011; Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett 2003). The differences between having a male versus a female mentor at such levels, and the varying benefits for female mentees, therefore, remain to be explored in depth. Although an increasing number of women are being mentored in the professional arena (Doogue 2014; Hewlett 2013), it has become evident that they are not being promoted up the corporate ladder in corresponding numbers, despite the career advantages that this support purports to bring (Hewlett 2013; Laura Sherbin et al. 2009; Ibarra, Carter and Silva 2010). Attempts to explain this paradoxical outcome have led to conclusions that mentoring, as much as it helps, may also be hindering women's rise to the top (Ibarra, Carter and Silva 2010). At the very least, it may be failing to provide the quality and level of support actually needed to truly help other female employees to access senior management positions (Doogue 2014; Hewlett 2013; Vinnicombe 2011). This finding is evident from studies by Doogue (2014) and Hewlett (2013), which showed statistical discrepancies in the number of promotions being received by mentored men and women.

However, this support problem is not the only issue. In light of these findings, researchers are also now suggesting that mentoring may not be what women actually need. Rather, women require sponsors (Hewlett, Sherbin et al. 2009; Carter and Silva 2010; Ibarra, Carter and Silva 2010; Foust-Cummings, Dinolfo et al. 2011), a particular kind of mentorship whereby a mentor not only provides advice and resources but further advocates for and endorses his or her mentees, with seemingly more significant impact than traditional mentorship practices. This particular form of support will be described in the next section.

### **2.15.2 Sponsorship**

Sponsorship is a form of mentorship that offers advice and support, but also includes public endorsement of the person being sponsored within the business setting. Sponsorship is broadly understood as the provision of resources by either an individual or an organisation in order to fund an activity, event, or cause for a second party (Lee, Sandler et al. 1997). In the corporate world, however, sponsorship is a tool which provides the public endorsement and advocacy needed to springboard a protégé into high-profile assignments, positions, and, ultimately, success (Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010). Thus, sponsorship tends to offer more tangible and measurable practical results than mentorship. Sponsors themselves are individuals armed with influence and decision-making power, senior executives whose positions within organisations can be capitalised to champion their underling's advancement (Foust-Cummings, Dinolfo, and Kohler 2011).

Whilst mentors can hold any level of power, it is this strict commitment to status which has sponsorship offering distinctly greater returns on investment than its mentoring counterpart (Vinnicombe 2011; Travis, Doty et al. 2013). Indeed, sponsors do not just open doors for their protégés; they have the ability to make such opportunities appear in and of themselves. As Hewlett, Sherbin and Sumberg (2009, 6) state, mentoring "offers backroom support, not front-and-centre leverage." For women, sponsorship is the direct and unwavering investment of the latter which has become a must-have tool for their ascents up the career ladder (Foust-Cummings, Dinolfo and Kohler 2011; Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010).

The effect of sponsorship upon women's careers can include both an increased likelihood of negotiating a pay raise with their superior and success in asking

for stretch assignments in order to prove themselves (Hewlett, Sherbin and Sumberg 2009). The beneficial outcomes of effective sponsorship, therefore, are more concrete. Despite this reality, men appear to have a much stronger likelihood of finding a sponsor at (46 per cent) over the likelihood that a woman will find a sponsor (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin, and Sumberg 2010). Doogue and Hewlett make the point that a large number of men have been experiencing the unique benefits of sponsorship, such as strategic planning and endorsement, under the guise of mentorship (Doogue 2014; Hewlett 2013). This finding may suggest that men benefit because they are more readily offered support and advice which actively raises their career status, while women appear to capitalise less in this way despite parallel educations and skillsets (Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010). The women in Magrane et al.'s (2012) study were seen to have more mentors, but to receive fewer promotions compared to the men for whom their mentor endorsed their mentee publicly. In these cases, it seems that the mentors were more willing to vouch for their male mentees, in effect acting as a sponsor. Such research leads back to the conundrum of the mentored woman and the sponsored man, or the differing levels of meaningful support and development that men and women frequently receive.

According to Hewlett, Sherbin, and Sumberg (2009), women often prefer male sponsors because they perceive them to be better connected, more powerful, and to possess an increased understanding of how to succeed. As is the case with mentoring, however, this trend regarding sponsorship may be due to the lack of choice for women who occupy high enough positions to actually be classified as sponsors (Hewlett, Sherbin, and Sumberg 2009). Nonetheless, for women who have engaged in such cross-gender partnerships, the issue that these may be misconstrued as sexual in nature is a valid concern due to the damage such accusations may wreak on their personal image and consequently their careers (Ehrich 2008; Hewlett, Sherbin, and Sumberg 2009; Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010; Vinnicombe 2011). This stigma can frequently lead men and women to avoid engaging in such partnerships altogether (Hewlett, Sherbin and Sumberg 2009).

While research on sponsorship is still in its infancy, early findings suggest that barriers and pitfalls exist that halt women from accessing its potential benefits (Hewlett, Sherbin and Sumberg 2009; Vinnicombe 2011). Seeking to find a less disruptive means by which they may promote female advancement sector-wide, many in leadership have

suggested that women consider utilising the benefits of networking. As the following section will demonstrate, this option offers its own drawbacks and limitations.

### **2.15.3 Networking**

Networking has become a buzzword in the contemporary business setting, seemingly offering limitless opportunities, particularly for women seeking to gain a more equal footing in the workforce. In its simplest conception, a network can be understood as a communiqué relay made up of nodes and ties (Brass, Galaskiewicz et al. 2004). A node represents a connection point, a component which produces, as well as receives, information from other nodes. A tie, in turn, is a pathway through which this same information can be transmitted (Brass et al. 2004). When embedded in a social context, nodes and ties represent human beings and the relational bonds between them (Kram 1985). While networks transpire across a range of settings, the present review focuses on those which exist within the organisational landscape (Prescott and Bogg 2013).

While multiple definitions of networking exist, they all appear to hold similar notions of social connectivism, communication, and mutual collaboration designed to assist and improve the members of the network (Vinnicombe and Colwill 1995; Forret and Dougherty 2004; Singh, Vinnicombe et al. 2006). Based on this conclusion, a network can be operationalised as a system which allows resources, such as information, advice, and support, to be accessed (Durbin and Tomlinson 2010; Porter and Woo 2015). Organisationally-based networks appear to follow a similar typology as mentoring, occurring either formally or informally (Prescott and Bogg 2013) and offering up both instrumental (career-related) or expressive (psychosocial) assistance (Durbin and Tomlinson 2010). Likewise, the networking process is often touted to be just as essential as the aforementioned methods in gaining the social capital needed for career success, its positive benefits towards occupational advancement being well-documented in the literature (O'Leary and Ickovics 1995; Linehan, Scullion et al. 2001; Timberlake 2005; O'Neil, Hopkins et al. 2011).

For women, engaging in networking is perceived as a beneficial venture, offering career and interpersonal advantages (O'Neil, Hopkins, and Sullivan 2011; Linehan, Scullion and Walsh 2001; Singh, Vinnicombe and Kumra 2006). Coincidentally, it can be a resource which may also remain partially, or completely,

inaccessible to many female workers (Ibarra 1992; Ibarra 1993). This may occur because of family or home commitments, which restrict the time women can allocate to networking in professional environments (Linehan, Scullion and Walsh 2001).

Alternatively, it may also be due to structural restraints such as the 'old boys' network': an informal networking system which has emerged from the dominant patriarchy within the workplace (Ibarra 1992). Under such a patriarchy, certain spaces and activities are simply not viewed as socially accessible for women, who must then find alternative means of networking (Berhane 2015). Such networks provide men with ready access to insider information, social kinship, professional support, and strategies for occupational progression. In turn, their gender exclusive nature prevents women from accessing these same benefits (Powell, Penick et al. 1982; Linehan, Scullion et al. 2001).

This limited or absent access to organisational networks is cited as a frequent barrier to women's career advancement (Ibarra 1992; Linehan, Scullion and Walsh 2001), and recent attempts to counter this practice have led to the development of formal women-only networks within the workplace (Pini, Brown et al. 2004). Such structures are perceived to provide increased leadership roles, skill development, and promotion of diversity (O'Neil, Hopkins and Sullivan 2011), greater prosocial and supportive behaviours in the corporate setting (Singh and Vinnicombe 2004), personal development (Linehan, Scullion and Walsh 2001) and support, friendship, and encouragement when faced with the challenging, and at times hostile, environment in which women often work (Catalyst 1999).

However, the exclusivity of women-only networks has also been criticised (Pini, Brown and Ryan 2004). Women themselves have suggested that their divisive nature is actually off-putting to the gender equality they are trying to achieve within organisations (Linehan, Scullion and Walsh 2001; Pini, Brown and Ryan 2004). In a case study examining the effects of a women's network within a company, it was found that such groups did not improve women's advancement in the organization (Bierema 2005), largely due to the participating women's negative perception regarding workplace gender issues. In fact, Bierema (2005) suggested that networks might actually perpetuate patriarchal attitudes rather than combat them.

Other research has also suggested that the composition of female networks may actually lead to less career-related advancement than the equivalent male

networks (Davidson and Cooper 1992; Ibarra 1993; Ibarra 1997; Rothstein; Burke and Bristor 2001; Forret and Dougherty 2004). Indeed, traditional male networks are often constructed from more high status and powerful men (Ibarra 1993), a composition which holds more instrumental value for career enhancement (e.g. promotion and increased compensation). This is particularly the case in work occupations where men are the gatekeepers to management positions (Ibarra 1993; Rothstein, Burke and Bristor 2001).

Additionally, Forret and Dougherty (2004) found that certain networking behaviours, such as increasing internal visibility and engagement in professional activities, leads to greater compensation and promotions for men, but not women. Thus, while networking is seen to be a tool to gain the social capital needed to advance women to senior level management (Chen, Doherty et al. 2012), the gender discrepancies between differing networks mean that capitalising on these is significantly more difficult for women. It may be that there are simply not enough senior level women within organisations who can step into these networks and offer the influence and power they need to actively make a difference for other women's career pathways (Davidson and Cooper 1992).

Nevertheless, other research has found women's networks to be useful in providing an avenue through which women can exchange information and share experiences and strategies with other women (Cross and Armstrong 2008; Vinnicombe and Colwill 1995). In a study of the self-perceived effects of a women's network on women's careers, the majority of participants recognised the positive benefits of participation in the network, such as increased support, insight, the cultivation of a collective identity, and decreased experiences of isolation (Pini, Brown and Ryan 2004). In a similar qualitative study, twenty middle-level female managers across various industries in Ireland were interviewed and reported experiencing beneficial outcomes from participation in women's networks (Cross and Armstrong 2008). In particular, the women explained that such networks offer a useful platform to share strategic knowledge with the collective, particularly techniques for securing a mentor (Ford, Boxer et al. 2008).

Despite the mixed results of extant research regarding women's networking, it clearly exhibits the potential for contributing to women's career advancement, especially

if utilised in conjunction with other strategies including mentoring and professional development (Cross and Armstrong 2008; O'Neill, Hopkins and Sullivan 2011). In particular, a utilization of professional development opportunities can mean that, while networking provides women with access to persons who may suggest them for higher positions of power, such self-improvement in a business context will additionally make women more qualified to adopt those positions should the opportunity arise.

#### **2.15.4 Professional Development**

Another means by which persons in leadership have sought to promote female advancement in mining and other fields is through encouraging and providing professional development opportunities. Professional development (PD) pertains to the ongoing improvement of, and addition to, an individual's skills and resources for both personal and organisational success (Hopkins et al. 2008). PD also falls within the broader purview of leadership development, of which mentoring, and networking are a part as well (Hopkins et al. 2008). Over the last few decades, research into the female experience of PD has been a focus point in the areas of education (Johnston 1998), academic medicine (Magrane et al. 2012), and the human resources literature (Hopkins et al. 2008).

However, there is a paucity of research into the professional development of women holding non-traditional roles and working in non-traditional industries (Cater-Steel and Cater 2010). Women face unique challenges within the workplace (Chuang 2015; Hopkins et al. 2008). One of the few research studies on this subject matter was conducted by Magrane et al. (2012), who developed a framework called 'The Systems of Career Influences Model' to explore how it can influence women's career advancement in academic medicine. One of their research questions pertained to how formal professional development may influence women's academic career development. Formal professional development refers to a nexus of support strategies including mentoring, workshops, and specialised leadership programs. One of the questions raised from the findings asks how women who seek formal professional development fare in advancement compared with those who do not.

Dougherty et al. (2013) likewise investigated the effects of gender imbalance of support and development on men's and women's career advancement. Driscoll et al.

(2009) found that a combination of professional development strategies including peer mentoring, tutoring, and collaboration contributed to the career success of women professionals in the educational sector. Given that professional development is often treated as an umbrella term that encompasses specific techniques like networking, mentoring, and sponsorship, much of the relevant literature has already been discussed above in the sections for each respective approach. One significant finding from this review is how strongly interdependent the various approaches are that women draw upon at the management level. In particular, women have sought to benefit and succeed through seeking mentorship, sponsorship, networking and professional development opportunities. Yet, the overall effects of such efforts, particularly within the resources sector and in a specifically Western Australian context, have yet to be evaluated.

## **2.16 Summary**

While much of the existing literature on career development and career success is male-oriented, a substantial body of research on career development as it specifically pertains to women has recently emerged. Within this literature review, most studies reviewed focus on women in either traditionally female-dominated professions, or in areas of work that have progressively become more open to women. The specifics of women's careers in persistently non-traditional areas, like mining and construction, has only been very recently explored.

The definition of career success and what it means for women in the male-dominated industries including enablers for sustaining women's career (mentoring, networking and professional development) was also examined. The discussion of powerful metaphors signifies the separation and challenges that women encounter in their careers and metaphors that can also symbolize the insurmountable barriers and futility that women are often faced with when trying to advance their careers. Such concepts allow for considering the importance of family, other external pressures, and varying conceptions of what it means to have a 'successful' career, which define many women's professional lives. Nevertheless, these concepts and models fail to adequately identify frameworks for facilitating women's professional success, particularly at the senior management level and how the women in such roles conceptualise their success. It is this critical gap in the literature that the current study aims to address.



## **Chapter 3 Women in Management in the Resources Sector of Western Australia**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with the Australian Resources Sector that focused on the implication on the downturn in the mining, oil and gas market during the time of the study. an overview of women in the resources sector in Australia. Then I provide an overview of women in the resources sector. Women's earliest involvement was in mining, and it is important to consider this in the context of women's increasing involvement in the broader resources sector. I then discuss the extant literature on the success of women at the senior management level in the resources sector, which leads to my exploration of research regarding this cohort's experiences specifically within the Western Australian context.

### **3.2 The Australian Resources Sector**

Australia is a global leader in black coal, zinc, uranium, iron ore, lead, and alumina exports (Reeson, Measham et al. 2012, 302). Despite the financial crisis of 2007–2008, rapid growth in India and China created increased demand for raw materials, supporting a mining boom that was influential in stabilising Australia's economy.

During the time of the study, the resources sector in Australia has undergone significant economic growth, leading to a sector-wide skilled labour shortage by 2012, as many new projects entered the construction phase (Garnett 2012). Because of this need for additional skilled labour, particularly in electrical, metals, and engineering (Garnett 2012), new opportunities emerged for women to enter the resources workforce. In recent years, the resources sector has embraced new cultural trends toward gender parity, although it must be noted that female employees have yet to see significant improvements in reducing occupational sex segregation (Murray and Peetz 2009). Meanwhile, the gender pay gap among full-time senior management positions in mining has reached over 32 percent (Minerals Council of Australia 2016). Women remain significantly underrepresented in the resources sector (Minerals Council of Australia

2016). However, mounting external pressures to create gender balance have slowly shifted the sector toward welcoming women.

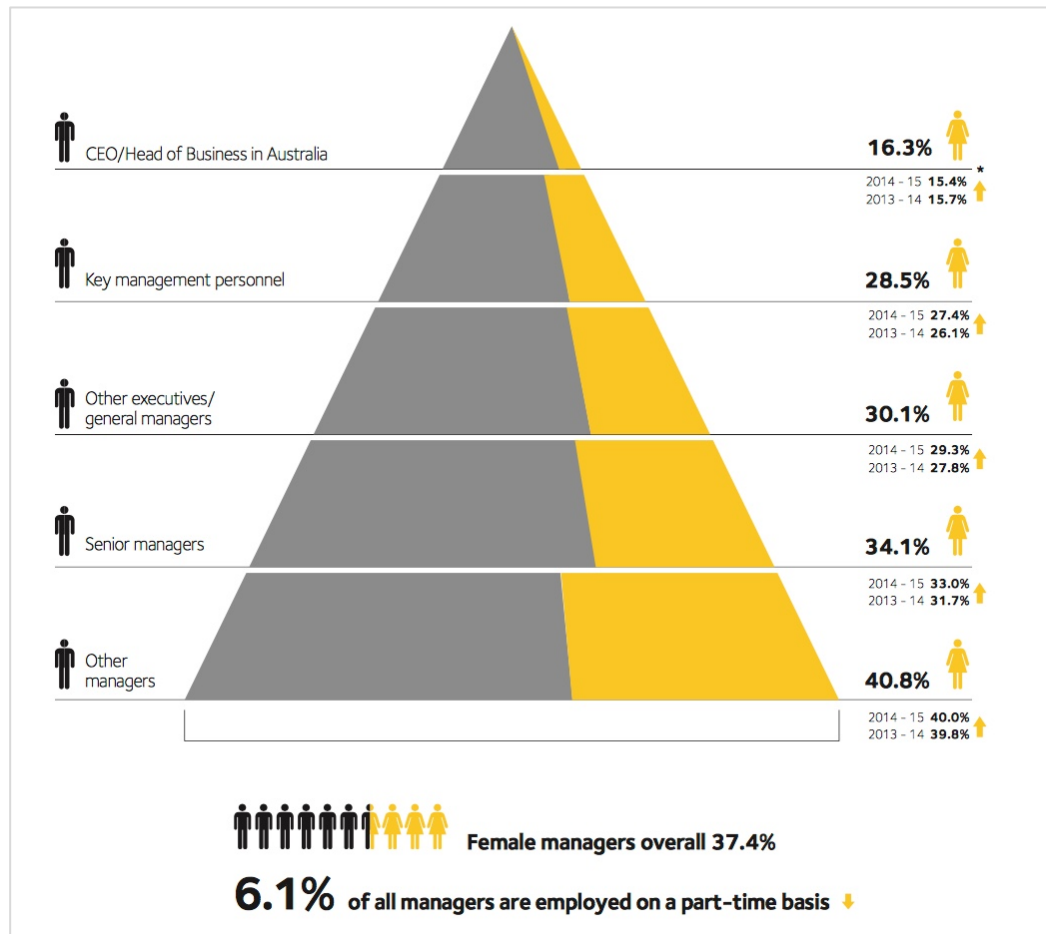
As commodity prices declined from 2014 widespread layoffs and pay cuts followed (Critchlow 2015). As a result, and largely due to the economy's dependence on this sector, Western Australia faced its highest unemployment rate in 13 years at 6.4 per cent in November of 2015 (Perpitch 2015).

Murray and Peetz (2009) initially described a positive 'civilising effect' of female influence within the male-dominated mining culture, and more recent studies have quantified this phenomenon in the lower occurrence of accidents, reduced cost of asset depreciation, and improved interpersonal relations on jobsites (Minerals Council of Australia 2013, 4). While some Western Australian employers recognise the value in the diverse perspectives that women can offer, as well as the financially measurable improvements to productivity associated with higher rates of female employment, they are doing little overall hiring at present (Letts 2016). Recruitment has slowed and many job seekers have abandoned the prospect of finding jobs in this sector altogether (Landers 2016).

Despite these setbacks, the Australian resources sector as a whole has made efforts to increase workforce gender equity and reduce attrition by improving employee engagement. Interestingly, the resources sector has served as a national leader in supporting parental and maternity leave. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency reported that 61.8 percent of mining companies provided an average of 12.1 weeks of paid maternity leave compared to 51.7 percent of all other companies offering an average of 9.7 weeks. In addition, 45.6 percent of mining companies provided paternity leave benefits for an average of 1.4 weeks, as compared to 38.1 percent and 1.6 weeks in all other organisations (Minerals Council of Australia 2013, 3).

Despite the incremental but promising improvements in gender equity outlined above, the resources sector remains one of the most highly gender segregated industries in Australia. Progress has been slow; in the fifteen years between 1998 and 2013, female employment in the Australian mining labour force only rose from 11 percent to 14 percent.

More generally, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015b) has noted a broad trend across industries towards a decreasing presence of women in leadership positions. This is shown in Figure 3.1 below.



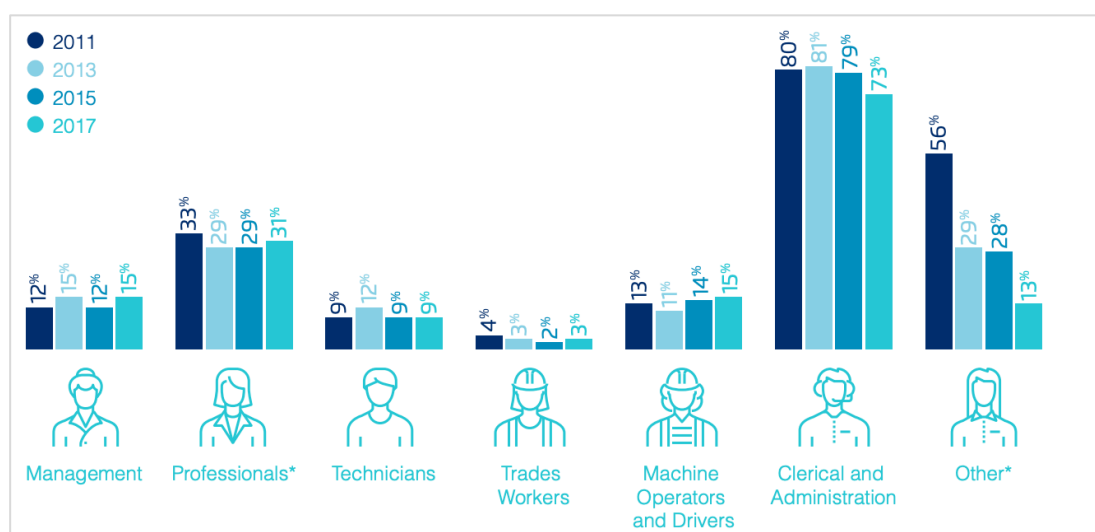
**Figure 3.1 The proportion of Women in Management in 2016 (WGEA 2016).**

Figure 3.1 shows the number of women declining in seniority in their job roles with 16.3 per cent women as the CEO/Head of Business in Australia in 2016 compared with 40.8 percent women in the role of frontline managers. It is clear from this figure that women’s advancement to the top management roles are still hitting a ‘glass ceiling’ across industries.

### **3.3 Women in the Resources Sector Overview**

Globally, the resources sector has traditionally been male-dominated, and little has changed in recent years. The Australian resources sector has historically excluded female workers from a range of technical and professional roles in the resources sector, with certain exceptions made for office work and clerical duties

(Murray and Peetz 2009). Australia, and Western Australia in particular, offers a long history of gender segregation and underrepresentation in an especially male-dominated sector making this region an excellent candidate for in-depth research on how women's underrepresentation has impacted on their career success. Figure 3.2 demonstrates the last 7 years of women representation in the resources sector. Based on the figure, women are largely in the clerical and administration roles as compared with management role of ranging from 12 to 15 per cent in the last 7 years.



**Figure 3.2 Female representation in the resources sector of WA from 2011 to 2017**  
 (Source: CME Diversity in the Western Australian Resources Sector Survey 2017)

The role of gender in the workplace has a rich history in the Australian resources sector. In the mid-1800s, the Royal Commission prohibited women and children from working in underground mines (Murray and Peetz 2009), and the Queensland Coal Mining Act of 1925 explicitly stated that ‘no female shall be employed below ground in any coal mine.’ The 45<sup>th</sup> Convention of the International Labour Organisation also banned female underground workers. During the massive Australian gold mining boom of the mid-nineteenth century, some Australian women participated in small surface mining gold operations in Bendigo (Victoria) and Glen Osmond (South Australia), but women eventually withdrew from the mines (Mayers and Boorman 2016).

In the twentieth century, women found clerical employment within the resources sector, often working as typists or secretaries in mining offices. However, the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s began to change how society viewed

women's relationship to work. In 1972 the then Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (ACAC) ruled that there would be equal pay for work of equal value in Australia. Whilst this was a significant achievement it only applied to women working under federal and not state awards.

At the same time, two important changes in the resources sector created new opportunities for women. First, the development of mining technology increased efficiency and relieved miners of many physical burdens. Without the need to rely as heavily on bodily strength, more women were considered eligible to work in mines. Second, the resources sector shift toward open cut mines eliminated the social stigma and perceived risk of women working underground in male-dominated teams. In 1977, the Queensland Miner's Convention decided to repeal the Coal Mining Act's ban on women working underground (Murray and Peetz 2009), further opening the door to female representation in the sector.

