GENDER AND GENDER INEQUALITY:
A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1   INTRODUCTION

For many years, the mining industry has not been an obvious and preferred career choice for women. The industry was predominantly male dominated and has traditionally drawn its labour from a largely male, rural workforce. Until the 1990s women were legislatively prohibited from working in operations underground; however, these constrictions were lifted by the adoption of the Mine Health and Safety Act in 1996 (see Chapter Three, 3.2.3.1). Mining legislation now requires from mining companies to make specific provisions for the inclusion of women in core mining activities.

The historical gendered roles played by women and men in the mining industry were quite traditional. Men were the breadwinners and entered the public sphere (the mine workplace), while women were responsible for maintaining the family and thus remained in the domestic sphere (the home) (Ranchod, 2001:8). New labour legislation (see 3.2.2) as well as mining legislation (see 3.2.3) aims to redress previous inequalities in the mining industry and has now placed women on the same footing as men, where women and men can be seen as people of equal worth and dignity and as equal workers and earners – thereby moving away from traditional and static gendered roles. This implies a significant shift in gender roles, relations and responsibilities for both women and men (Ranchod, 2001:8).

This chapter provides a theoretical framework of issues related to gender and gender inequality in order to gain a proper understanding of the topic under discussion. The chapter unfolds in the following way. Firstly, a conceptualisation of the terms 'sex', 'gender' and 'gender difference' is done in order to create an understanding of gender as such. Secondly, a general overview of feminist theory is given, followed by several feminist approaches and their views on the origins of gender inequalities. Thirdly, attention is paid to different aspects regarding women and work. In this section main theories explaining gender inequalities in the workplace are also reflected on. Lastly, a contextualisation of 'gender inequality' and 'women and work' in South Africa is done.

2.2   UNDERSTANDING GENDER

This section provides an explanation of gender and attention is given to the conceptualisation and clarification of the terms 'sex' and 'gender'. Furthermore, this section aims to provide some background to and understanding of the differences between the two sexes and the existing inequalities between them.

2.2.1   'Sex' and 'gender'

In sociology there is differentiation between 'sex' and 'gender'. Sex refers to the biological and anatomical differences between women and men (Giddens, 1989:158). Sex indicates a distinction between two physically and genetically categories of people, which is referred to as *sexual dimorphism* (Wharton, 2006:18). A person is born either male or female, and therefore it can be assumed that sex is an *ascribed* status (Tischler, 1996:320).

According to Connel (2009:9), the term 'gender' comes from an ancient word root meaning 'to produce' or 'to generate' and in many languages refers to 'kind' or 'class'. Tischler (1996:319) as well as Kessler and McKenna (cited in Wharton, 2006:6) refers to gender as the social, psychological and cultural attributes of masculinity (maleness) and femininity (femaleness) that are based on biological distinctions. Stoller (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:93) states that if the proper terms for 'sex' are *male* and *female*, the corresponding terms for 'gender' are *masculine* and *feminine*.

Furthermore, gender pertains to the socially learned patterns of behaviour and the psychological or emotional expression of attitudes that distinguish males from females. Gender represents the characteristics taken on by men and women as they encountered social life and culture through socialisation (Wharton, 2006:6). From birth onwards, ideas about masculinity and femininity pattern the ways in which men and women are treated. Gender roles are also shaped by ideological, religious, ethnic, economic and cultural factors (Moser, cited in Quisumbing, 1996:1580). It can therefore be assumed that gender is an *achieved* status and is learned through the socialisation process – the socially learned expectations and behaviours associated with members of each sex (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:302; Tischler, 1996:320).

It is clear from the above that the term 'gender' refers to more than 'differences' and also focuses on 'relations'. Connel (2009:10) states that "[g]ender is, above all, a matter of the social relations within which individuals and groups act". Gender must be viewed as a social structure; it is neither an expression of biology, nor a fixed dichotomy in human life or character – and therefore only focuses on bodily difference. Connel (2009:11) defines

gender as "the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes". The author emphasises that gender, as a social structure, is multi-dimensional and is not "just about identity, or just about work, or just about power, or just about sexuality", but includes all these things at once. This view is also supported by Enarson (2009:1), who refers to gender as follows:

> [T]he array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to people on a differential basis. It is not biologically pre-determined but refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female in a particular point in time.

From the definitions and statements mentioned above, it is clear that a definitive distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' can be made. Sex is inherited, thus fixed and static. 'Sex' refers to the biological or physical difference between women and men. 'Gender', on the other hand, is viewed as a social construct that is learned and taken on through the socialisation process from birth onwards and is ascribed to people on a differential basis. Furthermore, it refers to the social roles and identities associated with 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Gender varies from society to society and refers to what a group considers proper for its male and female members. Gender is dynamic and gender roles can change dramatically over time. For example, today, fathers are more involved in the caretaking of children, men and women wear unisex clothing and women and men are employed in the same jobs (Lorber, cited in Disch, 2009:113).

2.2.2   Gender difference

Theories of gender difference are among the oldest of feminist theories and describe, explain and trace the implications of the ways in which women and men are or are not the same in terms of behaviour and experience (Ritzer, 2008:458). Scientists differ in their explanations of the variations in the behaviour of women and men as well as the social roles that they fulfil in society. These differences between the two sexes are related to, among other things, hormones and the brain, socio-biology, biology and the culture of society. These viewpoints are briefly highlighted in the following sections.

2.2.2.1   Hormones and the brain

Some scientists believe that the variations in the behaviour of men and women as well as their social roles are related to differences of hormones and the brain. Given the fact that hormones are closely integrated with the activity of the nervous system, they can influence behaviour, personality and emotional disposition (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:93). Supporters of this belief have sought evidence from, among others, studies of animal species. These studies have sometimes been used to link androgens and aggressive behaviour. Critics of hormonal explanations, among others, question the use of animal studies to explain human behaviour. Archer and Lloyd (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:93) believe that there is "interaction between biological and social processes" and that social behaviour is not simply determined by hormones. They also believe that "hormones only influence behaviour in the context of particular historical and cultural settings".

2.2.2.2   Socio-biology

Socio-biologists believe that human and other species develop and change through a process of natural selection. Individuals of a species vary in terms of their physical characteristics, and those that are best adapted to their environment are most likely to survive (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:94). This theory is based on Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, but goes well beyond his theory. Socio-biologists argue that much of human social behaviour has a genetic basis. Patterns of social organisation, such as family systems, organised aggression, male dominance, defence of territory, fear of strangers and even religion, are seen to be rooted in the genetic structure of our species (Tischler, 1996:322). Socio-biologists believe that it is not just physical characteristics that evolve, but also behaviour. Furthermore, they argue that behaviour in animals and humans is governed by a genetic instruction to maximise the chances of passing on their genes to future generations by breeding (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:94). Wilson and Barash (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:95) assert that different reproductive strategies produce different behaviour in male and female individuals and also lead them to occupy different social roles. Critics of socio-biology argue that socio-biologists try to explain 'universal' human behaviour that is in fact not universal. Furthermore, they argue that the evidence used from animal studies to support their case is selective – it ignores all the examples of animal species where males are not dominant (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:95).

2.2.2.3   Biology

It is widely believed that biological differences between women and men are responsible for the differences in both the behaviour of men and women and the roles that they play in society. Anthropologist George Peter Murdock believes that the biological differences between women and men form the basis of the sexual division of labour in society. He suggests that biological differences such as physical strength lead to gender roles out of practicality. In a study he found tasks such as hunting, lumbering and mining to be predominantly male roles and cooking, water-carrying and making and repairing clothes to be largely female roles (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:96).

The above-mentioned argument was also emphasised by the well-known structural-functionalist Talcott Parsons. He argued that there had to be a clear-cut sexual division of labour for the family to operate efficiently as a social system. Parsons characterised the woman's role in the family as *expressive*, as she provided the family with warmth, security and emotional support. The man's role is *instrumental*, as he is the breadwinner and spends his working day competing in an achievement-oriented society. The expressive and instrumental roles complemented each other and promote family solidarity (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:96).

2.2.2.4   Culture of society

Oakley (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:98) rejects the views of Murdock and Parsons. She does not accept that there is any natural division of labour or allocation of social roles on the basis of sex. Oakley believes that gender roles are culturally rather than biologically produced. She argues that the *culture of a society* exerts most influence in the creation of masculine and feminine behaviour. Furthermore, she believes that gender is socially constructed in the sense that differences in the behaviour of males and females are learned, rather than the result of biology.

Socialisation – as already briefly discussed under 2.2.1 – refers to the process through which individuals take on gendered qualities and characteristics. Through socialisation, people learn what their society expects of them as males and females. Gender socialisation is viewed as a two-sided process. On the one side is the *target of socialisation*, for example the newborn, who encounters the social world through interactions with parents and caretakers. On the other side are the *agents of socialisation*, the individuals, groups and organisations who pass on cultural information (Wharton, 2006:31). Gender socialisation has an effect on the self-concepts of women and men,

their social and political attitudes, their perceptions about other people and their feelings about relationships with others (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:305). Gender identity, one's definition of oneself as a women or man, is viewed as a result of gender socialisation. Gender identity is central to our self-concept and shapes our expectations of ourselves, our abilities and interests and how we interact with others (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:305).

Oakley (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:98) identified four ways in which socialisation into gender roles takes place:

- The child's self-concept is affected by manipulation, for example mothers tend to pay more attention to girls' hair and to dress them in feminine clothes.

- Differences are achieved through canalisation. This involves the direction of boys and girls towards different objects, for example the provision of toys to boys and girls, which encourage them to rehearse their expected adult roles. Girls are given dolls and miniature domestic objects and appliances to play with, which encourage them to perform their expected adult roles as mothers and housewives. On the other hand, boys are given bricks and guns, which encourage more practical, logical and aggressive behaviour.

- Socialisation through the use of verbal appellations, for example "You are a naughty boy" or "That's a good girl". These appellations lead young children to identify with their gender and to reproduce adults of the same gender.

- Male and female children are exposed to different activities, for example girls are particularly encouraged to become involved with domestic tasks. These stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are also reinforced by the media through the tendency to portray men and women in their traditional social roles.

Anderson and Taylor (2006:305) identified the following agents of gender socialisation:

- *Parents* play a critical role in shaping their children's experience of gender and are regarded as a fundamental source of gender socialisation. Connel (2009:123) states: "As soon as a person is categorized as male or female, gender is used to organize and interpret additional information about that person and to shape expectations for behaviour. This process starts at birth or even earlier". For example, expecting parents that are going to have a girl tend to decorate the nursery in pink, rather than blue. Parents also shape the kinds of clothes and toys

they purchase for the different sexes. Parents may also discourage children from playing with toys that are identified with the other sex.

- *Childhood play and games.* Gender socialisation also takes place through social relations and interaction with peers. As children grow older and move into their pre-school and school-age years, a greater amount of their play and interactions involve other children (Connel, 2009:129). Childhood play and games influence and shape children's patterns of social interaction, cognitive and physical development, analytical skills and the values and attitudes of their culture (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:306).

- *Schools* have a strong influence on gender socialisation because children spend a great amount of their time in school. Teacher expectations, classroom interaction, the content of the curriculum and the representation of men and women as teachers and school leaders communicate to learners that there are different expectations for women and men (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:306).

- *Religion* is regarded as another source of gender socialisation. In certain faiths, the exclusion of women from religious leadership positions suggests that women have a lower status of importance in religious institutions. However, it is important to know that all religious beliefs and texts are subject to interpretation and that interpretations of religious doctrines can change over time (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:308).

- *The media*, such as television, film, magazines and music, communicate and reinforce strong gender stereotypes. Although some changes took place over recent years, the media, and more specifically television, continue to portray stereotyped roles for women and men. Women are more likely than men to be seen as sex objects and to dress provocatively (in nightwear, underwear, swim suits and tight clothing). Gender racial stereotypes are also created by television. For example, white men are often shown as exercising more authority than either white women or African men and women (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:309).

From the above, it is clear that scientists differ in their views and explanations for why differences exist in the behaviour of women and men and why women and men fulfil different social roles in society and the workplace. Moreover, the origin of gender differences cannot be solely ascribed to hormones and the brain, socio-biology and biology. The culture of a society also has an impact on the creation of masculine and feminine behaviour. The socialisation process from birth onwards plays an important role in shaping women's and men's behaviour and the roles that they fulfil in society. Agents of

change, such as parents, childhood play and games, schools, religion and the media, also contribute to the creation of masculine and feminine behaviour, which in turn exerts most influence on the roles men and women adopt in society and in the workplace.

This section aimed to create an understanding of the term 'gender' and provided some explanations for the differences between the two sexes and the roles they fulfil in society. The following section relates these differences to the origin of gender inequalities between the two sexes.

2.3 GENDER INEQUALITY – A FEMINISTIC APPROACH

The differences between women and men are often related to inequalities that exist between the opposite sexes. The major frameworks of sociological theory – functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism – provide some answers to the question of why gender inequality exists; however, feminist sociologists, under the meta-theoretical 'umbrella' of especially phenomenology and postmodernism, have been mainly responsible for developing theories of gender inequality (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:325). In the section below, a general overview of feminist theory is given, followed by several feminist approaches and their views on the origins of gender inequalities.

2.3.1 Feminist theory

Ritzer (2008:450) defines feminist theory as "a generalized, wide-ranging system of ideas about social life and human experience developed from a women-centred perspective". The author maintains that feminist theory is *women-centred* in two ways, namely in that it firstly investigates the situation or situations and experiences of women in society, and secondly seeks to describe the social world from the distinctive points of women.

According to Ritzer (2008: 451), the theoretical basis of *feminism* is rooted in the following basic questions of feminism:

- *"And what about the women?"* This question seeks to answer the following: "Where are the women in any situation investigated? If they are not present, why? If they are present, what exactly are they doing? How do they experience the situation? What do they contribute to it? What does it mean to them?" Ritzer (2008:451) indicates that after more than 40 years of posing these questions, the following generalised answers were given: Women are not present in situations because there have been deliberate efforts to exclude them, and not because they lack ability or interest. In

situations where women have been present, they have played roles differently from the popular conception of them, for example the roles as housewives and mothers. Women's roles in most social situations have been subordinate to the roles of men.

- *"Why is all this as it is?"* Sociologists have tried to answer this question by means of the concept 'gender'. According to feminist theorists, a specific distinction can be made between *biologically* determined attributes associated with male and female and the *socially learned behaviours* associated with masculinity and femininity – designated by feminist theorists as *gender* (also see discussion under 2.2). Feminist theorists view the concept gender as a "social construction, not emanating from nature but created by people as part of the processes of group life" (Ritzer, 2008:451).

- *"How can we change and improve the social world so as to make it a more just place for all people?"* In this question is embedded a commitment to social transformation and a commitment to seeking justice and confronting injustice.

- *"And what about the differences among women?"* According to Ritzer (2008:452), the answer to the above question leads to a general conclusion that women's lives are greatly affected by women's social location, that is, by their class, race, age, affectional preference, marital status, religion, ethnicity and global location.

Although a kind of feminism has always existed, three broad phases, also known as periods or waves, in the development of feminist thinking can be identified:

First-wave feminism is seen as focused on women's struggle for political rights, especially the right to vote, and is marked by the following two key dates in the USA:

- 1848, when the first women's rights convention was held at Seneca Falls, New York

- 1920, when the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.

Second-wave feminism is marked by the period of 1960 to 1990 and aimed to translate the above-mentioned basic political rights into economic and social equality and to re-conceptualise relations between women and men with the concept 'gender'.

