

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EXERCISE OF
MALE POWER IN MIDDLE MANAGEMENT IN
TECHNIKONS IN KWAZULU-NATAL, WITH PARTICULAR
REFERENCE TO VERBAL COMMUNICATION

by

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The researcher wishes to acknowledge her indebtedness to Mrs J. J. Prosser, the supervisor of this dissertation, for her encouragement, interest and moral support.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all sources
I have used have been acknowledged by means of complete
references.

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APPROVED FOR FINAL SUBMISSION

SUPERVISOR

12.3. 1999.

DATE

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the exercise of male power in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal, with particular reference to verbal communication.

The glass ceiling, blocking promotions to senior positions, is a reality for women in technikons and the researcher explored the ways in which exploitation and marginalisation occur when sexism and power is wielded by males through verbal communication.

A literature survey of women in management in technikons revealed that gender power and sexism has not been explored in any depth in these institutions in South Africa. However, it is the researcher's belief that although verbal communication and gender power are only one aspect of sexism, it is important for female managers to understand how it operates and how to deal with it.

Research was conducted by means of questionnaires and a structured interview applied to a representative sample of females in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal. Subjects were female academics in promotion positions in management, involved in decision-making or were heads of department. The research analysed specific areas of bidirectional and monodirectional communication through which male power has been exercised and which indicated verbal discrimination.

Results revealed that females in middle management believed that they were not taken seriously by male colleagues in their attempts to crack the glass ceiling. Moreover, subjects emphasised their perceptions that gender discrimination and male power play existed and all felt that the time for change in the attitudes of male managers had arrived.

The dissertation has suggestions for women in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal which may help to counter sexist evaluation and discrimination, as currently practised in the workplace. Among these are that women should be armed with the knowledge and an awareness of the differences between male and female styles of speech. This is necessary if both sexes are to work harmoniously together for the benefit of the institution in which they are employed. The art of verbal interaction is vital if equal opportunity in the workplace is to be a reality and not applied tokenism.

Professional women should learn how to cope with the realities of sexual discrimination and themselves work to change the situation so that ultimately meaning may be given to gender identity and open access to top management positions exist irrespective of gender. Only then will the glass ceiling be cracked.

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CHAPTER 1

"Diversity is a biological fact, while equality is a political, ethical and social precept."
(Alice Rossi)

1.1 Introduction

It is a man's world! Gender prejudice in practice is alive and well. Statistics prove it. Attitudes reinforce it. Gender equality is as elusive as the mist!

Women all over the world have for decades protested at the gender discrimination and sexism they have experienced in almost every aspect of their lives. Sex-role stereotypes, certainly in western societies, act as the basis for inequalities and social controls over what women wish to do. Not only socially, but in business, industry and in the educational professions, a culture of male dominance pervades and persists. In the workplace a patriarchal culture still exists and continues to operate through "old boy" networks and patronage: although men now openly support equal opportunity in a number of ways, in reality there does not appear to be any observable shift in the gender-power balance. Such power, in this research, is wielded through sexism. The terms "gender-discrimination" and "sexism" form part of the focus of this project. Although they will be fully analysed at the end of this Chapter, briefly, what is referred to is the preference of one gender over the other. The basic assumption is that in education and achievement, women are inferior to men.

None of this is new. Barriers exist in the workplace for women's advancement, but not for men. Women have to work really hard in today's changing society including the workplace too, to draw attention to their issues and to establish new realities in terms of equal acceptance. (Aburdene and Naisbitt 1993. Megatrends for Women). Men it appears are not ready for change. A survey of 5 000 readers of The Harvard Business Review (March-April 1974 : 58) in Loring and Otto (1976) discovered that male managers do not see their organisations as having any responsibility to change their policies in this regard.

The consequence of this is that all women, including professional women's beliefs in their chosen paths becomes more and more difficult to sustain. This has particular concerns for women in education in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal.

Females are under-represented in all professions at senior management level. The Equal Opportunities Commission Report (1991) showed that senior and middle management in Britain are still dominated by men. Such discrimination has been supported by a review published in the USA in 1991, which revealed that many women and minorities are discriminated against in promotion practices. This led to the setting up of the Glass Ceiling Commission under the Civil Rights Legislation. The "glass ceiling" is not a physical barrier but an attitudinal one, consisting of stereo-types and preconceptions which mitigate against women's advancement in the

workplace hierarchy. In Britain, the notion of the existence of such a ceiling was formally acknowledged in the Report of the Hansard Society's Commission on Women at the Top (1990) that women : "... face general barriers which transcend differences of occupation and sector-out-dated attitudes towards women's roles in society, sex-discrimination ..., and inflexibility in the organisation of work and careers." (from Nicholson, Gender, Power and Organisation: a psychological perspective). Men do not experience the same attitudes. The majority of people who do succeed are men. Women are the ones who are victims, either in loss of career, unfulfilled potential or in other personal ways.

Women at the Top examined the under-representation of women in posts of responsibility, for example, in both top management in business and in higher education institutions and concluded that there are pervasive sexist barriers to female advancement. The Report revealed that 81% of British corporations have no women on their main holding boards and less than 25% had more than one woman on any board.

In Women at Work (May-June 1998 : 24) attention is also drawn to the small numbers of women in management in South Africa : "The number of women in managerial positions increased from under 22% in 1996, to more than 26% in 1997, but at senior management level a plateau was reached at 10,5%". Sexism and discrimination still rears its head!

In the late 1970s increasing numbers of women in Britain and America entered both business and the professions. However, of the latter, very few rose to managerial positions in academic institutions. Even in the late 1990s David and Woodward (1998) refer to several publications revealing the disadvantageous plight of women in higher education in the late 1990s. They too refer to the glass ceiling, a concept used to describe the aspirations of female middle managers to senior posts but their inability to reach them. (See Addendum 1). Morrison et al (1992 : 48) maintained : "... the glass ceiling applies to women who are kept from advancing higher because they are women." It is the barrier which keeps women out of senior management which is the seat of power in an organisation.

When considering the South African workplace, there is no observable difference in the circumstances described above. Sexism is just as pervasive as is seen in the way men perpetuate their own advantages : exploiting, intimidating, and discriminating against women through both policy and practice in the workplace. Gender power affects the working relationship of men and women. However, this is not to say that women are always the victims. Nevertheless organisations, because of negative stereotyping tend to under-rate women and so accord them inferior status and power.

Gender power is seen to be a pervasive controlling factor underlying the formal processes through which promotions are achieved and power

distributed in educational institutions in particular.

This male controlling power is reflected in the myths encountered with regard to the promotion of women : people don't want to work for a female boss; women don't want top jobs; women are too emotional to be managers. Myths about women's aspirations in the workplace have been perpetuated by middle-aged men from the standpoint of their own prejudices. It is clear they are ignorant of female realities or values, their communication patterns, their career aspirations, their philosophies or needs. However, in recent years women have written about women for women (McLoughlin 1992; Nicholson 1996; Bancroft 1995).

This research is particularly concerned with the position of women in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal in senior management positions. A study by UDUSA (Union of Democratic Staff Associations) in 1991 (Bethlehem) and a research project at the University of Cape Town earlier (1986 / 1987) in Lessing (1994) South African Women Today revealed that female academic staff at South African universities are severely under-represented among the decision makers when it comes to selection and promotion of staff. Higher Education Personnel Statistics on gender compiled by the Department of Education (Pretoria) for 1997 and 1998 reveal, most clearly, that males dominate the executive managerial positions in universities and technikons. This fact is supported by the statistics of Stiver, Malik and Harris (1994) in the 1994 World Year Book

of Education in which they provide international comparisons about the positions of women in higher education, which supports the fact that women hold fewer positions in top management than men.

In 1989 the Graduate School of Management at the University of Pretoria started the first "Women as Executives" Programme at a South African university. Its aim was to develop the leadership potential of women in management; recognition given to the role women ought to play in the workplace.

Nevertheless, the 1990s still show that relatively few women, especially in universities and technikons, make it to the top. Negative stereotyping is still held by men about women's capabilities, perhaps even creating the self-fulfilling prophecy: the stereotypes held about women's abilities can cause them to fulfil those expectations, allowing the stereotypes to become self-perpetuating and self-fulfilling. Women then begin to accept these negative connotations and perform according to men's expectations of them. It is notoriously difficult to rid oneself of psychological stereotyping, thus perpetuating sexism and negative attitudes. Stereotypes become rooted deep down. Women unthinkingly pass on the stereotyping because they have accepted gender-discrimination for so long, they are unable to name it for what it is, thus perpetuating sexism and negative attitudes.

In the literature reviewed on the topic of sexism and gender-power in

middle management in universities and technikons, there is both anecdotal and research evidence to suggest that there are frequently misunderstandings in communication concerning women in management because of power expectations and beliefs. In the domain of management, sexism in verbal language is both covert and overt, but the game is always the same : it is about gender, power and patriarchy. Paula Nicholson (1996) in her reference to the reality of the glass ceiling, refers specifically to the overt sexist attitudes manifested in language: for example, jokes and remarks by men, which senior women in management have to endure while attempting to better their positions. She writes of sexual exploitation through language and states that one of the problems facing professional academic women in senior positions is that of sexual harassment which is usually verbal and low-key. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3. A general ethos of "not rocking the boat" prevails against anyone who complains.

Rhoda McFarland (1990 : 66-69) refers to the stereotyping and double meanings manifested in sexual attitudes. Deborah Tannen (1995), the well-known linguist, in referring to the workplace, writes of the "conversational rituals" common amongst men in their power-play interaction with women, noticeably : teasing; playful put-downs; and the expending of great effort to avoid the one-down position in interaction, that is being in a verbally subordinate position. This is using communication to constantly manoeuvre themselves into a position superior to that of

women.

Carol Shakeshaft (1995) in Corson (1995), Discourse and Power in Educational Institutions refers to many authors, for example, Bourdieu, Foucault, and Van Dijk, who interpret social power as ways of discursive control at management level. These authors suggest that the more powerful the people, the more control they have over verbal interaction. Men use communication to exercise power, women to create interaction, the theme echoed by Eakins and Eakins (1978). In her study of school managers, Shakeshaft (1995) supports this. She argues that women use language that emphasizes power rather than language that uses power over others, as used by men managers. Tannen (1995) in her studies, claims that men use verbal communication in order to convey status, that is control through power. These points of view and examples will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Despite the fact that the Constitution of 1996, built upon the 1993 Interim Constitution and Charter of Fundamental Rights, forbids discrimination on the grounds of gender, South African women still experience a lack of power which is most observable in management positions in the workplace in educational institutions particularly in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal. Communication and organisational theory focuses on how power is exercised through the way men in management positions use language in a sexist manner.

Organisational sexism is all too observable in attitudes and behaviours in management, making it unavoidable that many women will face deep-seated challenges in being allowed to demonstrate their leadership abilities.