Following critical policy and cultural changes during the 1970s, mining companies began hiring women who were already living in local mining communities. Because these women were generally the wives or family members of male miners, the companies were able to expand the labour supply without overtaxing restricted accommodations which would result in increased cost of living and wage expectations (Murray and Peetz 2009). In the early 1980s, the first new wave of women mining pioneers entered the workforce and began the arduous task of dealing with the masculine culture prevalent in the industry (Murray and Peetz 2009). With the increase of technological advancements, blue-collar mining work had become a feasible option for women (Murray and Peetz 2009). Additionally, the increased pay associated with male-dominated fields provided economic freedom which would not have otherwise been attainable for women at the time.

However, according to Murray and Peetz (2009) female miners have historically faced, and continue to endure today, extreme personal and professional challenges in adapting to working in this field, particularly in relation to social identity, work conditions, and gender role redefinition at home and in the community.

### **3.4 Senior Management Women's Career Success in the Resources Sector**

Much of the research on gender inequality has tended to focus on women's careers in sectors that have either been historically dominated by women (e.g., teaching, domestic service, laundering or childcare) or have recently become more conducive to incorporating women in substantial ways (e.g., middle management, creative industries, legal and other skilled professions) but not as much as in the non-traditional careers especially in the senior management (Australia Human Rights Commission 2017; Pocock 2003; Masterson and Hoobler 2015; Sofer and Thibout 2016).

The challenges that women face in the resources sector are often more acute than those that women face in integrated work environments. For example, women in the resources sector receive lower salaries than their male counterparts at all levels (Cassells, Duncan et al. 2016; Reeson, Measham and Hosking 2012). Furthermore, Reeson, Measham and Hosking (2012) found that income inequality persists even when the percentage of women employed within the resources sector has increased. The issue with income inequality also occurred when both partners in a heterosexual relationship are employed in the resources sector within mining communities, meaning that women are more likely to accept less pay when their partners are more adequately remunerated (Reeson, Measham, and Hosking 2012).

The resources sector is further distinguishable from other industries due to its position as a relatively dangerous occupation. The number of serious injuries and fatalities associated with the resources sector has remained consistently relatively high in the past decade (Safe Work Australia 2014). These data, along with Australia's history of 'for your own good' laws that seek to protect women and children from the dangers of the resources sector (Murray and Peetz 2009), ensure that, while no longer law, patriarchal structures and attitudes continue to inhibit women's access to employment in the sector (Williams 1997).

Some research and corporate initiatives, however, have begun to consider the concept of career success for women in non-traditional, male-dominated fields (Roche 2006; Shaw 2009). The Committee for Perth's 'Filling the Pool' project, for example, has thus far focussed on attracting women to Western Australian industries and on encouraging them to make meaningful 'progress' in such careers (Fitzsimmons and

Callan 2015). In a similar manner, the Minerals Council of Australia (2013) outlines suggestions as to how to attract and retain female workers in the Australian resources sector by understanding what they might find fulfilling about working in the domain.

Although a gap remains in the literature, studies have contributed a richer understanding of some of the obstacles that women can face when seeking a career in non-traditional areas such as the resource sector. Table 3.1 summarises an overview of some of the key studies that have been undertaken over the last decade or so into the concept of career success for women in non-traditional and/or male-dominated sectors. For example, Roche (2006) looked closely at a wide range of non-traditional roles for women, from executive resource management to physical construction work, identifying factors such as financial benefit, intellectual enrichment, physical health, social engagement, and love of learning as contributing to women’s conceptions of career success in such areas. In the most comprehensive study produced thus far, Zula (2014) conducted an extensive review of women in non-traditional fields of work and identified meaningful mentoring relationships as an essential element of success. Shaw (2009) drew attention to specific non-traditional professions, such as that of electricians and longshore workers, to demonstrate the variety of forms of fulfilment women can enjoy in unexpected areas. Woods (1997) conducted a comparative study of differing definitions of career success for women in traditional versus non-traditional professions.

**Table 3.1 Literature on Women’s Career Success in Non-Traditional Areas, 2006–2016**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Main Focus</b>
Woods, Debra Michelle. <i>Women in Non-Traditional Versus Traditional Occupations: Social Comparison, Job Satisfaction and Career Success</i> , University of Saskatchewan.	1997	A key comparative study regarding the differing ideas of ‘career success’ for women in traditional and non-traditional roles. Notably, Woods found that women in such non-traditional fields were equally as satisfied with their employment as those in more traditionally ‘feminine’ fields.
Roche, Teresa Ann. <i>Women in Non-Traditional Careers</i> , University of South Florida.	2006	Explores the myriad definitions of career success that can drive women to pursue careers in non-traditional areas, such as the resources sector. Particularly notes that the number of female-owned firms in the resources sector actually decreased from 1997 to 2002.

Source	Year	Main Focus
Ingram, Sandra. <i>"Women Engineering Graduates from the 1970s, 80s and 90s: Constraints and Possibilities of a Non-Traditional Career Path"</i> .	2006	An analysis of the earliest periods during which women entered the engineering sector <i>en masse</i> , examining specific differences in ideas of career success between men and women. The study concludes that, while female presence in STEM education has increased, cultural practices and attitudes towards women have stagnated.
Shaw, Lynn. <i>Women in Non Traditional Careers: Tools for Success</i> .	2009	Presents a variety of non-traditional careers for women, including mining, longshore and electrical work, and the many forms of career success women can enjoy in such areas. As a former miner, the author particularly notes techniques that leadership in such industries may institute to increase female presence.
Eds. Cater-Steele, Aileen and Cater, Emily. <i>Women in Engineering, Science, and Technology</i> .	2010	Comprehensive and holistic resource on the careers of women in STEM, including notions of 'success'. Offers statistics for women in the resources sector, noting that, while leadership consistently cites attracting more women to the field as a major goal, numbers have largely remained the same.
"Workforce Gender Diversity Review White Paper", <i>Minerals Council of Australia (MCA)</i> .	2013	Stresses the importance of attracting female workers to the resource sector by understanding their needs and priorities.
Zula, Kenneth. "The Future Of Nontraditional Occupations For Women: A Comprehensive Review Of The Literature And Implications For Workplace Learning And Performance", <i>Journal of Diversity Management</i> .	2014	Extensive review of literature on women in non-traditional careers to predict trends for the future. Identifies constructive mentorship and meaningful relationships as keys to success in non-traditional areas for women. Provides meaningful data regarding female representation in the resources sector.
Hegewisch, Ariane and Hartmann, Heidi. "Occupational Segregation and the Gender Wage Gap: A Job Half Done", <i>Institute for Women's Policy Research</i> .	2014	Explores effects of stereotypically gendered divisions between professions and the importance of wage equity to women in non-traditional fields, where fewer resources are often allocated.
Nowak, Margaret, Marinelli, Melissa, Lord, Linley and Bonner, D. <i>"Deciding to stay or go: Understanding the career intentions of women in the Australian resources sector"</i> .	2014	Applies Schein's career anchor theory to explore career attitudes and motivations to women in the Australian resources sector.
Fitzsimmons, Victor J. and Callan, Terrance W. "Filling the Pool", <i>The Committee for Perth</i> .	2015	Initiative to discover what women value in Western Australian careers to attract them to the state's resource-centred sector.



From this overview of research that is focussed on the resources sector it is apparent that non-traditional sectors remain challenging for the female career. When considered in light of the issues discussed in Chapter 2, it becomes clear how exploring the experience of ‘successful’ women in non-traditional fields such as the resource sector can add to current understanding of women’s career success. In the following section, I will consider the issue of the lack of women in the senior management level in the resources sector in Western Australia.

### **3.5 Senior Women in Management in the Resources Sector of Western Australia**

Whilst there is current literature that considers women’s careers within male-dominated industries, such research is rarely specific enough to directly address women’s career success at management levels and how they conceptualise their success and their ability to sustain their senior roles in the resources sector. The senior management positions in Western Australia must be viewed within the context of the region’s unique socioeconomic structures and history.

Western Australia’s economy is predominantly tied to mineral and energy exports due to its strong resource sector and proximity to Asian markets. According to the Government of Western Australia, in 2016-7 the resources sector was responsible for 29 per cent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) which accounted for the highest contribution amongst other industry sectors (Government of Western Australia 2018). As the resources sector accounts for a large percentage of WA’s economy, meaning that the paucity of female leadership and pay inequality has a particularly significant impact. Western Australia thus offers a particularly significant case study that may be applied more broadly or understood as a uniquely regional occurrence that is, nonetheless, of interest given the global male dominance in traditionally ‘masculine’ resource sector. Research efforts towards the greater understanding of the experiences of career success, sustainability, and development of women at the senior management level in Western Australia present an important and unique opportunity for potentially furthering global progress for other women in similar sectors.

Western Australian’s situation is both unique and representative. For example, Western Australia has historically struggled with gender inequality in

employment, which has been largely attributed to the economic predominance of the male-dominated resources sector (Fitzsimmons and Callan 2015; WGEA 2017). Organisations in Western Australia have the lowest number of women in management positions in the country: 7 per cent of directorships, 1.6 per cent of CEO positions, and 1.3 per cent of board chairs (Skates 2014). In 2016, Western Australia's male to female pay gap among full-time employees was reported at 25 per cent, the largest pay gap in the country (WGEA 2017). This inequality is mainly attributed to male-dominated higher paid industries such as mining, as well as male predominance in higher paid roles. However, evidence of leadership-promoted gender bias was found by Fitzsimmons and Callan, authors of the 2015 *Filling the Pool* Report. Fitzsimmons and Callan (2015, 9) found "Systematic bias in the remuneration of females that was widely reported by interviewees and uncovered in all organisations which had conducted gender pay audits. Managerial discretion in pay setting and gender differences in the willingness to negotiate salary was identified as playing a significant role in perpetuating gender pay gaps". Scholars who focus on pay inequality and minority groups, such as Atanasoski and Vora (2015), note that systems that fail to take gendered approaches to pay increases and promotions into consideration, are often actually perpetuating inequality. Thus, in order for such gendered inequality within the sector to truly be addressed, systems must change so as to no longer rely on an employee's willingness to negotiate salary (Atanasoski and Vora 2015), as such practices contribute to growing pay inequality.

Another factor that distinguishes this study is that Western Australia's economy as noted above is mainly comprised of mining, energy, and construction—all industries that are operationally based. It is rare for women to move through operational roles into management and executive positions in this domain. In addition, onsite field experience is considered a sector prerequisite for advancement to CEO and board positions. This problem is further exacerbated by low numbers of university women enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs—areas of study that are considered direct pipelines into the resources sectors (Cater-Steel and Cater 2010; Ingram 2006; Zula 2014).

Between 2006 to 2011, more women than men have graduated from universities in Australia, but only 23 percent of STEM graduates are female (Commonwealth of Australia 2012). This is a significant problem for the future of

gender equity in the resources sector in Western Australia, given the heavy economic influence of mining (Commonwealth of Australia 2012). The continuation of traditional cultural factors is likely to mean that, even if women do receive STEM degrees, they are proportionally less likely to go into resources sector than men (Commonwealth of Australia 2012).

The number of women employed in the resources sector in Western Australia in 2012 was 15 per cent, an increase of 4 per cent since 1997. However, it is still relatively low when women represented around 46 per cent of the Australian workforce (Pattenden and Brereton 2015, 15). Within this sector, women also remain underrepresented in leadership roles. While many efforts have been undertaken to increase numbers of women in senior positions such efforts, including mentoring, networking, and professional development, appear to have had no sustained impact. In Figure 3.3 below, the distribution of women in management in the resources sector of WA from 2013 to 2017 is presented. The total number of women in management has decreased in 2017 compared to 2013.



**Figure 3.3 Distribution of Women in Management in the Resources Sector of WA from 2013 to 2017**

(Source: CME Diversity in the Western Australian Resources Sector Survey 2017)

### **3.6 Summary**

The research reviewed above considers the historical basis for women's current situation in the resources sector in Western Australia, the economic relevance of this industry in Australia as a whole. While there is a notable gap in the literature pertaining to women in senior management, the existing research offered a basis upon which the present study was built.

## **Chapter 4 Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology selected to answer the research questions for this study. The chapter begins with an overview of the qualitative research paradigm and discusses the assumptions that informed the way the research was conducted, the criteria for evaluating qualitative research, and the strengths and limitations of the paradigm. The following section describes the research procedures, participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. The final section of this chapter highlights key ethical considerations for this study and the approaches therefore undertaken to conduct the research.

### **4.2 Research Design**

Qualitative methods are a form of social inquiry aimed at developing knowledge related to the way people understand and make sense of their experiences to construct meanings and interpretations about the world (Babbie 2005, 6; Walter 2006, 7; Jaccard and Jacoby 2010; Miles, Huberman et al. 2014). As a form of inquiry into human behaviour, qualitative research has played a vital role in the early history of research disciplines such as social anthropology, ethnography, sociology, and areas of psychology (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). This section reviews the strengths and weakness of qualitative research, its philosophical assumptions, and key best-practices for conducting this form of inquiry.

#### **4.2.1 Philosophical Assumptions Underlying Qualitative Paradigms**

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experience of senior management women working within the resources sector of Western Australia. Qualitative methods were selected as a field of inquiry for this research (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, 3), because they seek to capture human experience and how people understand that experience (Patton 2002; Creswell 2013). As such, the philosophical assumptions underpinning this study are reflected in a constructive ontology and interpretive epistemology.

#### **4.2.1.1 Constructive Qualitative Ontology**

The choice of methodology for the thesis reflects a constructivist worldview about how knowledge is generated. In the constructivist view ( Lee 2012; Punch 2005), reality is a construct of the human mind; what is assumed to be real is a confluence of human intelligence and experience (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). One of the more notable and early proponents of the constructivist worldview was Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980). Piaget's theory of constructivism is based principally on his observations about how children learn. Piaget maintained that knowledge and meaning are based on people's experiences (Piaget 1971; Piaget 1972).

Piaget assumed that people construct knowledge about the world through two central processes of accommodation and assimilation (Piaget 1971; 1972). Accommodation occurs when a person has fully integrated an experience into how they act in the world. Because the experience of each individual is unique, the assimilation and accommodation of a new experience leads people to construct their own unique views of how the world operates (Piaget 1971; 1972). Assimilation is reflected in how a person integrates new experiences with previous experiences. Through assimilation, a person can develop distinct perspectives, attitudes, and outlooks, which may cause a re-evaluation of priorities and ultimately a change in worldviews (Piaget 1971; 1972).

The constructivist worldview assumes that individual experience of the world is the central focus of valid research methodologies (Lee 2012; Piaget 1971; 1972; Punch 2005). The implication of constructivism for research is that research phenomena are dynamic and best understood by referring to the meanings people construct about the world and their experiences in real contexts and situations (Piaget 1971). In turn, qualitative research provides the best avenue for understanding the individual perspective.

There is a level of social and cultural complexity to the experience of women in management. This complexity is difficult to account for using quantitative methods. Therefore, the constructivist ontology of what constitutes reality appears to be the most suitable paradigm for the research in this thesis, it is also related to the interpretivist epistemology. In light of this thesis's research focus, qualitative methodologies informed by the constructivist paradigm are a valid approach to investigating the

experiences of women in senior management positions in the resources sector of Western Australia.

#### **4.2.1.2 Interpretive Epistemology**

The interpretivist perspective on the nature of knowledge focuses on an individual's perspective understanding on their experience, event and state (Treagust, Won et al. 2014). As such, the interpretivist approach makes the assumption that there is a level of relativity in research and a research phenomenon. In this sense, each individual perspective may differ on a given topic; however, each respondent provides a valuable source of data that is unique in its content (Treagust, Won and Duit 2014). The interpretivist view is based on the idea that a phenomenon's background factors form valid aspects for data collection and interpretation (Treagust, Won and Duit 2014).

The qualitative methods selected for this study are fundamentally linked to the interpretive epistemology (see Smith and Osborn 2003; Smith 2004). Qualitative methods provide a suitable approach for investigating research questions that focus on an individual's views and attitudes as they relate to a person's social and cultural background. That is, the experiences of women in senior management positions in the resources sector of Western Australia and any interpretation of their meaning are subsequently bound by the context in which they occur. Interpretivism reinforces that researchers reflect on their own possible values and biases and how they may influence research outcomes because qualitative research is a process of social negotiation that requires the close proximity of researchers to their respondents (Treagust, Won and Duit 2014).

Specifically, the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to perform this negotiation with participants and is one of the most frequently employed methods of data collection in interpretive research methodology (Smith and Osborn 2003). The semi-structured interview has a high degree of flexibility for engaging respondents in their own terms, with the phenomenon under question. These interviews also provide the opportunity for a researcher to develop rapport with a respondent, allowing a researcher the freedom to delve deeper into experiences, insights, and issues raised by each respondent (Smith and Osborn 2003).

To capture and cultivate important nuance and depth of understanding of a phenomenon, the interpretive approach encourages open, free, and relaxed communication (Smith 2004). To perform semi-structured interviews effectively, Smith (2004) recommends that researchers employ several methods, including empathic listening and responses to participant's thoughts, emotions, and experiences, and take an interpretative position to generate a conceptual understanding of their worlds. In doing so, a researcher is more able to gather rich data and more contextually based information than that provided by questionnaire and survey-based research methodologies (Smith 2004).

## **4.2.2 Trustworthiness and Rigour in Qualitative Research**

In addition to being different in fundamental philosophy, qualitative research differs from quantitative research in how quality is evaluated. While quantitative research assesses the quality of research via the concepts of validity and reliability, qualitative research does the same by assessing trustworthiness and rigour. Accordingly, this section is segmented into two sections with each section detailing specific strategies aimed at upholding research quality.

### **4.2.2.1 Trustworthiness**

The work of Guba (1981) and Lincoln (1995) has yielded a set of four main criteria for judging qualitative research. Each criterion will be described in this section.

#### **Credibility**

The process of ensuring credibility in qualitative research ultimately entails maintaining a researcher's objectivity and independence regarding the outcomes of an inquiry (Lincoln and Guba 1985). According to Shenton (2004), these safeguards include the adoption of accepted methods and the clear operationalization of concepts and research questions. One means of ensuring credibility is through the process of triangulation (Breitmayer, Ayres et al. 1993; Guba 1981; Tracy 2010). Triangulation was conducted in this study by collecting data from various sources including participants, reports, and conferences where the participants have presented. The purpose of triangulation is to ensure that the data collected are consistent so the findings can be presented as a thorough, and therefore confident, depiction of the



experiences of the participants and the interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation (Breitmayer, Ayres and Knafl 1993).

### **Transferability**

The transferability of research findings is defined as the extent to which findings from a particular study may reflect other settings, contexts, and respondents (Shenton 2004; Patton 2002). Transferability is related to the generalizability or representativeness of findings. A transferable study can be employed to make inferences about other settings and contexts to which the research phenomenon applies. To ensure the transferability of findings, this study provided detailed information about the time, place, and other contextual factors. By doing so, a thick description is provided to ensure that informed decisions are made (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Houghton, Casey et al. 2013).

### **Dependability**

Research dependability reflects concerns about whether or not the findings are stable over time and context (Tuckett 2005; Houghton, Casey et al. 2013). The dependability of research and findings can be enhanced by an audit trail (described in a later section) whereby a researcher documents and accounts for all research decisions and activities undertaken during the research process (Anney 2014). Furthermore, a qualitative data analysis software program, NVivo, provides a record of decisions made during data analysis (Tracy 2010). One of the functions of NVivo is that the 'query tools' are able to safeguard against irregularity (Tuckett 2005; Miles, Huberman et al. 2014).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability of findings relates to the steps that researchers take to ensure that the findings are an objective representation of reality and not biased by the researcher's subjective views (Anney 2014; Shenton 2004). Confirmability is about how well research findings reflect respondents' ideas, attitudes, and experiences. Triangulation provides an important method for enhancing the confirmability of findings. It is also important for researchers to justify the decisions they make regarding participant selection, interview guide formation, and coding strategies (Shenton 2004). One important method for ensuring confirmability of findings entailed

the use of a reflective journal that the author kept during data collection. It can be described as "a place to dump [one's] brain" about participants, phenomena, or processes under investigation by thinking and thus writing about participants (Saldaña 2013, 32). The intention is for the researcher to reflect how the interviewer relates to the meanings behind the words of participants and how these thoughts relate to the research question (Saldaña 2013, 32).

#### 4.2.2.2 Rigour

In qualitative research, rigour refers to a systematic approach that is able to stand independently to allow other researchers to analyse the same data in the same way and to conclude in a similar way (Mays and Pope 1995). Table 4.1 details how the validity of the research can be evaluated positively on various points of rigour, its conditions and the action that can be taken in research.

**Table 4.1 Elements of rigour in the research methodology**

<b>Elements of rigour</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Action taken in research</b>
Philosophical stance	Structuralist and Interpretivist	Qualitative research design
Data gathering	Face-to-face semi-structured interviews	Questions aimed to encourage participants to share their experiences
Giving voice	Recording and transcription	Careful transcription of interviews; respondents' words were utilized to describe their experiences
Constant comparison	Ongoing review of data	Continually interrogating the data
Expert checking	Critical readers and discussants	Engage in ongoing discussion about the research process and the findings
Triangulation	Secondary data sources	Data obtained from other sources provided by participants; a wide range of respondents
Replicability	Transparency	Use of an audit trail to detail research decisions

Source: Adapted from Mays and Pope (1995).

Based on meeting these elements of research rigour, it may be assumed overall that the methodological approaches taken in this thesis have provided a valid set of findings that address the research focus and questions. First, there were a relatively low number of participants for research of this type because there are few women in the senior level in the resources sector. The most effective methodology is qualitative as

they shared their stories and experiences about the reasons behind the small number of women in the sector. Second, the interview protocol was pilot tested and improved through four iterations, and coding of the data was conducted in a sequential and objective manner, enhancing the credibility (or internal validity) of the findings. Finally, the details of the study are described fully via an audit trail such that the research is easily replicable and comparable to other related research findings.

#### **4.2.2.3 Summary**

The quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research findings can be evaluated by the degree to which the methods employed to generate the findings are credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. This thesis, in describing the detail of the approach and of the actions undertaken by the researcher, has taken specific measures known to establish credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. However, despite making these efforts, qualitative research has limitations, which are described next.

The interview protocols are based on standard and accepted methods, the respondents' interviews are confidential and anonymity is assured to recruit honest responses from respondents. Triangulation methods were employed by accessing data from different sources. Thus, the research process addresses criteria for credibility. Dependability of the findings was addressed by conducting an audit trail of methods and procedures to enhance the replicability of the findings. Finally, the confirmability of the findings was ensured through triangulation of findings from different sources in order to maintain objectivity throughout the data collection period.

#### **4.2.3 Limitations of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research has much strength, including the ability to generate rich and descriptive data relating to a research phenomenon. However, qualitative research also has limitations. This section overviews five limitations that are important to acknowledge.

First, qualitative research can lack generalizability or transferability. That is, findings from a specific and often purposive sample, time, and setting may not adequately capture the research phenomenon in a general sense (Denzin and Lincoln

2000). Although this is commonly noted as a limitation, it should be stated that qualitative research is not intended to be generalized.

The second potential limitation of qualitative research is its susceptibility to researcher bias. Qualitative data analysis can seldom be objective because of the researcher's own worldviews and personal skills. The researcher do not have any strong personal feelings or biases towards the study and able to bracket herself to address issues of potential research bias (Rubin and Rubin 1995). It is necessary to bracket her own experiences to prevent them from negatively interfering with the analysis and interpretation of interview data (Klenke 1996). Although the elimination of bias can never be ensured under this method, there are many safeguards to minimise its negative impact. Among these safeguards are to make methodological decisions based on the body of relevant and valid literature (Howitt 2010). Indeed, the interview questions for the research in this thesis were based upon the relevant literature related to the experiences of women in senior management positions in the resources sector.

The third limitation is that the depth and quantity of data generated by qualitative analysis is also included among its weaknesses. Interview data can be voluminous, layered, and complicated, making it difficult to manage efficiently and effectively (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Furthermore, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative findings is time consuming. For a single case, there is substantial time required to conduct an interview, transcribe interview content, read and re-read the interview, code the interview content, and interpret and integrate the findings with other cases. As such, qualitative research seeks to balance the required time spent on each case with the sample size needed to adequately address the research questions. In this study, the focus of the research is quite specific, such that the sample size can be relatively moderate to address the research question.

The fourth limitation pertains to the replicability of findings. Typically, replicability is an important criterion to judge a study, especially in quantitative research. However, interpretivism recognizes that findings will ultimately represent a certain time, context, and set of respondents (Hughes and Sharrock 1997) and be open to reinterpretation by other researchers with other skill sets, values, and biases. To allow for the most accurate reproduction of this study in the future, the research methodology is described in detail with thick description and an audit trail to ensure

that the study can be replicated to determine the dependability of the findings. However, findings of the replicated method might be interpreted differently based on the factors noted above.

A fifth limitation of qualitative research pertains to confidentiality and anonymity (Howitt 2010). Qualitative research entails a face-to-face relationship between the researchers and informants. Participants can be justifiably concerned about anonymity and confidentiality, limiting their willingness to share or the depth with which they disclose information.