Third-wave feminism aims to describe and explain feminist ideas of the generation of women who will live their adult life in the 21st century. The concepts of 'women' and 'gender' are central to this feminist thinking or viewpoint (Ritzer, 2008:453).

These broad phases in the development of modern feminist thinking are related to particular mainstream theories, namely:

- Classical liberal theory

- Modern social theory

- Poststructuralist and postmodern theories.

These theories were criticised, modified and changed by feminists in order to address sexual differences and inequality as social and political issues (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:488) and are critically discussed below. Although feminist thinking within the classical liberal and poststructuralist and postmodern theories is highlighted, the main focus is on feminist perspectives within modern social theory, as this feminist movement made many contributions to social change by focusing on continued ways in which women are socially disadvantaged by men, by analysing the sexual oppression women suffer and by proposing interpersonal as well as social, political and legal solutions for gender inequality (Lorber, 2010:3).

2.3.1.1   *Feminism and the classical liberal theory*

The first wave of feminism emerged in the 18th century and was rooted in the classical liberal thinking that individuals should be free to develop their own abilities and pursue their own interests (Macionis, 1995:380). Seidman (cited in Bilton *et al.*, 2002:488) defines *freedom* as freedom from coercion, as moral determination, or as the right to individual happiness. According to this belief, only rational human beings are capable of exercising freedom, and women were not considered to be as rational as men. Classical liberal thinkers considered women as inferior to men with different intellectual and moral qualities from men.

Mary Wollstonecraft (cited in Bilton *et al.*, 2002:488), one of the earliest feminist thinkers, in her writing, referred to as the liberal framework, stated that rationality is identified as essentially human and that it is irrational not to apply it to women. Furthermore, she argued that women might seem to be less rational and they might appear to wallow in empty-headed vanity, frivolity and sentimentality, but that this was due to the sharply segregated system of education that taught them to behave in such a way in order to attract men. She also argued that non-segregated education should be introduced to allow women to develop their minds and stated that society would reap the benefits of harnessing women's talent. Mary Wollstonecraft believed that the tyranny of men over

women should be viewed as a case of unreasonable, unjustified privilege that is ripe for removal.

The main aim of first-wave feminism was to obtain equal legal rights for women, more specifically the vote (or suffrage) (Lorber, 2010:2). However, first-wave feminism also addressed a wide range of goals, such as access to good employment, equal pay, access to education, the rejection of prostitution and sex trafficking, married women's property rights, a stance on the problem of violence against wives and the right to legal separation and divorce (Walby, 2011:53).

2.3.1.2   Feminism and modern social theory

Modern feminist theories are regarded as theories that are committed to the removal of inequalities in gender relations (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:527). Second-wave feminism arose in the late 1960s and 1970s and was rooted in the classical 'functionalist' sociological theory, which saw the individual as constituted by society and argued that the power of society shapes the individual's values and behaviour (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:490). Second-wave feminism began with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex* in France in 1949. According to this work, men are regarded as the first sex, and women always the second. Men are the actors and set the standards and values. Women are the reactors and lack the qualities the dominants (men) exhibit (Lorber, 2010:3).

Second-wave feminists rejected the belief that sexual inequality is natural and an unchangeable fact of life. Furthermore, they made a specific distinction between *sexual difference*, regarded as rooted in nature, and *gender difference*, regarded as socially constructed (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:490). (Also see 2.2.2.)

Second-wave feminism also included a radical feminist movement that aimed to investigate the causes of female oppression. Radical feminists investigated aspects of power and inequality, which included unequal pay, discrimination in the labour market, domestic violence, rape and other forms of subordination and assault predominantly experienced by women. This generation of feminists related women's subordination to the way society is organised and believed that this problem could be solved by reorganising society (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:490).

According to conventional sociology, society delineated two separate spheres of life: The *public sphere* was viewed as the arena of male activity and includes paid work, the market, the state and politics. This sphere was characterised by objectivity. The *private or domestic sphere* was regarded as the domain of women and includes activities such as

childrearing and taking care of family members. This sphere was characterised by emotional attachment and instinctual behaviour. Men lived in both spheres, while women's lives and behaviour were related to the private or domestic sphere. The public sphere was regarded as the more important field of interest for sociology, but feminists and gender theorists changed this sociological viewpoint by showing through their work that these two spheres were connected to each other in the lives of women and men (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:490).

Second-wave feminism aimed to address, among others things, political, economic and social inequality, and was characterised by the following specific theories: liberal feminism, radical feminism, and Marxist and socialist feminism. These theories are discussed below.

2.3.1.2.1 Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism is regarded as the least radical of the feminist perspectives but probably with the most impact in terms of improving women's lives. Furthermore, liberal feminism is viewed as the major expression of gender inequality theory. Liberal feminists believed that gender inequality is the result of a sexist patterning of the division of labour and that gender equality can be achieved by transforming the division of labour through the repatterning of key institutions, such as law, work, family, education and the media (Ritzer, 2008:463).

Liberal feminists aimed to achieve a gradual change in the political, economic and social systems of Western societies and did not seek revolutionary changes. They wanted reform to take place within the existing social structure and tried to achieve this through a democratic system (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:102).

According to liberal feminists, nobody benefits from existing gender equalities. They believed that both men and women are harmed in the process because their potential is suppressed. For example, on the one hand, many women with the potential to be successful and skilled members of the workforce do not get the opportunity to develop their talents to the full. On the other hand, men are denied some of the pleasures of having a close relationship with their children. Liberal feminists related this to the culture and attitudes of individuals and not to the structures and institutions of society (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:102).

According to Ritzer (2008:463), liberal feminism rested on the following beliefs:

- All human beings have certain essential features, for example capacities for reason, moral agency and self-actualisation.

- The exercise of these capacities can be secured through the legal recognition of universal rights.

- The inequalities between women and men assigned by sex are social constructions with no basis in 'nature'.

- Social change for equality can be produced by an organised appeal to a reasonable public and the use of the state.

Liberal feminism regarded gender as a *socially constructed stratification system* that produces a gendered division of labour, an organisation of society into *public* and *private spheres* and a cultural dimension of sexist ideology. Women are mainly responsible for the private sphere, while men have privileged access to the public sphere, which includes access to money, power, status, freedom and opportunities for growth and self-worth (Ritzer, 2008:464).

These two spheres are still shaped by patriarchal ideology and sexism and have a constant impact on the lives of women, more than on men. On the one hand, women's experience within the public sphere of education, work politics and public space is still limited by practices of discrimination, marginalisation and harassment. On the other hand, in the private sphere, they find themselves in a 'time band', as they return from work to 'a second shift' at home where they perform activities such as caregiving, emotion management and the maintenance of routine tasks. These pressures of the private sphere have a direct impact on women's performance in the public sphere (Ritzer, 2008:465).

The main aim of liberal feminists was to create equality in society by advocating for the eradication of discrimination, sexism and stereotypical views of women and men. They argued for equal educational and economic opportunities; equal responsibility for the activities of family life; the elimination of sexist messages in families, education and the mass media; and individual challenges to sexism in daily life (Ritzer, 2008:466). Liberal feminists attempted to address equality issues such as job discrimination, sexual harassment, equal pay for equal work, and so forth. They tried to achieve this through the introduction of law, in other words legislation, litigation and regulation, and through arguments for fairness (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:102).

Liberal feminists saw the ideal gender arrangement as one in which each individual is free and responsible to choose the lifestyle most suitable to him or her and in which this choice is accepted and respected. Great emphasis was placed on individualism, choice, responsibility and equal opportunity (Ritzer, 2008:466).

According to Bryson (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:103) the following criticisms against liberal feminism can be identified:

- Liberal feminism is criticised for being based upon male assumptions and norms that include a belief in the value of individual achievement and competition, an emphasis on the importance of paid work and a belief in rationality. Critics argue that these beliefs encourage women to be more like men and deny the value of qualities traditionally associated with women, such as empathy, nurturing and cooperation.

- Liberal feminism is blamed for emphasising public life, for example politics and work, at the expense of private life.

- Marxist and radical feminists criticised liberal feminism for advocating changes that are too limited to free women from oppression.

- Black and postmodern feminists criticised liberal feminism for assuming that all groups of women have shared interests.

- Abbott *et al.* (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:103) criticised liberal feminism for failing to properly explain the exploitation of women due to the fact that it takes no account of structural sources of inequality.

Despite the above-mentioned criticisms, the following contributions were made by liberal feminism (Lorber, 2010:26):

- Promotion of gender neutrality in language, children's books and education

- Making formal and informal gender discrimination visible and countering its effects by mentoring and networking in women's professional and occupational associations

- Working with civil rights organisations to frame affirmative action guidelines and bring lawsuits for women and disadvantaged men

- Getting more women elected and appointed to government positions

- Encouraging employers and governments to provide childcare and parental leave

- Getting abortion legalised and procreative rights recognised as human rights.

2.3.1.2.2   Radical feminism

There were different kinds of radical feminist theorists, but they shared the viewpoint that "men had an interest in controlling women's reproduction and sexuality" (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:491). Radical feminists saw women as an *oppressed* group who had to struggle for their own liberation against their *oppressors* (men). They blamed men for the exploitation of women. Radical feminists believed that it is primarily men who benefit from the subordination of women (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:101).

According to Ritzer (2008:469), radical feminism was based on two central beliefs, namely firstly, that women are of absolute positive value as women and secondly, that women are oppressed everywhere, and violently so, by the system of patriarchy. The author further argued that violence is not always associated with physical cruelty, but can be hidden in other practices of exploitation and control, such as in standards of fashion and beauty; tyrannical ideals of motherhood, monogamy, chastity, heterosexuality and sexual harassment in the workplace; the practices of gynaecology, obstetrics and psychotherapy; and unpaid household drudgery and underpaid wage work.

Radical feminists differed in their viewpoints regarding the origin of women's oppression as well as the possible solutions to it. Some radical feminists saw the family as the key institution that contributed to women's oppression in modern societies. They believed that women are exploited by men through unpaid domestic labour in the home, which in turn restricts women from gaining positions of power in society (Richardson & Robinson, 2008:22). Other radical feminists, such as Shulamith Firestone, blamed women's biology, specifically the fact that they give birth, for their oppression. They become materially dependent upon men (Richardson & Robinson, 2008:22). A number of radical feminists blamed men's biology for women's oppression. Radical feminists, such as Mary Daly, believed that men's aggression contributed to women's oppression. Rape and male violence towards women were regarded as the methods through which men secure and maintain their power (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:101).

Some radical feminists blamed patriarchy for the existence of gender equality. Patriarchy literally means 'rule by the father' (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:109), but radical feminists used this term to refer to male dominance in society and men's power over women.

Patriarchy was seen as a universal phenomenon, as it existed across all cultures and historical periods, albeit in different forms (Richardson & Robinson, 2008:22). Radical feminists believed that men create and maintain patriarchy for the following reasons (Ritzer, 2008:470):

- Women are an effective means of satisfying male sexual desire.

- Women's bodies are essential to the production of children.

- Women are a useful labour force.

- Women can be ornamental signs of male status and power.

- Women are pleasant partners, they are carefully controlled companions to both child and adult males and they are good sources of emotional support.

Kate Millet (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:109) was one of the first radical feminists who used the term 'patriarchy' and who gave a detailed explanation of women's exploitation by men. Millet (cited in Haralambos, 2008:109) identified the following eight factors that explain the existence of patriarchy:

- She argued that *biology* in the form of superior male strength played an important part in creating gender equality. Furthermore, she believed that early socialisation encourage males to be aggressive and females to be passive. Males and females are taught to behave and think in ways that reinforce the biological differences between them.

- Millet believed that *ideological factors*, such as socialisation, played an important role in the existence of patriarchy. Men are socialised to have a dominant temperament and therefore gain a higher social status in society. This leads them to fulfil social roles in which they can exercise mastery over women.

- Millet also related *sociological factors* to the existence of patriarchy. She believed that the family is the key institution of patriarchy and plays an important role in maintaining patriarchy across generations.

- She considered the relationship between *class and subordination* in her explanation of the existence of patriarchy. She believed that women have a cast-like status that operates independently of social class. She claimed that even women from higher-class backgrounds are subordinate to men.

- She blamed *educational factors* for women's subordination. She argued that economic inequalities are reinforced by educational inequalities. Even the paid work that women do is usually menial, badly paid and lacking in status.

- Millet argued that men retain their patriarchal power through *myth and religion*. She stated that the Christian religion portrays Eve as an afterthought produced from Adam's rib and that the source of human suffering lies in her actions.

- She believed that *psychology* is a direct source for men's power. She blamed the media for reinforcing women's passive and inferior role in society.

- She identified *physical force* as the final source of male domination. She referred to all forms of violence against women, such as rape and sexual violence, which are used by men to intimidate women.

Radical feminists believed that patriarchy can be defeated by creating awareness among women so that each woman recognises her own value and strength and rejects patriarchal pressures to see herself as weak, dependent and second-class. They should work in unity with other women, regardless of differences among them, to create mutual trust, support, appreciation and defence (Ritzer, 2008:470).

Valerie Bryson (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:101) cited the following criticisms against radical feminism:

- The concept of patriarchy is criticised for being 'descriptive' and 'ahistorical'. It tends to describe the position of women without providing any explanation for it. Furthermore, it does not take into account the variations in experience of women of different class and ethnic backgrounds.

- Radical feminism has also been blamed for encouraging women to focus only on negative experiences of relationships with men and to ignore positive experiences of relationships, for example experiences of happy marriages.

- Radical feminism has been criticised for portraying women as essentially good and men as essentially bad. Men are viewed as the enemy, which suggests that they cannot be trusted as fathers, friends, sexual partners or political allies.

The following contributions were made by radical feminism (Lorber, 2010:122):

- Establishment of a theory of patriarchy. Patriarchy is viewed as the system that privileges men and exploits women sexually, emotionally and physically

- Recognition of violence against women as a means of direct and indirect control through fear

- Identification of sexual harassment as part of the continuum of violence against women

- Tracing the global paths of sexual trafficking in women, raising public awareness of its harm to vulnerable young women

- Identification of rape as a weapon of fear

- Advocating for the establishment of accessible rape crisis centres and battered-women shelters

- Criticism of hidden devaluation of women in science, medicine, law and religion.

2.3.1.2.3   *Marxist and socialist feminism*

The foundation of Marxist feminism was laid by Marx and Engels. Their main focus was social class oppression, but they turned their attention to gender oppression in the writing of *The origins of Family, Private Property, and the State* (written by Engels in 1884). In this manuscript, Engels argued that woman's subordination results not from her biology, but from social relations that have a clear and traceable history and that is subject to change. Marxist feminism is viewed as a relatively dormant theory in contemporary American feminism, but remains important due to its influence on socialist feminism (Ritzer, 2008:472). Marxist feminists viewed class as the ultimate determinant of women's social/economic status, while socialist feminists viewed gender and class as equally powerful oppressive mechanisms (Tong, cited in Whelehan, 1995:44).

Marxist feminists viewed women's oppression and exploitation as a symptom of capitalism. They believed that the family is the crucial site of women's oppression. They argued that women's oppression arises from the fact that women engaged in unpaid work in the household and paid work outside the home. Women try to balance both kinds of work and that leaves them disadvantaged in both situations. On the one hand, they try to manage domestic work at home and on the other hand, they are undervalued and underpaid in the workforce (Bilton *et al*., 2002:492). Marxist feminism is distinctive

because it viewed women's oppression, whether they are proletarian or bourgeois, as a product of the political, social and economic structures associated with capitalism and not as a result of the intentional actions of individuals (Tong, 1989:39).