It is especially through active verbal communication, in formal and information situations, mono-directional and bi-directional, that women suffer the most rejection. Mono-directional communication refers to a one-to-many situation, as in a speech or lecture, and bi-directional to one-to-one situations as in conversations and interviews. Sexism in active, verbal communication is pervasive and subtle, whether it be at academic, departmental or faculty meetings, or in informal discussions which are work related. Such sexism is rife and demonstrates its power through double messages, vocabulary and the language games people play. These examples will be discussed in Chapter Three of this project.

Sexist and defensive communication have to do with power relationships and interpersonal power plays - aspects for which women can take responsibility, in an attempt to hold on to the optimum power for themselves. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1993 : XVIII. Megatrends for Women) wrote : "The important point for women as well as their male colleagues is to begin preparing for the future today".

Surely the important issue here is to acknowledge that men and women

are different, and that because of this, would not management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal benefit from the combination of male and female differences in values, attitudes, priorities and principles? The workplace environment could become less stressful, and more fulfilling, if these differences were understood by all the role players and both sexes shared in the development of better social, ethical and political practices to create a climate for equality of opportunity and development.

So far, women managers particularly in educational institutions such as technikons in KwaZulu-Natal, have not been involved in sharing organisational development and exercising power at top management level. Such acknowledgement of differences is not enough for the future. Both sexes need to take a more integrated approach to management in working together harmoniously for change in management practices in educational institutions. They need to break away from the gender-specific way, the old patterns, and realise that nothing is impossible.

Women as professionals, managers and leaders, are constantly faced with, and experience, sexist attitudes and behaviours often expressed in communication in the workplace. Although verbal communication is only one aspect of sexism, it is really important for women in management to acknowledge its existence, understand it, analyse it and develop strategies to counter its negative effects seriously. Women in educational management are constantly exposed to the negative effects of language. The underlying meanings, the hints, the innuendos are all subtle and

women are not always conscious of the implicit stereotyping. Gender subordination operates through language and wields power in a variety of ways : the stealing of female staff ideas, trivialising women's issues and the denying of feminine experiences as relevant or important, are but a few examples.

The writer believes that a knowledge of the part sexism and power plays in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal can help empower women in their struggle against gender discrimination in the workplace. The time is ripe to challenge the attitude expressed by men such as Napoleon Bonaparte who said : "Nature intended women to be our slaves ... they are our property, we are not theirs ... What a mad idea to demand equality for women! ... Women are nothing but machines for producing children".

1.2 Choice of Focus

The focus in this research is on how gender power is exercised through the way men in management positions use language in a sexist manner to discriminate against women in management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal. Gender relations are power relations, through which male values have dominant status over female values, and socialisation into gender roles is a component of the support structure of patriarchal control. It is through these contextualised relationships that men and women experience their workplace interactions.

In conducting a literature search of the position of women in educational management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal on gender issues in management, little information is available. Gender-power and sexism in this system of tertiary education appears not to have been explored in any depth in top management in South Africa. The writer believes that although verbal communication and gender power is only one area of sexism, it is important for female managers to understand how it operates and how to deal with it. In this way female managers will be able to develop strategies to deal with the negative effects of such sexism.

This study will concentrate on the verbal communication used in gender-power relationships in middle management, paying particular attention to the patterns predominantly used in sexist communication. Identified and analysed will be the conversational rituals common amongst men who seek to establish dominance - dependence power relationships over women in management; the interpersonal power plays (both covert and overt) which are used to gain power over a woman or situation; and some of the ways in which language is used to keep women defensive and non-competitive in a managerial arena.

The conclusion will be the formulation of strategies and suggestions to assist women in such situations.

1.3 Definition of Terms

1.3.1 *Sexism:*

The preference of one gender over the other. Usually it is discrimination against a gender by stereotyping, patronising or other form of offensive behaviour. In the case of women the basic assumption is that in education and achievement, they are inferior to men and that men are more likely to succeed in their occupations. The area of sexism to be dealt with is that of sexist verbal communication practised by men in power relationships in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3.2 *Gender-Power*

Gender refers specifically to the social characteristics by which men and women exist in dynamic relationships to each other. The process whereby individuals, male (or female), or groups gain or maintain the capacity to impose their will or control upon others, to have their way recurrently, despite implicit or explicit opposition, through invoking or threatening as well as offering or withholding rewards. In this research power is wielded through sexism and defensive communication, directed at women.

1.3.3 *Technikons*

Post-secondary institutions in South Africa which are vocationally orientated, with particular reference to KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3.4 *Middle Management in Technikons*

Any academic in a position of managing and decision-making in a promotion position, for example senior lecturer, associate director, director and anyone with the status of head of department.

1.3.5 *Verbal Communication*

The transfer of information from one person to another by means of speech. It refers also to the context of the message that is conveyed.

1.3.6 *Mono-directional and bi-directional communication*

Mono-directional refers to a one-to-many situation, as in a speech, talk or lecture and bi-directional to a one-to-one situation, as in conversations and interviews, where the second person also shares opinion and feelings.

1.3.7 *Tokenism*

Instances in which educational institutions perform trivial positive actions for female members toward whom they feel prejudice. Such tokenistic behaviours are then used as an excuse for refusing more substantive beneficial actions for this group.

1.4 Summary

Women in South Africa have many challenges to meet. They are increasingly moving into the economic arena and into professions which were in the past regarded as the bastions of men. Nowhere is this more visible than in technikons especially in KwaZulu-Natal. All too obvious is the position of women who are middle managers in such institutions. These women are marginalised and exploited by sexism and power through verbal communication, thus establishing the reality of the glass ceiling in their attempts to gain higher promotion positions in top management.

The glass ceiling is a reality in South Africa. Organisational, attitudinal and behavioural prejudices are acting as barriers, keeping women from promotions and key appointments, particularly in technikons. Women thus need to be empowered to overcome these problems in their difficult progress towards challenging gender-power discrimination in the workplace.

This research project focuses on the exercise of male power in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal with particular reference to verbal communication. Recommendations will be discussed which can empower women in such circumstances. The next Chapter, Chapter 2, will deal with the methodology used, the collection of data, and the analysis of the statistical information.

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CHAPTER 2

2.1 Methodology and Collection of Data

It is difficult to measure gender-power relations within the context of sexism by only traditional objective means of research. Figures on the numbers of women in executive managerial positions in higher educational institutions (1985) are available from the Department of Education, Pretoria but are not yet ready for general distribution (Addenda 2 and 3). Surveys too have provided evidence of sexual harassment, verbal and physical, but much of the power-politics within organisations in the field of gender and language and the inherent patriarchal values held by many institutions is beyond mere quantification. Although behaviour in these areas is observable, it is not always reported and hence statistics do not expose the depth of the problem.

Some of the findings in this area of study are generalisations. At this point it is necessary to distinguish between two different kinds of "generalising". It is acknowledged that "bad generalising" does lead to stereotyping, but "good generalising" refers to discerning a pattern either in a single instance, for example a case study, or among a mass of incidents and examples observed. This study would like to be categorised as "good generalising". After all, the results of even a scientific study based on experiment and quantification must be generalisable or they are of no use.

This study is qualitatively based on participant and non-participant observation, interviews, using structured questionnaires, anecdotal material and a review of current literature. A small number of females in middle management, that is 13 in number, participated in the questionnaires (Addendum 4). The structured interview (Part A - Addendum 5) consisted of 10 questions answered according to the Likert scale from which information was obtained by the analysis of frequency distributions, tables, and bar graphs (represented by percentages).

The qualitative Structured Open-Ended Interviews (Part B - Addendum 6) were administered to provide deeper detail at personal levels on the issues of gender-power and sexism, with special reference to language in Questions One and Two. These were evaluated by qualitative content analysis. A pilot study was administered.

2.2 Findings

The following Frequencies, Frequency Table, and Bar graphs represent the statistical analysis of Section A of the Questionnaire.

Frequencies

Statistics

		Emotion	Constraints	Supervise	Type	Dual	Authority
N	Valid	13	13	13	13	13	13
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Range		2.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
Minimum		1.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00
Maximum		3.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

		Discrimination	Performance	Risk	Power
N	Valid	13	13	13	13
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Range		3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Minimum		2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Maximum		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Frequency Table

Emotion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	9	69.2	69.2	69.2
	2.00	3	23.1	23.1	92.3
	3.00	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Constraints

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	2	15.4	15.4	15.4
	4.00	7	53.8	53.8	69.2
	5.00	4	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Supervise

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	8	61.5	61.5	61.5
	2.00	3	23.1	23.1	84.6
	3.00	1	7.7	7.7	92.3
	4.00	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Type

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	2.00	3	23.1	23.1	30.8
	3.00	2	15.4	15.4	46.2
	4.00	6	46.2	46.2	92.3
	5.00	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Dual

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	2	15.4	15.4	15.4
	3.00	2	15.4	15.4	30.8
	4.00	6	46.2	46.2	76.9
	5.00	3	23.1	23.1	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Authority

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	3.00	2	15.4	15.4	23.1
	4.00	6	46.2	46.2	69.2
	5.00	4	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Discrimination

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	2	15.4	15.4	15.4
	3.00	2	15.4	15.4	30.8
	4.00	3	23.1	23.1	53.8
	5.00	6	46.2	46.2	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	4.00	5	38.5	38.5	46.2
	5.00	7	53.8	53.8	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