Thus, it is important to protect anonymity and ensure confidentiality by taking certain measures (Howitt 2010). Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality during the informed consent process and permitted to withdraw their data from the study at any time. Member checking was also performed whereby respondents were given the opportunity to review their responses to assure them that the data accurately represent their views and attitudes about the experiences of women in senior management positions. In this case, participants were sent transcripts to read, verify, and comment upon and then return within 14 days.

#### **4.2.4 Summary**

Qualitative methods are an important mode of inquiry into research phenomena relating to human experience. The qualitative approach selected for this study rests on the assumptions of constructivism and interpretivism whereby knowledge is considered a construct of human experience. This inquiry seeks to understand people's thoughts, ideas, attitudes, and behaviour from their own perspectives. The qualitative approach provides an opportunity to collect rich data about the women in senior management career experiences within the world of work through face-to-face interviews. The remaining sections of this chapter describe the procedures employed to capture these experiences in a trustworthy manner.

### **4.3 Interview Design**

The principle method of data collection in the study entailed face-to-face semi-structured interviews with female managers in the mining industry. As depicted in Figure 4.1, this study has adopted the Data Collection Cycle model proposed by

Creswell (2013). Each element of the cycle is designed to gather data that is relevant to the research focus. The stages of the cycle are elaborated upon in the sections that follow.

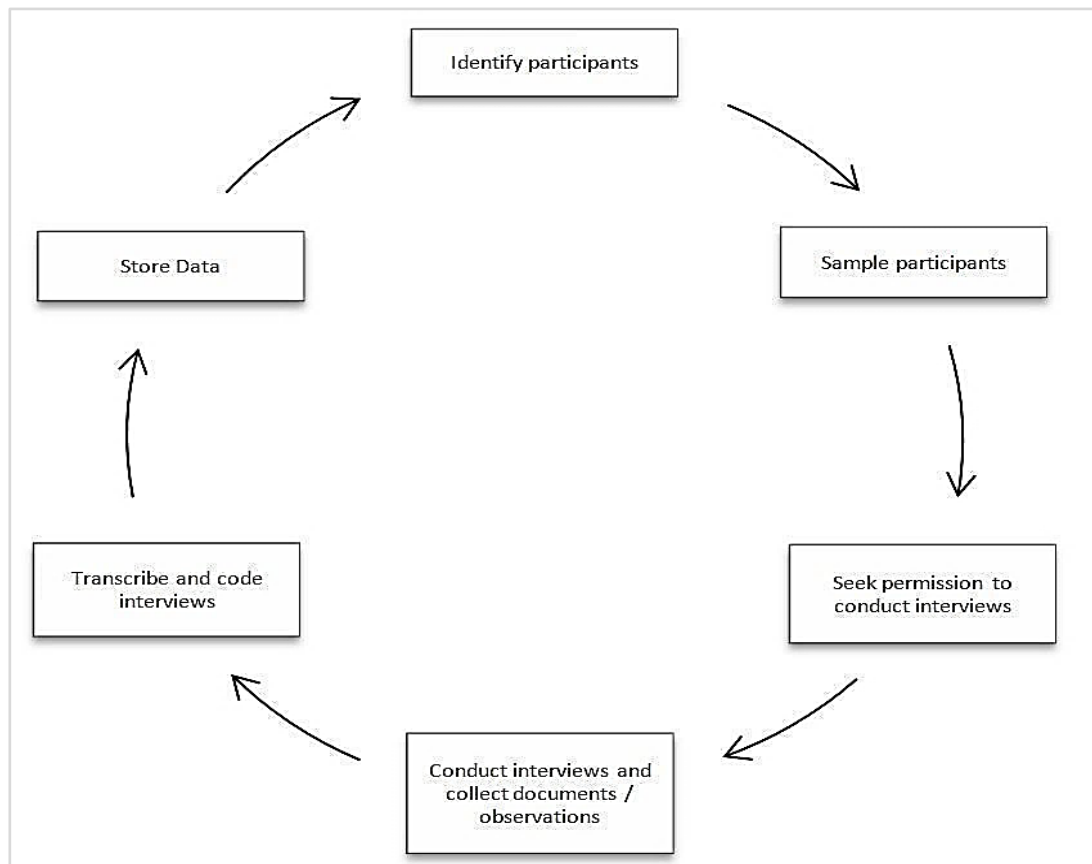


Figure 4.1 Data Collection Cycle (Creswell 2013, 146)

### 4.3.1 Design of Interview Questions

Interview questions for the main study were selected based on key findings from the literature review, discussion with academic industry experts, and a review of a pilot study (Teo, Lord, and Nowak 2014, 165). The original questions (Appendix B) covered several topics, including defining career success, career development, retaining and sustaining career success, and advice to other women. These interview questions (Appendix B) explored issues such as how participants arrived at their current positions, questions defining career success, barriers and opportunities affecting their careers, and how they sustain and develop their careers through networking, professional development and/or mentoring.

**Table 4.2 Audit Trail**

<b>Process</b>	<b>Actions taken</b>
1. Design of interview questions	Initial literature review Questions developed for pilot study and interviewed two senior management women in other male-dominated industries
2. Identification of potential female participants who have experienced the phenomenon	Contact women meeting the criteria through utilizing different women network groups and recommendations
3. Interviews	Confirmed date, day and location
4. Transcription of interviews	Interviews were transcribed and reviewed
5. Initial coding	Initial coding performed using NVivo 10 used for data management
6. Checking with experts on methodology	Meeting held with experts to discuss interview questions and techniques
7. Coding	Final set of data coded.

#### **4.3.1.1 Identify participants**

It is often the case that data generated from interviews reaches a saturation point when collection grows beyond a certain sample size. At such, provided data saturation is reached employing smaller sample sizes is a valid method in qualitative research and was thus undertaken in this study. A total of 31 women participated in this study and data saturation was reached.

Each participant held a senior management role in the resources sector. As noted in Chapter 1, senior management role was defined in five standardised occupational categories. These are

- a. CEO or equivalent
- b. Key management personnel (KMP)
- c. Other executive or general management
- d. Senior managers
- e. Other managers.

WGEA also state that “a manager does not need to be responsible for people to be defined as a manager” (WGEA 2017, 1).

Participants were recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that

provides the researcher the opportunity to select participants who are uniquely positioned to best understand the issues that are central to the problem or phenomenon to be studied (Patton 2002). Purposive sampling of women managers was enabled through access to network groups of women working in the resources sector.

Recruitment also included finding participants via the business network website, LinkedIn, and through snowball sampling whereby associates sent emails to invite potential participants to participate in a research interview. Subsequently, a total of 43 emails were sent to senior management women identified in the Western Australian resources sector. From this contact, a total of 31 women (72 percent) responded with interest to the e-mail invitation and agreed to participate in the study. As shown in Table 4.3, more than 50 percent of the participants were in either a general manager or a managing director role ( $N = 17$ ), with all of the sampled women serving in the senior echelon of their companies and thus meeting the definition of senior manager utilised in this research.

**Table 4.3 Breakdown of position titles held by interview respondents**

<b>Position</b>	<b>N</b>
General Manager	12
Managing Director	5
Principle Engineer / Geologist / Consultant	8
CEO	1
Chairperson	1
Senior Structural Engineer	1
Vice President	2
Executive Consultant	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

#### **4.3.1.2 Sample participants/Pilot Interview**

Consistent with the recommended strategies for ensuring credibility, a small pilot study was conducted to test the validity of questions (Rubin and Rubin 1995). Two women were interviewed, one from the finance and the other the motor industry sector. These two women were selected because of their experiences in senior management levels. As these were the first interviews conducted for the study, they were transcribed by the researcher to gain an understanding of the participants' intonations, pauses, and tones in terms of responses. The social and emotional aspects raised in the interviews



allowed the researcher to get a sense of the deeper meaning behind women's experience in senior management (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

The interviews commenced with broad questions asking the participants to talk about their professional journeys (Appendix C). The purpose of this approach was to establish rapport with the respondents, put them at ease, and ensure that they could relate their own experiences while taking care "not to box them into a particular response" (Rubin and Rubin 1995, 132). Questions relating to professional development, networking, and mentoring were included in the pilot questionnaire. The questions used in the pilot study are found in Appendix C.

After the first interview, the researcher observed that the participant introduced unanticipated issues that were relevant to the research focus. One of the issues related to respondents' experiences with career barriers. The other issue raised pertained to "adding value to the community," which concerns sustainability. As a result, questions were added or altered for the second pilot study interview to reflect these issues (Appendix D).

Rubin and Rubin (1995) recommended that evaluating an interview after it has been conducted is critical to the process of improving research questions and tailoring them in accordance with the research topic. Therefore, the pilot interview was reviewed and evaluated accordingly. Several questions were subsequently added or adapted to improve the clarity, detail, and depth of the interview. These are shown in Appendix D. The second interview indicated that the addition of further questions added value to the data gathering and those questions were subsequently incorporated into the interviews for the main study.

### **4.3.2 Determining Interview Type**

Drawing from the constructivist and interpretive research paradigms, it was determined that face-to-face semi-structured interviews were the most valid approach to data collection. Semi-structured interviews enable the collection of the rich and layered experiences of respondents. As such, data were collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews that included a combination of closed- and open-ended questions (Teo, Lord, and Nowak 2014, 165). Interview questions for the main study are shown in Appendix D.

### **4.3.3 Recording Procedure**

Each interview was recorded on a high sensitivity microphone recorder. To ensure clarity in the recording device and to avoid any distractions or interruptions, an attached microphone was placed in the vicinity of the participant. The recorder was fitted with a noise cut function to reduce ambient noise. The anonymity of respondents was maintained by erasing any form of identification from the recording and the transcribed interviews.

#### **4.3.3.1 Seek permission to conduct interviews**

Each potential study participant identified during recruitment procedures was sent an email seeking permission for an interview in which they were also provided with a brief biography of the researcher and the study and how the participant's name had been obtained for contact. The e-mail also encouraged potential participants to undertake the interview given that there are very few women in leadership in the resources sector. Once a person had agreed to participate in the study, they were sent a document to detail the confidentiality provisions of the study and the interview questionnaire schedule.

Prior to commencing each interview, respondents were asked to sign a consent form to confirm their awareness of the purpose of the study and their willingness to participate. Ethical issues of autonomy wherein research participants were made aware of the rationale, method, and possible implications for undertaking the study so that they can make an independent decision about whether or not to participate formed part of the initial discussion. Prior to the actual commencement of each interview, the researcher verbally assured respondents about the confidentiality of the procedure and that it was in accordance with the requirements of Curtin University's Ethics Committee. Respondents were also told that the interview would be recorded and that they may stop the interview at any time without consequence or judgment. At the end of the interview, participants were told that the discussion would be transcribed and returned to them for review.

#### **4.3.3.2 Locations of Interviews**

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 30 of the 31 participants in a variety of locations, including the participant's office, and the respondent's home, with two interviews conducted at the researcher's office in Perth. Most of the participants booked a room in their office location for the interview in order to maintain privacy. Only one interview was conducted over the phone with the respondent in her office, which is stationed in regional Western Australia, a 9-hour drive from Perth. In each case, the interview location and setting were convenient and familiar to the respondents, likely contributing to their comfort with the interview process.

#### **4.3.3.3 Length of Interviews**

The average length of the interviews was 35 minutes, with the range stretching between 30 mins and 1 hour and 30 mins. In most cases ( $N = 29$ ), the interviews were uninterrupted; one interview was interrupted by a phone call and one home-based interview was interrupted by the participant's two young children.

#### **4.3.4 Conduct interviews and collect documents/observations**











Prior to each interview, several documents, such as Power Point slides, conference notes, website articles, and newsletter articles were collected from participants to construct a background profile about their respective organizations and careers. The researcher also took notes after each interview as a reflection of what was observed and/or what was said by the respondent after the interview between the participant and the researcher. In each case, the collected documents provided useful information to calibrate the focus of the research and this thesis. Data was collected over a period of five months, from January to May 2013.

#### **4.3.5 Transcribe and code interviews**

Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. Upon receiving the transcripts, the researcher read through them to ensure that they accurately captured what was said during each recording. Each transcript was then sent back to the participant to allow her to check for any inaccuracies and to alter any earlier comments to clarify the meaning of the interview. Returned interviews were then labelled as revised and coded in NVivo (refer to Table 4.4). Transcribed interviews were uploaded into

NVivo, a qualitative data management software package, to help manage the data during the process of analysis, which included coding content to help identify themes pertaining to the study’s research questions. Each respondent’s transcript was given a code to maintain confidentiality (Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4 Respondent’s transcript coding**

Name	
	R1 revised
	R2 revised
	R3 Revised
	R4 Revised
	R5 Revised
	R6 Revised
	R7
	R8
	R9.
	R10

#### 4.3.5.1 Analysing Transcripts and Notes

The researcher carefully read each transcript multiple times to understand the interview before proceeding to develop interview themes. The researcher also reviewed her own reflective journals and the conferences notes and any other documentation that were supplied by the participants to triangulate the data.

#### 4.3.5.2 Interpreting and Coding the Data

At this stage, description, classification, and interpretation of the interview data was conducted utilising the NVivo software. The themes in the text that reflected the main research questions and concepts in this study were identified (see Figure 4.2). The theme node is a collection of experiences by the participants. Each node is organised to join the connection from the interview (see Figure 4.2). Ultimately, the themes represented shared meanings across participant responses and were generated by process of coding: initial, focused, and theoretical (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Saldaña 2013).

Initial coding entailed examining each line of data to define the thought, action, or event that was conveyed by a respondent’s words. This open-ended coding process

leads to a name or category for each line of data that can be ultimately collated and compared between respondents to note multiple occurrences of an idea, thought, experience, or instances of negative cases that are contrary to the category (Miles, Huberman et al. 2014). At this stage the participant's words were used to name the code.

The next stage of data analysis was focused coding wherein initial codes are applied across the entirety of the data. It is at this stage that the most fitting initial codes that categorise the data most accurately and completely are applied to the interview content. Repeated uses of a code across respondents led to the formation of categories or higher level concepts. Moreover, each category developed from focused coding could be specified by its unique properties, specific conditions under which it occurred, consequences, and relationship to other categories or themes (Rubin and Rubin 1995). The categories were named to reflect the meaning of the data contained within the category.

The final stage of coding was theoretical coding whereby categories and themes that were generated from initial and focused coding were developed into broad constructs and concepts to capture how the overall meaning of the data related to the research phenomenon (Creswell 2013). The broad construct labels reflected the insights developed as a result of the data analysis. An important aspect of theoretical coding was to consult the literature about women's career aspirations in male-dominated industries. Through this process, the categories and themes that emerged from analysis were compared to theoretical concepts in the literature to ensure that they were well grounded (Charmaz 1995). Overall, the coding process aimed to ensure that the interview data could be defined in terms of essential properties, relationships, and concepts, while at the same time linking concepts to the concrete words and lived experiences of respondents.

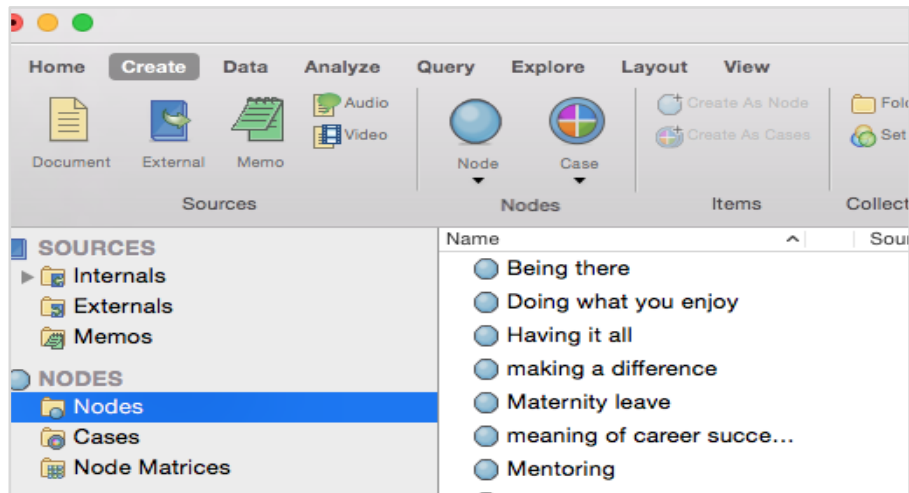


Figure 4.2 Example of NVivo theme codes

#### 4.4 Data Storage

The audio files and transcripts have been stored in the Curtin University's shared network drive which is the research drive (R: Drive) for storing research project data. This complies with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Curtin's Research Data and Primary Materials Policy.

#### 4.5 Ethical Considerations

There are several ethical challenges to conducting research with human participants, such as how participants are recruited, their ability to consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, in addition to considering any potential harm that participants may experience as a result of completing the study (Sales and Folkman 2000). In general, ethical research centres upon the principles of respect for autonomy, justice, non-maleficence or doing no harm, and beneficence or doing good (Sales and Folkman 2000). These principles translate into the need to ensure that participants undertake research voluntarily after being informed about the nature of the research and what is required of them (autonomy), and the need to assure participants that they are being treated fairly and there will be no negative consequences as a result of undertaking the study, such as being treated unfairly or breaches of confidentiality or anonymity (justice). Moreover, ethical research should not lead to any harm to participants (non-maleficence) and should promote positive outcomes for the participant and from the research more generally (beneficence) (Sales and Folkman 2000).

These principles were addressed by ensuring that each participant was provided with relevant information about the research before consenting and undertaking it (see Appendix E for the Information Sheet and Appendix F for the Consent Form). More specifically, the informed consent process ensured that participants were fully informed regarding the purpose of the research, the anticipated duration and procedures, their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research after it had started, and the anticipated consequences of withdrawing. Participants were also informed about potential risks, discomfort, or adverse effects of the research, although none were expected given the nature of this research. Participants were informed of any prospective research benefits and whether there were any limits of confidentiality, such as data coding, disposal, sharing, and archiving (see Appendix E for the Information Sheet and Appendix F for the Consent Form)). Overall, the research methods ensured that participants' privacy was respected and their responses were confidential, as the responses were de-identified, reported in aggregate form and only used for the purposes of the research. The interviews were treated as confidential and, to protect the participants' identities, their identifying information was removed prior to storing the data and transcripts.

In summary, the following points were addressed to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner:

- Participants were given information about the study before they commenced in order to ensure that they could give informed consent.
- Participants gave their written consent to undertake the study.
- There was no request for personal information from the participants in order to ensure that they could be identified and to protect their anonymity. Individual participant data was only utilized by the researcher and research supervisors for the purposes of this study and will not be distributed to any other person or organization.
- Data was stored in a confidential manner whereby names of the participants were deleted.
- An assessment of the risks and benefits of the study indicated that participation would not cause any undue harm. The study was related to their public life and did not request any emotionally unpleasant responses from participants. The

benefit of generating more knowledge about the career success of women in senior management outweighed any potential risks of the proposed study.

- Prior to commencement of the study, the research was examined and approved by Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee to ensure that it met the institution's ethics standards for the conduct of research.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to provide a description and justification for the methodological choices made in this thesis to investigate the career experiences of women in senior management in the resources sector of Western Australia. The first choice was to conduct a qualitative investigation given the unique circumstances and experiences of women in senior management. Qualitative methods reflect the constructivist paradigm and an interpretive methodology wherein valid knowledge is gained from understanding respondents' views and attitudes within their social, cultural, and political contexts. As such, qualitative methods were determined to be the most valid to the research question and phenomenon of this thesis wherein knowledge about career success for women in senior management is likely to be relatively idiosyncratic and related to this distinct context.

The chapter also outlines and justifies the methodological steps that were taken to investigate women's career success in senior management via face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These general steps included participant selection, interview format and interview questions, data coding methods, and analytical procedures. The methods employed in the research were based on well-established procedures that consider the best-practices for evaluating qualitative research and recognising the limitations of the qualitative research paradigm. The next chapter of this thesis reviews the findings in detail as they relate to the themes and meanings behind women's career experience in senior management in the resources sector of Western Australia.



## Chapter 5 Findings

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from 31 interviews with women holding senior management positions in the resources sector in Western Australia. The findings elucidate how these women define the concept of career success, as well as how they have attained it and the challenges they have encountered as women in a male-dominated industry. In this chapter, I firstly discuss the professional and educational demographics of respondents. The definition of senior managers is provided in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.1 Senior Management Roles. Then I present a conceptual map of Women's Career Success. This is followed by a discussion of the findings based on the three significant themes shown in the conceptual mapping. These are 'believing in yourself,' having 'others believe in you' and 'overcoming barriers'. Lastly, in this chapter I discuss how these women build their career success despite the barriers they encountered.

### 5.2 The Respondents' Professional and Educational Demographics

This study involved analysing data from 31 interviews that were conducted with women in senior management positions employed by corporations from the resources sector with offices located in Western Australia. The majority of respondents (81%) occupied the roles of General Manager, Principal Engineer/Geologist/Consultant, or Managing Director. Table 5.1, provides a breakdown of the qualifications held by respondents.

**Table 5.1 Highest Qualification Held**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Degree	21	68
Double degree	1	3
Masters	5	16
MBA	3	10
PhD	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

Nearly all the respondents (93%) possessed a tertiary qualification, with the most common qualification being an undergraduate degree (68%), followed by a Post-graduate degree (32%; see Table 5.1). Just over two-thirds of the respondents (64%) studied a related field as their undergraduate degree, such as engineering, geology, environmental science and metallurgy. The remaining respondents had undertaken studies in management, teaching, humanities and psychology.

### **5.3 Concept Map of Career Success**

The findings are illustrated by key themes and are supported by respondent's quotes. The quotes are presented in *italics* and end with the respondent's number code to indicate the different respondents.

An overview of the interview themes is provided in the concept map below (Figure 5.1). This presents a diagrammatic view of career success drawn from the respondents' interviews. The main theme of how these women defined career success emerges under the three headings 'believing in yourself; having 'others believe in you'; and 'overcoming barriers'.

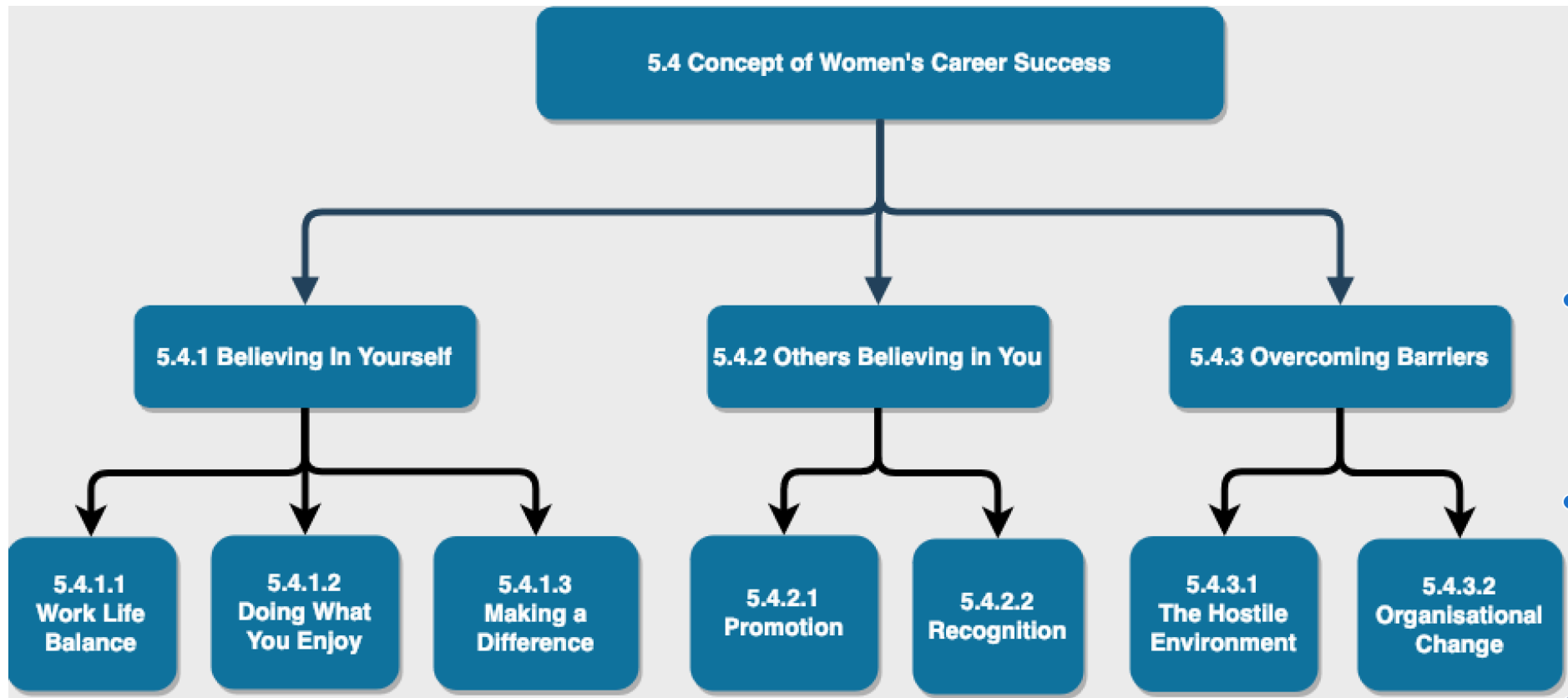


Figure 5.1 Concept Map of Women's Career Success

## 5.4 Concept of Women's Career Success

This cohort of women generally described career success as a process of pushing beyond standard work boundaries and barriers in order to attain a sustainable balance in all aspects of their lives. Thus their ideal notion of career success was one that comprised an 'overall package', and that there was 'balance' between work and family life. Thus success was broadly defined and not limited to a particular organisational role, material rewards or set of managerial or leadership responsibilities.