The distinctive feature of capitalism is that the class that owns the means of production (the capitalists) operates on a logic of continuous accumulation. Capital refers to wealth, money and other assets, which can be used to generate the material infrastructure of economic production. Capitalists seek to exchange goods in order to create wealth, which in turn is invested in the material infrastructure of economic production to generate goods in order to generate more wealth (Ritzer, 2008:475).

Marxist feminists sought revolutionary change and they believed that it could be achieved through the establishment of a communist society (a society in which the means of production will be communally owned). Furthermore, they believed that all gender inequalities will disappear in a communist society (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:102).

Socialist feminists explained women's oppression in terms of the combined forces of patriarchy and capitalism (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:492). These combined forces of oppression are described in one term, namely *capitalist patriarchy*. However, according to Ritzer (2008:475), the term 'domination' is more widely used to describe this form of oppression. "*Domination* is defined as the relationship in which one party, *the dominant*, succeeds in making the other party, the *subordinate*, an instrument of the dominant's will, refusing to recognize the subordinate's independent subjectivity" (Ritzer, 2008:475). Socialist theorists were concerned with all experiences of oppression, by both women and men. They also explored how some women, for example privileged-class women in society, actively participate in the oppressing of other women, for example poor women in society (Ritzer, 2008:475).

Socialist feminists sought change by means of creating a global solidarity among women to combat the abuses, caused by capitalism, in their lives, in the lives of their communities and in the environment (Ritzer, 2008:477). According to Ritzer (2008:478), they aimed to achieve this by mobilising people to use the state as a means for the effective redistribution of societal resources through the provision of a variety of public services such as publicly supported education, healthcare, transportation, childcare and housing, a progressive tax structure that reduces the wide disparities of income between rich and poor and the guarantee of a living wage to all members of the community.

CHAPTER TW0:
GENDER AND GENDER INEQUALITY: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Criticism against Marxist and socialist feminism entails the following:

- Eisenstein (cited in Bilton *et al.*, 2002:492) blamed Marxist feminism for paying too much attention to the impact of capitalism and ignoring other ways in which women were oppressed.

- Marxist and socialist feminism were criticised for being essentially masculine theories. Too much emphasis was placed on class inequality and economic factors and other sources of gender inequality, such as culture, violence and sexuality, were neglected in the process. Black feminism criticised it for neglecting race and ethnicity (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:102).

- Other feminists believed that women's experience of communist and socialist regimes has often been far from happy (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:102).

- Abbott *et al.* (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:102) blamed Marxist feminism for placing too much emphasis on how the position of women relates to the capitalist system and neglecting to emphasise the ways in which men oppress women.

- Furthermore, Abbott *et al.* (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:102) argue that these types of feminism tend to be relatively abstract and do not reflect the everyday experiences of women in their relationships with men.

- According to Lorber (2010:46), permanent, full-time jobs will not relieve wives and mothers of their home-based responsibilities. In addition, reliance on welfare state benefits will limit women to childcare as their primary role.

Marxist and socialist feminists had much in common. They viewed capitalism as the principal source of women's oppression and related women's oppression to the production of wealth. Furthermore, capitalists were viewed as the main beneficiaries. Women's unpaid work as housewives and mothers was seen as one of the ways in which women are exploited. Marxist feminists sought more revolutionary changes by way of a communist society, while socialist feminists saw prospects for gradual change within the democratic system (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:102).

The following contributions were made by Marxist feminism (Lorber, 2010:46):

- Recognition that women are regarded as subordinate and second-class citizens

- Recognition of the exploitation of women as paid and unpaid workers in capitalist, communist and socialist economies

- Making visible the necessity and worth of women's unpaid work in the home for the functioning of the economy.

The following contributions were made by socialist feminism (Lorber, 2010:71):

- Making visible the combined effects of gender, class and racial ethnic discrimination

- Emphasising the complexity of inequality among women (patterns of their economic, educational and cultural disadvantage)

- Focusing on the unequal pay scales for women's and men's jobs.

From the above it is evident that second-wave feminists made significant contributions towards addressing political, economic and social inequality; firstly, by analysing the continued ways in which women are socially disadvantaged by men and the sexual oppression women suffer; secondly, by making visible the discriminative practices and inequalities that exist in society as well as the workplace; and thirdly, by advocating for several practices to redress these inequalities.

2.3.1.3   Feminism and poststructuralist and postmodern theories

Third-wave feminism emerged in the 1990s and consists of the following feminisms: multiracial/multi-ethnic feminism, feminist studies of men, social construction feminism, postmodern feminism and queer theory. These feminisms challenge the duality and oppositeness of male and female, homosexual and heterosexual, women and men. This school of thought argues that there are many sexes, sexualities and genders and many ways to express masculinity and femininity. The main focus is on 'how we do gender' and 'how in the process we have built and maintained an unequal social order' (Lorber, 2010:4).

Another movement of younger feminists also emerged in the 1990s. They reject the idea that women are oppressed by men, but rather include men as feminist activists. Furthermore, they assume that gender equality is the norm and that women's agency and female sexuality are forms of power. These feminists are concerned with gender-inclusive causes, such as peace; the environment; and gay, lesbian and transgender rights, rather than on advancing the status of women (Lorber, 2010:4).

Sociologists differ in their views on why these new feminisms have emerged. Some believe that these theories have developed because various groups of women felt underrepresented by second-wave feminism. These women highlighted significant differences pertaining to racism, ethnicity and sexuality among women that could not be accommodated in theories pertaining to second-wave feminism (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:527). Others believe that new feminisms have developed due to dissatisfaction with the general theories characteristic of male-dominated science. These feminists have also been suspicious of theories developed by men (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:115). According to Barret and Phillips (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:115), the change was stimulated by the following three factors:

- The development of black feminism. Dual-system theories could not accommodate a third system.

- Increased suspicion of the distinction between sex and gender. Feminists began to question the idea that men and women could be both equal and alike. Female difference came to be seen in a more positive light.

- Postmodern ideas started playing an increasingly influential role in social science in general.

The following section outlines some features and characteristics of black feminism, which provides some answers to existing gender inequalities. A brief discussion of postmodern feminism is also provided. Black feminism and postmodern feminism share some similarities. They both reject the idea that a single theory can explain the position of women in society and regard different viewpoints as equally valid (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:116).

2.3.1.3.1 *Black feminism*

Black feminism developed due to dissatisfaction with other types of feminism. Black feminists believe that feminism in general has ignored the experiences of women in colour and failed to recognise or analyse racial oppression and, by doing so, supported and maintained the inequalities of a racist society (Bryson, 1999:32). Black feminists have made suggestions on how black feminism can contribute towards an understanding of the social word. According to Collins (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:104), most feminist theories have suppressed the ideas of black women and concentrated on the experiences and grievances of white women. Brewer (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:104) sees the basis of black feminist theory as an understanding of 'race, class and

gender' as simultaneous forces. She argues that black women suffer from disadvantages because they are black, they are women and because they are working class. According to Brewer, the distinctive feature of black feminism is that it studies the interplay of race, class and gender in shaping the lives and restricting the life chances of black women.

According to Abbott *et al.* (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:103), black feminists criticise feminism for the following reasons:

- It is ethnocentric because it tends to address issues related to women in general, but actually focuses on the experiences of women through the lens of *white* perspectives and priorities.

- It views black women as the helpless victims of racism and sexism and ignores the extent to which black women have resisted oppression and actively shaped their own lives.

- They accuse white feminists of theoretical racism due to the fact that they expect of black women to write about their experiences instead of contributing to the development of feminist theory.

- Black feminists argue that white feminists sometimes also engage in cultural appropriation of black women's culture.

Black feminists insist that their experiences should not be added to feminist analysis, but should be included on an equal basis. The different arguments are discussed in the section below.

Firstly, according to Angela Davis, a feminist movement focusing on middle-class white women will only change their position and leave the lives of other women untouched. She argued that if we aim to improve the situation of those at the bottom, namely the working-class black women, the entire oppressive structure of society will have to be transformed. She further stated: "The forward advance of women of colour almost always indicates progressive change for all women" (Davis, cited in Bryson, 1999:34).

Secondly, others believe that black feminism could contribute to feminism due to the fact that black women are the most disadvantaged group in society and they have a clear understanding of the world, from which we all can learn.

Thirdly, some argue that a focus on the experience of women of colour enables us to see the interconnecting and interactive nature of different forms of oppression, which opens up

feminist analysis to other previously marginalised or excluded groups, such as women with disabilities.

Fourthly, recent black feminists argue that black women's situation should not be understood as the sum of cumulative disadvantages (gender plus race plus class), but as the product of multiple oppressions (gender times race times class). This approach enables us to see that different forms of oppression interact and that gender oppression is experienced by different groups of women in different ways. It also stresses the fact that all women, not only women of colour, have a racial identity.

Finally, the fact that different oppressions are interconnected and that they reinforce one another suggests that members of different oppressed groups can have a shared interest in social change. It can therefore be assumed that the struggles of all women are interconnected, although they are not the same. Hooks (cited in Bryson, 1999:35) elaborates on this argument and argues that the idea of 'sisterhood', which means an oppression shared by all women, should make way for solidarity. The author argues that this enables different groups of women to support one another, without insisting that their situation is identical, and that it enables women to form alliances with oppressed groups of men.

The following criticisms were raised against black feminism:

- It fails to address the oppression experienced by white women (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:104).

- Although black feminism introduced the concept that differences between women are as important as similarities and shared interests, it is criticised for emphasising one difference, race and ethnicity at the expense of others, for example class and sexuality (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:104).

Black feminists believe that black women's perspectives should be included in feminist analysis, not as a matter of justice, but to broaden the understanding of women's oppression. Black feminism contributes by making visible the intersectionality of gender, race and ethnic class, among others (Lorber, 2010:197). Black feminism thought has had an influence on postmodern feminism.

2.3.1.3.2   Postmodern feminism

Until recently, postmodern feminism was referred to as 'French feminism' and many of the roots of feminism are found in the work of Simone de Beauvior. The author raised the question: "Why is woman the second sex?" or in postmodern terms "Why is women the other?" Postmodern feminists still view women as 'the other', but instead of focusing on the negative implications, they focus on the advantages. They believe that the condition of 'otherness' enables women to stand back and criticise the norms, values and practices that the dominant culture (patriarchy) seeks to impose on everyone. They claim that 'otherness' is a way of being, thinking and speaking that allows for openness, plurality, diversity and difference (Tong, 1989:219).

Ritzer (2008:481) describes *postmodernism* as the product of an interdisciplinary and international community, which had its origins in, and remains based in, the academia. Postmodern theorists argue that we no longer live under conditions of modernity but of *postmodernity*. According to Ritzer (2008:481), the postmodern world is produced by the interplay of four major changes, namely:

- an aggressively expansive stage in global capitalism;

- the weakening of centralised state power (with the collapse of the old imperial systems, the fragmentation of the communist bloc and the rise of ethnic politics within nation states);

- the patterning of life by an increasingly powerful and penetrative technology that controls production and promotes consumerism; and

- the developments of liberationist social movements based not in class but in other forms of identity, for example nationalism (the revolutions of formerly colonial states), race (the African-American civil rights movement), gender (feminism as a global movement), sexual orientation (gay rights) and environmentalism.

According to Bryson (1999:36), postmodernism is not a clearly defined theory but a loose body of thought that draws on interconnected ideas regarding language, knowledge, reason, power, identity and resistance. Postmodern feminists reject the sex/gender distinction made by earlier feminists. They argue that it is society that creates the category 'women' by attaching significance to particular anatomical arrangements. Furthermore, they believe that it is society that makes them significant and gives them changing meanings and thus creates sex as well as gender (Bryson, 1999:36). Tong (cited in

Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:118) argues that postmodern feminism encourages awareness and an acceptance of differences: differences between women and men, the masculine and the feminine and different types of masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, postmodern feminism tends to attack the idea that some characteristics are to be preferred to others. Therefore, they sometimes reject the idea that women can progress by taking on the characteristics and gaining the social positions traditionally reserved for men (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:116).

2.3.2   Conclusion

From the above it is clear that feminist theories contributed significantly to achieving more equality in society and the workplace globally. Furthermore, feminist theories attempt to explain and provide some answers to the persistent inequalities in society and the workplace. First-wave feminism advocated for equal legal rights for women (the vote), but also addressed a wide range of goals such as access to good employment and education.

Second-wave feminism focused on gender inequality – the equal treatment of men and women. They analysed the continued ways in which women are socially disadvantaged by men and the sexual oppression women suffer and worked to address political, economic and social inequality. Second-wave feminism aimed to create a gender balance in an unequal social structure. They worked to eradicate sexism, stereotypical views of women and men and any existing discrimination such as unequal pay scales for women and men. They recognised and made visible the necessity and worth of women's unpaid work in the home for the functioning of the economy. Furthermore, they emphasised the complexity of inequality among women and made visible the combined effects of gender, class and racial ethnic discrimination. It includes a radical feminist movement that worked to eliminate sexual violence, prostitution, pornography, sexist portrayal of women in the media and sexual harassment of female workers. Second-wave feminism also concentrated on increasing women's legal rights, political representation and entry into occupations and professions dominated by men by advocating for affirmative action policies and procedures. Furthermore, they worked to attain equal opportunities in terms of education and healthcare. They also advocated for the provision of childcare and parental leave to assist women in balancing their 'home life' and 'work life'.

Third-wave feminism emerged from the 1990s and is now part of the 21st century. They recognised and made visible how gender is socially constructed and maintained through 'doing gender' and weakened/challenged by 'not doing gender'. They continue to focus on multiple sources of inequality such as race, ethnicity and social class (Lorber, 2010:12).

The section below outlines and discusses some important issues regarding women and work.

2.4   WOMEN AND WORK

Women's participation in the labour force has increased over the past 30 years, mainly due to expanding economic opportunities and equal employment opportunity (EEO) legislation, which have drawn many female workers into the market. According to the World Development Report on gender equality and development (World Bank, 2012b:XX), women now represent 40% of the global labour force, 43% of the world's agricultural labour force and more than half of the world's university students. The report states that over half a billion women have joined the world's labour force over the last 30 years. Although great progress has been made in recent years towards achieving gender equality in the developing world, gender disparities still prevail in many areas and even in rich countries. In the paid work environment, these pertain to the following, among others: women tend to be paid less than men; women are concentrated in the lower echelons of work; women are concentrated in certain occupations, firms and jobs; and women find it difficult to get access to top positions.

This section aims to clarify and discuss some important issues on women and work. Firstly, main theories explaining gender inequalities in the workplace are contextualised. Secondly, attention is given to the discourse of the 'sexual division of labour'. Lastly, main issues regarding women and work are outlined and discussed, namely balancing work and family life, discrimination, the gender pay gap, barriers in career development and progression and sexual harassment.

2.4.1   Theoretical perspectives on gender inequality in the workplace

There are many theories that aim to explain women's subordination in the workplace. The following main theoretical perspectives are discussed: functionalism and human capital theory, the dual labour market theory, Catherine Hakim's preference theory and feminist debates.

2.4.1.1   *Functionalism and human capital theory*

Functionalists such as Bales and Parsons view society as a system of interlocking statuses and roles that are based on shared values, beliefs and expectations and are

arranged into social institutions. They believe that society has a tendency to equilibrium and that roles and statuses are normally in harmony and complement one another. Furthermore, they believe that traditional differences in gender roles are important for the effective functioning of societal operations. Bales (cited in Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:256) found that two types of leaders are necessary for the effective functioning of a small group (such as the family). *Instrumental leaders* direct the group toward achieving goals, while *expressive leaders* are important to resolve group conflict and promote harmony and social cohesion. According to Parsons and Bales (cited in Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:256), most families are organised along these two lines. They ascribed the *instrumental role* to the man, as he provides for the economic needs of the family, and the *expressive role* to the woman, as she stays at home, does the domestic work and provides for the family's emotional needs. This view suggests that women with children will give up or interrupt their careers to take care of their children (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:125).