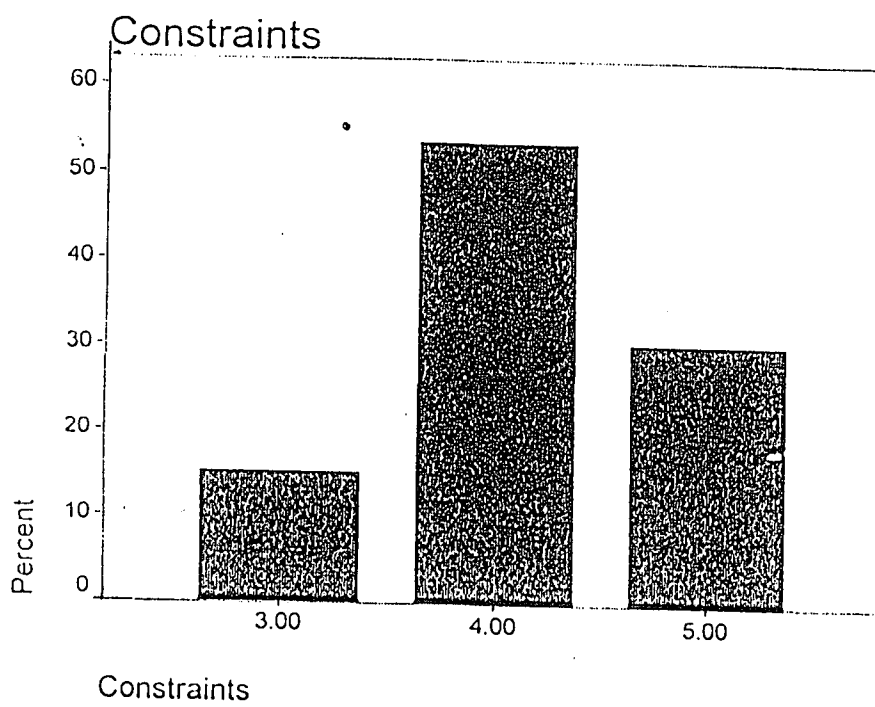
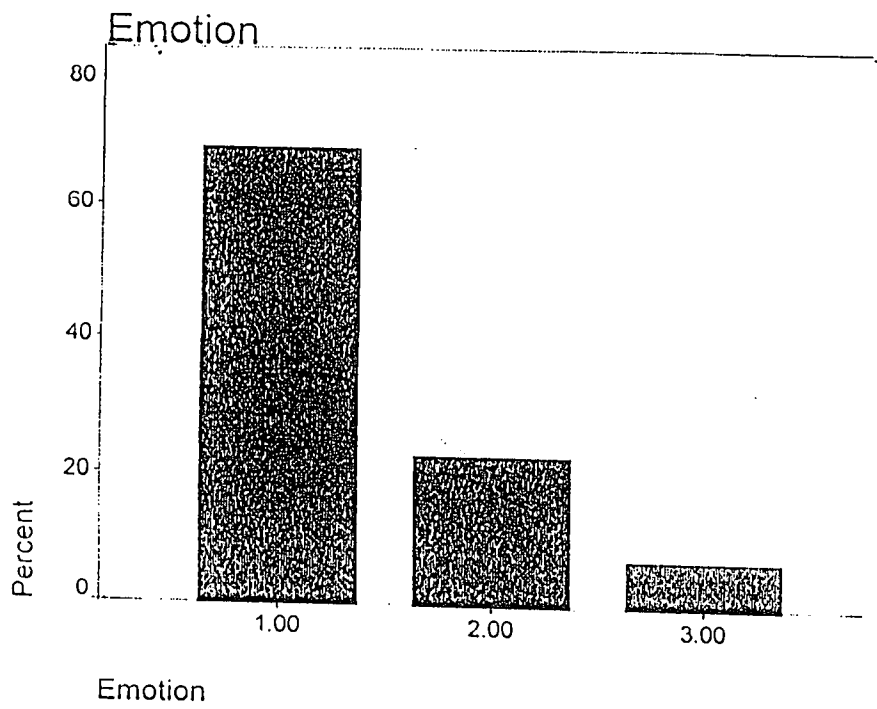
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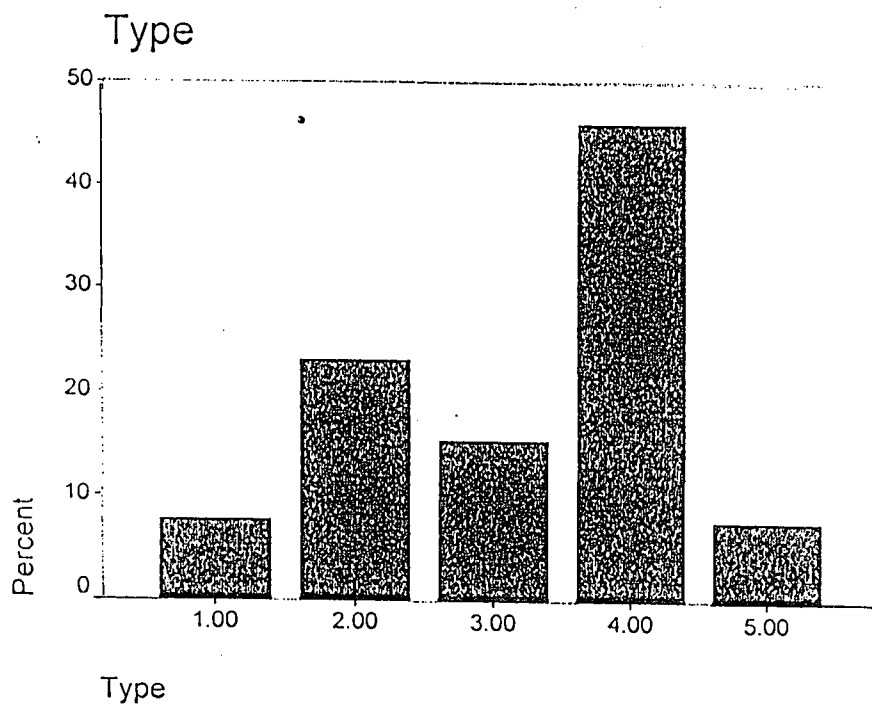
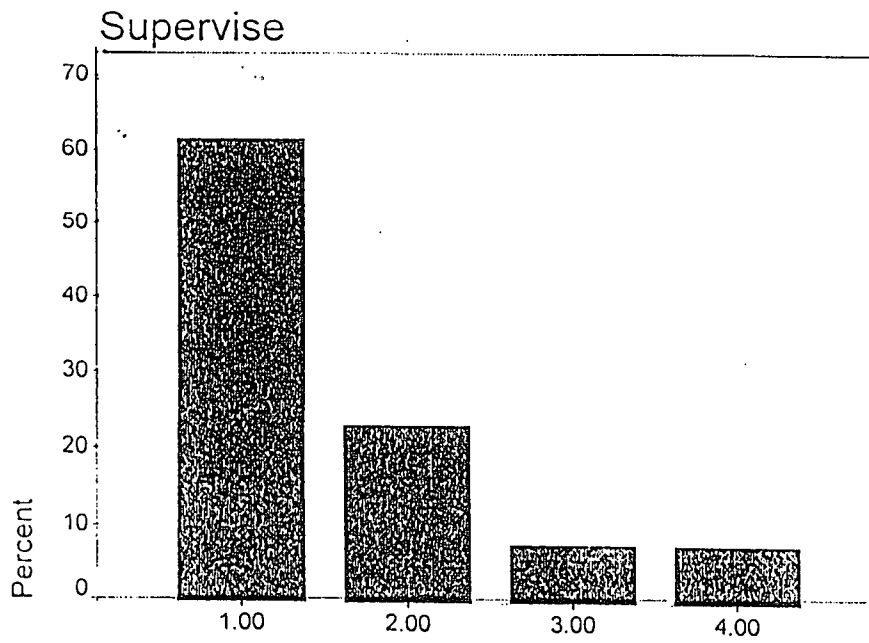
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	2	15.4	15.4	15.4
	3.00	2	15.4	15.4	30.8
	4.00	6	46.2	46.2	76.9
	5.00	3	23.1	23.1	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Power

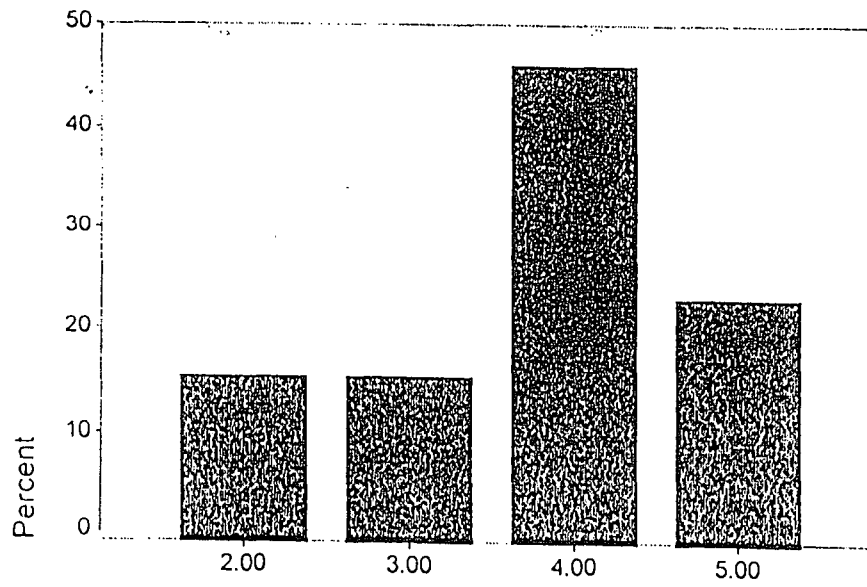
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	3.00	5	38.5	38.5	46.2
	4.00	6	46.2	46.2	92.3
	5.00	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Bar Chart