*I think women define success as when they've got all of the parts of their lives humming... so career success comes as an overall package when I've been working with women. (R11)*

*I suppose I don't see career success can ever stand by itself, its life success and everything I achieve in my career is reflected and has to be reflected in my family life. (R30)*

*I have defined career success as having [both a work and home life], because I do have a family, I do have two children, in my view success is having both. It's having a professional career and having a strong family career. (R19)*

*If I am encountering difficulties, challenges, whatever they may be, whether they be in terms of HR, difficult people, an issue that I don't know how to deal with, whatever that is, being able to go home and do the things that I have to do there gives me that balance and keeps me going. So that's important – both are important I couldn't live one without the other. (R24)*

The data also revealed that career success for this group was a result of three emergent themes: believing in yourself; others believing in you; and overcoming barriers. 'Believing in yourself' encompasses personal, intrinsic, or subjective perceptions of success, such as enjoying oneself, feeling as though they were making a difference, and managing a work-life balance. Specific examples of this theme are discussed in the following section.

### 5.4.1 Believing in Yourself

'Believing in yourself' describes respondents' perceived self-preparedness for the workplace and their ability to thrive within their career role. The concept is

inherently individual, but directly impacts the level of enjoyment and stimulation which they derive from their careers. The concept is also essential to experiencing a desire to make a difference in the workplace, as well satisfaction in balancing family life and work commitments. Thus, the theme of ‘believing in yourself’ entailed three important subthemes cited by the respondents: ‘work-life balance’, ‘doing what you enjoy,’ ‘making a difference’. These different, yet complementary, areas are examined in detail below:

#### **5.4.1.1 Work-life Balance**

For some respondents, implementing a practical system for ‘work-life’ balance involves strategically planning how best to achieve this integration with other parties. Partners who are supportive of the respondents’ careers played an integral role in this process, with childcare and housework responsibilities often being shared. R8 referred to their partner’s specific role in the household, stating, *He was educated to do house work... So, some tasks he’s better at or enjoys more than I do, he does, and I do others.*

In some instances, partners volunteered to stay at home with children or worked part-time, as they recognised the importance of their wife or partner’s career and took steps to support it. R11’s partner was particularly supportive in this regard and R13 added this on the matter:

*We also talk frequently around our work -life balance because he stays at home and looks after the kids and as many challenges that I have at work with being in a male dominated environment, he has many more challenges because he’s in a female -dominated environment. Dropping the kids off at school and doing all of that, that he, yeah, has got as many challenges as I do. (R13)*

Additionally, some respondents noted that women who aim to reach a senior role within the workforce must be prepared to commit themselves to their careers, and this commitment was understood to be synonymous with full-time work. However, this advice was usually delivered in an encouraging, rather than a disparaging, way:

*Women need to own their careers... I tell women "It's okay to work part time for a few years but if you want to tell me you want to work part time for next 25 years and you want to get to my job it's not going to happen. But it's okay to work for five or whatever year's part time and you can still get to my job. (R16)*

A few respondents also discussed guilt as being an issue. For example, R11 explained that she doesn't feel 'guilty' about choosing to continue a full-time career after having children because of the open communication and thus the support she receives from her husband.

*I guess because my husband and I talk quite a lot and prior to having children we were married 10 years before we had kids and we talked quite a lot about how we would raise kids and that I would go back to work and that he would stay at home. We talked through a number of those issues. That I don't feel guilty. I don't – when I talk to other women that they've got – you know, they talk about the mother's guilt, that they've missed out on something with their children or they haven't done something and they carry around this guilt, I don't have that. I'm not saying that I won't have it in the future. Our children are only 5 and 3. But I don't ever feel that they're missing out, I don't feel that I'm missing out, that my husband and I have struck that balance. (R11)*

Despite these examples of successful work-life balance, most respondents agreed that the women who are most successful in their careers in the resources sector are still those without any children.

*But clearly, when I look at the women around me who've done well, the ones who don't have children are the ones that have made it higher than anyone because the ones who do have children have got to make compromises. (R6)*

This raises interesting questions about how success is viewed by the participants and their reflection on how organisational success for women, at this point in time is more likely to be achieved.

#### **5.4.1.2 Being a Role Model**

Some respondents desired to be role models for their children, with work/life balance being something they feel motivated to portray. There is thus a motivation to

provide an example to aspire to. R6 said, "*One (motivation) is my kids. Be a role model and I'm also a provider.*" R18 added:

*I guess the other thing is that I want my children to see that you can balance things and you can actually have your own identity as well as being a mum and a wife and the like (R18).*

In particular, the ability to inspire pride in their children was a central driving force. R30 said, "*Seeing my kids being proud of me.*" However, even though study participants appeared to have everything in place, they still get questions by people regarding the role they are modelling:

*The other real barrier was around people's assumption that I should be at home looking after children and therefore because I wasn't my children were suffering. You know, that somehow that they were missing out. So conversations ended up being, "Well, how do you make sure your children are going to be well-balanced?" I'm like, "Well, my husband stays at home and there is a parent at home just as if there would be a parent at home if there was a mum at home. There's nothing wrong with that." There were sort of some assumptions that my children may not be as well rounded as they could be (R31).*

#### **5.4.2 Doing What You Enjoy**

The respondents also expressed the need to enjoy what they are doing at this senior level of management. The notion of 'doing what you enjoy' involves women deriving satisfaction from the demands of their career:

*I really enjoy what I do. I enjoy making a difference. I guess I enjoy being able to solve problems and to help other people solve problems. Just through the combination of work that I've done and people that I've met, I have the capacity to do that. (R1)*

*I've really enjoyed this role. I've built this oil and gas business in Australia. We've been stunningly successful and I'm really proud of the business and the team we've built together. (R5)*

The ability to feel a personal level of satisfaction at work is integral to the respondent's feelings of success, fuelling their passion for their work and readiness to progress in their role. Some suggested that they felt what they are doing professionally is 'right,' resulting in a mindset which leads to workplace longevity and, subsequently,

their progression and advancement. Responses to the interview question about defining career success consistently yielded reflections that being happy with one's work and in one's workplace is crucial to experiencing personal satisfaction and that this is a barometer of their career success. R31 reflected in the following way:

*I see career success as something that makes you happy in what you're doing because there's no point in getting all the trimmings of career success and more money and a fancy car if you hate every moment that you're at work. (R31)*

*I think overall, it's all about happiness. I think if you like what you're doing you're successful anyway. Because if you're happy doing what you're doing and you're enjoying it you've got the energy to pursue it and get better at it and chase opportunities. If you don't like it then you're just going to turn into dead wood. (R6)*

Other respondents framed success as being happy both at work and at home:

*So where I'll get happiness and if I'm really happy in my career the kids are happy, my husband is happy, I'm not under pressure and it's about finding that efficiency, because we all work like dogs, we don't need to work like dogs. (R30)*

It is understood from the respondents that they enjoy what they are doing and this enjoyment led to a sense of overall happiness. This was an essential component of career success and enabled them to 'have it all' however they defined it.

### **5.4.3 Making a Difference**

The other noticeable component of success entailed 'making a difference'.. Although respondents described this somewhat differently, 'making a difference' was a strong recurring theme.

For instance, some women evoked the desire to engage as something that defines them beyond work, and as something that they have always aspired to:

*I've always wanted to make a difference in the world and that, to me, has been important for success. (R16)*

*You can make a difference to someone, you know, particularly in their career. When I see that happen I go, "Yeah"." I know what I'm doing is right and what I'm doing actually serves a purpose beyond selling a thing. (R27)*



*I think women are more about making a difference to the world than just making a difference to themselves, that they like to take on bigger roles where they can have a larger impact, where the problems are more complex. So, to them, it's success. (R25)*

Some stressed the value of making a 'contribution' and underlined the importance of community and effecting change. R7 said,

*"For me, it is being able to contribute and being able to do what- to be adding some value."*

Meanwhile, others, like R15, considered 'making a difference' a more important achievement than financial success. She said,

*It's probably not so much about money for women. I guess we're not so status-oriented. No, it's more about doing interesting roles and doing things that are a bit meaningful. (R15)*

Some respondents stated they had the opportunity to achieve such goals within their senior roles, portraying a belief in their capacity to make substantial differences within their professional community. This internal locus of control allowed the women to form and execute their personal visions in their companies, alongside the effective implementation of the strategic aims of their workplace. They each evoked changes they have been able to effect in their workplaces, and problems they have been able to solve, thanks to their level of responsibility.

R28 said:

*"I've been given the opportunity to fix them so I want to make sure that I make the most of that opportunity."*

Meanwhile, R10 said:

*Giving, being given sufficient responsibility and yeah, responsibility and authority to do what I need to do to make it happen... Having the ability to deliver outcomes that are tangible. (R10)*

Some of the responses included a recurring favourable outlook toward the prospect of being reasonably challenged by such responsibility. This suggests that the respondents are inherently confident in their competency, meeting such trials head-on with feelings of satisfaction during the course of their careers. Overcoming these

barriers further promoted feelings of success. Indeed, dealing with the challenge of these barriers was a central component of satisfaction across the majority of the interviews. Some women used words such as ‘fulfilling’ and ‘satisfying’ when discussing their problem-solving abilities. For example, R29 said that, "*Making a difference and fixing things and making them better*" was important, while R31 stated, "*I see career success as things that keep me challenged. I don't like it when I get to the point that I'm comfortable*".

#### **5.4.4 Others Believing in You**

The second significant element of defining success entailed drawing upon resources outside of themselves, their support system, and their belief system. Many respondents discussed the importance of the notion of the belief of others in attaining career success. Two categories contributed to this factor: promotion and recognition.

##### **5.4.4.1 Promotion**

The respondents regarded the act of promotion as an external confirmation of their abilities, a gesture which acknowledged their work efforts and commitment. Most respondents assessed their right to promotions in relation to their peers:

*Promoted to the same level as your peers are being promoted to and being paid a salary that is commensurate with what your peers are getting and with the work you're doing. (R20)*

Promotion arose as a more objective assessment of career success. R11 added:

*"I guess success is the role that you're offered and whether you are being promoted, are you being asked to be a leader." R1 also depicted success as objective, stating "Career success for me was always to get to that next rung up on that ladder."*

##### **5.4.4.2 Informal Recognition**

Beyond formal promotions, the respondents further discussed the importance of being recognised for their efforts in addition to the formal validation of promotion. Informal recognition entailed feedback from others as an important element in their self-perception of success. As R23 and R27 portrayed, respectively, the opinions of others, especially superiors, were held in high esteem:

*Being acknowledged that I do well in what it is that I do and that I get recognised for that, both internally and externally... that my expertise is recognised by different stakeholders. (R23)*

*I think it's really-I feel very successful because I have been given that opportunity and given that responsibility to do that. I think, wow, that means someone has said that I am alright. It's come from-the CEO is the one who tapped me on the shoulder and said. "we want you to do that and we are going to give you this." (R27)*

Acknowledgement was perceived as equally important to the women as was the recognition that others believed in them. When others believed in what these women were doing, it helped developed a sense of trust and belief in oneself.

### **5.4.5 Overcoming Barriers**

The third significant theme that the respondents highlighted, was their need to 'overcome barriers' in gaining their career success. The notion of 'overcoming barriers' occurs when these women encountered barriers through either organisational policy and/or equally influential issues within workplace culture. Their perseverance in the face of these obstacles was assisted by the emergence of a workplace culture more supportive of women, which has been gradually reinforced by the advancement of women to more senior positions within the sector. Two categories emerged from this factor, each encompassing different elements that influence the respondents' perceived ability to succeed. These categories included 'hostile environment' and 'organisational change.'

#### **5.4.5.1 Gender Bias**

Some respondents cited examples of gender bias in their work environment in this male-dominated sector. R6 and R25 narrated their examples of barriers they faced as women in the resources sector.

*They still exist today. But I would say today they're much, much more hidden. I think if you've got self-confidence they're definitely overcome-able. But when I was younger I noticed that it was very difficult to be taken seriously because if you're short and smiley and friendly and female— people just look at you as a sexual object. It was hard to be seen as a professional when I was younger. I did struggle with that. My observation is if you're tall and a bit emasculated and kind of boyish your chances of being taken seriously are better. I'm talking about operational roles where you're dealing with a lot of blokes. Emasculated women had much less problems than me. That was really difficult for me in my younger years. But as I got older it was less and less of a problem (R6).*

*So, I've run into a number of situations throughout my career that because I think differently to the team and I'm prepared to challenge how the team's thinking to get the business outcome, whatever the business is expecting from us, that people are sometimes uncomfortable working with me, and when they become uncomfortable, you can get some extreme reactions, everything from them putting in formal complaints and wanting to get you sacked, to I've got one example where essentially all my performance for about three years has been wiped out of the corporate memory, because that somebody didn't actually want to have the truth of what was going on known, and the best way to protect them was to sort of wipe out a few years of the truth as far as I'm concerned (R25).*

Some respondents mentioned how they missed opportunities for promotions because they are females in a male-dominated industry.

*He didn't have any tickets, he'd come up through being an excavator driver. He's a really nice guy and he was really good at his job and he was training to become a mining engineer and doing all the tickets and stuff. But at the end of the day I sit there and go, "What more do I need to do to get this job? You know, I just can't believe that you're giving this job to him and not to me. But in that period as well I had to sign a confidentiality agreement because it was market sensitive. I had no support, I had no-one to talk to about it. So I'm going – you know, I just cried. Then I rang up the employee assistance. I said, "I can't tell you anything about this but I can just tell you that this sucks and I'm feeling like this and this and this." Do you know what they said to me? "Have you thought about going and having babies?" (R12).*

*But if you were going to get bumped from going offshore I was probably always the first one that got bumped because they didn't have a bed for a female. So you missed out on opportunities because of that. I can remember missing out on the opportunity of doing a project scope in the Middle East because I was a female and the challenges of going and doing that role in that society, being a female (R13).*

*It was very obvious in my organisation that– the men, male graduates coming in, were promoted. There was a bunch of us [women] who were not promoted as quick. We were not given the cars and the phones and the bits and bobs that the men were. It was very obvious. Of course, three of us left at the same time. (R9)*

The devaluing of female work meant that some women also experienced a lack of support from other women in the workplace. This suggests that the source of workplace hostility is not from men but rather is indicative of a masculine environment within which women are expected to undertake stereotypically female roles.

Consistently, examples of unsupportive female colleagues involved more junior women being discouraged from progressing by women in more senior positions. R2 described it this way:

*I've never gotten on particularly well with women leaders... That's probably the biggest kind of thing that's slowed me down in terms of career trajectory and growth was working – not always, the last time I worked for a female leader and because I'm quite an alpha character, I'm quite confident and I give off quite a lot of energy, she found me very, very confronting and we just – we never actually managed to gel. (R2)*

Unsurprisingly, the lack of support from other women impacts respondents' capacity to function optimally within their respective workplaces R29, for example said, "*I could say something and the women at work would completely ignore it*", while R25 adds:

*[The fact] that people are sometimes uncomfortable working with me, and when they become uncomfortable, you can get some extreme reactions, everything from them putting in formal complaints and wanting to get you sacked. (R25)*

Participants also reported being compared to equivalent male colleagues in disparaging ways. For example, R29 said, "*Then some bloke who had half the experience I did would come in and say the same thing.*" Similarly, R7 said, "*The day*

*I was appointed as the manager, the unions went on strike because no woman could do a job like that."*

The participants perceived these issues as inherent aspects of the male-dominated industry in which they worked. With a history of higher employment rates of men than women and a focus on physical work and strength, the resources sector is grounded within a gender-specific environment, fuelling the masculinised workplace culture which promotes these hostile by-products. This gender difference fortifies barriers for women within the workplace, restricting their progress and succession into the senior ranks. Due to this male-dominated history, respondents felt that most women lacked positive examples of senior women as mentors or role models.

While it is recognised that in some instances women do still manage to excel, the general absence of this higher-level presence, and thus the lack of senior women able to provide both recognition and backing, could be increasing the likelihood that women will remain invisible in the resources sector.

Meanwhile, maternity leave exposed a unique and noteworthy challenge that revealed a similar biased mindset. Many women, especially R18, felt that there was a predominant absence of procedures aimed to provide a just and sustainable arrangement for women who take maternity leave. R18 said:

*Another thing that's interesting is that when I went on maternity leave there wasn't even a policy because I was probably one of if not the first or second manager to go on maternity leave.*

R18 expanded with a story that exposed the micro-negotiations which complicated her maternity leave, as well as the company's unfamiliarity with the process:

*At the time, there was sort of a, well, what are we going to do about her car? I said, "What do you mean, what are you going to do about my car? Because at the time I had a company car... So, the question was, "Well, while you're on maternity leave should you be able to use your car?" I'm like, "I don't know. I'll pay for the petrol. I don't know.*

The taking of leave also often creates challenges as women struggle to stay connected to work when physically absent. When this connection is broken, it can lead to detachment and the feeling of being left behind. The same respondent described

being both physically and ideologically isolated from the workplace throughout the maternity leave process. R18 continued:

*Because I think at one stage I had to give back my car and phone and all the rest of it... How do you make people feel that they're connected still to the organisation when they're on leave?... The ability to work from home, the ability to take breaks from work and feel that you're not actually left behind is important.*

R18 continued saying that this was an issue for all employees, not just women:

*So yeah, I think that's one thing that I think organisations need to think about, is how to keep people, not just women, but people connected during times of leave.*

The bias of organisation practices has been around for many years because male-dominated sectors rarely, if ever, had to account for the needs of women in the workforce. As a result, maternity leave serves as a case exemplar of the negative impact organizational policy and hegemonic masculinity can have on a woman's success.

#### **5.4.5.2 Organisational Change**

As the resources sector incorporate more women into its work environments, the policies under which organisations operate are being analysed in terms of how these facilitate or obstruct women's career progressions. Overall, the respondents recognised that the resources sector has undergone positive changes. For example, when asked about the sector's history, R9 replied, "*It's time to move on.*" Similarly, R7 concluded that, despite its shortcomings, "*I think the resources sector has come a long way.*"

Respondents further recognised that the impact of workplace barriers on women is beginning to soften in the wake of these organisational changes. Such changes were perceived as supportive rather than a hindrance to women. These changes could be segmented into three categories that focus on both the structural and cultural evolution of the work environment. These include the power of 'being there,' the activating question 'what can I do for other women?', and the influence of the 'role of the organisation'.

### 5.4.5.3 Making history

This section describes how women felt displacing men in a male-dominated sector when such a significant change has never occurred before. Several respondents discussed the pioneering role they had taken within the workplace as the first female contender for their senior position. By their own admittance and abilities, these individuals broke new ground within the workforce, opening up opportunities for other women in turn, encouraging them to be visible, and to make both their deservedness and willingness for promotion known. In other words, they were able to ‘be there’ for others in similar positions.

Many respondents related stories regarding their experience as the first woman in their position. Here is a list of five such breakthroughs:

*I was the first female operations manager in railways in (our company). (R11)*

*I was one of the first offshore supervisors in Australia if not amongst the first in the world. (R29)*

*I was the first female manager that was from WA that was appointed. (R7)*

*I was the first female district inspector in this state. (R6)*

*I think when I got this role I'm the first female director for this organisation so it was a significant milestone for the organisation. (R23)*

Others described how their ground-breaking promotions led to an increase in recruitment of women. R7 said, "*Throughout (the company), there's women in virtually every senior position throughout the company.*" However, some participants noted that they were still alone as the sole woman in their company. For R30, being the only woman and holding an executive management position was described as rewarding, not worrisome:

*I was very self-focused as well from a perspective of I enjoyed being the only woman... I enjoyed the buzz of that, I enjoyed being the pioneer, I enjoyed stepping out.*



Part of the realistic concern is that workplaces with few women are a product of a "token" hiring. R23 noted this concern but emphasised having achieved her position through her own aptitude thanks to the support of her colleagues:

*With our board they were all overwhelmingly positive that I got the role not because I was female but because I could do the job.*

#### **5.4.5.4 Leaving a legacy**

R30 described a sense of obligation brought on by her senior position. Namely, she identified a desire to offer something in return to women in the future, and felt a certain responsibility to do so. Based on her reflections on achieving seniority, she discussed the evolution of her focus becoming more attentive in doing this:

*I got to the point of thinking what is wrong that there aren't other women? It was at that point I realised I had to give something back... I had to start looking, because I was complicit in all of this, I'm playing the part of to be a woman and successful you have to be a certain way and buying into it and allowing it to happen and then you realise, I can't do this anymore, I've got to create - start looking to this culture to create something different so other women can come in. (R30)*

Like many of the other respondents, she felt she was in a position to act as a role model in order to provide support to other women who showed potential to become leaders, and to assist them actively in advancing in their careers:

*The big challenge is, probably earlier in my career, is the support, there weren't a lot of women around especially in my first couple of roles in fly in, fly out, there were very few women on site... So, having other people to talk to, I'm involved in a lot of women in mining groups because of that, because I didn't have that, I think it's really important that we provide for our women. (R4)*

Following from this point, respondents viewed the workplace as being more supportive at an interpersonal level than in preceding decades, with notable improvements being observed in the encouragement which women are now receiving from each other.

#### 5.4.5.5 The Role in the Organisation

Changes are occurring at the organisational policy level, with organisations demonstrating greater commitment to diversity and inclusion in their workforce by employing and promoting more women into senior positions in the resources sector. One respondent experienced these changes this way:

*So since then, I guess there's been all of those types of policies put in place to be able to actually understand, well, what do you need to do, so it's clear... I think it needs – those types of things need to be thought through as an organisation about well, what's fair as well. (R18)*

In light of this increased recognition of the challenges of being a woman in a male-dominated sector, respondents discussed the perceived benefit that increasing workplace flexibility has provided for both the women and the organisations in which they work. R3 said, *"But the organisation got great value out of Joan and I who were both part-time people."* Similarly, R18 adds *"I think organisations have to have policies and procedures that allow flexibility."*

In fact, in light of the positive changes, several showed an affinity to stay in their positions, by choice, well into the future. R21 said, *"I think I'll probably try and continue, if not on a part-time basis certainly on a flexible sort of work basis."* R20 enjoyed her flexibility, stating *"I'm very interested in my work, really enjoy it and I still see myself working part time-three days a week like I do now."*

Earlier, R18 cited the challenges of going on maternity leave in a male-dominated workplace. Several respondents cited that their organisations are starting to make positive changes for women going on maternity leave so that women stay connected to the workplace. For example, the formalisation of playgroups allows new mothers the opportunity to keep connected. R18 spoke about the change:

*One of the things that (my company) and I helped champion, one of our staff members did it recently, is – well, not recently, I think we started it about two years ago... Was just a coffee catch up at a playground, at the (company) playground... We paid for the coffees but basically it was for anyone who was on maternity or paternity leave within iron ore... Once a month, second Tuesday of every month at 10 o'clock. (R18)*

Additionally, R18 felt that she could maintain a close connection with their workplace thanks to phones and other technologies provided by the company:

*You need to keep connected and yes, you need to keep your phone... You know, keep, if you want to, keep just connected on in terms of the company communications... So, you know what's going on and you feel still like, well, you're not just out there on your own with the crying child. (R18)*

By promoting networking practices, the issue of women being displaced from their workplace when on leave appears to be gradually diminishing, leading to a more fluid reintegration into the work environment when necessary. R18 continued:

*It gave people an opportunity to come back and say, "Oh, what are you doing? How – when are you going back? How do I do this? What do I do?" (R18)*

However, several respondents did not describe such a positive return to the workplace. One respondent even described maternity leave and the process of reintegration as a 'wide unknown':

*Because that wide unknown when you actually go on maternity leave, you don't know whether people still remember you or do you really still have a job or are they just saying that... I found that really – it was quite confronting and I think that's one of the things I've actually been able to mentor people through in this is how you do it and this is what you do. (R12)*

Beyond procedural changes, respondents further discussed how their nurturing and caring approach to leadership, while differentiating them from their male counterparts in parallel senior roles, was becoming more valuable as organisations began to recognise its advantageous nature. Several respondents described this nurturing quality as an individual element of their personality:

*I'm a sort of naturally bit of a nurturer and carer so when you get into these positions of responsibility you can use that. (R27)*

*That I do not go into a situation telling everyone what the answer is. I go into a situation asking for input and then we come up with consensus answers. (R3)*

Others linked this nurturing approach more closely with their gender:

*I know that they're fairly natural styles for a lot of women... The other thing that being a woman helps you is in your natural sort of openness. (R3)*

*I think that I listen and that's one of the things that women do a lot more than men, is what I find...Just the ability to listen with empathy, I think, has helped me a lot more than if I was in a man's shoes. (R11)*

*I always kind of think that women have much more aptitude at juggling priorities and juggling things and being able to listen to different people's viewpoints. (R13)*

In line with these reflections on many women's 'nurturing' approach, the respondents observed that their ability to be a team player, an important aspect of work behaviour:

*Many men like having women on their team, they appreciate the fact that they're usually the really good team members and they will also help solve some of the interpersonal skill issues in any workforce (R31).*

*I think we built a really strong team because there was that level of, you know, "It is a team decision on this stuff guys. I can't tell you what to do." Yeah, the guys, they ended up yeah, really enjoying, I think, working for me (R18).*

While the respondents observed that workplace changes are occurring, it was also recognised that this is an ongoing process, and further time and effort will be required to completely address the issues which exist for women within the resources sector. Although, earlier, one participant identified the long way her company had come on integrating women, R7 also note that, "... they've still got a long way to go."