Human capital theory suggests that gender stratification is a result of the unequal resources that women and men bring to the labour market (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:261). According to Anderson and Taylor (2006:315), gender stratification refers to the hierarchical distribution of social and economic resources according to gender. These theorists believe that women have less 'human capital' (training, qualifications and experience) to offer and therefore they are valued less by employers and earn less than men (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:261, Hakim, 2004:12; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:125). They believe that women's lack of commitment to paid work, mainly due to their family responsibilities, is the cause of the disadvantages they suffer in the labour market. They argue that women tend to take career breaks or to work part-time because they want to combine work with raising a family (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:125).

According to Blau and Ferber (cited in Hakim, 2004:12), human capital theory is useful for analysing female employment, especially for explaining differences in earnings between women and men. Witz (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:125) criticises functionalist and human capital approaches. She argues that women still end up in lower-paid and lower-status jobs, even if they continue working without taking career breaks. Sloane (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:125) investigated human capital theory when studying the labour markets of Rochdale, Swindon, Aberdeen, Coventry, Kirkcaldy and Northhampton between 1985 and 1988. The author found that although qualifications have a big impact on pay, gender is an important variable to consider. While controlling for factors such as education, experience and training, he found that men still enjoyed a 29% earnings advantage over women. The human capital theory could not provide answers for this trend.

2.4.1.2   The dual labour market theory

Human capital theory primarily focuses on the labour income effects of human capital investments (training, qualifications and experience), while the dual labour market theory claims that labour market opportunities and restrictions are important concepts to consider in determining an individual's employability (Berntson *et al.,* 2006:226; Dekker *et al.,* 2002:106).

The dual market theory splits the labour market into two segments: the *primary labour market* and the *secondary labour market*. The primary labour market is characterised by "high wages, good working conditions, employment stability, chances of advancement, equity and due process in the administration of work rules" and the *secondary labour market* by "low job security, poor working conditions and low wages" (Doeringer & Piore, cited in Berntson *et al.,* 2006:226). Workers in the primary labour segment include professional and managerial staff and high-skilled manual workers. On the other hand, workers in the secondary segment include those doing unskilled or semi-skilled manual or non-manual jobs (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:126). These workers normally have low educational levels and problematic work histories, making them less attractive to employers (Giesecke & Gross, cited in Berntson *et al.,* 2006:226). Employers are prepared to retain primary sector workers due to the skills and experience they acquire, but secondary sector workers are viewed by employers as easily replaceable, as having less interest in gaining additional skills and as less concerned than primary sector workers about their wage packages. Therefore, employers have little incentive to offer them higher wages, job security or promotion (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:126).

British sociologists Barron and Norris (cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 2008:126) postulate that women are more likely to have jobs in the secondary labour market, as they are viewed by employers as easily replaceable, as having less interest in gaining additional skills and as less concerned than men about their wage packages.

Beechy (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:126) criticises the dual labour market theory for the following reasons:

- Some women in skilled manual jobs (for example the textile industry) still receive lower wages although they are doing similar work to men.

- Dual labour market theory cannot provide explanations for why women gain less promotion than men, even though they are doing the same jobs.

2.4.1.3   Catherine Hakim's preference theory

Catherine Hakim does not totally reject the human capital theory and believes that it does offer useful insights into gender inequality. However, she disagrees with the theory, which suggests that the same factors cause gender inequality in all societies and that rational choices to maximise family income lead to inequality. She postulates that women's position has changed, leading to more choices for women. She argues that inequality is driven by personal preferences rather than rational choices to maximise family income (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:125).

Preference theory is a new theory aiming to explain women's choices between market work and family work. It has the following distinguished features: it is historically specific, it recognises the diversity of women's lifestyle preferences, and it is tested and developed through recent surveys in Europe (Hakim, 2004:13). Preference theory is based on the following four principles: Firstly, five historical changes have collectively produced new options and opportunities for women in the 21st century. They are the following (Hakim, 2004:14):

- The contraceptive revolution (from about 1965), which for the first time in history gave sexually active women reliable and independent control over their own fertility

- The equal opportunity revolution, which opened up new opportunities for women in the labour market (and in some countries wider than just the labour market) – for the first time in history, they have equal access to all positions, occupations and careers

- The expansion of white collar occupations, which are far more attractive to women than most blue collar occupations

- The creation of jobs for secondary earners, which provides for flexible hours and part-time jobs, among other things

- The increasing importance of attitudes, values and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of prosperous, liberal, modern societies.

Secondly, women are heterogeneous in their preferences and priorities relating to the conflict between family and employment as well as employment patterns and work histories (see Table 2.1). Thirdly, the heterogeneity of women's preferences and priorities creates conflicting interests between the different groups of women. Fourthly, women's heterogeneity is the main cause of their variable responses to social engineering policies in the new scenario of modern societies (Hakim, 2002:7). Preference theory suggests that

women of all social classes and at all levels choose three different lifestyles once choices are open to them. These are tabled below:

Table 2.1: **Classification of women's work lifestyle preferences in the 21st century**

Home-centred	Adaptive	Work-centred
20% of women (varies from 10% to 30%)	**60% of women (varies from 40% to 80%)**	**20% of women (varies from 10% to 30%)**
Family life and children are the main priorities throughout life	This group is most diverse and includes women who want to combine work and family, as well as drifters and those with unplanned careers	Childless women are concentrated here; main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities in the public arena, e.g. politics, sport and art
Prefer not to work	Want to work, but not totally committed to work career	Committed to work or equivalent activities
Qualifications obtained as cultural capital	**Qualifications obtained with the intention of working**	**Large investment in qualifications/training for employment or other activities**
Number of children is affected by government social policy, family wealth, etc.	This group is very responsive to government social policy, employment policy, equal opportunities policy/propaganda, economic cycle/recession/growth, etc.	Responsive to economic opportunity, political opportunity, artistic opportunity, etc.
Not responsive to employment policy	Responsive to things such as income tax and social welfare benefits, educational policies, school timetables, childcare services, public attitude toward working women, legislation promoting female employment, trade union attitudes to working women, availability of part-time work and similar work flexibility, economic growth and prosperity, and institutional factors generally	Not responsive to social/family policy

Source: Hakim (2002:10)

From the table it is evident that the largest group consists of *adaptive women*. They want to enjoy the best of both worlds and prefer to combine employment and family work. *Work-centred women* are in the minority and are focused on competitive activities in the public sphere such as careers, sport and politics. Family life is fitted around their work. As a majority of men are work-centred, preference theory predicts that men will retain their dominance because only a few women are prepared to choose the work-centred lifestyle. *Home-centred women* are also a minority. These women prefer to give priority to home and family life after marriage. However, they do not necessarily invest less in qualifications, but are likely to choose vocational courses in fields such as the arts, humanities and social sciences (Hakim, 2002:7).

Hakim (2004:15) points out that choices are not made in a vacuum and that institutions, laws, customs, national policies and cultural constraints continue to shape and structure behaviour. Furthermore, she maintains that social and economic matters will produce variations in employment patterns and lifestyle choices. She claims that lifestyle preferences broadly determine women's fertility, employment patterns (choices between careers and jobs, full-time and part-time work and associated job values) and their different responses to family policy, social policies, employers' policies, and economic and social circumstances.

Hakim's theory is criticised by some sociologists for ignoring the way in which structural constraints limit and shape preferences (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:125).

2.4.1.4   Feminist debates

Feminist theories were mainly developed to provide explanations for the persistent inequalities in society and the workplace. A thorough discussion of several feminist approaches and their views on the origins of gender inequalities took place under 2.3. Although already touched on, this section briefly highlights and summarises some feminist thoughts on gender inequality in the workplace.

Liberal feminism argues that gender differences are not rooted in biology, and therefore women and men are not different and should not be treated differently. They believe that women should have the same legal rights, education and work opportunities as men. Liberal feminism aims to eradicate discrimination and to promote gender mainstreaming by "ensuring that government laws and organizational policies do not adversely affect women and do address women's needs" (Lorber, 2010:25). Furthermore, they advocate

for affirmative action to "bring women into occupations and professions dominated by men and breaking through the glass ceiling to positions of authority" (Lorber, 2010:25).

Marxist feminism (during the 1970s) argued that gender inequality stems from the economic structure and material aspects of life. "Marxist feminist theory is based on the division between work in the family (primarily women's work) and work in paid production (primarily men's work)" (Lorber, 2010:46). They argued that women are exploited because their work in the home is not recognised as work, but has a caring and nurturing function. Furthermore, Marx argued that capitalism required a reserved army of labour (a spare pool of potential recruits to the labour force). He maintained that capitalist economies went through cycles of 'slump' (decline) and 'boom' and workers should be hired in times of 'booms' and fired in times of 'slump' (Haralambos, & Holborn, 2008:127). Women are regarded as the main part of a reserved army of labour, as they can be encouraged to work when the economy needs more workers, and can be easily fired when needed (Lorber, 2010:48). Marxist feminism advocates for permanent waged work for women, government-subsidised maternal and child healthcare, childcare services, financial allowances for children and unions organising women workers (Lorber, 2010:46).

Socialist feminism (during the 1980s) expanded on the ideas of Marxist feminism. They argued that gender equality stems from broader injustices and is not just the result of women's oppression as unpaid workers for their families and as low-paid workers in the economy. According to socialist feminism, gender equality is a result of the intertwined effects of social class, gender and racial ethnic status. They believed that gender discrimination devalues the status and income of women's jobs and that women in groups disadvantaged by race, ethnicity and immigrant status suffer double or triple discrimination (Lorber, 2010:71). Socialist feminism advocated for increased economic opportunities for women and disadvantaged men, for the upgrading of women's jobs, for the redistribution of responsibilities in the family (equal sharing of family work), for government support for care work and for universal rights to education, healthcare and income support (Lorber, 2010:70).

Radical feminism argued that patriarchy is the system of men's oppression of women. According to this belief, men gain control of women by means of sexual and emotional exploitation. Radical feminists advocated for, among other things, sexual harassment guidelines and penalties for workplaces and schools (Lorber, 2010:121).

Multiracial/multi-ethnic feminism argued that gender inequality stems from the intersection of racial ethnic, social class and gender discrimination, continued patterns of economic

and educational privilege and disadvantage built into the social structure and the cultural devaluation of women of subordinated racial ethnic groups. Intersectionality refers "to the way in which multiple forms of subordination interlink and compound to result in a multiple burden" (Bradley & Healy, 2008:45). Multiracial/multi-ethnic feminism advocated for, among other things, equal access to education, good jobs and political power (Lorber, 2010:197).

"Social construction feminism looks at the structure of the gendered social order as a whole and the processes that construct and maintain them" (Lorber, 2010:244). They believed that gender is also embedded in institutions, meaning that institutions are patterned by gender and result in different experiences and opportunities for both men and women, which include the following (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:314):

- Stereotypical expectations

- Interpersonal relationships

- The division of labour

- The images and symbols that support these divisions

- The different placement of men and women in social, economic and political hierarchies of institutions.

According to social construction feminism, the gendered social order constructs not only differences, but also gender inequality. In the gendered structure of family, the burden of housework and childcare rests with women, even if they are career women. In the gendered division of the labour market, men hold positions of authority and receive higher pay. Social construction feminism advocated for the counteracting of the power of gender norms at work and in the family, among other things (Lorber, 2010:243).

2.4.1.5   Conclusion

From the above it is clear that not one single theory can be singled out to explain gender inequalities in the workplace. The theories discussed all attempted to provide some explanations for persisting inequalities and hold some elements of truth, but are also subject to limitations. The following sections explore and apply some of these theories to gender inequalities and issues experienced in the workplace.

2.4.2 The sexual division of labour

Globally, throughout history, the division of labour has developed along the lines of sex. The term 'sexual division of labour' refers to the process through which tasks are assigned on the basis of sex (Wharton, 2006:82).

Many different views exist as to why societies differentiate labour on the basis of sex. For some, the origin of the sexual division of labour is located in the fact that women traditionally had the responsibility of taking care of the household and raising the children. They argue that children's dependency on their mothers shape their perceptions of the type of labour that women can perform. Furthermore, they believe that men can perform certain activities due to their greater average physical strength. Others argue that the sexual division of labour, whereby women and men specialise in different activities, is linked to the relative status of each sex; more specifically, that the relative contributions of women's and men's labour to survival influence the degree to which each sex is socially valued. They believe that women and men are more equal in societies where the value of their labour is regarded as more similar (Wharton, 2006:82).

In the 20th century, sex continues to be a key basis on which tasks are divided. Women and men continue to do different kinds of work and are employed in different occupations, firms and jobs (Wharton, 2006:82). The next section aims to explain why women and men are concentrated in different occupations, firms and jobs.

2.4.2.1 Sex segregation

"Segregation refers to the social processes which ensure that certain social groups are kept apart with little interaction between them" (Hakim, 2004:145). Groups are differentiated according to personal factors, such as age, sex, race or religion, and work-related factors such as occupational grade, for example different canteens for different grades of staff in an organisation (Hakim, 2004:145).
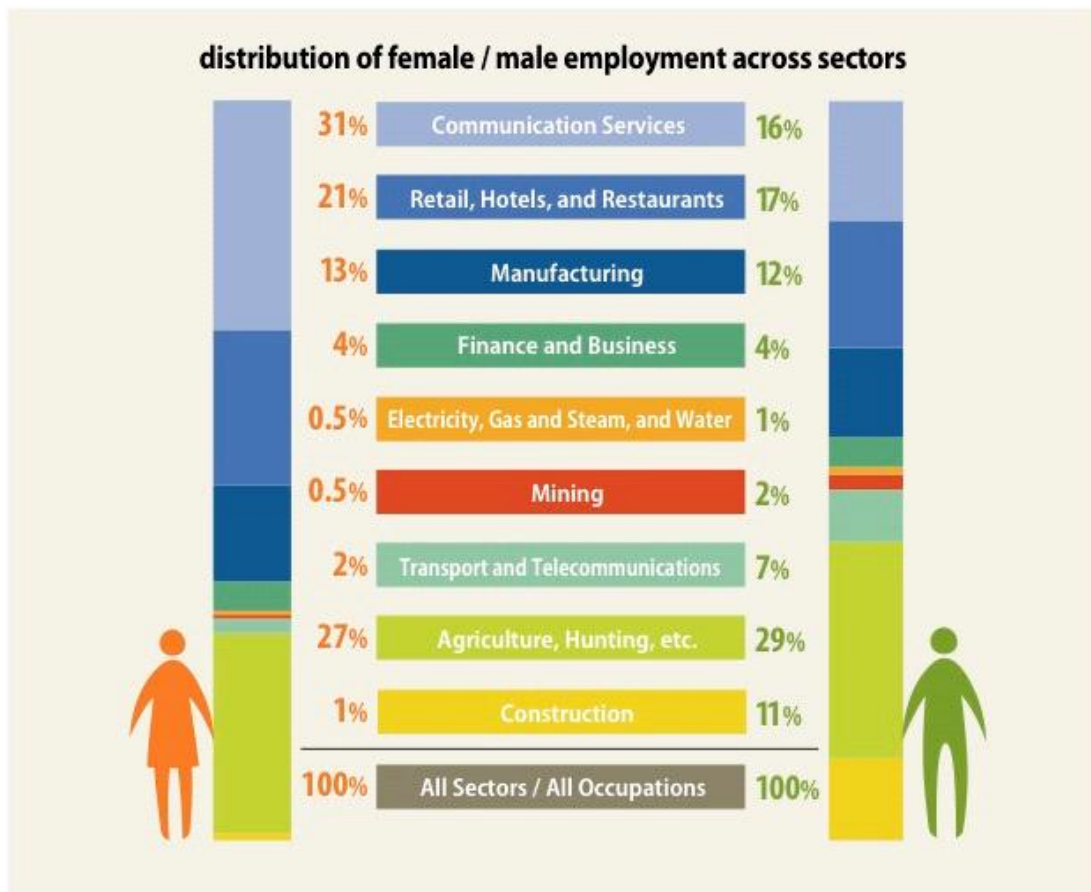
Sex segregation refers to the concentration of women and men into different occupations, firms and jobs (Wharton, 2006:95). Occupational segregation on the basis of sex refers to the concentration of women and men into different occupations (Wharton, 2006:97). For many people, occupations such as nurses, receptionists and elementary school teachers are predominantly assigned to women, while occupations such as engineers, plumbers and mechanics are dominated by men.