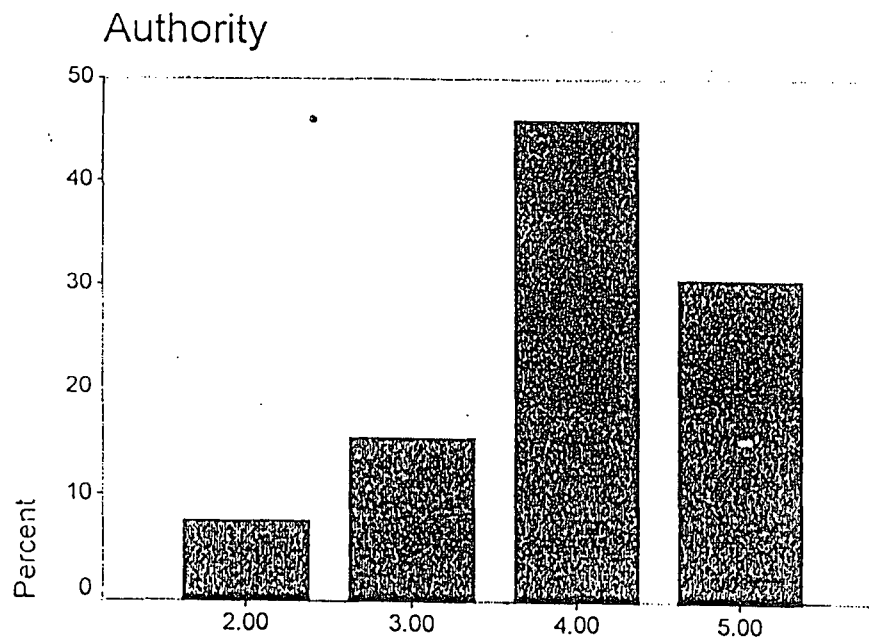




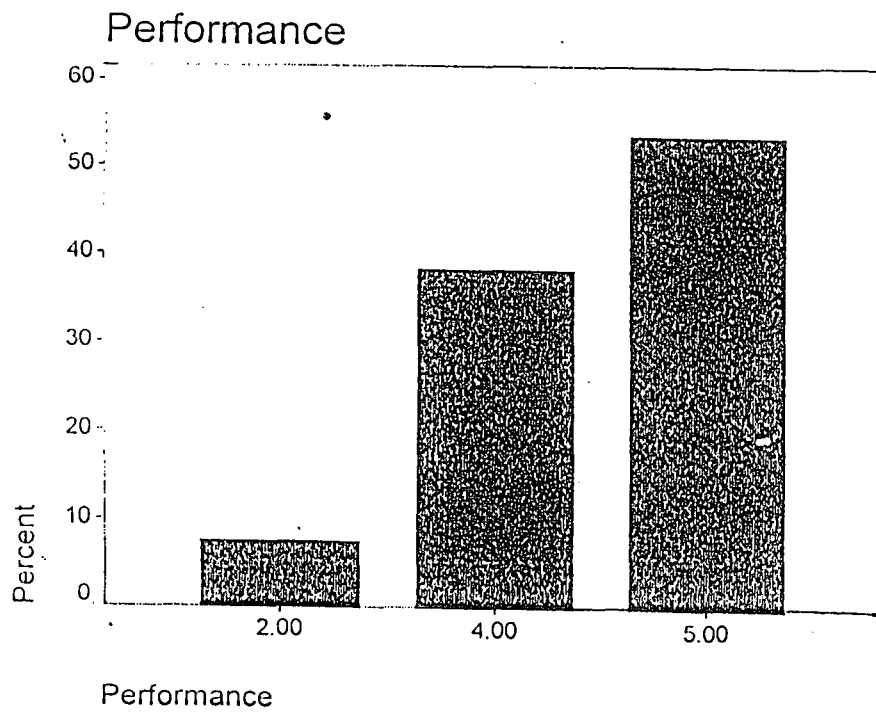
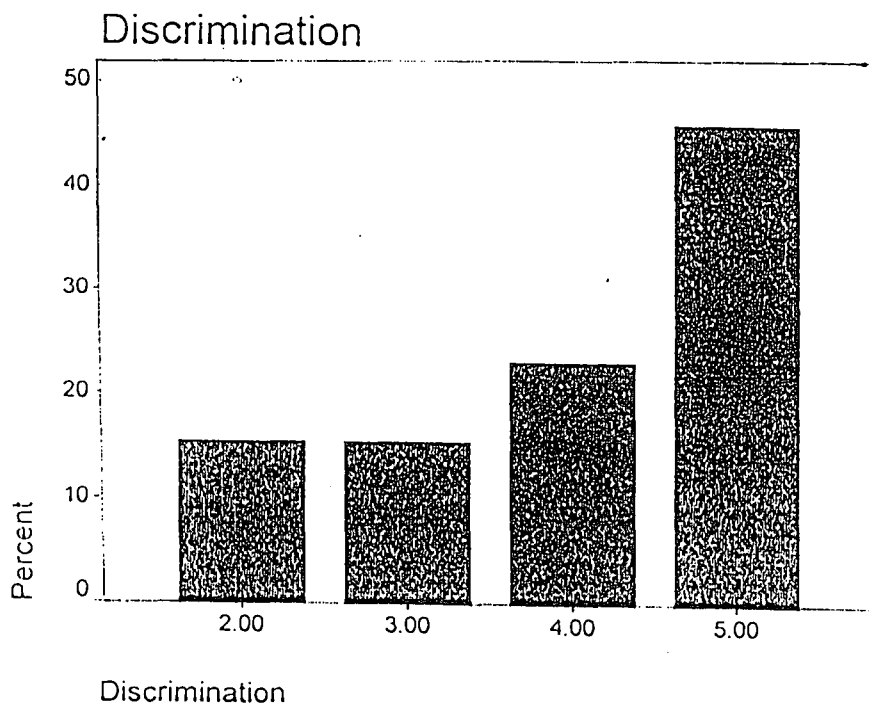
Dual

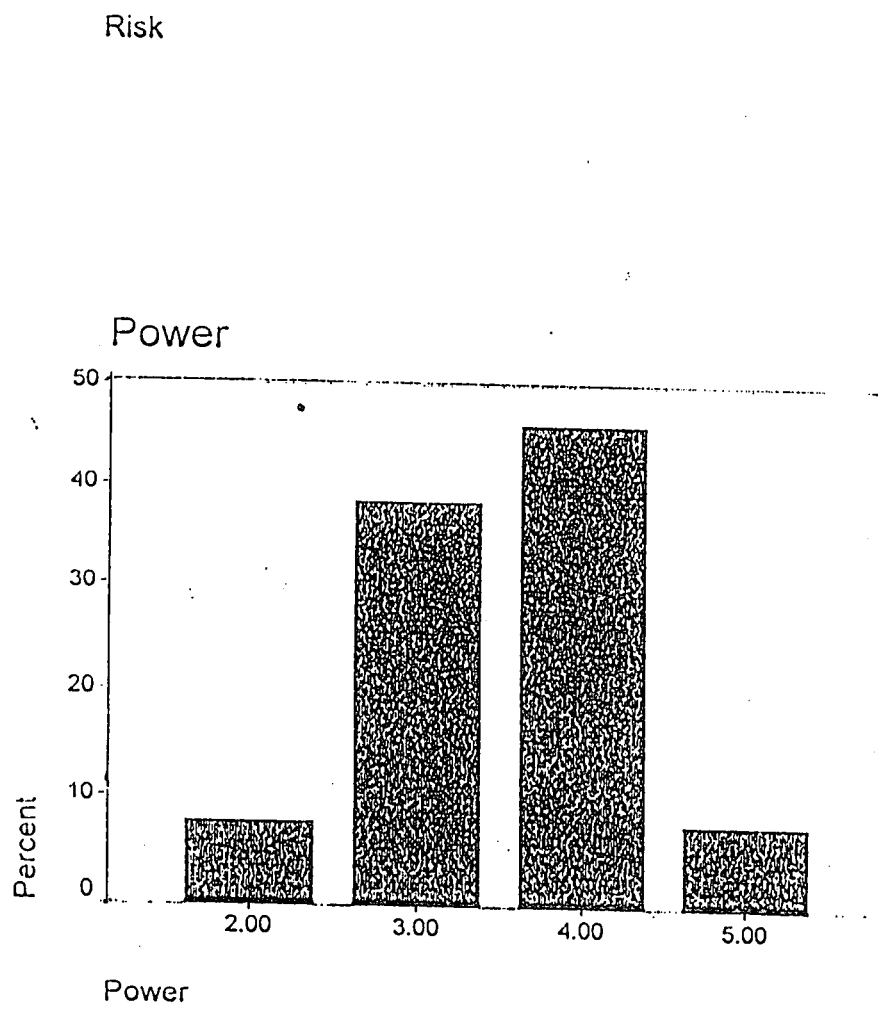
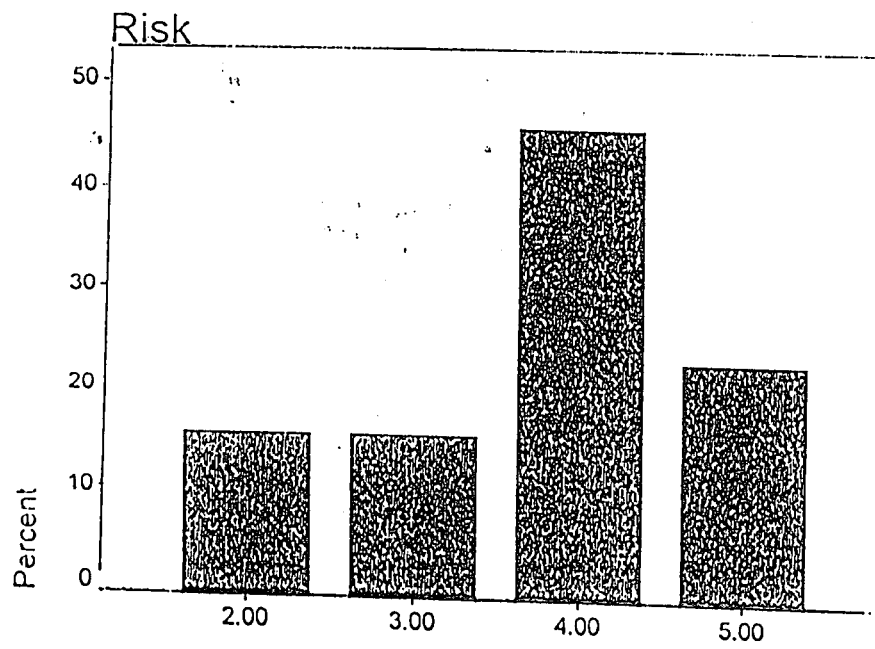


Dual



Authority





The Table that follows summarises the findings of the above, on a continuum of agreement at one end (Likert scale Points 4 and 5) and disagreement at the other end (Likert scale Points 1 and 2). Likert scale Point 3, "undecided", provides the watershed for the two ends of the continuum :-

TABLE
Section A
Summary of Findings in Percentages

Question Number	Agree / Strongly Agree	Undecided	Disagree / Strongly Disagree
1	-	7,7	92,3
2	84,6	15,4	-
3	7,7	7,7	84,6
4	53,9	15,4	30,8
5	69,3	15,4	30,8
6	7,7	15,4	7,7
7	69,3	15,4	15,4
8	92,3	-	7,7
9	69,3	15,4	15,4
10	53,9	38,5	7,7
	Points 4 & 5	Point 3	Points 1 & 2

- Answers to Questions 1 and 3 show strong disagreement (92,3%), that is 12 of the 13 respondents fell into this category. In essence this indicates that these women felt that female managers are quite capable of dealing with a crisis and can supervise both sexes.

- Answers to Questions 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (over 65% consensus) indicate most clearly that the subjects felt that gender issues play a prevalent role in attitudes to women in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal.
- 53,9% of the subjects agreed with the statements in Questions 4 and 10. Although Question 10 dealt with the theme of sexual discrimination in the workplace, its main focus was on power and power struggles. 53,9% of the subjects agreed with this issue in this section of the Questionnaire, yet when the issue of language was raised in Questions 1 and 2 of the Structured Interview, the respondents were most vehement in their support of the view that male managers in technikons, both at middle and top level, used language as a power base of control in their verbal interactions with their female counterparts.

Section B **Structured Interviews**

The key issues which emerged from this Section are as follows -

Question 1

Only two of the subjects had not had personal experience in this domain. Both came from departments and faculties in which the majority of employees were female. Thus their contact with male superiors was limited and only occurred at Academic Board level. This was not the norm for the other respondents.

The general consensus was that these women in middle management felt that they were not taken seriously. They frequently experienced "compliments" which went beyond the acceptable and which they interpreted as offensive. Sexual references to physical attributes, that is being called "dolly-bird", and the devaluing reference to their unimportance, for example "little women", they found demeaning. References, remarks and jokes tended also to be centred around the areas of women's behaviour and responses. Women in middle management positions were often referred to as being "too emotional" when involved in a meaningful issue; pre-menstrual if not co-operative; and covert references made to family and children obligations suggesting woman's role in management and the workplace to be secondary. The subjects stressed how disempowering male managers' remarks and attitudes could be to women in middle management positions.