It is clear that for women to continue working in this sector, there is a need for more change. Though organisations are progressing towards equality, it has been a slow progressive change, according to participants.

## **5.5 Strategies for Career Success**

The second research question asked how women sustain and develop their career. Based on their responses, three significant themes arose: professional development, networking, and mentoring and sponsorship. Each will be detailed in this section.

The respondents viewed the attainment of success as a strategic pursuit formed through a course of deliberate steps to advance themselves within the

workplace. As explored in the literature review chapter, several metaphors have conceptualised the pursuit of career success for women in the workplace. These include the 'glass ceiling' (Hymowitz and Schellhardt 1996) and the 'kaleidoscope' (Mainiero and Sullivan 2005). Each of these metaphors proposes a lens for understanding women's careers and for interpreting the differences between male and female 'success' in the workplace.

Each of these concepts underlines the importance of women taking strategic action in order to progress in their careers. This is reflected in the interviews, as many respondents emphasised that taking a proactive role is seen as paramount, with a strong focus based on self-promotion and a willingness to commit to their success. Engaging with workplace opportunities and challenges allowed the respondents to prove their abilities at the professional level, letting their internal drive be displayed and their readiness for promotion be ascertained. While previously acquired expertise provided the groundwork for achieving the senior positions they aspired to, the respondents recognised the importance of increasing their workplace visibility. As a result they actively sought to become visible. For example, R4 said, *I think I've only ever had one promotion where I haven't had to go and ask for it... So, I physically go and say "Okay, so what do I have to do to get this."* Meanwhile, R18 showed this attitude in the following way:

*I said, "Well, I'm happy to go and try my luck at something else and do something different [like] go down to [another] plant and be [a leader] of the [other] plant which involved a team of 40-odd people. (R18)*

Evidenced by the following six excerpts, many respondents described their active pursuit of progress as involving 'pushing' or 'pestering' their male superiors to attain what they sought and deserved:

*I ended up pushing in the company and going to speak to some senior vice-presidents and saying, "Look, I want to be considered for this." (R12)*

*From very early in my career... I've always pushed for what I wanted, and I think I've got where I am because of that. (R4)*

*I took the opportunity of pestering our leadership at (name of organisation) at the time saying I really wanted to be there. (R18)*

*I do continuous professional development programs and the network group. (R8)*

*I'm in (network name) so I try to go to those lunches. I'm a chartered professional so I'm actually - one, it's good for networking, two I need it for my professional hours so I can be registered. (R12)*

*I think it helps to network and talk to people and know what's going on, and share information, and when you need something, you know whom to ask. (R8)*

In the following section, the women analysed their roles further as a workable strategy for women.

### **5.5.1 Professional Development**

Most respondents readily participated in activities and events designed for the acquisition of further knowledge and skills in both professional and personal areas. They stressed the importance of these to their careers. R5 shared, *"I guess part of this personal growth has been this breath in, away from the straight technical roles into the more broad business role."*

Furthering their workplace abilities was achieved through multiple avenues. In certain instances, they involved external events and programs. R20 said, *"I have attended a lot of conferences and courses during my career."* In other instances, this experience was viewed as a compulsory aspect of their day-to-day employment that was designed to keep the respondents well-placed within their role:

*I'm a chartered professional so... I need it for my professional hours so that I can be registered...I want to be in the industry for another 20 years and you need to keep your tool kit pretty sharp so for me, I need to keep thinking, I need to keep learning (R12).*

Additionally, undertaking professional development occurs across different time schedules depending on personal or work preference. As for R1, in some instances, engagement may be short term. She said, *"I did the advanced management program at (Name of program) in (European Country)."*

Those participants aiming for formal qualifications in support of their career advancement may be involved in more long-term professional development programs:

*My professional development at the moment is that I'm at xxx University doing a Masters (relevant professional qualification), which xxx pays for and give me study leave to do. (R20)*

While benefit of credentials was frequently evoked, some respondents also mentioned difficulty in attending professional development courses, leading to missed opportunities to evolve their existing skill set. The issue of limited time was raised by R13 who had trouble finding time to attend courses due to their constantly full schedule. She said, *"Not to the extent that I maybe should do. I think sometimes you get home and you think, that's it, I can't be bothered with these things."* R29 also faced this issue:

*So I'd like to get an executive coach and do some higher level executive development but I'm really struggling to find time to fit that into the program. So have I done any professional development in the last three or four years? No. (R29)*

Three respondents further commented that, given their proximity to retirement, professional development held little importance to them anymore. These responses capture a change in perspective which may occur with age. About this sense of complacency, R16 shared, *"I'm coming relatively close to the end of my career, but I've had xxx internal courses on lots of different things, leadership and so on"*

By contrast, some respondents are leading or developing professional development courses. R30, for example, said *"I do a lot of professional development work, so we have a leadership development course, so that's where a lot of my focus is."* Similarly, R4 added,

*In terms of ongoing training is through me actually writing courses and giving them to other people, so I'm actually giving the professional development. (R4)*

Meanwhile, others questioned the proposed value of professional development, stating that they were unsure what they would derive from it given that they already possessed many qualifications and much experience in their area. R23 and R6 elaborated, respectively:

*If you talk about things like the xxx courses and – yeah, but I guess haven't necessarily been convinced of the value proposition of what that would deliver for me. (R23)*

*I guess you get to a point where you've got so many degrees and so much experience, if you do anymore after that is it really going to be worth the money you're spending? (R6)*

In general, participants felt that professional development could be achieved in a number of ways. It is generally tailored by both respondents and organisations to suit an individual's personal needs and schedule.

### **5.5.2 Networking**

Networking was a central activity for most respondents' ongoing career success. Just as for professional development, its importance for the respondents was easily ascertained. Interviews showed that networking in and beyond the workplace was equally vital:

*I don't think we can underestimate the importance of networking...Be it internal or external to your own organisation...That influences people's opinion. (R10)*

Networking was conducted in a diverse range of ways, including variations in who is participating in it and why. Networking was interpreted as a give-and-take system. On some occasions, this took the form of opportunities to clarify workplace problems, providing a secure place where the knowledge sharing is both customary and accepted. R8 and R20 elaborate below:

*I think it helps to network and talk to people and know what's going on and share information, and when you need something, you know who to ask. (R8)*

*Take a break from work, have lunch and talk over technical problems and see if other people have got ideas. (R20)*

Some respondents spoke of networking as a tool which provided support by assisting in the development of mentoring relationships, showing an interdependence between these two categories. R25 explained:

*The last couple of years I've got more involved in networking, but it's more a matter of providing advice, support, mentoring to other women that are earlier on in their careers. (R25)*



Several participants further described how strengthening interpersonal connections could foster workplace visibility. For example, R30 said, "*You've got to be known. We are a community, we're little communities and the only way somebody gets somewhere is if I know that person.*" This exposure assists in career advancement and is enhanced by the motivation the respondents derive from the process.

For certain respondents, the act of networking deviated from being a simple support task and developed into a source of inspiration and initiative that propelled their ambition:

*Yeah, you just need that empathy to continue to find the energy to keep challenging yourself to keep doing more, and therefore as a source of energy, as opposed to a source of contacts. (R25)*

Similar to professional development, there were respondents who found it difficult to actively engage in networking. Barriers included family commitments, work commitments, a lack of confidence in undertaking the activity. Below, R18 talked about family obligations, while R9 highlighted time constraints due to work-life balance:

*I do Women in Mining groups, not regularly simply because when you're juggling families, it tends to drop off. Also I'm not a big networky-type person. I find myself fairly shy in those environments. (R18)*

*Very hard for me to find the time. Here I am, talking about time. But, you know, I do have a family so for me it's a balancing act and all of these groups are outside of work and I just, I physically don't have the time. (R9)*

Networking was seen as a critical part of career success to many respondents, not only to discuss or share work but also to raise their profile: *I think networking in the last couple of years has done a couple of things. The first thing is because there are less senior women around the place, it does sometimes feel lonely and just having somebody else that says, "Yeah, been there, done that, feel the same."* (R25) (Teo, Lord, and Nowak 2014, 170).

*Any sort of networking you can do raises your profile which is important across not just the mining industry, but across business in general. And also, as a result of some of this, you get media attention through newspapers or news or whatever. (R28)*

The respondents involved in networking would formally and informally network. Some of the respondents not only networked but were involved in the networking committee and spoke in these events. For example, R2 said, *I do a lot of networking because business development is a key part of the work that I do now. I go to Women in Mining networking*" while R30 added, *"Yeah, I go to the Women on Board events when I can. I've talked at Women in Mining and Women of xxx."* (Teo, Lord, and Nowak 2014, 170).

Informal networking among staff members seemed to be common, too. R18 said, *"Yeah, generally it's a coffee or a catch up. I'll go for a wander up and have a chat to someone at their desk or we'll go and have lunch."* R11 also added, *"I've been inundated with, 'Can I catch up with you? Can I catch up with you?'. So the informal network here is massive and really important as well."*

Most of the respondents perceive networking and professional development as connected. In effect they were woven into each other:

*Networking kind of comes as part of the professional development and the activities we do. It's all about getting to know people and getting to understand opportunities. I guess you need to be prepared to do things for other people as well as have them do things for you. (R14)*

### **5.5.3 Mentoring and Sponsorship**

Mentoring is also critical to advancing in one's career, with the respondents regarding it as a vital component to develop confidence in their career success. When discussing their occupational histories, many spoke of having had several mentors and of serving as mentors themselves. Two respondents reported having mentors who were women and with whom they had the opportunity to speak three or four times a year to discuss work-related issues. For example, R23 said, *"My boss who is a woman is someone who I have a lot of respect for and who I really actively engage with to think through work related issues."*

As R1 mentioned, mentoring was critical, although often a product of informal contact rather than a structured company initiative.

*I've got a mentoring relationship. It's a chat in the lift, it's the chat wherever, when you bump into each other at the supermarket maybe, but you've got to start building on that...You've got to be known. We are a community, we're little communities and the only way somebody gets somewhere is if I know that person and I can do something. (R1)*

Seeking support outside the workplace was also common, with the respondents' partners frequently acting as additional mentors/supporter/consultant:

*I use my husband outside of work to talk about work matters inside work rather than anyone else in the organisation. Only because he's very good, you know, not just as my husband but he's been in the professional world himself and he provides excellent advice around that. So, I never would have thought he would have been my go to person but he actually is. (R9)*

The specific benefits derived from a mentor were depicted by participants as dependent upon the skills and abilities that they can supply, given their own expertise.

One respondent proactively found a mentor, personally paying for support and guidance:

*When I became a manager, I went and sought one out for myself. I went and actually paid someone who I respected who had had similar experience, sort of thing, and I actually paid for them for six months to have a meeting with me. They were fantastic because they wouldn't let me get away with anything. (R12)*

Overall, among respondents who did have a mentor, trust became an essential part of this professional relationship. R8 said, "*Yeah. We do consult each other, a lot... Then yes, I have a few trusted people.*" Similarly, the respondents cited the importance of respect to the quality of the relationship. R1 stated, "*They really made me feel valued. They were a great mentor.*" R23 added the following:

*After having worked with him for nine and a half years we've got a good relationship there. In that regard if there's an issue that I'm managing and I need a sounding board, he would be my point of contact. (R23)*

In some circumstances, some respondents acted as mentors themselves, serving as occupational role models for those wanting formal support and guidance. R9 said, "*Yes, I do mentor- I've got a graduate that I mentor.*" R2 had also mentored, adding, "*I've got a number of people that I mentor and coach myself.*"

These mentors shared that their commitment and engagement extended beyond the workplace:

*So, one of the girls that I have been mentoring has just secured a manager position up north and moving her family up north which is great. (R11)*

Mentorship was highly valued and the respondents discussed the significant gains they derive from participating in the practice. This could take the form of contentment in knowing they help to keep their mentees energised and assist in breaking through workplace barriers:

*The other thing that I find about mentoring is that's also about providing energy in that when you've been bashing your head against a brick wall. (R25)*

Many other reasons were cited regarding motivations for acting as a mentor to other women. While the reasons were diverse, the respondents' core motivations rested in helping women navigate their careers successfully. Given the senior positions of study participants, each could be classified as an expert in their field, demonstrating their own capabilities and commitment to achievement. As such, they are valuable sources of knowledge, with the mentees approaching them and seeking guidance:

*So through my career I've had people just casually approach me for career conversations and advice. It really did start accelerating when I came into the general manager role ... These other women a level or two below me in the organisation were going, "Wow, how does XX pull that off?" They sought my advice...Most of the time it works it comes about through a woman approaching me and saying, "Look, I'd love to catch up for a coffee" ... I can't think of anyone actually approaching me and say, "Can you be my mentor?" (R3)*

Specifically, this led many to engage in actively providing instruction in how to advance the mentee's skills and abilities:

*So some of the ladies that I've mentored that have been, I guess, at superintendent level wanting to break into being manager and quite often needing to break across their technical qualifications, is why I often get sought out. Somebody earlier in their career comes along and needs advice, and you talk them through it. We've ended up catching up every month or two. (R11)*

A level of camaraderie is also seen to develop from the mentoring relationship, with one respondent mentioning that this resulted in a friendship. R31 said, "*I've become friends with the woman I was mentoring.*"

While mentoring appeared commonplace for many of the respondents, some indicated that they had not had a formal mentoring relationship earlier in their career, as either the company they worked for did not facilitate this or the opportunity had simply not arisen. As a result they have found it effective to seek advice from a variety of sources rather than just one:

*But, you know, one thing I've found is I've never had a formal mentor in my career. It's something that I've thought about for a long time and would love to have but it's just something that this company has really struggled to kind of support people in finding mentors and I just haven't taken the initiative to go out and do it myself. So yeah, it's probably more a range of people that I talk to if I need any guidance, not just one person. (R26)*

Additionally, a distinction is made between mentors and sponsors. A sponsor is referred to as an individual who holds an active investment in the individual they are advising in comparison to the more passive support one commonly receives from mentors. R7 explained:

*A mentor can be a bit of a sounding board, not necessarily – an essential role, but not necessarily one that has to proactively go out there and speak on your behalf. A sponsor does do more of that and does actually go out and creates opportunities for you. (R7)*

In particular, sponsors were characterised by their unique capacity to 'open doors' which would benefit career advancement. R7 stated, "*A sponsor is someone that actually actively goes and opens doors*", while R30 elaborated in the following way:

*I think, more importantly, those sponsors, I've always had a sponsor, I've always had somebody who really believed in me in the company and that's - and it's through every job I've had, I've always had somebody who's just connected with me and wanted to see me do better and that's really important and that's pretty important that that's a male as well. (R30)*

## **5.6 Summary**

Engaging closely with the data, this findings chapter also discusses how these women draw on self-formulated strategies they have developed to navigate

professional development, networking, and mentoring to build, maintain, and further their success. This led to the development of confidence, competence, and connectedness that proved important to navigate a traditionally male-dominated sector as a woman.

These findings show the definition of career success for women in the resources sector of Western Australia to be a multifaceted. The 31 women who participated in interviews for this study described a wide array of approaches and strategies they have adopted in their past and present roles in order to attain a senior management role and gain satisfaction from their work. From this data, a set of themes emerged which holistically defined success as it has been experienced by these women.

Most respondents stressed the satisfaction and validation they experienced via promotions, raises, and positive reinforcement from mentors and sponsors. The integration of work and life into a cohesive system is another critical element and allowed respondents to feel that their career and family are both complete and successful. The notion of 'work-life balance' proved a shared ideal for many respondents, although each acknowledged the challenges involved in reaching a sustainable work-life balance in such a male-dominated and demanding work area.

While significant barriers against women attaining career success do persist in the contemporary workplace, policy and procedural changes have emerged that offer more support for women and their role within organisations. To further increase this potential, the respondents appeared to recognise the necessity of accruing social capital via relationships from networking, mentoring and sponsorship, and other professional development activities. Enhancing their human capital through further professional development and education (whether short or long term) consistently reappeared in the interviews as a valuable tool for career advancement. This support helped establish women in senior roles through increasing their visibility in their professional field, boosting their self-value, developing their skill set, and ultimately providing their career an opportunity to progress to a higher level.

Based on these experiences, respondents perceived themselves as well-placed to provide guidance and suggestions to current or future women who sought to climb the organisational ladder. With their experience as pioneering senior women in their (male-dominated) fields, these respondents have the authority to articulate,

critique, and advise on management strategies for the issues currently affecting women in senior work positions. Transforming personal strategies into advice that can help to aid others, they suggest a range of methods aimed at assisting the next generation of women. The findings in this Chapter lead to the development of the emergent 3C's model, which is explained in Chapter 6.

## **Chapter 6 Discussion**

### **6.1 The Concept of Career Success**

The research question which this research posed was “how do women in senior management positions develop and sustain their careers in the resources sector in Western Australia (WA)?” The contextual setting for the research, the WA resources industry, is an industry with a workforce which is highly male dominated; the strategies and narratives of women who have developed and sustained their careers in senior management positions who are able to provide potentially valuable input for women who may follow them within similar contexts.

In this chapter, I will synthesise the findings presented in Chapter 5 and I will use the findings to develop what I call the 3 C’s Weaving Model; a conceptual model that depicts how women in senior management conceptualise their own career development and sustenance within the resources sector. In the research carried out for this study I found that three strands were perceived by the participants as especially important in their senior management careers in the resources sector.

The strands are the three C’s: confidence, competence, and connectedness. Each of the three factors form a strand in the overall weaving model. The strands start with believing in yourself and having others believing in you. Then it is followed by other strands: the ability to make difference, overcome barriers, work-life balance and being involved with professional development, networking, sponsoring and mentoring as depicted in Figure 6.1. It will conclude with a summary of the main areas.

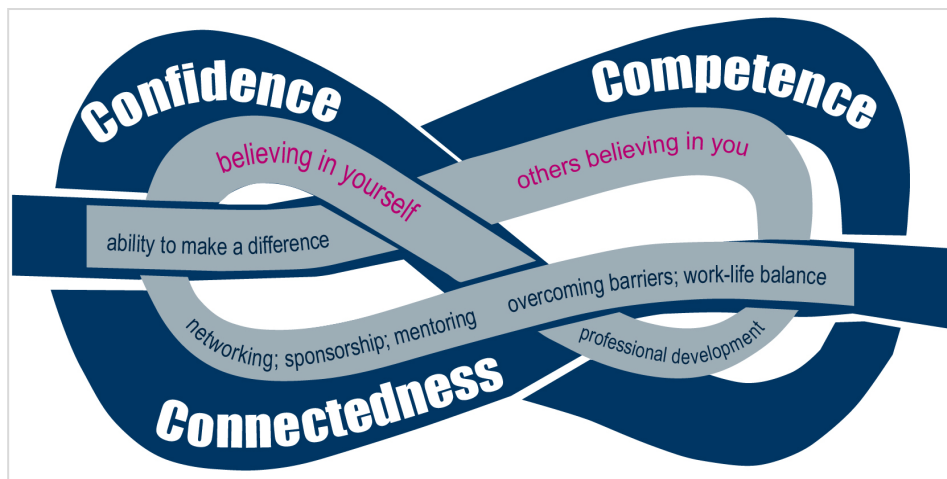
### **6.2 The Purpose of the 3 C’s Weaving Model**

The 3 C’s model is based on the findings from the interviews with women in the WA resources sector. It is based on the principles the women emphasized in describing their success and how they sustain their careers. This model is not an academic model but meant to show a practical way to help encourage career success for women by using case studies. The 3C’s weaving model gives a practical framework for understanding how these women manage their careers in a practical way in a visual context (Gioia et al., 2012, 17). This framework identified the successful strategies for their career. It brings together the stories of the experiences of these women in



developing their careers and it provides a holistic framework relating to their career actions and interactions.

The 3 C's weaving model is best seen as a single, continuous cord of three woven strands that represent the factors necessary for women's career success and work together to create strength and resilience in the face of gender barriers present in male-dominated workplaces like those in the resources sector. As the weave tightens, it gets stronger and reinforces itself. This model will provide a framework for understanding how gender-related setbacks and challenges, including the struggle to achieve work-life balance, are more easily addressed with a strong, interconnected foundation (see Figure 6.1).



**Figure 6.1** The 3 C's Weaving Model of Women's Career Success

The 3 C's weaving model identifies enablers or positive factors that contribute concretely to women's career success with a combination of confidence, competence, and connectedness which are interwoven with *believing in yourself* and having others *believe in you*. Additionally, ability to make a difference, overcoming barriers, work-life balance, professional development, networking, mentoring, and sponsorship form threads that weave the three C's model. These activities are vital to achieving career advancement and personal satisfaction. The interplay of all these strands results in strength and resilience which is vital to the development and sustainment of women's success in this study.

The analysis of findings in Chapter 5 show that women weave together their confidence, competence, and connectedness to achieve career success. These themes

are portrayed in the 3 C's weaving model as a way of conceptualising the interconnected and reinforcing nature of the women's success. The first strand, *believing in yourself* (6.3.1), reflects the positive internal views and sense of confidence required to overcome the barriers associated with the male-dominated culture in which these women were employed. The second strand, *others believing in you* (6.3.2), represents the external factors that impacted the women's success within the male-dominated environment, including the recognition and trust which they sought and acquired from others. The participants stressed how visibility and self-promotion were important, and actively taking on responsibilities to build the confidence of others in their abilities. In addition, the study participants stressed how involvement in networking, mentoring, and sponsorship helped to facilitate the sense of confidence they gained from others, while also generating career opportunities and a willingness to act on them.

In addition to their passion for maintaining and advancing their own careers through such avenues, the participants were also committed to helping other women succeed in the field. The third strand embodies the women's experience of consistently overcoming the gendered barriers they faced. These experiences contributed to the women's personal agency.

To succeed, the participants mentioned that they need to struggle to earn their place in the resources sector which is a contrast to men who are not forced to fight for their career success in the same way (Mayes and Pini 2010). From informal barriers, such as a masculine work culture, to formal roadblocks, such as ill-defined or non-existent maternity leave policies, the male-dominated workplaces in the resource sector are anything but a level playing field. Thus, aspiring women leaders must overcompensate in order to excel in such an environment. The 3 C's weaving model helps to better conceptualise how women experience these barriers and roadblocks but still achieve success at the senior level in the resources sector.

In the next section, I examine in detail the 3 C's weaving model and their themes which make up the single interwoven cord of the weaving model. These elements are drawn from the narratives of the participants explaining their perceptions of their own success at their careers.

### 6.3 The First C: Confidence

Self-confidence, which can be characterised as self-assurance and faith in one's own abilities is the first of the three primary themes depicted in the weaving model. While self-confidence can be identified as a significant factor influencing an individual's success under a wide range of circumstances, self-confidence becomes even more critical when workplace culture and conditions are already skewed against you (Eagly and Carli 2007b). A lack of self-confidence has been demonstrated to negatively affect one's ability to succeed in business, particularly with regard to women employed within male-dominated fields because they are subsequently seen as lacking in the psychosocial requirements to really ascend to the top of their field and sector (Noe 1988). Turban and Dougherty (1994) also specifically noted in their research that a lack of self-confidence made one far less likely to seek out mentors or more difficult assignments that may lead to greater job recognition and promotion. Gill and Orgad (2015) point out how discussions regarding women's lack of confidence means that organisational and structural inequalities remain unaddressed. Thus whilst confidence as shown in this research is an essential component of career success it remains individualised. The women have built their confidence often despite organisational settings not because of them.

The "second-generation bias" in the workplace has been found to complicate the recognition of confident women employees because the behaviours typically associated with leadership and confidence are ascribed to men (Ibarra, Ely and Kolb 2013). Women leaders who did not behave like other male executives and instead demonstrated leadership in non-conventional ways were typically perceived as less confident (Ibarra, Ely and Kolb 2013). As one of the study participants remarked, the barriers against women in a male-dominated market are much more hidden. As she explained: "I think if you've got self-confidence, they're definitely overcome-able. But when I was younger, and I noticed that it was difficult to be taken seriously because if you're short and smiley and friendly and female-people just look at you as a sexual object. It was hard to be seen as a professional when I was younger. I did struggle with that."

Research has also shown that being competent is not enough to ensure that women achieve confidence and success in the workplace. Women also need to be perceived as confident by others in order to be successful. This is indicative of one of

the barriers or roadblocks that women can encounter in their careers because women must be both competent and well-liked by others in order to be viewed as confident at work, while men need only be competent to be regarded as confident (Guillén, Mayo, and Karelaia 2016).