Historically, most studies focus on occupational segregation; however, in recent years more data have become available on the sex composition of jobs and firms. This enabled researchers to examine the degree to which women and men are segregated into different jobs within and across firms. These studies revealed that sex segregation at job level is more extensive than sex segregation at occupational level. Furthermore, it indicated that women and men are not distributed evenly across occupations and even if they are members of the same occupation, they are more likely to work in different jobs and firms (Wharton, 2006:97).

The above-mentioned argument is reinforced by recent research conducted by the World Bank (2012b:16), in which it was found that women and men still tend to work in different parts of the 'economic space' with little change over time, even in high-income countries. The following was evident in almost all the countries involved in the study:

- Women are more likely than men to engage in low-productivity activities.

- Women are more likely to be in unpaid family employment or to work in the informal wage sector.

- In agriculture, especially in Africa, women operate smaller plots of land and farm less remunerative crops.

- Women tend to manage smaller firms and are concentrated in less-profitable sectors.

- In formal employment, women are concentrated in female occupations and sectors (see Figure 2.1).

This view is also supported by Hermanus (2007b:1), who indicated that a major study conducted by the European Union found that few occupations were 'mixed'. Women tend to be over-represented in the caring professions, in the public sector, in health and education, in small companies and in full-time employment. On the other hand, women are under-represented in high-status, high-paying jobs, among senior managers in the public and private sectors, in the engineering professions, and in high-risk sectors, which include mining, construction and manufacturing.

distribution of female / male employment across sectors

Female	Sector	Male
31%	Communication Services	16%
21%	Retail, Hotels, and Restaurants	17%
13%	Manufacturing	12%
4%	Finance and Business	4%
0.5%	Electricity, Gas and Steam, and Water	1%
0.5%	Mining	2%
2%	Transport and Telecommunications	7%
27%	Agriculture, Hunting, etc.	29%
1%	Construction	11%
100%	All Sectors / All Occupations	100%

Figure 2.1:   Women and men work in different sectors

Source: World Bank (2012b:16)

Occupations and jobs can also be segregated according to race and ethnicity. Most studies done on racial segregation in employment focus on the segregation between African-Americans and white people. These studies revealed that levels of occupational segregation by race are lower than levels of occupational sex segregation. This means that women and men are more likely to work in different occupations than are black and white people. Therefore, according to these studies, race is regarded as a relevant component in terms of occupational segregation, but sex is regarded as the most important characteristic (Wharton, 2006:99).

Sex segregation can be both horizontal and vertical. Horizontal job segregation refers to women and men who work in different occupations, for example women are cooks and men are carpenters. Vertical job segregation refers to men that dominate the higher-grade and higher-paid occupations and jobs, for example men are heads of schools and women are teachers. This is often known as the 'authority gap' or the 'glass ceiling' (Hakim,

2004:148). According to Hakim (2004:149), vertical job segregation is the main cause of the gender pay gap, while horizontal occupational segregation explains one-quarter of the difference in earnings.

Research done to compare levels of occupational segregation across societies revealed that occupational segregation is a feature of all industrial societies; however, the form thereof varies. Furthermore, the level and pattern of occupational segregation are also determined by government policies relating to gender, such as equal opportunity policies (Wharton, 2006:100).

2.4.2.2   *Causes of sex segregation*

Different viewpoints exist on the causes of sex segregation. The following perspectives contribute towards creating an understanding of the concept: the individualist, interactionist and institutional viewpoints.

2.4.2.2.1   *The individualist viewpoint*

These theorists believe that there are several ways in which we might expect male and female workers' characteristics to contribute to sex segregation. Firstly, the sex composition of an occupation or job may be a function of sex-specific preferences, skills and abilities. This means that if men and women possess different bundles of these characteristics, they may be best suited for a particular kind of work (Wharton, 2006:167).

Secondly, individualists view gender socialisation (see 2.2.2.4) as another explanation for sex segregation. Socialisation theory assumes that people's choices are shaped by their prior experiences and in particular those occurring during childhood. Furthermore, the socialisation perspective emphasises the ways in which men and women develop different traits, abilities, values and skills. Therefore, socialisation theory suggests that men are expected to approach work differently, make different kinds of choices and consequently end up in different kinds of occupations (Wharton, 2006:168).

Thirdly, human capital theory is used as another explanation for sex segregation. As indicated earlier in 2.4.1.1, human capital refers to those things that increase one's productivity. Human capital theorists believe that people invest in their own human capital through actions such as going to college, with the expectation that this investment will pay off for them economically. The implication is thus that two people who make different kinds of investments will acquire different types and amounts of human capital. The human capital theory suggests that people are primarily motivated by an economic

calculus, seeking to reduce costs and increase rewards by choosing one occupation over another. Furthermore, human capital theorists believe that women and men, on average, make different kinds of human capital investments because they look different to employers and therefore end up working in different kinds of jobs (Wharton, 2006:172).

According to Popenoe *et al.* (1998:261), human capital theory suggests that sex stratification in the workplace is a result of the unequal resources that men and women bring to the labour market. Women are often valued less by employers because they often have less experience and education (human capital) and have high turnover rates. Women often earn less than men due to the fact that they have less human capital to offer.

Human capital theorists also believe that human capital investments are differentiated by sex due to the fact that women bear children and men do not. They claim that women make their human capital investments towards occupations that do not penalise them for childbearing and childrearing. On the other hand, the primary responsibility for children does not rest with men and therefore they make different kinds of human capital investments (Wharton, 2006:172).

Human capital theory also suggests that women who neither marry nor bear children would be less likely than other women to work in predominantly female jobs. These women tend to act most like men in their labour-market behaviour. Furthermore, this theory suggests that predominantly female jobs would be more compatible with childbearing and childrearing than other occupations (Wharton, 2006:172).

2.4.2.2.2   *The interactionist and institutional viewpoints*

The interactionist and institutional viewpoints are based on the belief that people get certain jobs due to the opportunity structure of a firm and the respective employer's actions. According to these viewpoints, employers play an important role in creating and maintaining sex segregation because they are the ones that assign workers to jobs (Wharton, 2006:174). The following three factors contribute towards sex segregation: sex discrimination by employers, institutional barriers and social closure.

Sex discrimination by employers. Five types of discrimination can be identified: myopic, principled, statistical, consumer-driven and work-driven. According to Jencks (cited in Wharton, 2006:174), the first two forms of discrimination are usually economically irrational, while the other three may have economic benefits for employers. The author further claims that myopic and principled discrimination reflect either employers' short-

sightedness or their belief in male or female superiority. These employees hire only men or only women. By excluding all members of one sex from consideration for a job, they limit their pool of candidates, thus decreasing supply and potentially driving up the wages they must pay. The author suggests that these forms of discriminations should only occur among employers that are less sensitive to market considerations.

Statistical discrimination occurs when an individual applying for a job is treated as if he or she possesses the qualities and characteristics 'typical' of his or her sex. When employers statistically discriminate, they are assumed to be correctly assigning group averages to individuals. Group characteristics, such as age or sex, become screening devices used by employers to identify qualified workers and to exclude those who are less qualified (Wharton, 2006:176). Furthermore, employers that practice statistical discrimination often base their hiring decisions on the assumption of women's higher statistical probability of quitting in an attempt to minimise organisational cost (Estévez-Abe, 2006:144).

Consumer-driven and work-driven discrimination can be understood on the basis of the same logic. Consumer-driven discrimination occurs when employers believe that they will lose customers if they hire a women or a man for a job typically performed by the other sex. For example, if an employer believes that customers prefer to buy products from a certain sex (for example men), the other sex would be excluded from those positions, which therefore would make economic sense. Similarly, if an employer believes that already employed workers would resist working with a person of another sex, he or she may exclude people of that sex from positions in the company (Wharton, 2006:176). These types of discrimination may be economically beneficial for employers, but the cost of such discrimination may fall mainly on individual members of the excluded group, who are prevented from competing for jobs for which they may be qualified (Wharton, 2006:176).

Institutional barriers. Institutional forces can also play a role in maintaining predominantly male and predominantly female jobs. Workplace practices that have become institutionalised require little effort to maintain. According to Wharton (2006:177), these practices include, among others, the following:

Internal labour markets refer to structured opportunities for advancement that are made available to those already employed. Internal labour markets are governed by seniority systems and other complex rules for promotion. These factors may make it difficult for people who begin their careers in a sex-segregated entry-level job to transfer to a less-

segregated position in a firm. In this way, internal labour markets can institutionalise sex segregation within a firm.

Tools and technologies used in a job. Women may find it difficult to operate tools and equipment that are designed to be used by men. This may limit the number of women to be employed for such a specific position.

Informal workplace policies and practices. Men and women often end up in sex-segregated jobs due to a number of social processes. Social networks can play an important role in job searching and hiring. Social networks also tend to be sex-segregated, for example job information that is exchanged between people of the same sex. On the one hand, employers often rely on employees' referrals. On the other hand, employees tend to refer people like themselves, and therefore jobs are likely to be filled by people of the same sex as those already employed (Wharton, 2006:178).

Social closure. Social closure refers to the processes through which a group closes off or monopolises a desirable position for themselves. Social closure is therefore a process of exclusion as well as segregation. Some researchers argue that men engage in social closure as a means to ensure that their advantages over women will be preserved. In other words, men engage in social closure as a means to acquire tangible job benefits. The exclusion and segregation of women therefore results in better jobs for men (Wharton, 2006:179).

Other researchers argue that the motives behind sex-based social closure are not purely economic, but regard similarity as a powerful source of interpersonal attraction. The similarity-attraction hypothesis implies that being a member of a sex-segregated group would be preferable to being in a more sex-integrated group. This means that people prefer to interact with others like themselves and feel uncomfortable, threatened and less committed when they are in more heterogeneous groups. This explains why discomfort and hostility occur when men or women enter an occupation, job or work setting that was previously dominated by the other sex. Men in predominantly male jobs often perceive women as a threat to their power and status and may therefore be motivated to drive them out. This resistance can range from attempts to make women uncomfortable or to refuse assistance and support to more serious expressions of hostility and harassment, such as sexual harassment (Wharton, 2006:179).

Women are progressively entering previously male-dominated occupations as well as professional and managerial positions in substantial numbers. Male colleagues often refuse to provide the necessary support to their new female colleagues, in other words the

informal job-induction process, the camaraderie and co-operative teamwork that they need to succeed. Instead, they regularly ignore, harass and undermine their new female colleagues (Hakim, 2004:157).

Therefore, on the one hand, women entering predominantly male occupations struggle to fit in and to demonstrate their competence because femaleness is regarded as less highly valued than maleness. On the other hand, women who cross gender boundaries by entering predominantly male occupations are also influenced by issues of status and economics and aim to improve their situations, as jobs traditionally held by men are regarded as highly valued and compensated as opposed to traditionally female jobs (Williams, cited in Wharton, 2006:180).

2.4.2.3   *Conclusion*

Although sex segregation still exists in occupations, firms and jobs, globally, the pattern thereof has changed over the years. More women have entered the workforce and now represent 40% of the global labour force. Furthermore, equal employment opportunity policies and legislation opened up new employment opportunities for women and also obliged organisations to employ women at all levels. Despite this progression, women still tend to be segregated in certain occupations, firms and jobs in all kinds of economies. Several reasons were put forward for this phenomenon (as discussed above). Up to now, liberal feminism has made significant contributions in terms of opening up the workplace for women, bringing women into occupations and professions dominated by men and breaking through the glass ceiling to positions of authority by advocating for affirmative action policies and legislation. Women are employed in almost every field (mining, the police force, the military, higher education, professions of law, medicine, sciences, etc.) and at all levels (senior and top management positions). Liberal feminists worked to eradicate all forms of discrimination by ensuring that government laws and organisational policies do not adversely affect women, but address women's needs. However, there is still a long way to go in achieving gender equality in all occupations, firms and jobs and at all levels.

The next section highlights and discusses issues that women, globally, are experiencing in the labour force.

2.4.3   Gender issues at work

Women entering the workplace are subjected to various constraints. They are still mainly responsible for domestic work, such as cooking and shopping, as well as for caretaking of their children. Working women have to balance these activities with the requirements or demands of their jobs. Black women find it even more difficult because they experience strain and conflict due to a lack of adequate infrastructure, for example childcare facilities and transport. At work, women often experience some form of discrimination from their male counterparts. They are also often exposed to some kind of sexual harassment. Furthermore, employers tend to view women as unreliable and not achievement-oriented, and therefore they are often reluctant to provide maternity leave and childcare facilities. Women also find it difficult to gain access to high-level positions (know as the 'glass ceiling' effect) (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:259). The main challenges women are facing at work are highlighted and discussed in the section below.

2.4.3.1   *Balancing work and family life*

Over the years, the family as a gendered institution has played an important role in shaping many aspects of women's and men's work as well as their family lives (Wharton, 2006:82). Although the participation of women in the labour force has increased over the years, in most societies, the primary responsibility for raising and caring for children still rests with women. Men, on the other hand, continue to provide primary economic support for their families (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004:71).