Question 2

Within their departments in everyday interactions the subjects felt that sexist language was more covert than overt. Where there is a predominance of females in departments this was minimised. In their organisations in general, these subjects felt that sexist language was infrequent, probably because they felt that women have learnt to "play the game", that is they have learnt female ploys in dealing with men in the workplace. Such examples of sexism tended to be more specifically experienced at formal and informal academic meetings with male peers

and superiors. In such instances they encountered language used as a powerful means of changing, challenging, and controlling in decision-making procedures. This resulted in their feeling disempowered, submissive, and dominated.

Question 3

Everyone of the respondents replied in the negative to this Question as to whether their organisations had made any provisions for women middle managers to discuss the problems they might experience in their relations with top management. The only unbiased avenue which exists for dealing with problems such as sexual harassment lies with their unions via the grievance procedure, which they felt to be a rather daunting process. They felt rather aggrieved since many of the issues they were likely to experience lay in the academic ambit, for example, those to do with academic leadership and sexual discrimination, with which they felt the unions were not necessarily equipped to deal. All subjects felt rather optimistic about the establishment of a Work Place Forum in institutions as it could deal with such problems.

Question 4

Twenty-five percent of the subjects indicated that they had experienced this. They felt that women in educational management were not openly blocked but were not encouraged to apply for positions of power.

Respondents felt that perhaps power had so firmly been entrenched in the existing patriarchal culture, that women middle managers saw themselves as not being capable of advancement, that they had become victims of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The suggestions made were that perhaps many women in middle management positions in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal could not see these obstacles because of their gender-specific socialisation.

Question 5

"Why do you think change has been slow in your organisation in accepting women as equals in management?"

The answers here fell into three clearly categorised areas :

- a) patriarchal culture
- b) the self-fulfilling prophecy
- c) entrenched perceptions of the past

a) *Patriarchal Culture*

All of the respondents gave support to the concept of the "old boys club": unwritten and unspoken male dominance in a world created by men, opportunities made by men, rules and standards set by men, selection of staff for promotion made largely by men, new staff recruited by men. It was felt that equal opportunity in educational management was mere tokenism and that legislation was insufficient to change this. Men managers should be part of a

process of change in accepting that there are differences between the sexes in management practices and that learning to work together would make for harmonious relations in the workplace, as well as making gender equity realisable.

b) *The self-fulfilling prophecy*

The female middle managers who were involved in this study, were concerned that perhaps women in management positions did not reach their full potential in advancement and equal opportunity as a result of their own psychological and subconscious barriers, which had been entrenched by social expectations in terms of stereotyping women as second class citizens, homemakers, and child-bearers. Many women had too many roles to play as already mentioned, so did not put themselves forward for promotion in the workplace. Perhaps they created for themselves the reality of the glass ceiling. Women had learnt to "play the game", that was to render themselves subordinate to the power games of men, in order to avoid "rocking the boat". They did not want to upset the unspoken rules already set by those with power.

c) *Entrenched perceptions of the past*

Traditionally institutions and organisations have a patriarchal culture, giving power to men in decision making and management. Male hierarchial dominance has always been part of organisational

structure. Until about five years ago in South Africa, Afrikaans males (40 - 55 years of age) were dominant in educational management. It was perceived by the women who took part in this study, that the only change noticed was that of a racial change in the males occupying top educational management positions. The subjects of this study were most emphatic about the need for a change in mind-set, a paradigm shift, that would allow for the increased entrance of women as top managers in educational institutions. The infrastructure thus needed to be changed to accommodate staff training for both male and female managers. Women in middle management at present in educational institutions suffered from the lack of female mentors in top management. This they felt must change as more and more women entered the management hierarchy.

Once these three issues are addressed, the subjects felt optimistic that the glass ceiling could be cracked and that gender-power and discrimination could become a thing of the past.

2.3 Summary

The main focus of this Study was on the data obtained from Question One and Question Two of the Structured Interview, evaluating the extent to which women who are middle managers in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal are marginalised and exploited by male sexism and power through verbal communication and thereby creating the reality of the glass ceiling.

Questions Three, Four and Five supported the point that women middle managers in technikons perceived themselves as not being taken seriously in their attempts to crack the invisible ceiling, that is in their attempts to be recognised as equal candidates in the promotional positions in top management. During the Structured Interview respondents discussed their perceptions of gender discrimination and of male power play and emphasised the need for change in attitudes on the part of male managers in academic institutions.

The Questionnaires successfully reinforced perceptions of sexual discrimination and gender-power which was observed by women in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal.

Questions One and Two of the Structured Interview formed the area of focus of this study. The specific areas of verbal communication identified in these two questions will be analysed and discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

- 3.1 The aim of this chapter is to analyse the specific areas of verbal communication (through which power had been exercised) and to indicate how they were used to discriminate against women in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal. This will include language which is monodirectional and bidirectional in communication, and will have reference to formal and informal settings.

The view taken by this writer is that language, indisputably, is a powerful tool in shaping and entrenching power relations in educational management. Not only does language transmit, in a subtle way, the nature of male and female status, but it is also sexist in many of its connotations, thereby exercising both overt and covert gender-power in verbal usage. One has merely to look at the generic term for human beings: man. Would the male sex feel included and comfortable if the word "womankind" was used instead? This may seem silly to those who do not take gender-sexism seriously, but think again! The use of "man" for "mankind" has led the way for discounting and devaluing of women, a kind of indirect sex-role stereotyping which has been sustained for centuries - the impact of which is still experienced by women in the workplace today.

Although language usage may be only one aspect of sexism, it plays a predominant role in educational management where men and women are

involved in power relationships, which are sometimes dominance-dependence relationships, that is where superior - subordinate roles are demarcated, reinforced, and controlled. Such interpersonal power-plays are common in sexist communication where the aim is always to exert power or maintain power. Power can be wielded by women as well as men, but the focus of this study is on that wielded by men, whether overtly or covertly, which discriminates against women and thus disempowers them.

Eakins and Eakins (1978 : 24) provided a model to be used when considering verbal matters that signify a status or power difference. This model indicated asymmetry or imbalance of behaviour between status unequals :-

<u>Superior</u>	<u>Subordinate</u>
Order or commands	Complies
Ask or requests	Acquiesces
Interrogates	Replies
Declares	Agrees
Interrupts	Allows interruption, stops talking

This was a pattern often observed in areas of communication involving the sexes in management. More information flowed toward the greater power, less to lower positions of power. For example, women in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal have noted that more familiar terms of address tended to be used for them, rather than for men. Men in

middle management positions often addressed women of equal status by their first names, reinforcing a pattern of submission or subordinate position, but by the same token would send out a subtle covert message that they, the senders, were superior : "be careful what you call me." This model devised by Eakins and Eakins could be applied to many exchanges or interactions made in either formal settings, for example, academic or faculty board meetings, or informal settings, for example in passing conversations or in plenary sessions, and could give useful information into the way women in middle management felt controlled by the opposite sex.

Information obtained, from women who participated in this study and obtained from participative observation by the writer, placed sexist "put-downs" high on the list of sexist language used by males to gain power over female colleagues in middle management. A "put-down", sometimes referred to as "one-upmanship" is a strategy which a person (here, a male) tried to place himself in so that he would be verbally in a superior position to another person (a female).

This strategy, often unintentional and unconscious, was used to put women down, to discriminate against them and so devalue what they had to say.

A covert attitude that exists in the management hierarchy is that authority

is associated with maleness, and this attitude is pervasive in language. To ensure that a man is not placed in a "one-down" position, male managers have developed ways of talking particularly in formal situations such as at committee meetings, appointments or promotion boards. The sexist "put-down" is usually in the form of a "double-message" (a communication in which there are two messages, one on the surface and one hidden) often with little effort made to keep the sexist message hidden. For example, when at a board meeting a newly formed body was being constituted, a senior management male asked how many "women" were required. His message was quite clear - "let's have only what we have to" - a clearly unacceptably biased viewpoint.

If a hidden message, which is part of the sexist put-down, is detrimental to the sender, it is obviously in his best interests to deny that such a second message exists. What is the purpose of all this subterfuge? - the need to maintain covert power! To do this it is vital that the overt message be acceptable so that the sender can deny the covert implication. What the sender hopes to achieve is the maintenance of power beyond the immediate situation.

A good example, of this with regard to promotion on the basis of status, was given by a female middle manager who participated in this study. When the head of department position had to be filled in her department, the men in that department made it quite clear that they thought that a

particular male candidate should be considered for the job, because he had what they considered “better” qualifications and expertise than the woman candidate nominated. In essence what they were doing was making the woman’s abilities seem inferior to that of the male candidate. When tackled by a peer on the premise that gender-discrimination had been manifested, this was totally denied.

Power-plays are not always easy to identify because often the surface message is taken at face value and the hidden message is not revealed until the person in the power position is already in a “one-up” position. Conversely, depending on how things go, the person in power can deny the hidden message, as already mentioned, and remain in the “one-up” position. Women managers need to be able to identify such power play and respond in context. Some examples of how power in language was experienced by women subjects of this research are :-

Overt

1. “Can you give me a specific example?”
2. “I’m not permitted to let you know, at this moment.”
3. “What you really mean is

Covert

- “..... I can then deflate your reply and prove you wrong.”
- “I don’t need to tell you so keep you guessing,” or “You’ll blab.”
- “I can tell it better than you can,” or “What you have to say is not important.”

In the domain of authority, females felt that they faced a challenge. It was perceived that often the way a female talks is not always what is expected

of her from males. If she asserted herself she was considered by her male colleagues less feminine than females lower in the managerial hierarchy from whom less was expected, but if she fulfilled their expectations of being feminine, she was often considered not really competent.

The image of authority is clearly associated with masculinity, so an assertive woman is referred to negatively by her male counterparts as "abrasive" or as a "feminist", suggesting of course that she is not feminine! Women are expected to deliver their beliefs as though they are opinions, to seek opinions and advice from males. Thus many women in management felt that the only way to deal with these awkward" situations was to downplay their authority, to appear subordinate, otherwise they would be disliked.

Keeping "a low profile" as one female manager put it, meant you could still be "in the game", that is, successful in your struggle for acceptance as a decision and policy maker. Not conforming to male expectations could mean being a victim of open hostility.

Owen Hargie et al (1994) made reference to studies on assertiveness conducted by Kern et al (1985) and Lewis and Gallois (1984) with reference to gender differences. Their findings supported the stereotypical view that assertiveness was viewed as masculine and that it was not generally acceptable for women to be assertive.