Research has shown how such perceptions have kept some women from receiving opportunities for achievement that would grow their self-confidence as leaders (Ibarra, Ely and Kolb 2013). As Hurst, Leberman and Edwards (2016) explain, women are far more susceptible to under-estimating their own abilities and assuming that others also doubt their skills, than men. Sturm et al (2014) found that women need more feedback and reassurance on average than men given their life experiences of facing unspoken biases and barriers in their education and in their job experience. They are not as likely to take the initiative to ask for an increase in their salary and they typically ask for lesser amounts than men because of the lack in self-confidence (Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb 2013; Ibarra and Petriglieri 2016; Kay and Shipman 2014; Ross-Smith and Chesterman 2009). These women developed confidence over time through challenges to organisational practices which showed that change could occur and by advocating on their own behalf for opportunities and being prepared to move organisations if they weren't forthcoming. The toughness of their environment appears to have contributed to their willingness to push for change. Some adopted a 'tempered radical approach' others sought more radical change to their organisations systems and processes (Meyerson and Tompkins 2007).

Clearly, difficulties related to self-confidence are intensified within male-dominated workplaces where success as a woman often requires overcoming numerous informal and formal obstacles impeding one's way. As this study's participants expressed, under such male-dominated employment circumstances, having a strong belief in oneself and knowing that others believe in you helps to build a strong foundation to support a women's performance, either directly or by inspiring employees to seek out mentoring, asking for highly visible assignments, and other opportunities for advancement. As the research participant noted above said, these barriers are "overcome-able" if you have self-confidence. In fact, confidence is the underlying overarching theme that affects two key strands in the 3 C's weaving model: believing in yourself and others believing in you.

### 6.3.1 Believing in Yourself

In an industry where one's skills are questioned because of one's gender, a strong sense of self-belief goes a long way towards achieving success. For the participants in this study, belief in oneself was an intrinsic mindset. Valuing their own worth and capabilities had a bolstering effect on these women, especially in the face of external gender-related conflicts and challenges that they encountered in the non-traditional, male-dominated resources sector that traditionally excluded women.

*Believing in yourself* has also shown to be an important factor for career success for women in other research. For example, self-assurance is important for giving an internal sense of control. It fosters a sense of motivation that first manifests as an internal sense of control but evolves to become an optimistic outlook on one's potential to achieve and it fuels motivation (Barsh and Yee 2012; Rotter 1966; Sturges 1999). Sturges, for instance, interviewed both male and female managers and developed a typology of the kinds of career success that sought identifying four 'orientational categories' (1999, 245). She found that there were gender differences to how these relate to *Believing in Yourself*. Similar to prior research, such as that carried out by Mavin, Grandy and Williams (2014), in my study self-belief was marked as a significant facet of success for women, demonstrating a sense of trust and self-confidence in one's ability to make a difference in their management roles during their leadership tenure (Barsh and Yee 2012; Sturges 1999). An example would be from R16, R27 and R25 who stated that their desire to make a difference is something they aspired to and from R17 discussing about adding value and contributing to the community.

For most of the women interviewed in this study, their motivation for success in both career and home life was spurred by their inherent sense of self-assurance. This finding is in line with Mavin, Grandy and Williams' (2014) research regarding the importance of self-efficacy and self-belief to the success of the elite women leaders. As the researchers described, participants emphasised the significance of "developing self-belief, resilience, confidence in [one's] own abilities and valuing themselves in ways which reduce insecurity" (Mavin, Grandy and Williams 2014, 9). The passion and strength of the women in the present study, reflected high levels of

self-belief, that had propelled them to their current roles and spurred them to pursue higher levels of achievement.

The participants were asked what suggestions they offered to other women trying to succeed in the resources sector. At the heart of most participants' suggestions was the recurring importance of belief in oneself and cultivating confidence in one's own self-worth and abilities to succeed in a male-dominated environment. These factors are considered important especially in the resources sector for women maintain a high level of confidence to continue working in the environment.

### **6.3.2 Others Believing in You**

In addition to *believing in oneself*, it is also important for others to believe in you in order to secure career success. This is one of the extrinsic qualities of a woman's career success, where her accomplishments and capabilities are recognized by her supervisors and colleagues.

The theme of *others believing in you* sits in direct contrast to its intrinsic twin: *belief in oneself*; others believing in you represents the extrinsic quality of women's career success: gains which are objective and recognisable by a third party. These are recognized as extrinsic factors in career success. Key extrinsic validations that contribute to women's success included concrete rewards (Judge et al. 1995; Linz and Semykina 2013). These extrinsic validations can be formal in nature, such as a salary raise, a more senior job title, or being chosen to for and spearheading a major project, or they may be more informal types of recognition, such as praise from a peer or an invitation to dinner to acknowledge a job well done.

Research has shown that there are some differences in the attitudes towards extrinsic and intrinsic motivations by men and women. The literature relates job satisfaction to actual and expected rewards (Clark 1998; Clark and Oswald 1996; Judge et al., 2001) but gender differences in job satisfaction are still understudied (Kim 2005; Mottaz 1986). Some studies suggest that men have a tendency to prefer rewards in the form of pay or promotion and that women value intrinsic rewards such as learning new things (Bartol 1976; Mottaz 1985). Yet other research that finds there are no gender differences (Brief and Aldag 1975; Brief and Oliver 1976). The study of Linz and Semykina (2013) compared gender differences in desired and expected

rewards among men and women workers, both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and found across both expected and desired rewards that men were more extrinsically oriented, although for women there were some categories that were extrinsically important, such as job security.

This gender difference in the preference for intrinsic or extrinsic rewards was also highlighted in a study of medical professionals that found female urologists had the same level of job satisfaction as male urologists despite being paid significantly less than their male counterparts (Spencer et al. 2016), suggesting that intrinsic validations played a significant role in the women's overall job satisfaction. Zhou (2015) elaborated on this point, finding that job satisfaction in women and men was similarly influenced by extrinsic validations, but that intrinsic factors played a stronger role in women's satisfaction with their jobs than for men.

The research I carried out with senior management women in the resource sector in Western Australia showed that what they value extrinsically about their careers is different from what tends to be valued in existing studies concerning men for example, making a difference and being a role model is value highly by the women as compared with salary increase. Building on the importance of extrinsic validations and the mechanisms for achieving external recognition, the women in this study reflected much of what current research says about mentoring and networking as enablers of success (Ford et al. 2008; Noe 1988; Tharenou 2005; Zula 2014). Thus, mentoring and networking were mediums that helped these women to express their passion, strength, and confidence and contributed to the belief that others had in them.

Most women interviewed in the study recognised the beneficial role that mentoring and networking played in building broad relational systems that assisted them with forming professional contacts in the workplace as well as sustaining their careers. Similar findings about the positive effects of mentoring and networking have been found for example amongst female academics (Gardiner et al. 2007) and among female entrepreneurs (Laukhuf and Malone 2015).

Thus, it was unsurprising that mentoring would play a key role in helping women in the resources sector to build connections as it is a predominantly male sector. One of the most effective forms of mentoring is sponsorship, in which successful individuals advocate more concretely for their mentees, helping them to

secure access to advancement opportunities and important projects (Ibarra, Carter and Silva 2010). However, research by Ibarra, Carter and Silva (2010) found women in general were found less likely to be offered or receive sponsorship opportunities. Women are not being promoted in a positive way as men are. It seems that men are more likely to be sponsored than women.

Another important result reflected in the study findings is that women can sometimes be a hindrance to other women in male-dominated fields like the resources sector. For some women this means that they are not only excluded from networks and sponsorship opportunities that can be seen as markers of others belief in them, they also don't receive support from senior female colleagues. Some of the women in this research reflected similar findings in a range of organisational contexts that junior women can be held back or prevented from climbing the professional career ladder by women managers (Hurst, Leberman and Edwards 2016). This has been referred to as Queen Bee Syndrome (Staines and Jayaratne (1974). Women in senior management positions sometimes subconsciously perceive lower ranking women as threats to their hard-earned success, distancing themselves from those women. Derks, Van Laar, and Ellemers (2016) found this pattern to be even more common among marginalized groups.

Scholars such as Staines, Jayaratne, and Tavis (1973), as well as Mavin, Grandy, and Williams (2014) discussed the damaging effects of the intra-gender micro-violence expressed when women with power use forms of micro-aggression and psycho-social violence against female colleagues and their female subordinates. This Queen Bee Syndrome, through which senior women are less likely to encourage junior females to advance their careers, has been observed to lead to social microviolences in an already challenging work environment (Mavin, Grandy and Williams 2014).

Although this dynamic certainly exists in the resources sector, as related by a number of the respondents interestingly most of the senior women interviewed in this study appeared supportive of the other women in their field. They spoke of how they mentored and sponsored younger women and of the reciprocal benefits of engaging in such supportive relationships. The participants' responses highlighted the additional support that some women in male-dominated careers were now able to access and that support from women who were currently, or had been, in the same position was particularly helpful.



Despite the importance of mentoring and sponsorship in bringing about career success, not all women in this study had access to a mentor or sponsor. Some also experienced further disadvantage when they experienced intra-gender micro-violence from other women in their field (Staines, Jayaratne and Tavriss 1973; Mavin, Grandy and Williams 2014). This suggests that the participant's general willingness to support other women's careers is a reflection of both positive and negative organisational experiences

As another means of achieving success in their chosen career field, the participants also widened their involvement in workplace activities. This added to their exposure to other colleagues at work and created greater opportunities for recognition by their peers and superiors and could lead to mentoring, sponsorship and networking. Hewlett (2013) agrees that both networking and mentoring are critical support mechanisms which assist women with the challenges they face in the resources sector. The interweaving between activities that demonstrated others belief in your abilities helped form and inform professional development because it helped women become more aware of what they needed to do in order to build their careers.

Thus, while this strand of the 3 C's weaving model focuses on external supportive factors (e.g., validation and support from superiors, promotion up the corporate ladder and positive feedback from peers), it also stresses the importance of the interconnection with an intrinsic belief in oneself as an inherent quality that helps them to advance their careers.

### **6.3.3 Ability to Make a Difference**

The desire to give back or make a difference was a prevalent theme in this study, as noted in Chapter 5. This is consistent with a number of studies across a range of industry sectors. For example, in a study that included more than 4000 interviews over a span of 5 years of executives worldwide, Groysberg and Abrahams (2014) found that women prize their individual achievements, passion for work, and ability to make a difference above organisational accomplishment or professional development. This finding also supported the women's dedication to work was not solely due to their desire for power or monetary gains, but also to their ability to make a notable impact or

contribution. This desire and ability to make a difference was one of the defining features of this study and was specifically described as ‘giving back to the community.’

Other scholars have also emphasized the importance of giving back as a motivating factor. For example, Ruderman et al. (1999) identified the central motivating factors for female senior managers as being a good parent and contributing to society. Moreover, in a study of women in non-traditional sectors, Roche (2006) found that social engagement was a contributing factor to women’s definitions of career success. For the respondents in this study, a central part of making a difference was as noted above engaging with women in lower-ranking positions through mentoring and sponsorship to help them achieve professional success.

Viewing making a difference as an important part of how these women defined career success shows the symbiotic relationship between their activities such as mentoring and networking, and intrinsic factors, such as the job satisfaction and increase in their own self-worth, derived from helping others and witnessing positive change to other women’s professional success (Shambaugh 2013; Sok et al. 2011). The 3 C’s weaving model demonstrates that symbiotic relationship. The women interviewed were particularly keen to assist other women facing similar obstacles, because they understood the gendered nature of those obstacles in the resources sector and the challenges they had faced in their own career trajectories. Likewise, the women who sought them out as mentors regarded them as role models for overcoming these gendered obstacles. Several participants found that aspiring women sought their counsel specifically because they wanted to follow a similar upwards trajectory in the industry.

The results from this research, suggest that higher-ranking women were willing to support more junior women in heavily male-dominated industries where gender was a salient factor at all levels. Hence, this study suggests that whilst there are some women who manifest the Queen Bee Syndrome there was a greater willingness to help other women than has been reported in previous studies.

## **6.4 The Second C: Competence**

Competence, or being skilled and proficient is the second overarching theme that emerged from this study. Similar to confidence, competence is one’s area of specialisation that is key to the professional success of an individual, regardless of

gender or industry. An employee aspiring to advance in their career must exhibit some degree of competence in their professional skillset in order to gain career advancement. However, for women employed within a historically male environment, they enter into a field where their skills and competence are already under scrutiny (Genat, Wood and Sojo 2012).

#### **6.4.1 Overcoming Barriers**

The prevailing workplace barriers which exist for women in male-dominated environments such as the resources sector have been well documented by Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb (2013) and Lord, Jefferson, and Eastham (2012). While by no means an exhaustive list, factors such as marginalisation, gender bias, and the tendency for women to be undervalued for promotion (Clarke 2011) create barriers blocking women's career pathways (Eagly and Carli 2007a). Thus, it was not surprising that many women in this study voiced dissatisfaction regarding both formal and informal organisational barriers that had impacted on their careers. These included a lack of policy and procedural frameworks that recognised the increased diversity of the workplace and an organisational culture that privileged men's advancement over women's.

Despite such obstacles, women continue to strive toward success. According to the women in this study, however, such achievement required particularly strong levels of resilience, facilitated through a shift in one's mindset and the development of perseverance.

##### **6.4.1.1 Building Resilience**

###### **Shifting one's mindset.**

This optimistic mindset was reflected in many of the participants' responses, stating that they were motivated and satisfied by jobs in which they could effect change, make a difference, and confront challenges. Indeed, being capable at, and responsible for, problem-solving recurred as a key factor in job satisfaction for these women. While we cannot conclude that maintaining a positive mindset in the face of workplace challenges was an exclusive quality for these women in the study, it is possible that such a perspective influenced the participants' ability to excel in a male-dominated industry and it would be a fruitful area for further research to see to what extent a positive mindset helps women to overcome specific work barriers.

This positive mindset is reflected in how the women interviewed described their inherent resilience for contending with the challenges in their environment, as well as their problem-solving techniques and self-preparedness to deal with challenges. Polk (1997) concluded that these patterns contributed to different aspects of resilience which is also consistent with an internal locus of control.

Having a resilient nature has been tied to both health and productivity, factors that clearly support one's ability to function effectively in business environments (Sojo and Wood 2012). Resilience is defined by one's ability to fit in with an organization's culture, function within this context, and even thrive in environments that are risky on a professional level (Sojo and Wood 2012). For aspiring women leaders, these environments are more difficult to overcome risks as highly male-dominated industries have had little or no history of women's leadership in their organisational past. Such environments have been noted by researchers including Martin and Barnard (2013), Ryan and Haslam (2005; 2007) and Ryan et al. (2011) as requiring unique coping strategies.

### **Perseverance.**

In light of the problems and challenges that women working in the resources sector frequently face, perseverance was continually mentioned in this study as a key characteristic necessary to progress, overcome adversity, and remain resilient. This study's findings suggested that women's increased exposure to challenges and issues within a non-traditional work environment could be a contributing factor to the development of resilience rather than the erosion of it. It is highly possible that these women developed their resilience by overcoming the gender-based barriers they faced throughout their career, similar to the hypotheses presented by Holton and Dent (2012) and Eagly and Carli (2007a). Such hardships included a lack of organisational support and workplace gender discrimination (Holton and Dent 2012), family responsibilities or household responsibilities (Eagly and Carli 2007a), and limiting self-beliefs (Buse, Bilimoria and Perelli 2013). Additionally, as noted by Murray and Peetz (2010, 12), as female pioneers in their respective senior management roles, it is highly possible that these women bore the full brunt of such gender discrimination because they were among the first women to achieve these roles.

The women in this study found no shortage of barriers to dismantle or overcome. However, they were able to overcome these barriers, and some felt, as noted above that such obstacles strengthened their professional abilities. Indeed, given their skilful navigation of their workplace settings, it was evident that they did more than simply cope with such hardships. Some participants expressed that they thrived on challenges. These statements should be interpreted with caution. This group had achieved success, and when one is in a position of success, it is common to minimize or glorify the experience of overcoming previous challenges (Ruttan, McDonnell and Nordgren 2015).

A study by Ruttan, McDonnell and Nordgren (2015), found that persons who have experienced obstacles on their paths to success were much less likely than the average leader to feel compassion toward lower-level employees facing the same or similar issue. Instead, they often used their own success as a measuring stick against others' achievements, opining that if they could do it, so could others if they put in the same effort. As the researchers explained, this situation "creates the perception that the event can be readily conquered, reducing empathy toward others struggling with the event" (Ruttan, McDonnell and Nordgren 2015, 1). While this is sometimes true, it is evident from my findings that the women in this study were interested in smoothing the path for more junior women. They did not see the need for other women to overcome the same obstacles that they faced as they developed their careers.

As presented in the Chapter 5, the ideal work situation for many women does not involve a seamless, unproblematic professional experience, but rather a more complex environment where one is regularly presented with challenges. Interestingly, as Hall (1996) suggested, herein may also lie one the pitfalls for organisational strategies which are designed to accelerate career advancement. While fast-tracking individuals may boost favourable targets, those who take such routes often miss the experience and knowledge derived from managing difficulties and setbacks (Wan and Chin 2012). The underlying issue here is that the numerous challenges faced by the women in this study in this sector were overwhelmingly limited to those of their gender—men rarely faced the same difficulties when climbing the corporate ladder in the resources sector (Mayes and Pini 2010).

At the same time senior women in management may not be getting the same opportunities to learn how to overcome generic issues that are inherent to business leadership in their industry. Instead, when the challenges they regularly confront are related specifically to their gender, this becomes the salient factor in their professional advancement. Thus, perspectives which focus entirely upon correcting the behaviour of women in business may subconsciously become the ‘fix the woman approach’ rather than addressing organisational cultural issues. That is the focus remains at the individual and not the systemic level. While both men and women benefit from facing and overcoming work-related challenges (i.e., dealing with difficult co-workers and supervisors, solving technical problems related to one’s area of specialisation, addressing and resolving customer or stakeholder concerns), when those challenges are external to one’s position and instead related to an individual’s personal identity, overcoming them does not necessarily condition the individual to excel in their given profession. Thus, to overcome barriers may not contribute or be seen by others to contribute to increasing an individual’s competence across a broad range of skills and abilities, one of the main strands in the 3 C’s model.

Eagly and Carli (2007a) make the point that gender norms are embedded in organizational structure and culture. While Hall’s (1976) theory advocated for an individual’s proactiveness when it comes to their career, we must not mistake the overcompensation of female employees to gender discrimination as assertiveness or proactiveness. Nor should we continue to praise such resilience, without acknowledging the challenges and structural impediments that remain despite the success they have achieved.

#### **6.4.1.2 The Workplace Context**

The women interviewed were confident and at ease in their senior management positions, in part because they had successfully achieved such seniority in spite of gender stereotyping where assumption is made that the traits required for senior management are more likely to be embodied by men than women (Banaji and Greenwald 2013; Ibarra et al 2013). It is apparent that the participants have strong leadership abilities which were seen as key assets to the roles they now held. Perhaps most importantly, they were unafraid to conduct themselves in a way which they found authentic and in line with their values. They were able to overcome some their own

blind spots regarding stereotypes relating to women in leadership and may have also led to some changes in others' attitudes shaped by such stereotypes (Banaji and Greenwald 2013).

Not only have the women in the present study risen to a point in their career where such perceptions no longer impacted their career progression, but many also specifically identified their gender as being helpful to their skills as a manager. The question remains whether this suggests real change to 'think manager, think male' (Schein 1973; Ibarra et al 2013). This may suggest that once women have attained a senior management role, they are less directly impacted by mainstream gender role norms although second generation gender biases, the often unspoken, unchallenged organisational norms remain in place and unchallenged at a structural level (Opoku and Williams 2019).

Given that women who are new to the corporate world are less likely to perceive senior roles senior management roles with a gendered typology (Schein 2007), the respondents may represent a generation whose actions and mindset are helping to fuel this shift in perception.

## **6.5 Work-Life Balance**

Maintaining both a career and family is a familiar struggle for many working mothers. It has often been described as a juggling act. This juggling act has been described as women attempting to gain control over the time, location, and manner in which they work (Pocock, Charlesworth, and Chapman 2013) in order to manage the demands of work, childcare, and domestic labour (Grady and McCarthy 2008). But more often than not, women find themselves waylaid in this attempt to find and maintain balance. Several respondents pointed out that in the absence of organisational support, their partners have taken up their share household duties. This is a further example of a solutions being found at the individual level that do not challenge traditional career models of a dominant wage earner supported by high levels of domestic support provided by a partner. Thus the structural impediments as noted above, that impact on women's full participation in senior roles remain unchallenged.

Despite support from willing partners the ability to juggle work and home remains challenging for women without a supportive work environment. It is particularly intense for single mothers.

Literature has suggested that the proverbial phrase “having it all” is highly unlikely in reality given the structural factors that work against a woman in managing her personal life and her career (Hewlett and Luce 2005; Sinoway 2012; Slaughter 2012) and the notion can be misleading (Ezzedeen and Ritchey 2009, 277). Despite this however, most women in this study demonstrated a strong belief in the ability to achieve a seamless integration of work and family. These findings, particularly the respondents’ confidence in establishing a work-life balance. The particulars of this ideal are discussed in the following sections.

### **6.5.1 Challenges in achieving ‘Work-life balance’**

There is an ongoing struggle to balance work and family commitments. Research on women holding senior management roles in French utility companies presented a somewhat different understanding of work-life balance. Guillaume and Pochic (2009) found that this population of individuals in France did not actively try to maintain the same work-life integration as Australian women. This was determined to be an outcome of not having to choose between either their career or family. Instead, these women utilised the readily-available state/private-based childcare facilities in their country. They also hired nannies because this was encouraged through tax incentives. With the implementation of such family-friendly strategies, these women were provided the opportunity to work freely and appeared to be uninhibited by guilt associated with being seen as abandoning their caring responsibilities. Indeed, the normalisation of these practises within European society has led to a reduction in the guilt and regret which is often experienced when relinquishing caregiving duties. Thus, while cultural expectations promulgate that women should be at home raising their children, Groyberg and Abrahams (2014) suggested that these management strategies allowed women to successfully contend with such pressures. It was further proposed that the continual transition between work and family life desensitises women to the conflicts which can arise during this interaction, leading them to feel less guilty because of it (Livingston and Judge 2008).



The government assistance that is provided to women in French society differs in numerous ways from Western Australia, and the women surveyed in the present study did not benefit from the same advantages as the French women in Guillaume and Pochic's (2009) study. However, such findings are relevant for this study, as they showcased the importance of structural reform which supports the finding of others believing in you in terms of ongoing engagement with your career. Without such structural change, external support from colleagues, family, friends, and even paid workers, attaining career success for women remains challenging and elusive.

Indeed, many of the women interviewed in this study acknowledged that the support of their partners was instrumental in their ability to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance. They also acknowledged that they were in an industry sector that paid high salaries and so they were able to pay for a range of resources and assistance that helped them achieve the work-life balance they sought despite the lack of government and/or organisational support.

## **6.6 Career Success**

For the women in senior management roles who participated in this study, being successful in their career was a life goal that was highly important to them. Yet some respondents expressed the belief that greater achievement was more likely for women without children. Prior research has shown that women are likely to prioritise their children over their work if these two domains come into conflict (Grady and McCarthy 2008; Pocock, Charlesworth and Chapman 2013). Recognising this likelihood, some women decided not to have children and committed themselves fully to advancing their careers (Ezzedeen and Ritchey 2009, 277).

Almost all emphasised balance; however, this balance included family and other manifestations of success, such as feeling challenged, helping others, making a difference, pursuing further education, and engaging with communities that were external to their workplace. The varied perceptions of success identified by the participants demonstrated that that each woman has a fluid and individualised multi-faceted view of success.

## **6.7 The Third C: Connectedness**

Connectedness, forging professional ties or connections within one's profession, emerged as the third overarching theme in the 3 C's weaving model. As discussed above, building supportive professional relationships and establishing a solid reputation within one's industry were critical to professional advancement for the women who participated in this study. While the literature shows this is the case for individuals of any gender, the stakes appeared to be even higher for women in a male-dominated workplace, where who you know can determine how far up you move within an organisation. For some of the women interviewed, having the support or sponsorship built stronger ties and trust that assisted in their upward advancement as women (Ibarra 1997).

This study's findings indicated that women achieved connectedness primarily via the professional activities of networking, sponsorship and mentoring (Ibarra 1997). Forging a connection with stakeholders in an organisation was also important for finding new opportunities to enrich their career. The women participants also said it was important to engage in self-promotion to make it clear how one contributed to an organization and to the industry as a whole through these activities. This was despite the concerns often expressed and experienced by women when they engage in self-promotion activities (Lindeman, Durik and Dooley 2019).

### **6.7.1 Professional Development (PD)**

In the business world, professional development activities (PD) have been directly linked to one's ability to effectively scale the corporate ladder. Sustainability within an industry has been particularly linked to PD, suggesting that without continuous learning, one simply cannot excel in a business context (Hopkins et al. 2008; Valcour 2014). Furthermore, success and advancement have been specifically tied to PD, as constant learning leads to innovation and an ability to perform increasingly difficult management tasks (Mikkelsen and Jarcho 2015). However, PD may have a variety of effects on women's career paths. Increasingly, women are achieving higher educational qualifications than men, but employment rates of women still lag behind those of men in Australia (OECD 2018). Moreover, there is evidence that familial

obligations and organisational factors often lead to women settling for positions for which they are significantly overqualified (Fitzsimmons, Callan and Paulsen 2014).