Women entering the workplace are often caught in a 'double bind', as they have to do two jobs at once. Women coming from work have to do a 'second shift' at home where they take care of the home and the emotional, physical and psychological needs of their families. In the past, women often did this with little or no physical and psychological support from their husbands. Nowadays, the situation has begun to change. As more and more women have entered the job market, husbands have gradually begun to share home responsibilities with their wives (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:258). Although more men are involved in housework and childcare, a huge gender gap still exists regarding the amount of work done by women and men. According to the World Development Report 2012 of the World Bank (2012b:19), it is evident that across the world, women tend to spend more hours per day on care and housework than men, as indicated in Figure 2.2 below.
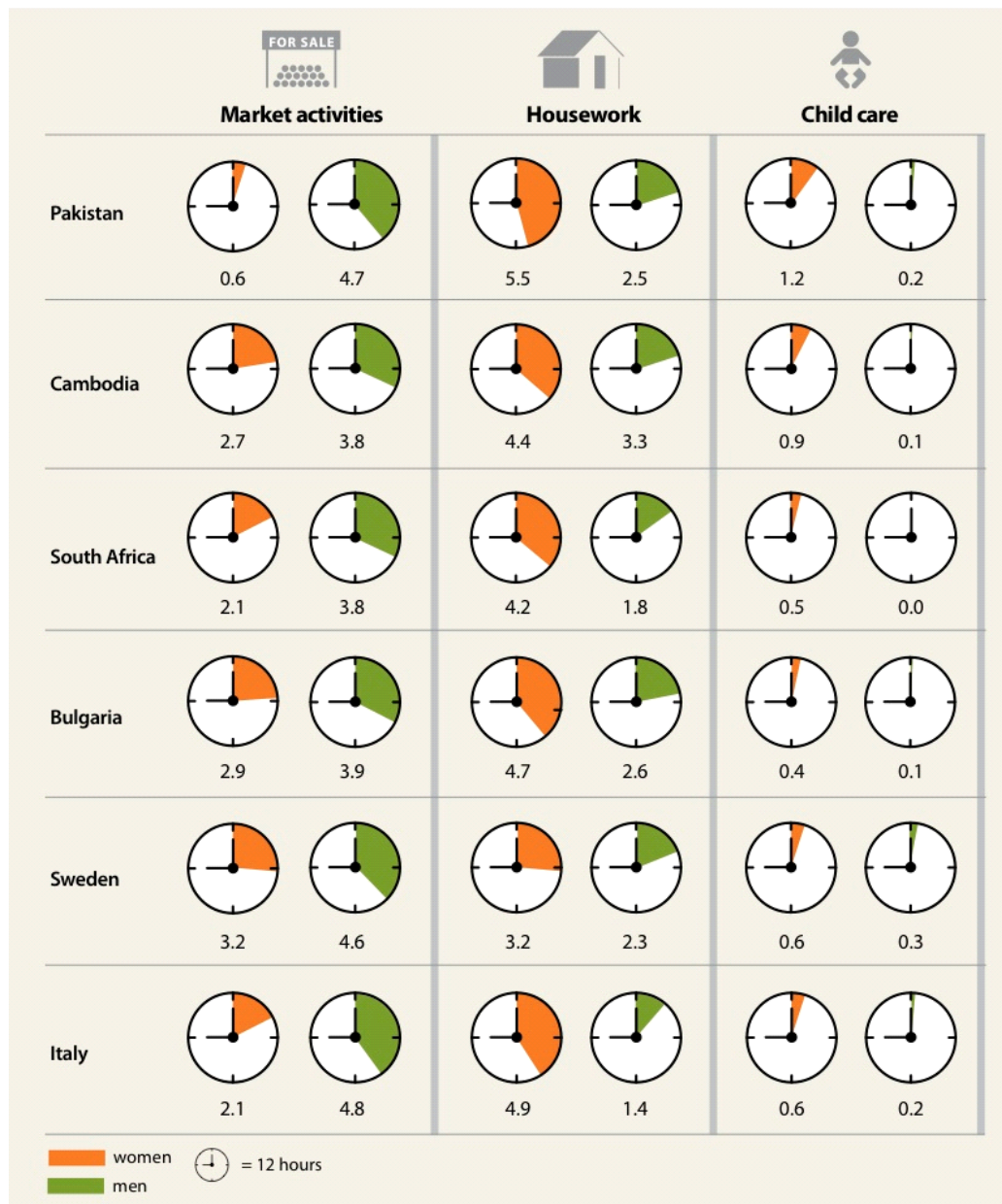
Figure 2.2: **Hours per day spent on housework and childcare**

Source: World Bank (2012b:19)

The increased hours of employment for both men and women, more specifically women, coupled with the demands of maintaining a household, are great sources of stress and have an impact on family life. The home is often increasingly regarded as work and according to Anderson and Taylor (2006:322), many women and men report that in this 'harried' life, they find work to be the place where they find emotional gratification and support.

Grobler *et al.* (2006:254) point to the following personal and organisational challenges that dual-career couples are facing:

- Couples often experience conflicting alternatives when advancement of the husband's or the wife's career means moving to a different geographical area. Conflict could arise around who's career is the most important.

- Many dual-career couples are reluctant to discuss their problems with their superiors. They may feel that it could harm their chances of advancement.

- The possibility of retrenchment could also have an effect on the dual-career couple.

- Family versus work is a main challenge that dual-career couples are facing. The following issues could result in conflict: Who take responsibility for the raising of children when both husband and wife fulfil professional jobs? Who stays at home when children are sick? Who assists with the homework? Who is responsible for cooking and shopping?

- Many couples lack the skills necessary to solve career–family crises, as mentioned above.

- Dual-career couples also experience challenges regarding the decision to have children or not.

On the other hand, De Klerk and Mostert (2010:7) indicate that fulfilling multiple roles could have positive as well as negative consequences. On the negative side, working parents, specifically women, are subjected to stress due to the fact that they have to balance their household tasks as well as childcare responsibilities with the demands of their jobs. On the positive side, the authors state that it could be beneficial to fulfil multiple roles. According to Hoffman (cited in De Klerk & Mostert, 2010:7) "working mothers tend to feel less depressed and more empowered, with their morale being higher than that of their stay-at-home counterparts". It could result in a positive spill-over to the home life as well as the work life.

Liberal feminists believe that mothers bear most of the economic and occupational cost of parenting. They maintain that if workplaces do not accommodate family needs and fathers do not share the responsibilities of childcare, mothers pay a price in lower wages, reduced lifetime earnings and minimal pensions because of part-time and interrupted work. Furthermore, they are also discriminated against in terms of hiring and promotions if they want to return to full-time work (Lorber, 2010:35). Socialist feminists argue that even if

women make use of domestic assistance in terms of household tasks and childcare, women alone are responsible for the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of their families. Therefore, mothers make less money, are more likely to be fired, achieve fewer positions of authority and prestige and have much less chance to gain social power. According to socialist feminists, women and men have to share family work and have to balance their work life and family life and therefore need government support (Lorber, 2010:76).

Research conducted by Jacobs and Gerson (2004:73) revealed that parents (both mothers and fathers) need job arrangements that could enable them to balance their economic (work) and parenthood (caretaking) responsibilities. Liberal feminists suggested providing flexitime to workers in order to accommodate their family responsibilities (Lorber, 2010:35). Flexibility gives workers some control over when (hours and days of the week to work) and where they work (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004:100). In practice, work–life balance strategies such as flexible working arrangements, entitlements to paid or unpaid leave and assistance with the care of children (for example the availability of childcare facilities or a paid allowance) are more directed to female employees (Richardson & Robinson, 2008:181). According to Jacobs and Gerson (2004:85), work–family conflict is not restricted to women only, but also affects men. Thus, work–life balance strategies focusing on both women and men could assist employees in balancing their work life and home life. Lorber (2010:35) stresses that family-friendly policies should be provided without penalties in terms of advancement and/or stigmatisation of part-time work. They should provide equal benefits such as health insurance and advancement opportunities.

Furthermore, De Klerk and Mostert (2010:10) suggest that organisations should not only provide work-related training and support to employees, but also training and support focusing on coping mechanisms for non-work-related demands such as parental training, role reorientation for couples, opportunities for working from home, childcare facilities, and so forth. Grobler *et al.* (2006:254) suggest that companies institute various programmes to assist and help dual-career couples with their problems. Workshops and seminars should be provided to assess opportunities, obstacles, potential conflicts and personal and development needs.

From the above it is evident that, globally, the burden of housework and childcare rests with women and that women experience extreme difficulties in balancing their home responsibilities with their work responsibilities. It is also evident from the literature review that organisations could play a role in assisting female employees to balance their 'dual responsibilities' by providing adequate support, such as the providing of flexitime to

workers, childcare assistance, training on non-work-related issues, counselling, and so forth.

2.4.3.2 *Discrimination*

Although great progress has been made over the years, women continue to suffer discrimination in almost all aspects of employment, including the jobs they can obtain; their remuneration, benefits and working conditions; and their access to decision-making positions. Discrimination is defined as the "unfavourable treatment of all persons socially assigned to a particular group" (Cashmore, cited in Haralabmos & Hoborn, 2008:168). Discrimination research revealed that gender pay gaps; occupational and vertical segregation; difficulties in balancing work and family life; the disproportionate concentration of women in part-time, informal and precarious work; sexual harassment; and discrimination based on maternity or marital status all persist despite legislative and policy initiatives (ILO, 2011:19). Women also experience a restriction in access to certain jobs due to their reproductive role and the fact that they continue to bear the main responsibility for house and childcare. Furthermore, women's position, development and advancement in the workplace continue to be subordinate to their male counterparts (Stead & Watson, 2010:110). Women also often experience a glass ceiling when aspiring for top management positions (Groblet *et al.,* 2006:22).

Black women often experience 'double' and even 'triple' discrimination. This implies that they suffer from disadvantages because they are black (racism), they are women (sexism) and because they are working class (Bilton *et al.*, 2002:186; Brewer, cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 2008:104). Racists could be defined as "people [who] discriminate against members of other races or express derogatory or stereotypical beliefs about them, regardless of what sort of theory, if any, underlies their actions or beliefs" (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:169). Sexism is viewed as the ideology that supports gender inequality and justifies male dominance of patriarchy. Sexism justifies the dominance of one group over another, in this case men over women (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:256). Norms and values that legitimate racism and sexism are embedded in society and subsequently reproduced in organisations (Bradley & Healy, 2008:76).

Popenoe *et al.* (1998:256) state that social inequality can be maintained if the ideology that supports it is accepted to some degree by the subordinate as well as the dominant group. For a long time women have accepted their traditional roles as 'natural' and some women still believe that they suffer from a kind of 'natural inferiority' (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:256). Liberal feminists actively worked to eradicate all forms of discrimination

against women by ensuring that women's needs are addressed in government legislation and workplace policies. Furthermore, black feminists contributed by making visible the intersectionality of gender, race and ethnic class.

Stead and Watson (2010:120) believe that not only legislation is needed to effectively eradicate discrimination in the workplace, but also a fundamental change in attitude towards women and employment; otherwise women will continue suffering discrimination in the workplace.

2.4.3.3   The gender pay gap

Although women across the developing world have entered the labour force in large numbers over the past quarter century, this increased participation has not resulted in equal employment opportunities and equal earnings for women and men (World Bank, 2012b:16). Women still tend to earn less than men. According to Roos and Gatta (cited in Wharton, 2006:189) this "wage disparity persists regardless of how you define earnings (for example annually, weakly, mean vs median), in all race/ethnics groups, across educational categories, over the life cycle, within detailed occupational categories, and across cultures". The gender pay gap is often expressed as a ratio of women's earnings to men's earnings and is measured in median earnings of women and men who work full-time, year-round (Wharton, 2006:189).

This persisting wage disparity was also evident in a report submitted to the International Labour Conference in 2009. The report stated as follows: "In most countries, women's wages for work of equal value represent on average between 70 and 90 per cent of men's, but it is not uncommon to find much wider differences" (ILO, 2011:21). This is also reinforced by reports by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in 2009 and 2010. In 2009, 20 countries were involved in the study. An average gender pay gap of 22.4% and a median gap of 20.4% was detected. In 2010, an additional 23 countries were included in the study, which revealed an overall median gender gap of 26% in favour of men. The report also indicated that the gap is narrower for those without children (20%) and wider for those with children (32%). Furthermore, it was evident that the gap is also more pronounced among respondents who work full-time (24%) than among those who do not (20%) (ILO, 2011:21).

According to Wharton (2006:189), the gender pay gap varies somewhat by age. In general, the earnings of younger women are closer to the earnings of younger men as opposed to the earnings of older workers. The explanation given by researchers for the

gender pay gap by age is twofold. Firstly, it is related to cohort differences, meaning that younger workers are beginning their careers in a more gender-equal world than the one in which older workers begin theirs. Secondly, it reflects lifestyle differences in women's and men's careers. This implies that women's and men's earnings may be more similar at the beginning of their careers than later in adulthood after other life events, such as marriage and childbearing have taken place. These explanations imply that, however gender-based wage discrimination may have decreased, women's and men's earnings continue to be differentially affected by changes over the life course.

Furthermore, sociologists believe that the wages attached to jobs are a function of several characteristics. They ascribe the persistent gender wage disparities to the following reasons:

Some sociologists relate existing wages disparities to the skills level of a job. According to neo-classical economists, skills are related to productivity. More skilled workers add more value to the firm than those with fewer skills. Initially it can be costly, but in future, it can be to the benefit of the company. The skills acquired by employees represent the company's human capital. Human capital can be measured by years of schooling and various types of on-the-job-training, for example. Human capital theory suggests that jobs that require more investment by workers, for example training, pay more than others jobs. Higher pay for these jobs is thus a means of compensating workers for their investment. Employers can also benefit because these workers are assumed to be more productive than workers with less human capital (Wharton, 2006:193).

Wages are also regarded as a function of the relative supply of workers available at a given skill level. Skill is socially constructed and means that the ways in which employers understand and respond to forces of labour supply also reflect the influence of social processes (Wharton, 2006:196). Supply is affected by the following: opportunities available outside the job for people with the same skills, the amount of investment in training a job requires and whether the worker finds doing the work required by the job pleasant or unpleasant. Employers may, for example, pay higher wages for jobs perceived as unpleasant by employees than jobs with more desirable working conditions (Wharton, 2006:193).

Wage setting is also influenced by forces such as the cultural understanding of the 'worth' of jobs and the values that are given to various kinds of skills. Society often places a higher value on men than on women (Wharton, 2006:198). In the past, women's work was considered 'useful', while men's work was viewed as contributing to the market economy

and thus had a clear monetary and exchange value. According to this viewpoint, men's work was valued as much more important than women's work (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:258). In the workplace, the worth of activities can be assessed economically, in the form of wages, and symbolically, in the form of status and prestige. Those with the most earning power receive the highest status work (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:258). Men and masculine activities are often more highly valued than women and feminine activities with regard to wages as well as status and prestige (Wharton, 2006:189). Societies that have traditionally placed a higher value on male achievements and masculinity than on the achievements of women and femininity will therefore place a higher value on jobs and activities associated with men. This results in a wage-setting process that becomes institutionalised and persists over time (Wharton, 2006:198).

Wages are also a function of the effort of workers and their organisations. The more powerful the workers, the more likely they are to successfully influence the wages. Historically, male workers have for instance been better organised and are therefore a more powerful force in negotiating wages than women (Wharton, 2006:199).

Popenoe *et al.* (1998:259) relate the lower average income of women to a range of interconnected forces. Firstly, women tend to congregate in certain sectors of the economy, such as the service sector, which includes domestic workers, clerical workers, nursing and teaching. Women are also employed in occupations such as psychotherapists, radiotherapists, social workers, librarians and information officers. Despite the fact that great progress has been made recently, women are still less concentrated in occupations such as mine workers, engineers and artisans. Secondly, women congregate in certain jobs within each sector. In other words, women are less represented at management level. Thirdly, women are often subjected to discrimination. Although women and men perform the same kind of jobs, they often receive lower pay and fewer benefits than men. This is also often applicable to occupations in which women and men have equal education and training. Fourthly, women who are employed in jobs traditionally assigned to men are usually concentrated in the lower echelons of those fields. Fifthly, men tend to work in the primary occupations, in other words those that pay high wages and offer good working conditions, real opportunities for advancement and substantial job security. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to work in the secondary sectors, which include jobs with low wages, limited opportunities and little job security.