Owen Hargie et al (1994 : 282) referred to Kahn (1981) as having suggested that this is because :

People expect women to behave unassertively. Women may not only accept this judgement of others and behave so as to fulfil prophecies based on stereotyped beliefs, but may avoid behaviours that do not fit 'the feminine role' and when they do engage in 'masculine assertiveness', they are likely to encounter disbelief or even hostility from others A common attack against females is the labelling of women who assert themselves as aggressive. (p.349)

One of the areas which caused the greatest distress to women in educational middle management in technikons was the covertly sexist remarks and jokes made in formal situations such as at board meetings. Question 1 of the Structured Interview referred to incidents which had been experienced by almost two-thirds of the subjects involved in this study. This is a similar experience to that of Paula Nicholson (1996 : Chapter 5).

Women managers found themselves in uncomfortable situations at times. They objected to frequent references to their being "premenstrual" if their votes or responses were not those desired or sought. Objectionable too were the references to women being "too emotional". They felt on occasion too that they were considered to be "second choice" for some managerial functions because of family and child-care responsibilities.

They perceived their femininity as being regulated through “patriarchal exploitation of the relationship between their reproductive function and what was deemed as being a real woman”, and that their roles at work are continuously circumvented by gender-role expectations. The general feeling was that if they “rocked the boat”, they would be viewed as humourless and perhaps be the victims of further exclusion later, that is, passed over in the future for promotion, excluded from certain committee membership or, even worse, considered a trouble-maker, someone best avoided.

Females in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal revealed in anecdotes about their experiences the fact that frequently they were exposed to examples of offensive, sexual attitudes; the discounting of their ideas and contributions; and unrealistic expectations because they are female. Women’s ideas and findings were frequently ridiculed or ignored and these women felt that the stereotypic beliefs that women are inferior and subordinate were commonly supported by the language used by their male colleagues, again reinforcing the idea that women managers are not taken seriously. An example from a meeting at faculty board level when a woman’s opinion was considered valueless : “with all due respect to the fairer sex, but”, make quite obvious that women’s opinions are of lesser importance than males’ opinions.

It became clear from the research conducted that language could be used

in a very subtle way to keep women managers on the defensive, or out of the competition, thus establishing the reality of the glass ceiling. One of the strategies documented by Loring and Otto (1976 : 127) referred to a survey of chief executive officials conducted by two public-relations experts (male) on telling conscious lies. Loring and Otto explained that these were “consciously chosen masks” used as forms of power plays “intended to divert or overwhelm the opponent”, and appeared in the following categories :-

Outright lies

Evasions

Half-truths

True statements which lead to false conclusions

Silence

Literal truth when it's known that the inference will be wrong

The “non-answer” or non sequitur

The knowing smile accompanied by silence

An attack on the questioner to avoid answering

Answering questions with other questions

Ambiguity

Postponement

Obfuscation or gobbledygook (also called “chaff”)

“Salted” paragraphs - a scattering of grains of truth in a quantity of falsehoods

Once again from the research conducted and from participant observation

by the author, it was clear that these conscious lies were frequently used by men in middle management and top management to protect themselves, their positions, and their own private domains in the workplace - a technique to overpower their opposition, usually women managers who threatened their security.

With reference to the above list, "evasions" and "half-truths" proved to be the most successful of all in controlling and gaining power. They were usually accompanied by an ingratiating smile, (uttered even though both parties knew they were lies), which proved to be the most frustrating to women managers. An example of this is the colleague who said : "I'm going to a meeting", when he was off to have a conversation with someone in his office. These women felt manipulated and hooked into a game of power designed to compel co-operation. By having their choices or options reduced, these women felt powerless and controlled.

The same effect was experienced by being subjected to "answering questions with questions" another technique which is really a transparent attempt at saying, "I don't know". As for : "True statements which lead to false conclusions", such practice of sophistry left the subjects of this research feeling totally helpless and annoyed to think that their male colleagues could think them so gullible and naive.

Outright confrontation by women managers in such instances was denied them for under patriarchal control such behaviour was seen as unfeminine,

and upsetting to the male management stronghold. To struggle against it was not seen as being typical of professional women because it was not part of women's socialisation. As one male head of department said in reply to a female colleague's attempt at such confrontation, "You really must learn to develop some inner peace in your life" - to maintain his one-up position, of course!

With reference to the Structured Interview, Question Two, which formed part of this research, almost all the participants referred to their own experiences of the differences in male and female vocabularies used in management situations and interactions.

They linked their discussion here to Point Two in the Structured Questionnaire, namely the difference between a "feminine" type of woman manager and a "masculine" type. What they had to say followed on from their perceptions of sex roles, cultural expectations and power positions. Perceptions are that men used language to reflect power and action and women used language to reflect softness and niceness - yet another sexist power related issue.

The difference between male and female vocabularies links with and can be incorporated into the model used by Eakins and Eakins (1978) discussed earlier in this Chapter. They concluded that there were possible explanations for sex differences in communication, two of which had

relevance to this research. One is what they referred to as "the factor of male control". They explained that dominance was part of the male cultural context, and thus communication manifested the maintenance of power relationships. A second explanation for the difference in communication as practised by both sexes was that value systems might differ according to sex, namely a dominant value orientation was manifested by males, and a variant or alternate theme was prescribed for females.

The dominant value system, appropriate for men, supported a communication system of aggression and domineering. The female system supposedly had a more social orientation. Bancroft (1995) interviewed forty-five females, and five males. They were asked to list the attributes of themselves and their colleagues. From their answers emerged two contrasting lists which approximate the two value systems just discussed.

A commonly accepted view was that interruption (when speaker A cuts off more than one word of speaker B) was a device used more often by men for exercising power and domination (Tannen 1995; Eakins and Eakins 1978; Loring and Otto 1976). This was the experience too of the female managers who took part in this study. All too often they were cut off in their explanations, or while giving their views and ideas, and often the interruption was phrased in the following way, "... (interruption of their

speaking) ... Yes, but ...", thus cutting them off. These victims were highly incensed and insulted by this common ploy to render them silent, or to change the focus in the conversation, placing them in a subordinate position. Eakins and Eakins (1976) in a study of seven faculty meetings at a university found that men generally averaged a greater number of active interruptions per meeting than did women.

Although interruptions could be viewed as perhaps showing support for a speaker, or enthusiastically supporting what he had to say, the subjects of this study on women in middle management in technikons did not view interruptions in this light. They felt that in terms of their experiences, interruption was a technique to dominate, to determine and to express ideas, which were not supportive of their verbal contributions. These women also felt that all things being equal, women were not likely to be listened to with the same attention, regardless of what they had to say. They made two more observations. Firstly, often suggestions made by a woman were ignored, but later were put forward by someone else (usually a man) as his idea! Secondly, when decisions were made by members of meetings, women managers do not always have decision making power. Here, in particular, the use of interruption was noticeably used as a silencing tool.

Another interesting area of discriminatory, verbal communication highlighted in this study was that of the role played by talk in our work lives

in the conversations of male and female managers in technikons. Conversation is the transference of attitudes, emotions, and information from one person to another via oral discourse. Confusion arises when the same rituals of conversation are not shared by men and women.

In a woman's world conversations are situations where negotiations for closeness occurred during which people tried to find and give support and affirmation and tried to reach agreement. In such situations women tried to minimise differences and any level of superiority. Men, on the other hand tended to focus on independence and superiority which highlights differences between the sexes.

Generally speaking, the rituals common amongst men are banter, joking, teasing, "playful" put-downs, and the expending of effort to avoid the one-down position in interaction. Three noticeable characteristics which emerge from the conversations of women are : the maintaining of an appearance of equality: taking into account the effect of exchange on other people; expending effort to downplay the speakers' authority so they can get the job done.

A conversational ritual often used in meetings was that of asking for the opinion of others before making a decision. The premise was that such opinions would be listened to, valued, and considered. In practice, such opinions appeared to be heard but not listened to, particularly when

offered by a female manager. She felt that when she offered her opinion, she was not being listened to and was being judged as a person not as a valued worker. She felt that the asking for opinions was sometimes a trick for making people feel involved in the decision making process but that ultimately the decision had already been made. This strategy used by male managers was commented on by female managers. Once again, their ideas were downplayed and worse than this, if their ideas were worthwhile, were later used and presented as one of the men's ideas.

If it was obvious that mere tokenism had been practised by seemingly involving all, the females involved felt demeaned and once more subordinated by gender-power and sexism.

In contrast to the need for male managers to maintain the one-up position, was the conversational ritual common among women to make others feel comfortable. Women often used such rituals to avoid humiliating each other. As women view working together important, one female speaker was accepting of being placed in the one-down position, knowing that she could trust the other to ritually return her to her original position. Women's socialisation enabled them to handle specific situations in which saving face for each other was an intuitive technique, particularly when the situation seemed to be the "battle of the sexes". One of the subjects of this study referred to an example where at faculty level she was requested to provide information regarding departmental participation in a particular

exercise. She had not been forwarded all the data by a fellow female department co-ordinator who was quick to offer a "ritual apology" and so share the blame. Not so the male colleague from another department who was in the same "female" situation. His response was such as to accept the admission of fault from his female colleague and use it to make himself look blameless.

Fully acknowledged by theorists was the danger of stereotyping but nevertheless theory and research tended to refer to generalisation in an attempt to reveal the differences between the sexes. Generally speaking, women tended to use verbal language which was more concerned with interpersonal matters, was more polite and direct, and which employed softening devices to avoid coming across too strongly or "masculine". Men's oral communication tended to be more externally focused, factual, literal and more strongly put. Thus the words of women are not always perceived in the same way as men's words are. This tended to place women at a disadvantage in verbal conflict situations. Eakins and Eakins (1978) referred to research that showed women as using obliging or adjustive tactics whereas men used more selfish devices to ensure self-advantage or gain.

These authors referred to a study of university faculty women who, faced with forceful verbal communication from their male colleagues, come off second best as they shrank from the competitive controlling tactics used.

Argumentative behaviour seemed more characteristic of men than of women.

The women, who participated in this present study, felt that even though attitudes might be changing with regard to women's participation in management, they still risked losing social acceptance and approval if they showed they were argumentative. Even though they saw advantages in being able to use male communication techniques, they felt that perhaps the past years of being conditioned into a subordinate role needed to be addressed by the changing of attitudes of those in top management, particularly of those who belonged to the patriarchal culture of technikons. They perceived themselves as victims of gender-power which has perpetuated sexual discrimination in the realms of communication.

3.2 Summary

This Chapter has focused on areas of verbal communication which professional women in management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal have perceived as being discriminatory. These areas they interpreted as one of possibly many that is controlling, which endorses the self-fulfilling prophecy of women being subordinate, and which creates the reality of the glass ceiling. It was felt that the knowledge and an awareness of the differences between male and female styles of speech was important in educational management in today's world if both sexes are to work together harmoniously. The art of conversation in verbal interaction was

vital if equal opportunity was to be a reality in the workplace, and not mere tokenism. Professional women needed to learn how to cope with these realities and work to change them in order to give meaning to their gender identity in the workplace where power has denied them access to top management positions.