The participants reported formally engaging with professional development activities (PD) at different phases in their career. While their advancement within the workplace was propelled by their commitment to, and passion for their role, these women enhanced their career capital further by engaging in a range of PD activities (Magrane et al. 2012; Richardson and McKenna 2014; Roche 2006). Their investment in PD was driven by a desire to advance their skills, knowledge, and expertise for their leadership roles. To the participants, PD is an enabler of the upward mobility they wished to achieve in their careers, one that prompted the growth of both self-confidence and self-assuredness. Some saw it as a necessary tool to remain well informed within the workplace, while others utilised it as a way to assert their professional presence and build their reputation. Therefore, PD offered benefits on multiple levels, from social to professional to intellectual. Despite PD's potential to aid women's career success, women may not have the time to make themselves available for this opportunity or provided for them as such. Thus, the participants access these resources at different stages of their careers and exhibiting varying levels of commitment.

The discourse of the women who engaged in PD was related to an increase in self-confidence and the leadership abilities acquired from participating in such activities. They credited the process for their improved abilities and increased opportunities to perform challenging tasks in the workplace. This aligns with work by Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) that suggests PD may be a vital precursor to both a woman's willingness and readiness to prioritise the parts of her career that require her to overcome challenges. The two not only bolster credibility, but also function as a dyad which fosters career success. As with mentoring and networking, these women found PD particularly valuable in fostering the relationships necessary to facilitate advancement within a predominantly male workplace.

Some of the participants had their PD courses and activities paid for by their organisations. This was a positive sign for women and reflected an environment that was beginning to openly encourage female employees to gain the skills and contacts needed to advance their careers. Similarly, this became an indicator for the women that others

believed in them, which in turn increased their own self-belief—once again highlighting the interdependent nature of the strands depicted in the 3 C's weaving model.

Additional factors that the women identified that contributed to their competence are discussed below, including workplace context and work-life balance.

### **6.7.2 Networking**

Engaging in networking is a well-known behaviour in the workplace. The concept of networking denotes involvement in a range of activities that help to build professional and personal contacts. While networking activities can be both within and beyond the individual workplace, these are occupational networks that give the opportunity for self-promotion to improve visibility, self-marketing, and confidence (O'Neil, Hopkins and Sullivan 2011). This type of networking gives women the opportunity to collaborate with others, converse about technical problems, and share information within secure spaces (Chen, Doherty and Vinnicombe 2012). In the context of networking events such as conferences, they can also contribute to raising a woman's professional profile and securing a favourable reputation among peers and industry leaders.

Beyond the benefit of establishing connections with others, the women in this study spoke of the vitality they derived from networking. Other studies have described networking as having a reinvigorating effect on women's passion and drive for their career (Pini, Brown, and Ryan 2004). The development of networks brings a corresponding growth in social capital, a factor that drives career advancement for the individual (Eagly and Carli 2007a; Ibarra 1993). The participants found a different motivation for networking. It provided them with the opportunity to mentor other women who were at an earlier stage in their careers, a role that was highly valued by the respondents in this study.

Networking, mentoring, and sponsorship should thus be seen as a beneficial nexus of resources available to women who are seeking to advance their own careers and bolster those of women in more junior positions. Chen, Doherty and Vinnicombe (2012) found that women aged 35–45 years were likely to cite the acquisition of networks as the main benefit resulting from professional development, a result that reveals the interwoven nature of these two concepts. Not all the women in the current

study engaged in networking, however; this may be attributed to situational demands and time constraints, including family commitments, which is an issue noted by Pocock (2003). While networking can be an informal process, the current findings indicated that it was most beneficial when conducted with a strategic and directed approach, which aligned with the findings of others such as Ibarra (1993) and Porter and Woo (2015).

In regard to maintaining connectedness through networking opportunities, the participants were able to identify the barriers that future generations of women will likely face on their road to senior management. As a result, many participants advocated for reforms to work circumstances, providing unique insight into how organisations could better accommodate women's professional relationships.

As noted earlier, one of the most common dilemmas that women managers faced was the conflict between work and family, which sometimes resulted in parents and caregivers leaving the workplace. Indeed, many of the metaphors for women's careers explored in the literature review centred on the choice to exit the workforce, temporarily or permanently, in order to raise children (e.g. Hewlett and Luce 2005).

While maternity leave patterns have long influenced women's professional paths, the women surveyed in this study proposed many other alternative means of navigating parenthood and careers. They emphasised a range of organisational strategies that could be utilised including maintaining communication with colleagues and superiors and between female employees during maternity leave and the need for the provision of a range of supportive services such as day care centres. Such initiatives have the potential to retain connections, prevent further alienation from the workplace, and help address the possible restrictions that child-rearing may have on work commitments and progression of primary caregivers. In Australia, the implementation of these initiatives is notably slow, but their success within select European and Scandinavian settings even though the efficacy of such policy frameworks has been challenged (Seierstad and Kirton 2015), do provide possible models for such interventions within the Australian work setting (Piterman 2008) and particularly within male-dominated sectors.

### 6.7.3 Sponsorship

This study's respondents identified unique benefits in both mentoring and sponsorship but were careful to differentiate between the two. They identified distinct differences in the roles and importance of mentors and sponsors. Mentoring generally involves the intellectual, emotional, and psychological support of a more experienced figure who assists by giving guidance and advice to a less experienced mentee. Mentoring is frequently characterised by the provision of advice and the creation of a safe space in which there is significant trust between the parties to discuss issues and ask questions which the individual may not feel comfortable broaching with other authority figures (Lee, Sandler and Shani 1997).

By contrast, sponsorship is defined as a more active relationship that may result in more concrete career benefits. A sponsor, for example, is more likely than a mentor to connect an employee with potential employers or negotiate specific opportunities for the employee that they are unable to arrange for themselves such as meetings or conferences (Lee, Sandler and Shani 1997). The women in this study found that while mentors acted as a sounding board, sponsors actively worked to create opportunities for them and invested in their future. This is confirmed by Ibarra, Cater and Silva (2010) who detail the importance of sponsorship to women's careers.

Another way of understanding this dynamic is to view sponsors as enablers who are critical to the success of the individual they sponsor as they carry on the sponsor's brand and legacy (Hewlett 2013; Ibarra 1993; Ibarra, Cater and Silva 2010; Shambaugh 2013). It is often seen as an inherently asymmetrical relationship, where the energy is flowing from the sponsor to their underling (Linehan and Scullion 2008). In contrast, a mentor will provide a less tangible, often more psychological form of support. Given that male employees experience sponsorship more frequently (Berhane 2015), it is likely to be a factor in their dominance at the senior leadership level. Participants saw notable value in sponsorship for women in male-dominated work environments, particularly if the sponsor was male and forged connections with the right people in the workplace. The study revealed that increased sponsorship opportunities were critical to women's progression through the hierarchies of the male-dominated workplace.

#### **6.7.4 Mentoring**

In contrast to sponsorship, mentoring was found to be bidirectional. Not only did both mentor and mentee derive benefits from the relationship, but participants tended to both receive mentoring and mentor others. The women found each role to be beneficial, valuing the process that assisted themselves and others in career advancement. Similar to previous findings, increased levels of job satisfaction were a common by-product of these dyadic relationships (Hewlett 2013; Shambaugh 2013; Zula 2004). Additionally, the women who were involved in mentoring spoke not only of the personal and professional learning they acquired, but also of the opportunity they saw for their own mentoring to make a difference by supporting other women. Mentoring was viewed as both personally rewarding and a benevolent or philanthropic act; in line with the women's desire to make a difference through their career. These elements reflected the 'give and gain' perception which many women hold regarding mentoring (Cheung and Halpern 2010; Hewlett 2013; Zula 2004).

Recent theories have suggested that having access to a number of different mentors for advice and guidance is highly beneficial to career progression (Hewlett, 2013; Higgins and Kram 2001). Similarly, the women in this study focused on such diversification, favouring a developmental network (DN) designed to advance their career (Higgins and Kram 2001), rather than a one-on-one mentoring arrangement. A DN redefines mentoring as a multiple relationship phenomenon (Higgins and Kram 2001), where the collection of mentors, both within and beyond an individual's workplace, exposes the individual to a varied set of skills and expertise and elevates their potential visibility across varying organisations (Dobrow et al. 2012; Dworkin, Maruer and Schipani 2012). The general concept of mentoring that emerged from this study was one that privileged community.

The study participants spoke of several avenues through which they gained mentoring relationships. Informally, they recalled confiding in their partners or husbands, gaining both support and guidance from them in a manner documented in prior literature (Cheung and Halpern 2010; Hewlett 2013). More formally, many acquired knowledge and guidance from their workplace superiors and actively sought alternative sources if specialised expertise was needed. Thus, both home and work sites were used. Supervisory mentors are commonplace within the workplace

(Bozeman and Feeney 2007; Tolar 2012), however, same-gender mentoring was often less available to women. Of those interviewed, only two commented that a woman had mentored them as part of their career development.

Although some studies have documented the effectiveness of same-gender mentoring (Dworkin, Maurer and Schipan 2012), as being the most beneficial because there is common experience concerning and well-versed elucidation of the barriers and challenges which women face in a male-dominated industry (Tharenou 2005), other research has noted the enhanced impact of male mentors for female employees, or cross-gender mentoring (Ragins and Sundstrom 1989; Ramaswamy et al. 2010a,b; Shambaugh 2013). Women with male mentors have been found to achieve increased career progression, pay, and career satisfaction (Dougherty et al. 2013; Ramaswamy and Gouilliant 2010a). This effect is especially salient within a male-dominated context where the vast majority of available mentors are inevitably male (Dougherty et al. 2013). The women in this study mostly had male mentors due to men's predominance in the resources sector. The general concept of mentoring that emerged from this study was one that privileged community.

Despite this view of same-gender mentor relationships, the shift towards less-gendered conceptions of senior management (i.e., the move away from the think manager, think male approach) that emerged from this study appeared to suggest that the lack of mentors of a desired gender should decrease in the future. While participants predominantly acquired male mentors, the increasing number of women reaching senior management reflects an increasing opportunity for future women to access qualified and experienced female mentors. The industry knowledge of these women has the potential for them to be equal contenders for a mentoring role with their male counterparts. Indeed, their involvement could provide a uniquely blended style of mentoring for women that capitalises on both the psychosocial benefit and career gains derived separately from female and male mentors, respectively. Moreover, female-female mentoring could be construed as a lynchpin in the minimisation of male domination within a sector or organisation, because it allows female leaders to support other women through gender-related struggles and builds solidarity based on self-belief and resilience in the face of such challenges. More can be done on an organisational and structural level to encourage mentoring relationships for female managers.



Almost all the senior women interviewed for this study emphasised balance; however, this balance included family and other manifestations of success, such as feeling challenged, helping others, making a difference, pursuing further education, and engaging with communities that were external to their workplace. The varied perceptions of success identified by the participants demonstrated that each woman has a fluid and individualised experience.

## **6.8 Other Findings on the Career Models**

This section discusses the findings from Chapter 5 on the earlier career models that first emerged with seminal work by Parson, Super and Holland and the later conceptualizations of career development such as the Protean and Kaleidoscope Career models that were discussed in Chapter 2.

The participants in this study stated their career needs are both at times subjective and at times objective as discussed in Chapter 2, but their strategies appear most related to the newer career development theories that stress flexibility and the intrinsic rewards that people gain from a successful career like feeling fulfilled. These new perspectives on career development have emerged in tandem with an increasing number of women who have struggled to gain influence at work and overcome barriers to gain successful careers, although the flexible theories of career development like notion of the boundaryless career are not just relevant to women (Mavin 2001). Scholars have noted these changes in job longevity and how frequently men change positions and even sectors in the span of their careers as well.

There are many ways that traditional theories such as Super's theory of vocational choice and Holland's career typology differ from the participants' view of career development (Duberley, Carmichael and Szmigin 2014; Kirchmeyer 1998). In the older views of careers put forward by Super and Holland, people were naturally suited to certain careers and the idea there are certain jobs that are performed better by men was one variation of this kind of mindset. At the time, there were jobs that women were considered unsuitable because they were unsafe or required higher levels of brute physical strength and this helped perpetuate the marginalisation of women in many industries for many decades. These early models of career development are modelled

on men's careers where success was built cumulatively and usually at the same firm or within the same industry sector over time (Mavin, 2001; Schein 1973).

In the paradigmatic framework of the earlier career theories, it was generally believed that women had to act like men if they wanted to become leaders or gain senior positions at the organizations where they worked and become successful at their careers. There was some indication of this traditional mindset in at least one of the women I interviewed. R11 said that "I guess success is the role that you're offered and whether you are being promoted, are you being asked to be a leader." She depicted success as objective, stating "Career success for me was always to get to that next rung up on that ladder." The notion of career success has similarly focused on male notions of success in the sense that the concept is associated with assertiveness, confidence, and gaining influence and securing the highest salaries among co-workers (Ryan et al. 2011).

In earlier notions of career success there was a concentration on what are called the objective or extrinsic characteristics of success. As R20 noted in my findings, success for her was being "promoted to the same level as your peers are being promoted to and being paid a salary that is commensurate with what your peers are getting and with the work you're doing" (R20). This shows that objective measures of career success are still important, but there are other dynamics in career development that are not well included in discussion of objective career success.

One redeeming quality of the early career theories is they helped to cement the idea of a career being more than just working for a living (Super 1953; Holland 1959). The early career theories recognized a vocation or a career brought people other levels of satisfaction and that some aspects of working are fulfilling or enjoyable. This exploration of the enjoyment factor in careers has been referred to in many ways in the literature: as motivation, flow, balance, or happiness, for example. Something more flexible was inherent in even the early career theories although it was shaped through frameworks of understanding that saw women and men as inherently different, and men being superior at certain skills.

Protean theory, the boundaryless career and the kaleidoscope career are later career theories that began to emerge as the notion of a career changed because people were becoming more mobile and flexible; this made it less likely that a person could build a career at just one organization or entity (Hall 1976). Protean theory recognizes

that organizations no longer determine the career path for a candidate, a protean career is more under the control of the individual and is based on their personal likes and career goals. In the protean career, a person's personal career choices are based on a search for self-fulfilment, and the criterion of success are “internal (psychological success), not external.” (Hall 1976, 201).

The personal agency focus of protean theory is similar to the ‘*believing in yourself*’ aspect of the 3Cs model described in this discussion chapter. If a career seeker believes in their own self-preparedness and ability to thrive than they probably have a higher sense of their own agency to control their own career path. *Believing in yourself* is thus an inherently individual concept that impacts the level of enjoyment and stimulation which a person derives from their careers. The concept also draws in other dimensions of a person’s life, so a career is viewed as something in function of the desire to make a difference in the world or leading a well-balanced and satisfying family life. For example, research respondent R25 stated that “I think women are more about making a difference to the world than just making a difference to themselves, that they like to take on bigger roles where they can have a larger impact, where the problems are more complex. So, to them, it’s success.” The spheres of work and home life are not mutually exclusive and the person has agency to make their own career choices and to find meaning in those choices for themselves. Meanwhile, others like R15, described how ‘making a difference’ is more important than financial success. She said, “It’s probably not so much about money for women. I guess we’re not so status-oriented. No, it’s more about doing interesting roles and doing things that are a bit meaningful. (R15).

Micheal Arthur and Denise Rousseau proposed another influential shift in understanding career development when they proposed the notion of a boundaryless career (Arthur and Rousseau 1996). Sullivan and Arthur (2006) distinguished between two different aspects of mobility in boundaryless career development: (1) physical mobility and (2) psychological mobility. The first kind of movement describes how workers move between different organizations throughout their careers and the second notion called psychological mobility entails the changes in attitudes that are needed to transcend traditional career barriers.

Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth (2006) explain that boundaryless careers combine considerations of salary and promotions with the more subjective dimensions of career satisfaction and de-emphasize reliance on any one organization or source of external validation. The boundaryless vision of career emphasizes the ability to cross over organisational boundaries, to be sustained by external networks, and to use different employment spheres to build a satisfying career (Arthur and Rousseau 1996). This is like the competency aspect in the 3Cs model, although the competency in the boundaryless career framework is built with a wider reach than traditional models as the career pursuer looks for career input from different sources. For the participants in the study, professional development helped them to move ahead in their careers and to increase their professional presence to help them grow their reputation with colleagues and organisations in their fields in general, not just with their immediate employer.

The concept of a kaleidoscope career emphasizes how a person might have to rearrange their careers over the course of their lives. Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) explain that career pursuers are now more likely to make changes in their careers throughout their lives to suit themselves and their lifestyles. In the kaleidoscope model the authors argue that people make career choices around three basic parameters: authenticity, balance, and challenge. What a person finds satisfying will change throughout their career life stages (i.e. early, middle, or late). The usefulness of the kaleidoscope notion of careers is evident among the participants when they mention taking maternity leave for example. They struggle to stay connected to work when they are physically absent. R18 described feeling detached and left behind. When this connection is broken, it can lead to detachment and the feeling of being left behind. The same respondent described being both physically and ideologically isolated from the workplace throughout the maternity leave process. R18 continued, “The ability to work from home, the ability to take breaks from work and feel that you’re not actually left behind is important.”

## **6.9 Summary**

In this chapter, the findings of how senior management women’s careers are sustained are presented in the 3 C’s Weaving Model. The combined intrinsic (subjective) and extrinsic (objective) strands of career success, of *believing in yourself* and *others believing in you*, illustrate how important conceptions of internal self-belief,

self-efficacy, and resilience are to career success, as are, as well access to tangible forms of external support and resources from others. In addition, professional development and activities that fostered connectedness within one's profession, such as networking, sponsorship, and mentoring, all proved instrumental in facilitating the participants' success. However, the overarching quality of these women's success was the interconnection of all these elements. The strands wove back upon others, with every individual element working in an interconnected fashion to support the women's professional advancement.

As pioneers in their respective senior management positions, the participants overcame various cultural and organisational gender-related barriers indicative of a male-dominated industry. The stories told by these women illuminated the powerful role of self-belief in enabling them to achieve their occupational goals. Confidence, competence, and connectedness were not merely attributes of these women on an internal, personal level, but attributes which energised and drove them to attain positions in the upper echelons of their industry. Rather than be defeated by the trials and challenges of their workplace and the gender norms embedded within them, their exposure to such difficulties cultivated powerful individual resilience. This increased their line of defence against numerous professional barriers and equipped them with the ability to overcome these barriers. The support of others who believed in them, as well as the career resources of professional development, networking, mentoring, and sponsorship, further bolstered their self-belief, fomented their agency, and ultimately, facilitated their success. Because their resilience was cultivated in part from facing gender inequality, these women possessed experience with certain problem-solving abilities that their male counterparts did not have to develop. Without minimising the unjust nature of the discrimination these women faced, this study suggests that the participants' struggle had the silver lining of making them even more competent managers.

The women in this study acknowledged notable improvements in gender relations within the resources sector, likely as a result of their own role in breaking barriers to women's advancement to senior position in this historically male-dominated industry. In particular, several women described how their organisations have worked to implement initiatives that better support women employees, from playgroups for those

on maternity to more structured mentoring programs. Nevertheless, such organisation-specific initiatives are likely not sufficient, on their own, to reverse the gender inequities that persist within this sector. There remains a lack of legally-mandated policies surrounding women's rights and protections that continue to undermine women's professional advancement in this field. For example, the lack of tax benefits related to child care costs and restrictive parental leave legislation often keep women from achieving the work-life balance necessary for them to sustain career success.

As it stands, the drive to retain and support the successful careers of the interviewed women remains at the organisational level. In addition to the formal government legislation needed to address gender discrimination, it is also important to work towards changing the work culture that continues to pervade much of the industry sector. The values and rhetoric within the resources sector need to shift away from privileging the masculine in order to truly support and encourage women's success and entice them to remain within the industry. Given that only those women who succeeded at remaining in the resources sector were able to be interviewed as part of this study, we must recognise that the stories of women who did not make it to senior positions remain untold. Their experiences, although outside of the scope of this study, are equally important to inform strategies for increasing support of women employees in the industry.

Instilling a belief in the value of appointing women to executive positions is vital to cultivate gender balance in a sector that has historically been highly gender imbalanced. Increasingly favourable perceptions among current stakeholders in the industry will ultimately expand the pool of support which women can draw upon to sustain themselves in the workplace. However, as this study's participants made clear, the right to choose how their career progresses and develops must remain with the women themselves. Women must be offered the freedom to design their ideal career paths, which may or may not involving juggling work and parenthood, rather than be obligated to adapt to a single, acceptable career path.

The stories that emerged from the women in this study have led to the formation of a solid, yet simultaneously flexible, framework illustrated in the 3 C's weaving model. This model explains how these women conceptualised their career success and offers a potential template for the future career strategies of women in

male-dominated industries. The model will assist women in their current occupational positions and in their aspirations to advance further by providing an understanding of how the 3 C's weave together to build a strong, resilient base for career advancement. Designed to reflect the individual subjective experience of women striving to maintain and sustain their career success, this model may be translated into concrete strategies to aid individual women who are seeking professional advancement in a male-dominated industry. It may also be used as a tool and a reference point for women seeking to establish a more sustainable and interconnected, balance between the various demands of their personal and professional lives.

While multiple metaphors pertaining to women in the workplace are present in the literature, they have been highly overused, and this has made them into not very substantive tools of analysis, as they now function almost like a caricature of the barriers inherent in women's careers. There is little support in such metaphors for continuing the analysis and figuring out clear institutional strategies that would support women better as they develop their careers. Although the use of such catchy metaphors raises awareness the issues which face women (e.g., glass ceilings, glass walls) and a conceptualisation of their careers (e.g., kaleidoscope, boundaryless models), these metaphors do not provide a framework for action or change, and they do not focus on the specific experiences of women within male-dominated industries. Through the participants' responses during the interviews, it became clear that, despite the challenges faced by these women at the senior management level, many positive outcomes have emerged for them as a result of their challenging professional circumstances. These beneficial outcomes are depicted in the 3 C's Weaving Model, which offers a more positive outlook compared to many of the common negative metaphors and models that have previously represented women's career experiences. This framework has the potential to boost organisational awareness of what women require to succeed within a male-dominated workplace.

In spite of the promising nature of this 3 C's Weaving model, serving as a guide, however, we must not overlook the reality of the gender inequities that these women had to navigate in order to achieve their success. It would be detrimental to celebrate their resilience and perseverance without acknowledging that such qualities were developed in direct response to the gendered barriers they encountered. Hopefully, one day women will be able to achieve similar success as men based solely on their competence.

## Chapter 7 Conclusions

### 7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine how women in senior management positions sustain and develop their careers within the male-dominated resources sector of Western Australia (WA). To accomplish this, three specific research questions were investigated:

1. How do women in senior management define their career success?
2. What are the barriers and opportunities affecting their career success?
3. How do women in senior management sustain and develop their careers?

The findings of this study led to the development of the 3 C's weaving model to conceptualise the key strands, that weave together to support women's career success. The model depicts how women's success within the male-dominated resources sector in WA is attained through the interconnected strands of confidence, competence, and connectedness. By exploring the intricacies of these concepts and how they are particularly affected by gendered discrimination, such as women's perceived lack of competence compared to their male counterparts and role incongruity (Genat, Wood and Sojo 2012; Hüttges and Fay 2015), we are able to better understand how the women achieved success despite the many barriers that stood in their way.

This chapter concludes the thesis and builds on the discussion in Chapter 6 to consider the implications and potential applications of this study for organisations in the WA resources sector and women aspiring to leadership positions within the industry. The chapter begins with an overview of the main findings of the study, followed by an exploration of the general implications of this research for policy and practice, and recommendations based on the study's findings. This is followed by a discussion of the study limitations. Finally, future research opportunities to expand on the current study are considered and the chapter concludes with a self-reflection on the research process of this thesis.



## 7.2 Main Findings

The findings of this qualitative study have furthered our understanding of how women in senior management positions within the WA resources sector define and experience career success, filling the gap of past literature as detailed in Section 3.4. The 3 Cs weaving model based on the findings of women's experiences and views of success provides a more nuanced view of the interconnection between the strands that contribute to career success. The 3 Cs weaving model illustrates the importance of recognising these interconnections which is lacking in some of the studies undertaken in the last decade (Section 3.4). These strands have previously been identified as playing an important role in women's career development and success but have often been studied in isolation for example, wage equity in Hegewisch and Hartmann 2014; job satisfaction in Roche 2006; mentoring from Zula 2014. The 3Cs model provides a more holistic framework that can be considered by women in terms of their own careers and by organisations in terms of effective and integrated support for women aspiring to senior organisational roles.

The qualitative research approach undertaken and described in Chapter 4 enabled the exploration of the women's stories of their career success and the strategies they had utilised to help develop and sustain their careers. Key findings as discussed in Chapter 5 highlighted the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. The respondents had high levels of self-belief and this had been coupled with external recognition from others through organisational recognition and reward. Belief in oneself, captured the positive intrinsic motivators that influenced the women's ability to succeed in the face of challenges in a male-dominated industry. Others believing in you embodied the extrinsic factors that influenced women's success, such as the reassurance and confirmation that they received from others regarding their professional role. The ability to overcome barriers was equally important, as it had helped build resilience that enabled their ongoing success at the senior management level.