The Word Development Report of 2012 (World Bank 2012b:18) relates the persistent segregation and earning gaps to gender differences in time use, in access to assets and

credit, and in treatment by markets and formal institutions (including the legal and regulatory framework). According to this report, these factors all play a role in constraining women's opportunities and are viewed as wedges blocking progress towards gender equality (see Figure 2.3). The report also suggests that mutually reinforcing interactions between these different factors make the problem difficult to overcome. These factors are briefly discussed below.
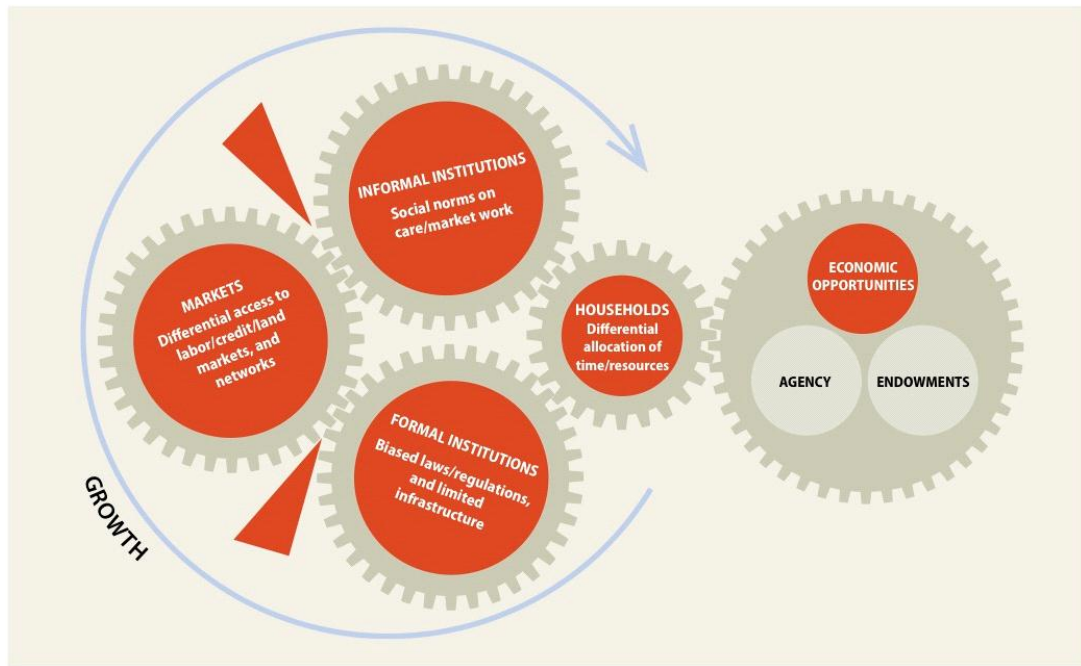
Figure 2.3:   Explaining persistent segregation and earnings gaps

Source: World Bank (2012b:19)

One factor that drives segregation and the consequent earnings gaps is the differing amounts of time that men and women allocate to care and related household work. As indicated in Figure 2.2, in most countries, irrespective of income, women tend to spend more time on housework and care than men. Men are mostly responsible for market work. When all activities are added up, women tend to work more hours than men and this has an effect on their leisure time as well as their wellbeing. Even if women take a bigger share of market work, they still remain largely responsible for housework and care. These patterns become even worse after marriage and childbearing.

A second factor driving segregation in employment and earnings gaps is differences in human and physical endowments, including access to assets and credit. Although there are increases in women's education, there are still differences in human capital between women and men. This includes a gap of years in schooling among the older generation as well as differences in what women and men choose to study among the younger generation. Significant gender disparities exist with regard to access to inputs, including land and credit as well as asset ownership. These differences may be further compounded by the differences in the availability of 'market time', which can have an impact on the same investment, making it less productive for women than men. For example, female entrepreneurs and farmers are often restricted to businesses and activities that are less profitable and less likely to expand. Women also seldom own the land they farm.

Thirdly, market failures and institutional constraints also play a role in segregation and earnings gaps. Labour markets often do not work well for women, especially if their presence is limited to certain sectors or occupations. Employers tend to hold discriminatory beliefs about women's productivity or suitability as workers if only a few women are employed. These beliefs can persist if there are no mechanisms in place to correct them. Furthermore, access to information about jobs, promotions and advancement are often provided in gender networks, which is detrimental for women trying to enter a male-dominated environment such as mining, and vice versa, when men try to enter a female-dominated environment such as nursing. Sometimes legal barriers also prevent women from entering some sectors or occupations.

Hakim (2004:177) lists the following contextual factors that could influence earnings:

- Hours worked (men often work longer hours than women)

- Public or private sector location (the pay gap is often smaller in the public sector, which has a centralised wage setting)

- Industry (certain sectors have a larger pay gap due to bonuses than other sectors where bonuses are rare)

- Region of country (regions with a long tradition of female employment usually have a smaller pay gap)

- Rural/urban location of a workplace (pay is highest in big cities and lowest in rural areas)

- Length of journey to work (which often reflects commuting into city centre jobs)

- Size of firm (small firms generally offer lower wages than large firms, and they tend to employ more women)

- Jobs being dangerous, having unsocial hours, shift work systems, long absences from home or working in difficult or foreign locations (employers often pay higher wages in these circumstances and men are more likely to take such jobs than women)

- Workplaces that have trade unions (these workplaces often have higher earnings than similar non-unionised establishments).

Hakim (2006:290) postulates that preference theory (see 2.4.1.3) provides a different explanation for the continuing pay gap and occupational segregation. The theory predicts that men will continue to dominate top positions for the following reasons: Men try much harder to get top positions. Furthermore, working women seek a large degree of work–life balance, more so than men. Women will rather negotiate shorter working hours than higher pay or promotion. According to Hakim (2004:84), one way to address occupational segregation and the gender pay gap is, firstly, to accept that women will never move into top positions and to focus on comparable worth and equal value initiatives to raise women's pay in lower-grade jobs, and secondly, to break down the barriers to women's promotion to higher-grade and better-paid jobs. Furthermore, the author suggests that employment law and policy will encourage this approach.

From the above it is evident that scientists differ in their viewpoints to explain persistent gender wage gaps. Moreover, it is difficult to provide a simple and single explanation for this phenomenon. Over the years, various stereotypes regarding the value of women's and men's work developed and became institutionalised. However, globally, various initiatives have been introduced to combat discrimination in the workplace. Over the past four years, various equality policies and action plans (among others the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951, No. 100 and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958, No. 111) have been adopted and implemented at national and workplace levels with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2011:xiv, 2).

2.4.3.4   Barriers in career development and progression

Although women's participation in the global labour force has increased over the years, women's position, development and advancement in the workplace continue to be

subordinate to that of their male counterparts (Stead & Watson, 2010:110). Stead and Watson (2010:110) identified the following barriers that could affect women's career development:

2.4.3.4.1 Role conflict

As already indicated in 2.4.2.1, women mainly remain responsible for household tasks as well as for the family, despite men also beginning to take part in these responsibilities. Sheldon (cited in Stead & Watson, 2010:117) concur with this statement by indicating that women continue to spend more time than men on housework, whether they are employed or not, they are involved in more of the work and are mainly responsible for taking care of their children. Women's dual involvement in home and paid work and the demands thereof could lead to stress, role conflict and role overload. Role conflict exists when an individual is confronted by divergent role expectations, in other words, the individual finds that compliance with one role requirement makes it difficult to comply with another (Robbins *et al.,* 2009:222). Role overload is experienced when employees must do more than time permits. Role demands and stress refer to pressures that are placed on people as a function of a particular role they play or fulfil in the workplace (or at home) (Robbins *et al.,* 2009:501).

Dual-career women often do not have time to perform the tasks required by the different roles (for example home, work and personal). In addition, organisations put increased demands on female managers who already face demanding and challenging jobs. This may result in compromising of some degree in one or more roles. This could have an impact on their work, home or personal health (Stead & Watson, 2010:118). A dual-career lifestyle offers women the opportunity to pursue both career and family interests; however, it is accompanied by various difficulties and challenges to balance these dual roles, as also discussed under 2.4.2.1.

2.4.3.4.2 Gender stereotyping

Some scientists believe that women's career development is inhibited by discrimination and sexual harassment and cultural constraints such as occupational gender stereotypes and gender socialisation in addition to their "motherhood role" (Fitzgerald & Netz, cited in Stead & Watson, 2010:118). According to Wharton (2006:31), "socialisation refers to the processes through which individuals take on gendered qualities and characteristics and acquire a sense of self". Through socialisation people learn what could be expected of men and women. Archer and Lloyd (2002:19) define stereotypes as "the shared beliefs that people hold about a group of people such as an ethnic group or people in a particular

occupation" and gender stereotypes as "the beliefs people hold about members of the categories man or women". (Also refer to the discussion under 2.2.2.4.)

Eagly (cited in Archer and Lloyd, 2002:24) postulates that "gender roles and stereotypes held in a society at any one point in time are rooted, not primarily in the society's cultural tradition, but more importantly in the society's contemporary division of labour between the sexes". This means that women and men are viewed as suited for specific social roles that they typically apply. This is known as the social role theory and suggests that if roles change, the stereotypes will also change.

Although women's role has changed over time, from 'expressive' to more 'instrumental', occupational segregation according to sex still exists (see Figure 2.1) and women are still mainly involved in housework and childcare (see Figure 2.2) (Archer & Lloyd, 2002:24). The following two studies show examples of types of gender stereotyping that still exist in organisations.

A study conducted in the field of gender and science revealed that girls and young women are less likely than their male peers to study maths and science; they perceive themselves as incapable in these fields. Negative parental influence, media stereotyping, inappropriate teaching materials and methods and poor perception of self-efficacy are regarded as key factors that affect this imbalance (Stead & Watson, 2010:118).

Another study examining the characteristics and background traits of women in non-traditional careers (construction trades, skilled crafts, technical fields, science and engineering) found that women who choose non-traditional occupations have personality characteristics usually ascribed to men. Characteristically, they tend to be autonomous, active, dominant, individualistic and intellectual. In terms of background traits, they tend to be better educated, have better mental health, be the only or eldest child and have fathers that are younger and well educated (Stead & Watson, 2010:119).

Although there is evidence of a decline in gender segregation of occupations nowadays, mostly due to equity legislation and policies, much still needs to be done to reduce gender barriers and to remove traditional stereotypes to ensure employment of women in all occupations (including occupations traditionally reserved for men, such as mining) and at all levels (including senior and top management positions).

2.4.3.4.3   The glass ceiling

Over the past 20 years, men continued to dominate high-prestige occupations in the Western world (Archer & Lloyd, 2002:182). As discussed, 'glass ceiling' is a term used to

describe why only a few women are appointed in leadership positions, why they do not advance as rapidly as their male counterparts in the hierarchical structure of the organisation and why they tend to face more stringent promotion requirements than men. It therefore symbolises a barrier to entry into top management (Stead & Watson, 2010:119). According to Lorber (2010:34), the concept of a glass ceiling suggests that women have the motivational ambition as well as the capacity for positions of power and prestige, but hidden barriers keep them from reaching the top.

Connel (2009:117) states that although many women in the USA have now reached middle-management positions, women experience a glass ceiling that prevents them from reaching the top management level. In 1991, the United States Congress set up a 21-person Glass Ceiling Commission to investigate the problem. They found that, among the biggest corporations in the USA, 95 to 97% of senior managers were men. Furthermore, they found that only one-fifth of 1% of big corporations had a woman employed in the top position. The commission attributed this phenomenon to a set of barriers that prevent women from obtaining access to high positions. These barriers are identified by Connel (2009:118) as the following:

- Unsuitable or inadequate educational background

- Prejudice and bias on the part of men in power

- Career paths that divert women from the main promotion pipeline

- Poor anti-discrimination enforcement by government

- Inadequate information about the problem

- Inadequate publicity

- Fear of loss among white men in middle management.

In addition, Connel (2009:118) states that the broad features of business organisations as well as deeply entrenched patterns of divisions in the workplace can also be seen as a reason for the absence of women in top management positions.

Lorber (2010:34) postulates that most people make use of networking (making professional contacts and using them for networking) and mentoring (being coached by a protective senior about the informal norms of the workplace) to advance in their careers.

However, only a few men are prepared to take women as their protégées, thus resulting in a glass ceiling for the advancement of women in every field.

Stead and Watson (2010:120) point to the following explanations for the glass ceiling phenomenon:

- The belief exists that it is risky to promote women to senior positions.

- Men in high-ranking positions often believe that women are not as competent, intelligent and capable as their male counterparts.

- A perception exists that women cannot function effectively in the tough and competitive business world.

- The belief exists that motherhood tends to distract and divert women from their careers.

- Men often feel uncomfortable sharing power with women.

- The perception exists that corporate power stays with men because those in authority promote in their own image.

- The belief exists that women do not have the appropriate attitudes, behaviours, skills, education and training for managerial and professional jobs.

- The lack of mentors and sponsors.

- Structural and systemic discrimination exist due to organisational policies and practices.

From the above it is evident that despite various equal employment opportunity legislation and policies, many hidden barriers still exist and prevent women from entering top management positions. There is still a long way to go to effectively break down barriers and to ensure women's full participation in the global labour force.

2.4.3.4.4   Organisational culture

Many organisations, such as mining companies, still have a masculine culture and are based on norms and beliefs that are more adhered to by men than by women. These norms and beliefs determine and promote forms of communication, views of self, approaches to conflict, images of leadership, organisational values, definitions of success and good management that are stereotypically masculine (Van Vianen & Fischer, cited in Stead & Watson, 2010:120).

Organisations with a masculine culture often exclude women from informal networking that promote occupational advancement. Furthermore, women are more prone to sexual harassment (see 2.4.3.5) in masculine environments. Women are also often marginalised by sexual harassment when entering occupations in organisations with a masculine culture (Archer & Lloyd, 2002:2005). A study conducted to explore the underlying interactive processes in women's experiences in a male-dominated organisation revealed that women had to adhere to the norms of the workplace in order to keep a healthy self-image and they constantly felt that their abilities were questioned (Bergman & Hallberg, cited in Stead & Watson, 2010:120).

According to Stead and Watson (2010:120), the power structure in an organisation cannot be successfully changed by legislation only. A fundamental change in attitude towards women and employment is needed in order to successfully change the traditional masculine organisational culture. The authors suggest the following practices to be followed in an attempt to remove career-development barriers for women:

- Career counselling, which includes the following, among other things: identifying women's strengths, assistance in confronting myths and stereotypes in the workplace, learning of negotiation skills, assistance in balancing home and work responsibilities, preparing women to handle sexual harassment in the workplace and setting up of specific support groups for women

- Allowing flexible work hours by changing the working contract; it may encourage women to select non-traditional, prestigious and high-paying positions

- Assisting with providing quality childcare, which can expand the career opportunities available to women

- Creating a healthy work environment; gender discrimination and sexual harassment should not be tolerated

- Accessing supportive and challenging mentors to assist women in career development.

From the above it is evident that women are subjected to various constraints in terms of career development and progression. Although it is not rare to see women in top management positions and positions traditionally reserved for men (such as mining) nowadays, it was not an easy road. Given the fact that women are mainly responsible for domestic responsibilities as well as child caring and raising, they often experience role conflict when combining domestic responsibilities with work responsibilities. Furthermore,

traditional gender stereotyping, masculine organisational cultures as well as the glass ceiling effect also played and still play a role in inhibiting women from progressing in their careers. Multi-stakeholder involvement, including government (legislation), supportive gender organisations and management buy-in, is needed to bring about change in attitudes towards women and employment.

2.4.3.5   Sexual harassment

Pons and Deale (2010:ch. 20, p. 16) refer to sexual harassment as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. According to the authors, sexual harassment may include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct such as the following:

- Physical conduct of a sexual nature includes all unwanted physical contact, ranging from touching to sexual assault and rape, and includes a strip search by or in the presence of the opposite sex.