The following Chapter, Chapter 4, will discuss strategies for women in this situation.

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CHAPTER 4

"Throughout history, the really fundamental changes in societies have come about not from dictates of governments and the results of battles but through vast numbers of people changing their minds - sometimes only a little bit."

- Willis Harman, Global Mind Change (in Carol R Frenier. 1997.

Business and the Feminine Principle : The Untapped Resource)

4.1 Recommendations

Technikons have traditionally employed large numbers of women in academic departments, and although more women are moving into the level of middle management their numbers in top management are few. Historically the stereotypic characteristics of the male manager, that is aggression, rationality, and objectivity have been more valued than those of female managers, namely emotiveness, passivity and gentleness. The widely male dominated field of management in technikons has provided evidence of sexist attitudes and practices, particularly in the field of verbal communication. Females in these institutions in middle management have attested to examples of offensive language, which is often sexist in connotation, degrading and exclusionary. To be effective and to survive, women middle managers have had to cope with problems of discrimination which have presented themselves as they have moved to higher levels in their organisations.

In technikons men and women have interacted with each other in an

organisational context where the underlying values were dominated by a patriarchal culture. Male gender-power was directed at women through the use of both verbal and physical harassment. This conflation of power and influence resulted in the devaluation of women in the workplace which placed them in positions they perceived as subordinate and unacceptable.

Women in middle management, who participated in this study, felt that constant exposure to sexist verbal communication in particular, was one of the ways in which women were made to feel inferior and was thus a factor affecting whether they applied for top positions in management. (This was discussed in Chapter 2).

Despite the undeniable differences between feminine and masculine expectations, attitudes and behaviour at management levels in technikons, the working environment in educational institutions is made both by the managers, and in turn moulds them. This means that female managers do not have to accept the way things are. Change could be brought about by the energetic and relentless efforts of female managers. Once this concept of change has been accepted, the only way is forward. The research covered in this project showed that women are under-represented in middle and top management in technikons; men did form the dominant gender group and were actively involved in promotion processes and women saw themselves as discriminated against, particularly whenever verbal communication was involved.

If women are to make equal opportunity in top management a reality for themselves, they will have to develop effective strategies or coping skills if they are to counter the present scenario. What action do females need to embark on to make this a reality? Such strategies the writer feels are twofold : firstly, women middle managers should work for long-term change in gender-power constraints in the domain of sexist language and unconditional acceptance in a man's world; secondly, they need strategies to cope with instances of sexist discourse they encounter but long-term remedies to eliminate it completely. To begin this long-term process of elimination Andrea P Baridon and David R Eyler (1994 : 171) suggested that management in business should :-

- * Accept gender issues as legitimate concerns of management
- * Decide what steps the company must take to eliminate sexual harassment and establish, publicise, and enforce policies to accomplish the elimination of sexual harassment with neither prejudice nor favouritism
- * Make a commitment to solving the glass ceiling problem
- * Determine how the company will balance the needs of the business and those of its employees who increasingly are parents in two-income households

These authors felt that if the above issues were not addressed conscientiously, (also in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal) institutions' and organisations' productivity could be destroyed.

What changes are envisaged by these female middle managers? Certainly not a female dominated organisation where "women-power" was the key word. What they desired was a workplace where feminine patterns of managing were integrated into a balanced managerial culture, where feminine attributes were introduced not as substitutes for masculine styles, but as complementary to them. Nancy Bancroft (1995 : 51) The Feminine Quest for Success made this point when she referred to a study involving 45 female and 5 male interviewees who were asked to list what they saw as feminine and masculine traits in managers. They saw feminine traits as being : holistic, process-orientated, inclusive, collaborative, emotional, self-doubting. The masculine traits were listed as : linear, result-orientated, hierarchal, territorial, stoic, combat. By combining these characteristics positive changes are possible in the managerial environment. The cultural judgement that masculine fulfilment is of more value than female fulfilment and the stereotyping of women must be eradicated. Collaboration between the sexes can provide a challenging opportunity to go forward, instead of making equality of opportunity in management a battlefield on which the sexes wage constant warfare.

Male and female managers should work toward the breakdown of traditional stereotypical views held about men and women and their differences which tend to affect working relationships. To unlearn their views, men and women must be more objective in their viewing of, and understanding of each other. They must accept the fact that some things can be changed, such as attitudes and beliefs, and that equality does not mean that men and women are the same, but

that the same opportunity for achievement should exist in management. Male and female characteristics are not the same but should be complementary in a work place of mixed gender and diversity.

Data referred to in this study has shown that women are increasing gradually in number and in many occupations to levels of greater responsibility. Top management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal should capitalise on the differences and uniqueness of male and female managers and use their characteristics and skills to achieve the goals of the institution efficiently and effectively. Gender differences should not be viewed negatively but in the light of how they could be utilised to get the best results. There must be a change in preconceived ideas about the inability of the sexes to work together harmoniously in an integrated environment. Both sexes must change their ways of interacting and communicating with each other. We have to learn to be "different but equal". (Baridon and Eyler. 1994 : 169).

To accomplish this, structural changes are necessary within the organisation which will benefit all members. Legislation is insufficient to achieve this. Women should work constructively towards this end by supporting one another and standing together. Women middle managers should be involved more in decision-making processes in their institutions, especially in areas affecting promotion, staff development and training. In this way they can be empowered to share in occupying positions of power. New patterns of work and new organisational structures should be negotiated in which women middle

managers could be included.

Although superficial agreement on equality and equity within technikons had been reached, action taken by top management was often ineffective because of a masculine culture being taken as its norm.

Aburdene and Naisbitt (1993) have discussed the importance of balancing the best of masculine and feminine styles in management to create a more harmonious and democratic work environment. Men and women managers must sort out their gender relationships if they are to get on professionally.

To take the way forward, men and women would have to work together to understand gender differences and not to try and change others. Negative power relationships could only be changed by working in a relationship that was collegial and productive, where the best was made of gender differences. Unfortunately these differences between males and females at work are often denied, negatively exploited or suppressed.

How could female middle managers achieve this rather tall order of working for change which seemed too distant and difficult? They should develop and practise skills and strategies to survive in the everyday working world dominated by males. They should understand their organisational environment and be aware of it so as to maximise their own effectiveness. They should learn to cope with these realities and how to change them, not how to assume the behaviours

and attitudes defined by the dominant patriarchal culture.

The following are gender-specific strategies which the writer regards as important in assisting women middle managers to cope in the workplace (where gender-power and sexism work against their achieving positions in top management) and perhaps, which will assist them in bringing about change in their organisational culture. They must bear in mind that the context in which they work consists of working relationships in which are relative power positions, especially between superiors and subordinates and peers of the opposite sex.

In order to counter sexist evaluation, that is judgements made by males about females in the workplace which are discriminatory in content, women middle managers in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal should know themselves to enable them to work with and collaborate with the "other" sex. Nancy Bancroft (1995 : 21) refers to this as "self-alignment, the increasing ability to discover and use all our qualities to enhance our lives and those of others". To know self, means that these women need to get in touch with their own personal beliefs, goals and strengths. Once they have identified these, such characteristics become the basis of behaviours and attitudes in the workplace. They then have to be proactive in their steps for working towards equality of opportunity in the workplace. This involves empowering themselves to cope in situations where male managers dominate.

A woman will, in being true to her self, encounter two problems. Firstly, the

characteristics which have already been discussed as being stereotypical of women in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, these being emotiveness, co-operation, vulnerability, helplessness, are usually discounted as non-valuable by male managers. Yet these very characteristics can be viewed as strengths in an environment where men and women work together. Secondly, women managers often feel that to succeed they have to be more like men to be effective. Not only is this unnecessary but also undesirable. Marvin Weisford in The Feminine Quest for Success (N.H. Bancroft. 1995 : 177) said, "If we wish to find out what works, we must start with our own values and personal situations. Management is best conceived as constructive self-fulfilling prophecies, acting in ways to make happen what we most believe in".

Women do not need to sacrifice who they are to be effective leaders. The concepts of sexually stereotyped working relationships should be discarded. This requires that women middle managers in technikons should be ever conscious of developing attitudes and abilities to deal with gender opposition without being gender biased.

Potential relationship issues among those with whom they work should be identified and resolved before they become problems that interfere with getting the job done. An example of such an issue is the sexist verbal communication discussed in this project. Female managers will have to take the initiative and diffuse potentially offensive language. This point will be developed later in this Chapter.

Furthermore, female managers should emphasise their professional characteristics without reference to gender. They have to learn to be players and to take control of their careers and responsibilities. This means having integrity and being responsive. They should be visible, to volunteer to take on assignments that were typically considered those of male managers, for example in the areas of finance and economics. They have to take on additional responsibilities and tasks, which many men do not have to do, if they wish to be recognised. Women middle managers must develop and keep up to date with the latest skills and technology in their field. They have to be creative and take the initiative in getting things done.

An important characteristic for female middle managers in technikons in a workplace saturated with masculine culture, is that of assertiveness. Assertion is the taking of a positive position which affirms one's rights and convictions, taking into account the rights of others at the same time. Women managers might need to involve themselves in Assertiveness Training, which is based on psychological and therapeutic practices, which show that behaviour can be learned and changed. There is no doubt that assertive behaviour can enhance self development and create confidence.

To survive the interpersonal problems of organisational life, women middle managers in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal need to establish boundaries between self and "others".

The impact of gender-power and stereotyping in these females in educational institutions implies they have to negotiate every working day in terms of the significance and power these realities have for them. One of the ways of coping is the establishment of psychological barriers between self and their sense of gendered subjectivity (the position assumed in relation to traditional beliefs about gender / femininity). In organisations and institutions which are male-dominated, female managers defer to "others" (males). This leads to their feelings of unworthiness and self-depreciation. To protect themselves from such evaluation it is important that female middle managers create boundaries and ensure that the line is not crossed.

This has particular significance in the area of verbal communication in middle and top management levels. A secure sense of boundary between self and others means that female managers are able to enter work relationships, connect appropriately with others, and remain secure in their contributions and involvement in their duties.

Female managers should watch what they say and how they say it, and how they respond to the communications of others. There is no need to tolerate crudeness to fit in with male colleagues. Neither is there any need to tolerate compliments which are found to be objectionable. Sexual jokes should be avoided as should comments that are suggestive. Discouraging such interactions and communications clearly sets the boundaries for male - female interaction in the workplace. Female middle managers need to be candid but

not flippant, making a conscious effort to avoid superficial or sexist comments, indicating that the same is expected in return. Feeling indignant or repulsed will not achieve the desired outcome of a commitment to respect and the neutralising of the stereotypes of sexual discrimination. If remarks are inappropriate female managers need to avoid compensating by coming up with the female equivalent of sexist abuse.