Further implications for organisations and individuals in the WA resources sector are discussed in the next section.

### 7.3 Implications of the Study

The themes and insights that emerged from this study suggests that women at the senior management level who achieved success in the WA resources sector were able to do so because they combined internal and external sources of support to create a strong, flexible foundation for their professional advancement. The key was the interconnected nature of these supportive factors. If, for example, an aspiring woman leader were to have a strong sense of self-belief but not the external support of family members or colleagues to draw upon, my findings suggest that it would be more difficult for her to achieve the type of sustained success experienced by the participants of this study.

The 3 C's weaving model (see Figure 6.1 in the previous chapter) was developed from the emergent strands of this study: Confidence, Competence, and Connectedness. These strands were interwoven with the key themes of belief in oneself and having others believe in you, to form a strong web of support for these women. Supporting threads included professional development, networking, mentoring, and sponsorship. The various strands in the model wove together to provide the flexibility and strength that the women leaders in the WA resources sector needed to achieve success within the senior echelons of their predominately-male organisations. These interconnected themes formed a foundation upon which these women could stand and reach greater heights. It was also their safety net when faced with challenges often gender based. It gave them something to fall back onto enabling them to re-energise and bounce back ready to address the challenge and move forward.

Although having this foundation to build upon was important, the study also suggested that women who were successful in this male industry, had a sense of agency that motivated them to respond proactively to the barriers they faced and find ways to overcome those barriers. Interestingly, these women did not use the predominant glass metaphors to describe the challenges they faced in their careers. For them, the barriers were not impenetrable glass ceilings, but rather more akin to Eagly and Carly's (2007a,b) labyrinth; a series of challenges that required dedication, commitment, and sometimes a change of direction in order to exercise their agency. Also of interest was that whilst the women acknowledged that for the most part their organisations had taken action to improve gender equality and some structural changes had occurred they

noted that this hadn't necessarily resulted in major changes to the gender profile particularly at senior levels.

Thus their sense of their own agency propelled these women forward and prompted them to seek out the professional opportunities and connections that facilitated their success within the industry. Kabeer (1999) defined agency within a business context as tied to the ability to set and work toward accomplishing one's goals, in both a work and home context. In response to traditional, rigid work models these women became self-propelling agents who facilitated changes in the workplace to meet their own needs (Shapiro et al. 2009). The women interviewed in this study gradually and subtly helped transform the highly masculine organisational cultures that surrounded them (Genat, Wood and Sojo 2012). In particular, it appeared that some were able to counteract the pervasive association of senior managers with masculine attributes, thus "minimizing the masculine stereotypes of effective managers" (Burke 2005, 17) by demonstrating their own competence as female leaders. This is something Burke (2005), suggests must occur in order for women to break through to senior-level positions within organisations. However, such approaches continue to rely on women to be the change agents (Hüttges and Fay 2015) rather than signalling embedded organisational reform (Kelan and Wratil 2018).

Even when the women in this study were not in the role they desired, they stretched themselves, finding ways to make themselves indispensable and prove their worth to the organization. This strategy line with previous research findings (e.g., Catalyst 1996; Ragins, Townsend and Mattis 1998) illustrates how these women brought their sense of agency to bear through actively pursuing mentoring, professional development, and other networking resources to facilitate the advancement they sought.

The common factor in these findings was the role of the women in actively directing their career paths. As discussed in the findings chapter, several of the participants directly requested a promotion and were regarded as pioneers within their organization and for some in the sector often being the first woman in a particular role. The women also actively requested mentoring as a strategy to help further their careers. Thus, they not only progressed their careers, but also became role models for more junior women in the industry. It became clear through this study that these

women were active agents of their own careers both despite organisational constraints and at times because of organisational opportunities.

They wanted the freedom to define their own success and create their own career paths, rather than conforming to a prescribed career model dictated by their organisation or society (Burke 2005). Part of travelling this path involved encountering and overcoming obstacles, while developing the resilience needed to be a successful leader along the way. These women directly challenge the glass barrier metaphors that continue to pervade societal perceptions of Western work culture; instead, actively directing their own career paths.

Women's lack of confidence has been noted previously by many researchers (Sturm et al. 2014; Ibarra and Petriglieri 2016; Kay and Shipman 2014). This study found that women mentors were highly effective at supporting junior-level peers and boosting their confidence in their own ability to succeed in a leadership position. These women wanted organisations to work with them, to become more flexible and adaptive to their needs and to those of emerging, young female leaders. This suggests that these senior women now expect organisational support and change. It also suggests that the presence of female mentors may be one way to counteract the perceived lower confidence in women employees by both providing individual women with a confidence boost and by challenging organisational norms that privilege existing gender norms regarding behaviour and ambition.

However, a woman's sense of agency alone is not enough to create change and organisations play a key role as well. There must be opportunities available within organisations to support women's career advancement, such as professional development, mentoring, and networking. The stagnancy that often occurs in lower levels of management may come about not because such women lack the desire or drive for advancement, but simply because they do not have access to the resources and opportunities they need in order to advance. In some cases, a lack of advancement was the result of overt efforts within the organisation to block women's upward mobility, reflecting a highly masculine organisational culture with unconscious, and at times conscious, bias against female employees (Genat, Wood and Sojo 2012).

Given the implications of this study, I have developed specific recommendations for practice that may help Executive level women, organisations

and Human Resource Managers and assist in supporting aspiring women leaders. While these recommendations pertain to the WA resources sector specifically, they may also be of value in other male-dominated sectors. My recommendations are presented below.

### **7.3.1 Recommendations**

A recent report on methods to achieve gender equality in WA was published in 2015, and it covers in-depth strategies for actions from the governmental to individual levels, that are intended to address the gender gap in senior level positions (Fitzsimmons and Callan 2015). Unsurprisingly, many of the themes and suggestions covered in that report echoed the concerns of the women who participated in this study. The recommendations at the forefront of this study highlight and strengthen the strategies contained in that report which may be most relevant and effective for promoting women's success in male-dominated industries such as the resources sector. The following recommendations that arose specifically from this study's findings are provided for executive-level women, organisations, and human resource managers each of which play a significant role in facilitating women's success within male-dominated sectors such as the resources industry.

#### **7.3.1.1 Recommendations for Senior Women in Management**

The findings suggested that mentoring relationships were one of the keys to the success of many women in this study. Many derived benefit from being mentored as well as being a mentor. Mentoring programs are often designed to be unidirectional however, given the mutually beneficial relationship of being both a mentor and a mentee I suggest that formal organisational programs are established that are bi-directional. That is there is an expectation of being a mentor and being mentored to increase awareness of organisational experiences at more junior levels. Women already at the senior level actively should consider mentoring a potential junior level woman or men for at least twelve months. This length of time is necessary to establish a trusting, long-term relationship so that the mentor can effectively guide the mentee through multiple gender-related barriers along her career path (Ibarra 1997; Carter-Steel and Silva 2010).

While mentors are valuable, these findings suggested that women also needed sponsors to have a successful career. Sponsorship played a pivotal role in the women's success because sponsors literally invested in their future. Sponsors provided women with powerful connections and opportunities, beyond the advice and guidance of a mentor. Therefore, I also suggest that successful women in the industry sponsor more junior women who are seeking professional advancement in the industry. Formal sponsorship programs should also be considered by organisations.

In addition to mentorship and sponsorship, the women in this study appreciated the informal support of members in their community and the support networks they were able to form. Therefore, I suggest that successful women facilitate opportunities to connect informally with women more junior than themselves to encourage women at earlier stages of their careers to build their professional and support networks.

The recommendations for women are listed below. The recommendations for organisations noted above are discussed further in the next section.

*Recommendations for women:*

- a. That where possible within the same time period women both mentor and are mentored to facilitate greater understanding of organisational practices at all levels
- b. That senior women actively mentor a woman in the junior levels
- c. That senior women in the industry also sponsor more junior women who are seeking professional advancement in the industry
- d. That senior women facilitate opportunities to connect informally with women more junior than themselves to encourage women at earlier stages of their careers to build their professional and support networks.

### **7.3.1.2 Recommendations for Organisations**

I suggest as noted above that organisations within the resources sector establish if they are not already in place and strongly encourage participation in formal mentoring programs. While some firms may not have the resources to make such a

program mandatory, such practices may be encouraged through incentivising mentorship for employees at the upper echelons of an organisation. For example, businesses may incentivise such a practice by considering the role of mentorship when reviewing senior leaders for promotion, including mentorship as a responsibility written into their job descriptions, and eliminating personal costs of such activities as much as possible (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014). Organisations can extend this further, by establishing sponsorship relationships through similar means, encouraging more senior staff to act as organisational sponsors for women (Hewlett 2013; Ibarra 1993; Ibarra, Cater and Silva 2010; Shambaugh 2013).

Mentoring is particularly critical for women in this sector because of the psychosocial issues they face. Being able to meet and talk with women peers who can empathise with them can provide invaluable emotional support that helps them process the challenges they are facing. Expanding the pool of female mentors by working across the sector as well as encouraging senior men to mentor women may help increase the availability of mentors for women seeking to advance in the industry.

The recommendations for organisations noted above are listed below.

*Recommendations for organisations:*

- a. That formal mentoring programs be established where possible and both senior women and men be encouraged to mentor more junior women
- b. That executive level men actively mentor high potential women
- c. That consideration be given to establishing formal sponsorship programs to support women's careers
- d. That senior women and men in the industry sponsor more junior women who are seeking professional advancement in the industry
- e. That organisations facilitate opportunities to encourage women at earlier stages of their careers to build their professional and support networks.
- f. Professional development opportunities for women who seek to improve and better themselves.

- g. Flexible work options for women to encourage more women to stay in the workforce.
- h. Setting a home-based office at the organisation's cost to encourage different work options for women (telecommuting).

I have further suggestions for organisations pertaining to ensuring that there is an appropriate policy framework in place and that managers are encouraged to utilise policies.

One of the issues raised was in relation to maternity and parental leave policies and support programs. Women on maternity leave are often isolated during their leave periods. In order to support women and to ensure that their career trajectory is maintained the following recommendations are made. Ensure that policies for extended leave allows women to retain their work entitlements, including a car, mobile phone, and email, in order to help women maintain their professional network and interpersonal relationships..

- a. Provide child care centres or support community centres to ensure access to high quality childcare
- b. Ensure procedures for flexible work options such as job share programs are not overly bureaucratic
- c. Provide training for managers to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities for promoting greater gender equality.
- d. Offer seminars and workshops for women to maintain contact and to provide support whilst on extended leave. Attending such seminars has the potential to help build resilience and keep women connected with the organisation. This has benefits for both the employees and organisations.

The next recommendation is to establish a support network for women employees outside the formal support offered in the organisation. This could take the form of a private email listserv or online forum for female employees to provide a secure, safe, informal way to discuss personal and professional challenges. This would further encourage the formation of informal mentorships and sponsorships.



The last recommendation is to ensure that employees are aware of the variety of support inside and outside of the organisation for building confidence, and encourage women within the industry to participate in such programs.

- a. offer professional development workshops focused on building self-confidence and dealing with the challenges specific to male-dominated industries for junior female employees.
- b. Offer professional development programs for all staff on building inclusive workplace cultures
- c. Consider subsidising participation in external programs such as the Young Women's Boxing Project in Perth, which empowers women through exercise to build self-confidence among women employees and give them the tools to achieve success as leaders.

To increase the number of women in senior positions in the resources sector will require both organisational and individual effort. The recommendations above are aimed at increasing the Confidence, Competence and Connectedness needed to provide the foundation for women's career success.

## **7.4 Limitations of the Study**

A qualitative research method was chosen for this study, because it was the most effective method for documenting the lived experience of these women. Based on the research design and methodology, this study had five main limitations:

1. The study was based in Western Australia and there were only a small number of women who met the study criteria.
2. The data for this study were gathered during the economic boom in Western Australia and this may have generated different findings than if data were collected during the later downturn.
3. The study explored the lived experiences of women who had achieved senior management roles. The experiences of women who had left the sector or not achieved senior level appointments were not explored. It is suggested that this be explored in future research.

4. The data is retrospective and may or may not accurately reflect the events that shaped their career trajectory. As noted earlier challenges can be downplayed once someone has achieved a position of seniority
5. The results from this study cannot be generalised due to the small sample size and limited scope of the research. However, the guidelines necessary to ensure the study is replicable were adhered to, and as such, the results may be relevant to research conducted in other similar, predominately-male, industries.

## 7.5 Future Research

This study explored how women at the senior management level sustained and developed their career success in the Western Australian resources sector, and identified three recommended areas for future research.

- **Why women in the senior management leave.** Conducting a similar study with women who have left resources organisations in WA before or after reaching the executive level could shed light on a very different set of experiences in this male-dominated industry (Cater-Steel and Cater 2010; Fitzsimmons and Callans 2015; Landers 2016; Murray and Peetz 2009; Reeson, Measham and Hocking 2012). Documenting the experiences of women who did not remain in the senior management levels and instead left the organisation could provide the other side of the story, directly contrasting the experiences of women who succeeded in the industry. In particular, such a study would provide insight regarding why women in senior management leave their organisations.
- **Test the effectiveness of the 3 C's weaving model.** Research assessing the effectiveness of the 3 C's weaving model among women in other male-dominated industries is necessary to test the robustness of the model. Given that the current study was limited to women in the senior level of management within the resources sector of WA, future research could apply the same model across other male-dominated industries and within broader contexts both in and beyond Australia. A qualitative study with a similar research design could be conducted in this industry to identify if the emergent themes are similar to those in the 3 C's model found here. Further support of the model with a quantitative survey study containing items

measuring participants' responses to the concepts depicted in the 3 C's model would also be highly useful for model validation.

- **Comparing the experiences of young women who do and do not receive mentoring.** Conducting research to explore the difference in experiences between young women (ages 25-35 years) entering the resources sector *with* access to mentoring programs and those *without* access would identify the specific role that mentorship plays in women's success. Specific issues that still need to be examined include these women's perceptions of gender issues within the industry, their self-belief and self-efficacy levels after participating in a mentoring program compared to those not receiving mentoring, and their attitude towards professional challenges they faced in their careers.

## 7.6 Personal Self-Reflection

In the last six years working on this thesis, I have made several changes in my personal and work life. This study was therefore not merely research to find out how women develop and sustain their career success, it was also about my own personal development. As a Director who has led my own company for the past fifteen years, I felt the need for revitalization and inspiration. For quite some time, I had questioned how women in my position were able to sustain a passion for their profession day after day, year after year. This study became my avenue to find those answers.

The interviews I conducted with the women in this study were inspiring. I remember the weeks of data collection as one of the best periods in my life. The participants' words of inspiration, their passion, their love for their work and family were incredibly revitalizing. I admired these women and the reasons for which they championed themselves. They freely shared their stories and experiences, conveying how self-belief and others' belief in them gave them the confidence to sustain and develop their careers successfully. They shared how professional development afforded them the competence they needed to be successful and how developing networks provided them connectedness in their industry. It is thanks to their insights that the 3 C's weaving model was developed, revealing some of the key sustaining and development factors impacting women's career success within the WA resources sector.

What can we learn from this study? That successful senior management women do not sit back and wait. They are propelled by their own agency to accomplish their dreams, regardless of the barriers standing in their way. They are continuously challenging themselves and they expect organisations to do the same. It is not enough for organisations to simply adapt to women's demands when they are given no option—businesses must anticipate such changes and be more amenable to women's needs in order to fully support them.

After listening to the stories of these women in leadership in the WA resources sector, I have begun to act on the example they set. As a woman in senior management, I have increased my own commitment toward mentorship and giving back, particularly to other women professionals seeking to advance in their career. Learning from these women's experiences, I have worked to follow a new leadership model that supports women's efforts to advance within my industry, while also noting my own subconscious biases. In particular, I have become more purposeful in my actions as a leader as detailed below:

- Mentor and sponsor promising young men and women who wish to advance in their careers. I promote them when they are ready and act as their active sponsor. I encourage them to work on both their strengths and weaknesses, giving them a specific task over time to build capacity. Furthermore, I am empathetic toward the desire for work-life balance: if children are sick, I encourage employees to stay home and care for them. I provide both a flexible and supportive environment and work schedule to allow for school drop-offs and pick-ups and modified work hours to accommodate childcare needs.
- Being an inspiration and role model to others, including children and subordinates.
- Prioritizing professional development to understand and keep abreast of changes in one's industry. I work to stay ahead and on top of business trends in order to pass that knowledge on to my colleagues and mentees.
- Networking with people from industries both similar to and different from my own. I was the President of a local community business organisation. In this role, I assisted other businesses with their growth and provided advice to those who sought it. I believe that such a model encourages a culture of change while also helping me continue my own growth as a leader and mentor.

Thus, in order to truly support female development in my industry, I believe that it is essential to be both an agent for oneself and a role model for other women.

Despite my executive position at my company and the leadership role I play within the business community, the Chinese culture that I'm brought up in expects women not to have a voice, at least in our household, and that all communication must be filtered through dad, further demonstrating how the findings of this study and the important discussions herein are still lacking in the broader culture and society in which we live. Indeed, we still have a long way to go.

Someone asked me recently, "Haven't we already seen changes taking place?" My answer was, "Yes and no." Within certain sectors, there has been noticeable change in recent years, but in other industries it will take much longer. Furthermore, as obvious gender barriers fall, it is the subtler, ingrained stereotypes and expectations that will need to be addressed. As the women in this study demonstrated, much of this change we have seen is subtle and gradual, achieved by constantly pushing back against gender barriers until they slowly start to erode. Women leaders will be there waiting to install new, diverse models of leadership and career success in their place. Finally, there remains a need to *want* change and for people willing to lead that change—a role that we must each be willing to fulfil.

*"Well behaved women seldom make history"*

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (1938 - ),  
American Historian, Academic, Author,  
Awarded the Pulitzer Prize for History (1991).

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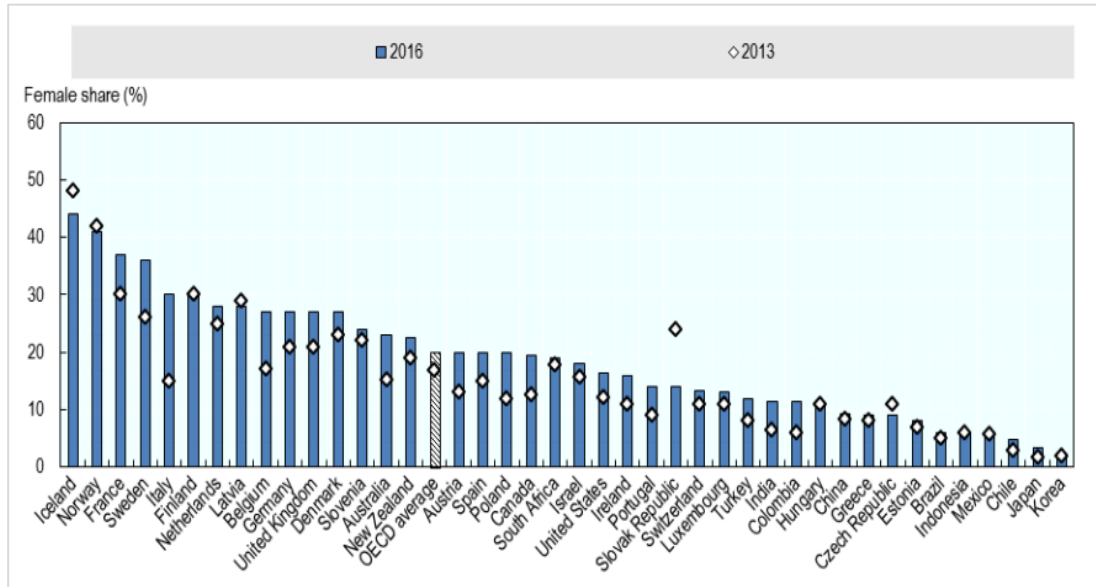
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## APPENDICES

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## Appendix A Female Board Members in Publicly Listed Companies from 2013 to 2016



## Appendix B Interview Guides

- Define Career Success**
- How do you think women define career success? Is your personal definition of career success any different from this?
- Develop Their Careers**
- Have you encountered any barriers or opportunities in your careers?
  - What difference, if any do you think that being a woman has made where you are in your career today?
  - Do you attend any professional development? Why do you attend them?
  - Do you attend any network group (formal and informal networking group)?
  - Where do you see yourself in five years?
  - Is there anything else I haven't covered that you feel is important to women's careers and success?
- Retain and Sustain**
- Do you have someone you go to when you have issues/problems professionally and personally?
  - In what way, if any, do you think organizational politics has impacted on your career?
  - Do you attend any Professional development? Why do you attend them?
  - Do you attend any network group (formal and informal networking group)?
  - Have you actively used a mentor or mentors in your career?
- Background**
- Please tell me how you arrived at your current position.
- Advice to Women**
- What do you feel is important to women's careers and success.





## **Appendix C      Pilot study interview questions**

1. Please tell me how you arrived at your current position.
2. What do you think women in general define as career success?
3. How do YOU define career success?
4. Have you encountered any barriers in your careers?
5. What difference if any do you think being a woman has made you where you are today in your career?
6. Is there anything else I haven't covered that you feel is important in women's careers and success?

## **Appendix D      Final interview questions for participants**

- Please tell me how you arrived at your current position.
- How you think women define career success? Is your personal definition of career success any different from this?
- Have you encountered any barriers or opportunities in your careers?
- What difference, if any do you think that being a woman has made where you are in your career today?
- Do you attend any PD or network group? Do you feel that this is likely to help you in your future career and how?
- Do you have someone you go to when things go pear shaped?
- Have you actively used a mentor or mentors in your career?
- What keeps you going?
- Is there anything else I haven't covered that you feel is important to women's careers and success?

## Appendix E Information Sheet for Participants

	 Curtin University
26 July 2017	Curtin Graduate School of Business 78 Murray Street Perth Western Australia 6000
<u>Information Sheet for Participants</u>	
<b>Research Aim</b> A critical analysis of women's careers in the resources sector of Western Australia.	
<b>Research Purpose</b> The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of women in senior management roles in the resources sector, focussing on women's career success, including their determination, career barriers and opportunities and career sustainability.	
<b>The Researchers</b> This research is being undertaken by Tracy Teo. Tracy is enrolled as a DBA student at Graduate School of Business, Curtin University. Supervising this research is Associate Professor Linley Lord and Professor Margaret Nowak, both of Curtin University.	
<b>Ethical Issues</b> The research will be conducted in strict accordance with University protocols and ethics and with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. Obtaining quality data requires that the participants speak freely, comfortable that any sensitive information disclosed during interviews is confidential and non-traceable. Confidentiality of participant data is respected at all times. Each participant will be provided with a written guarantee of privacy and anonymity and will sign a consent form that outlines the nature of the project, and each party's role and responsibilities. Neither the participants nor the researchers will receive any reward or remuneration for participating in this study. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or negative consequence by contacting the researcher as detailed at the bottom of this letter.	
<b>Benefits</b> By participating in this research you will be contributing to research that has the potential to promote better understanding of the challenges companies face including attracting, developing, retaining and advancing women in the resources sector.	
<b>Confidentiality</b> Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. The results of this study and any written reports will not identify either you or your organisation. All audio files and transcripts will be managed in accordance with Curtin University's research ethics requirements.	
<b>Requirements of Participants and Time Duration</b> Participants are invited to participate in a one-on-one, face-to-face, video or telephone interview lasting approximately 90 minutes. The interview will be recorded for data analysis and research development.	
	

Contact Details

For further inquiries about the study or any matter in relation to this research, please contact:

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Yours sincerely

Tracy Teo

Maureen Bickley Centre  
for Women in Leadership

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# Appendix F Informed Consent Form



Curtin University

Curtin Graduate School of Business  
78 Murray Street  
Perth Western Australia 6000

## Informed Consent Form

**Project:** A Critical Analysis of Women's Careers in the Resources Sector of Western Australia

Interviews for the above research project will be conducted either face-to-face, one-on-one and digitally audio recorded and scheduled to suit participants. It is anticipated that each interview will take approximately 30 minutes or more. Confidentiality is paramount. Following completion of the transcription of the interviews all identities shall be converted to code numbers. Some interview extracts will be used in papers and the study's final thesis; but no information in the papers, thesis or any subsequent publication will be able to be traced to an individual. All audio files and transcripts will be managed in accordance with Curtin University's ethical research requirements. Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have further questions, please contact Associate Professor Linley Lord: Tel +61 8 9266 4239.

Thank you for your co-operation.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (participant's name) have been informed of, read and understand the purposes of this study and have been given opportunity to ask questions. I agree to my interview being audio recorded and understand that all content remains confidential - that my name will not be associated with any report, subsequent publication or presentation arising from this interview. I know where to direct my queries and have a copy of the consent form. I understand I can withdraw at any time.

Participant	_____	Researcher	_____
Signature:	_____	Signature:	_____
Name:	_____	Name:	_____
Date:	_____	Date:	_____

Maureen Bickley Centre  
for Women in Leadership