In verbal communication it is important to remember that words expressing power and action belong on the masculine side. Females tend to use more passive, pleasant vocabulary. These differences have been discussed in Chapter Three. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the language of subservience and deference fits in well with the language used by female managers, conditioned through time.

Language is used to keep females on the defensive. Knowing this, is necessary. Women must learn to protect themselves from this sort of manipulation. They need also to be aware of the hooks that males use in their manipulation. These hooks are usually attitudes related to what people feel they have to do, engendered by work relations and expectations about male and female behaviour in the workplace, which cause females to co-operate and therefore allow themselves to be manipulated. Female managers develop attitudes and values about themselves in the workplace as a result of this and need therefore to make sure that they do not compromise themselves to the extent of feeling subordinate and uncomfortable. These hooks become

problematic when they become compulsive, thus reducing one's choices in situations. Female managers need to be aware of these attitudinal dispensations and so learn to be more flexible : for example "I have to win" can take on another form which will increase one's options in the process of progressing in competitive thinking. They do not have to lose their identity by being dependent on the judgements and expectations of their male colleagues as many have been programmed to think in a patriarchal workplace.

4.2 **Summary**

This Chapter presented suggestions to women in middle management in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal to exercise in the workplace with the aim of countering sexist evaluation and discrimination. By being aware of such strategies the writer feels that they can empower themselves to deal with stereotyping and inequality that exists in these educational institutions.

In the long term women should work towards changing the attitudes that exist with regard to feminine patterns of management and aim towards the involvement of more female managers in top management. They should develop new patterns of work and new organisational structures involving the integration of the feminine approach to management as well as the collective working of both sexes for the common good and efficiency of such institutions. On a daily basis, in order to survive the interpersonal issues of organisational life, female middle managers should focus on developing self and establishing psychological boundaries which clearly indicate their need to be taken seriously

as managers.

The four maxims developed by Carol R Frenier (1997 : 49) in her book "Business and the Feminine Principle : The Untapped Resource" could be of value in sustaining female managers in their efforts towards a positive future of change.

Firstly, she wrote that : "Life is difficult", a fact which must be accepted before progress can be made. Effort and energy are required to move forward.

Secondly : "Go with the flow", she recommended. She referred here to on-going processes, everything being in flux, and that all one has control over is one's own responses.

Thirdly, she suggested : "Rest during the onslaughts". Energise and revitalise self when opportunity permits.

Fourthly : "Don't lust after desired outcomes". She gave warning here to the unhealthy desire of lust reminding that "It will happen when it happens".

Perhaps women in middle management in technikons particularly in KwaZulu-Natal should heed these in their pursuit of equality.

An overview and conclusion follow in Chapter 5.

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CHAPTER 5

5.1 Conclusion

If gender transformation of the workplace is to be realistic and not mere tokenism, women should be granted their rightful place in management according to individual ability, aptitude, relevant qualification and experience.

Women in middle management positions in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal have been marginalised and exploited by sexism and gender-power through verbal communication which has led to the perception of the glass ceiling in their desire to achieve promotion posts in top management. This has had the following effects. Female managers have become victims of discrimination through verbal communication which is bi-directional and mono-directional, in formal and informal situations. They are faced with the dilemma of having been socialised into a dependency relationship which predisposes them toward the need to seek approval and to act according to the expectations of the male colleagues in management. Language is often a tool used to manipulate female managers, sometimes in a subtle way but often in an overtly dominant way, to control them in a demeaning way which leaves them feeling alienated, intimidated and subservient.

Gender-power and sexism, through verbal communication, are the pervasive experiences of women in middle management. The stereotypical view of what is feminine and what is masculine is most evident in male and female

vocabularies. Words denoting power and action belong on the male side, while gentleness and permissiveness in language are accorded to the feminine side. Female managers have been moulded and shaped into accepting these views by sex roles, cultural expectations and power structures particularly in institutions with a patriarchal culture. Power is maintained through language which renders female managers subservient and deferent.

The effectiveness and efficiency of technikons must be affected. Where so few females are involved in top management decisions and policy making, how can gender-equity in all aspects be addressed in technikons? As referred to in Chapter 1, the Department of Education in Pretoria has statistics which revealed how disproportionate the number of women in top management was to the number of women employed in technikons in a professional capacity during 1997 and 1998. Legislated gender-equity policies appear to be mere tokenism in view of this reality.

Statistics from this research project (Chapter 2) clearly revealed that female managers in technikons in KwaZulu-Natal felt that much needed to be done to crack the glass ceiling, a barrier depriving them of the essential experiences needed to reach top management positions. Women's professional roles in general are affected by the absence of female role models and a climate of discrimination.

5.2 Summary

Male and female managers are different in their styles of management and in their characteristics but these differences should be insufficient to cause a split in the ranks on the basis of gender / male superiority. Both sexes must learn to understand the other and work together in harmony to bring about effective and efficient working environments in management in technikons. More and more women are being employed in the academic domains of technikons, yet their gender is not reflected proportionately in top management. Some male managers resist change and some female managers expect immediate change. Nevertheless, both sexes must work towards the integration of the two gender-typical approaches to management if legislated equity is to become a reality in the workplace.

If the glass ceiling is to break, management procedures, attitudes and behaviours have to change. Top management has to recognise the problems of gender equity and work to solve them. Mere tokenism is not enough. This will involve power shifts and role changes. Men and women managers will need to work together to ease the problem of stereotyping and sexism, particularly in the field of verbal interaction where women managers have the right to verbal interaction without the fear of dominance or exclusion. Power is not something to be taken or exerted, but something which emerges through relationships with others.

Change is slow in equalising opportunities for women in management positions but this is not an impossible task. "To the extent that they are leaders, women and forward-thinking men can influence organisations by policy making and by example". (Bancroft 1995 : 178).

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ADDENDUM 1

Table 1.1 The relative position of women in higher education (Adapted from Stiver Lie, Malik and Harris, 1994, table 19.3, p. 208; data for 1988-1992)

	<i>Percentage of faculty who are female</i>	<i>Percentage of full professors who are female</i>
USA	26.0	14.0
Norway	24.2	9.3
Greece	20.5	6.3
UK	20.5	4.9*
Germany	17.6	5.0**

* Data for pre-1992 universities only

** Average of data for the former West and East Germany

REFERENCE: DAVID, M AND WOODWARD, D (1998)

Negotiating the Glass Ceiling - Careers of
Senior Women in the Academic World
 (Falmer Press)

ADDENDUM 2

FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

FROM: Carolyn Turnbull-Jackson
H.O.D. : Dept of Education
Technikon Natal

FAX NUMBER: (031) 204-2447

EMAIL ADDRESS: gloriah@umfolozi.ntech.ac.za

TO: David Farirai

FAX NUMBER: (012) 328-3089

DATE: 21 July-1998

Dear David

Re: our telephonic conversation this morning, I hope that you can assist me. I require, for my Masters research , the following statistics :-

With regard to higher educational institutions, the numbers of males and females, in "management" positions (middle and higher management positions, if possible). Although gender is important, race is not so crucial.

Many thanks for your consideration.

CAROLYN TURNBULL-JACKSON
HEAD: DEPT OF EDUCATION

ADDENDUM 3

From: "Farirai, T" <Farirai.T@educ.pwv.gov.za>
To: "'gloriah@umfolozi.ntech.ac.za'" <gloriah@umfolozi.ntech.ac.za>
Subject: Education Statistics
Date sent: Wed, 21 Oct 1998 11:29:04 +0200

Hi Carolyn Turnbull-Jackson,

I never thought that you received these statistics because you never e-mailed, phoned, or faxed to say you received them. Anyway it is good that you received them.

The statistics are actually preliminary and not yet ready for publication. There is a high chance that they will change. As such it is not advisable to use them like that.

Best wishes in your Masters studies.

Kind regards.

David.

=====

David Farirai
Information Systems Directorate
Department of Education

Bag X895 Pretoria, 0001
Tel : (012) 312-5099
Cell: 082 855 3945
Fax: (012) 328-3089

ADDENDUM 4

Department of Education
Open House

Telephone: 204-2515 / 2445
Fax: 204-2447

15 September 1998

From: Carolyn Turnbull-Jackson

Dear

This letter is a request for your help and expertise. Please read further. I have tried to reach you by telephone but I know how busy you are.

I'm in the process of a pilot study for my Masters Degree in Education which requires 15 minutes (maximum) of your time to help complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire is totally anonymous.

My Hypothesis:

Women who are middle managers in technikons are marginalised and exploited by sexism and power through verbal communication, thus establishing the reality of the glass ceiling in their attempts to gain higher promotion positions in top management.

To this end :-

- Part 1 of the questionnaire requires purely a figure value 1-5 (see attachment) to be written next to the number of the questions. There are 10 questions, using the Likert scale.
- Part 2 consists of a structured interview / talk / telephone conversation of 5 minutes.

My Request

1. Please would you help by completing Part 1 and then sending it to me via the internal post.
2. Part 2 - Please could you phone me, or vice versa, if we can't arrange to meet, to deal with the questions.

I promise not to take much of your time. I really need your help and sincerely hope you can assist. I owe you.

(Please by 1 October 1998).

Many thanks

CAROLYN TURNBULL-JACKSON

ADDENDUM 5

A. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

(Terms will be explained before questionnaire completed)

AIM:

To measure the extent to which women in middle management in technikons have observed discrimination / sexism in the workplace.

ANSWERS:

Likert Scale :

Strongly agree	5
Agree	4
Undecided	3
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

1. Women are not dependable - they are too emotional in a crisis. Men cope better.
2. Women in middle management are faced with the constraints of patriarchy in their careers as they make attempts to move up the hierarchy.
3. Women can supervise women, not men.
4. Men like working with a woman, providing she is "feminine", and not a "masculine" type.
5. Dual standards are used to evaluate men and women's performance in the workplace.
6. Women's authority is not as readily accepted as a man's.
7. Many women are faced with some kind of sexual discrimination in the workplace.
8. Women must be better performers than men to get ahead.
9. Women must take greater and more frequent risks than men to be recognised.
10. Gender relations are the site for power struggles and power-based conflicts in work organisations.

ADDENDUM 6

B. STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

(Face-to-face)

1. Have you personally experienced overtly sexist attitudes such as sexist remarks and jokes in meetings?
2. How frequently do you hear language used in your organisation which you consider sexist?
3. Are provisions made in your organisation to discuss the problems women as middle managers experience in their relations with top management?
4. Have you experienced women in educational management being blocked from applying for a position of power?
5. Why do you think change has been slow in your organisation in accepting women as equals in management?