- Verbal forms of sexual harassment include unwelcome innuendoes, suggestions and hints; sexual advances; comments with sexual overtones; sex-related jokes or insults or unwelcome graphic comments about a person's body made in their presence or directed towards the person; unwelcome and inappropriate enquiries about a person's sex life; and unwelcome whistling directed at a person or group of persons.

- Non-verbal forms of sexual harassment include unwelcome gestures, indecent exposure and the unwelcome display of sexually explicit pictures and objects.

- *Quid pro quo* harassment occurs where an owner, employer, supervisor, member of management or co-employee undertakes or attempts to influence the process of employment promotion, training, discipline, dismissal, salary increment or other benefit of an employee or job applicant in exchange for favours.

On the other hand, "sexual favouritism exists where a person who is in a position of authority rewards only those who respond to his/her sexual advances, whilst other deserving employees who do not submit themselves to any sexual advances are denied promotions, merit rating or salary increases" (Pons & Deale, 2010:ch. 20, p. 16).

Sexual harassment can be seen as an abuse of power by which perpetrators use their position to exploit subordinates. Sexual harassment occurs in every kind of work setting, but some settings are more prone to sexual harassment than others. A strong predictor of

sexual harassment is a work setting with a high male-to-female ratio. Therefore, women working in a male-dominated workplace, for example mining, are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment (Wharton, 2005:188, Martin, cited in Anderson & Taylor, 2006:503, Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:128).

Some sociologists have argued that sexual harassment is practised by men to show their resentment of women entering high-paying fields once reserved for men. It is therefore a mechanism used by men to maintain their dominance in the workplace. McKinney (cited in Anderson & Taylor, 2006:503) states that some men engage in this activity to show their interest and affection; others practise sexual harassment as a response to their perception of unfair treatment or as a demonstration of their anger. Men also tend to see sexual harassment as normal and tolerable and do not think of harassment as doing something wrong. Women, on the other hand, tend to see harassment as inappropriate behaviour and judge it more severely than men (Reily *et al.*, cited in Anderson & Taylor, 2006:503).

Women and men can be victims of sexual harassment; however, research suggests that women are more likely to experience sexual harassment than men (Wharton, 2005:188). According to Anderson and Taylor (2006:503), most surveys indicate that as many as half of all employed women experience some form of sexual harassment at some time. The authors further assert that there is evidence that women of colour are more likely to be harassed than white women.

Sexual harassment also appears to be underreported. Studies revealed that employees – women as well as men – are unaware of proper channels to report these issues. Women are also less likely to report these incidents because they believe nothing will be done to stop the behaviour (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:504). A national study undertaken in the USA found that only 5% of women and men who had experienced sexual harassment chose to report it. Grobler *et al.* (2011:95) cite the primary reasons why the other 95% did not report these incidents as the following:

- The fear of losing their job

- The need for a future job reference

- The possibility of being considered a troublemaker

- The assumption that nothing would change if the harassment was reported

- Concern about being accused of inviting the harassment

- Reluctance to draw public attention to private lives

- The prospect of emotional stress for filing a lawsuit and undergoing long, costly legal procedures.

The consequences of sexual harassment can be economic, emotional and physical. By creating a hostile working environment, sexual harassment can influence productivity at work. Workers who have been sexually harassed may experience feelings of helplessness, fearfulness and powerless. Victims also tend to lose their ambition and self-confidence and experience a negative attitude towards their work (Anderson & Taylor, 2006:504).

Organisations can follow the following steps to ensure a workplace free from sexual harassment (Nel *et al.,* 2011:272; Noe *et al.,* 2008:126):

- A good working sexual harassment policy must be developed. The policy statement must emphasise that sexual harassment in the workplace will not be tolerated.

- Training on the sexual harassment policy must be provided to all employees, old and new.

- A mechanism for reporting sexual harassment must be developed. Employees must be encouraged to speak out and report these incidents.

- Sexual harassment complaints must be thoroughly investigated.

- Management must take prompt disciplinary action against those who commit sexual harassment and take appropriate action to protect the victims thereof.

2.4.3.6   *Conclusion*

From the above it is clear that women employed in the labour force, globally, are subjected to various constraints. Although equal employment opportunity policies ensured the involvement of more women in the labour force, they are still struggling with issues such as balancing work and family life, discrimination in terms of job opportunities, career advancement, different wage scales for women's and men's jobs and sexual harassment. Second-wave feminists, and specifically liberal feminists, have been successful in breaking down many barriers in terms of obtaining equality in society as well as the workplace. Through advocating for anti-discrimination policies and affirmative action measures, they helped to ensure women's entry into jobs and professions formerly dominated by men (as well as positions of authority), helped to equalise wage scales

between women's and men's jobs, and advocated for sexual harassment policies in the workplace as well as for the provision of assistance with childcare. However, second-wave feminists have been less successful in fighting the informal processes of discrimination and exclusion that produce the glass ceiling that many women still experienced. The way women are treated in modern society, specifically the workplace, still causes large gaps in salaries, job opportunities and advancement. Women also still struggle to balance their home life with their family life. There is still a long way to go to solve the specific issues that women encounter in the formal working environment.

Despite the many issues women are experiencing globally, Nordic countries seem to have some answers for successfully integrating women into the labour force. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2012 (World Economic Forum, 2012:19), the Nordic countries –Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark – have closed between 80 and 86% of their gender gaps. The report provides a comprehensive overview of performance and progress in terms of achieving gender inequality in four categories (economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment) over the last six years. The study covered 132 countries. These countries' labour force participation rates for women are among the highest in the world, salary gaps between women and men are among the lowest in the world and women have abundant opportunities to move into positions of leadership.

The following reasons were put forward for this phenomenon (World Economic Forum, 2012:19): These economies have made it possible for parents to combine work and family, which have the following positive effects: higher female employment participation rates, more shared participation in childcare, more equitable distribution of labour at home and a better work–life balance for both women and men. Policies in these countries include mandatory paternal leave in combination with maternity leave, generous parental leave benefits provided by a combination of social insurance funds and employers, tax incentives and post-maternity re-entry programmes. These countries also follow a top-down approach to promoting women's leadership. In Norway, publicly listed companies have been required to have 40% of each sex on their board since 2008. Other Nordic countries followed by adopting similar measures. These countries were also among the first countries that gave women the right to vote. These countries have among the highest percentages of women in parliament in ministerial positions.

The successes achieved by the Nordic countries in terms of achieving gender equality are also in line with the thoughts of Jacobs and Gerson (2004:73), Lorber (2010:35) and Richardson and Robinson (2008:181), who suggest that work–life balance strategies (for

both mothers and fathers) could assist employees to balance their work life and home life and as a result contribute towards achieving equality in labour forces.

The section to follow contextualises and discusses gender inequality in South Africa.

2.5 GENDER INEQUALITY: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

South Africa's legacy of the past is characterised by numerous systemic and structural inequalities in all spheres of life that are compounded by variables such as race, class, disability, sexual orientation, religion and geographic orientation. Women in South Africa experienced numerous inequalities and widespread discrimination, which are visible in areas such as women's high levels of unemployment, illiteracy, poverty and violence against women (The Presidency, 2008:7).

The democratic regime of South Africa aimed to redress these injustices of the past by incorporating into its transformation agenda a gender-mainstreaming strategy for governance, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The intention of government is to create an enabling environment conducive to the empowerment of women. The empowerment of women in South Africa is about dealing with the legacy of apartheid as well as the transformation of society, including the transformation of power relations between women, men, institutions and laws. Furthermore, it is about addressing gender oppression, patriarchy, sexism, racism, ageism and structural oppression (The Presidency, 2008:7).

This section provides an orientation and perspective of gender inequality in South Africa, which is discussed along the following three lines. Firstly, a historical overview of the women's movement in South Africa in the struggle and strive towards achieving gender equality and equity is given. Secondly, international and national initiatives promoting gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women in South Africa are highlighted. Thirdly, attention is paid to the current situation with women and work in South Africa.

2.5.1 The women's movement in South Africa

The development of a unified women's movement in South Africa was prevented because of certain circumstances in the past. The women's suffrage movement in South Africa was also racially exclusive. White women began organising this movement as early as 1894 and more systematically with the formation of the Women's Enfranchisement of the Union

in 1911. The Women's Enfranchisement Act that followed in 1930 pertained to white women only (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:264). According to the Act, only white women had the right to vote and to be elected to the Houses of Parliament. They could take their rightful place as equals with men in political life (Walker, 1990:313). Black women were excluded from the vote not because they were women, but because they were black. This widened the gulf between white and black women. For black women, the question of votes was subordinate to the suppression they experienced because they were black. For them, women's rights and black rights were inseparable.

The 1913, women's protests against passes in Bloemfontein were one of the earliest campaigns led by politically organised black women (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:264). The women burnt passes in front of the municipal offices to show their resistance to government's attempt to impose passes on black women. The 1913 march demonstrates that black women protested against white domination in South Africa very early on in the history of South Africa (Dubbelman, 2011). In 1952, the apartheid regime attempted once more to impose passes on black women in order to curb non-white urbanisation (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:264).

In 1953, the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) joined with other organisations to form the Federation of South African Women (FSAW). The objective of this organisation was to improve the conditions under which South African women lived. They supported the view that the struggle should be against all injustices pertaining to race, class and gender. In 1954, at its opening conference, the FSAW drafted a Women's Charter, which established the principle of women's full equality to men (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:264). The Charter called for the enfranchisement of men and women of all races; equality of opportunity in employment; equal pay for equal work; equal rights in relation to property, marriage and children; and the removal of all laws and customs that denied women such equality. It also included the following demands: paid maternity leave, childcare for working mothers, and free and compulsory education for all South Africans (SAHO, 2011).

In 1954 and 1956, the apartheid regime again launched various attempts to impose passes for black women. The FSAW directed most of its energies to anti-pass campaigns. In 1956, 20 000 women were involved in demonstration campaigns against passes at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. This gathering of women attracted one of the largest crowds ever to gather at the Union Buildings. As a result, 9 August was declared Women's Day to commemorate the achievement. The day is still celebrated and has been declared a public holiday (SAHO, 2011). By 1962, the restriction of individual leaders of the FSAW

resulted in the virtual destruction of the organisation, due to government's banning and detention of leaders of the national liberation struggle (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:264).

It was only in the 1990s that the relationship between nationalism and gender oppression become an issue. A feminist movement began to form within the African National Congress (ANC) itself and eventually led to the formation of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in April 1992. The launch of the WNC was a historic moment. It brought together women from different class backgrounds, race groups, political parties and women's organisations (Meintjies, 1996:59). In February 1994, it presented the Women's Charter for Effective Equality to a women's convention. Women of all races and across the political spectrum attended the convention. Women claimed full and equal participation in the creation of a non-sexist, non-racist, democratic society (WNC, 1994:1). The Charter outlined the following demands for the women of South Africa (WNC, 1994:2–7):

- They demanded that equality be applied to every aspect of their lives, including the family, the workplace and the state.

- They demanded that the position of women be taken into account in deciding policy, determining legislative priorities, and in formulating, applying, interpreting, adjudicating and enforcing all laws.

- The claimed involvement in decision making and full participation at all levels and in all aspects of the formal and informal economy.

- Women and girls claimed the right to education. Education and training, including curriculum development, must acknowledge and accommodate the diversity of women's needs and experiences in every aspect of life.

- They demanded access to the full range of basic development resources and services necessary to sustain a healthy and productive life.

- They demanded accessible and affordable development-orientated social services, including emotional counselling, family counselling, preventive care, material assistance, clinics and hospitals. These services should be a right and not a privilege.

- The claimed the right to participate fully in all levels of political, civic and community life.

- They claimed the recognition of all family types. The acknowledgement of women's responsibilities must be reflected in their decision-making powers within the family and in the management of the household.

- They claimed freedom to practise their own religion, culture or beliefs without fear for all women.

- They demanded the provision of equal, affordable, accessible and appropriate healthcare services that meet women's specific health needs and treat women with dignity and respect.

- They claimed the right to have the diversity of women's lives and experiences, and their contributions in all areas of public and private life, reflected in the media.

The Women's Charter for Effective Equality had an effect on the development of the new Constitution of South Africa (108 of 1996) (see Chapter Three under 3.2.1) as well as the Bill of Rights, and ensured that women's interests were protected. It also had other successes, such as changes in laws that offered protection from domestic violence and illegalised discrimination against women (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:265).

The section below highlights international and national initiatives adopted by the South African government to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in the country.

2.5.2 Initiatives promoting gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women

In its attempt to promote gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women, the South African democratic government endorsed key international and national protocols, adopted significant legislative reforms and developed policies and programmes that sought to promote and protect women's rights in society (the home and the community) as well as the workplace. These initiatives are highlighted in the sections below.

2.5.2.1 *International initiatives*

Although great progress had been made regarding gender equality in society and the workplace, discrimination against women with regard to attitudes, perception and behaviour still continued to exist. Governments aimed to redress these deep-rooted inequalities by endorsing key regional and international protocols, including the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, SADEC's protocol on Gender and Development and the Protocol to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Hicks, 2010:2). Since the ratification of these international instruments, the newly elected democratic government of South Africa had passed numerous anti-discriminatory legislations (see Chapter Three) in line with the new Constitution and international commitments. The essence of these international protocols is presented below.

2.5.2.1.1 *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*

CEDAW, which consists of a preamble and 30 articles, was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. It is often described as an international Bill of Rights for women and defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination (United Nations, 2009).

States that accepted the Convention committed themselves to undertaking certain measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including the following (United Nations, 2009):

- To incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, to abolish all discriminatory laws and to adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women

- To establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination

- To ensure the elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organisations or enterprises.

The Convention realised equality between women and men; equality in terms of women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life, including the right to vote and to stand for election, as well as education, health and employment. State parties that accepted the Convention agreed to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, to promote women's rights and freedom. Countries that ratified the Convention were legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They had to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with the requirements of the Convention. (United Nations, 2009)

CEDAW was signed by South Africa on 29 January 1993 and ratified on 15 December 1995 and came into force 30 days later, on 15 January 1996 (The Presidency, 2008:20).

2.5.2.1.2   The Beijing Platform for Action

The Beijing Platform for Action was adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. It was an internationally agreed plan for achieving equality for women across 12 critical areas, namely poverty, education and training, health, the economy, power and decision making, human rights, armed conflict, institutional mechanisms, the environment, and violence against women and the girl child. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was approved unanimously by representatives from 189 countries, including South Africa. (Lowen, 2010)

2.5.2.1.3   The SADEC Protocol on Gender and Development

The SADEC Protocol on Gender and Development was signed by leaders of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in August 2008. The objective of the Protocol was to provide for the empowerment of women, to eliminate discrimination and to achieve gender equality and equity through the development and implementation of gender-responsive legislation policies, programmes and projects. The Protocol articles were grouped under eight headings: constitutional and legal rights; governance; education and training; productive resources and employment; gender-based violence; health and HIV/Aids; peace building and conflict resolution; and media, information and communication. Twenty-three targets were set, including that women will hold 50% of decision-making positions in the public and private sectors by 2015 and ensuring that provisions for gender equality are contained in all constitutions and include affirmative action clauses (SADC, 2008).

2.5.2.1.4   The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa was adopted on 11 July 2003 and enforced on 25 November 2005, 30 days after its 15th ratification. The major aim of the African Charter was the protection of human rights, and specifically women's rights in Africa. The preamble of the Protocol reflected the general concern that led to its establishment. It stated, among others, the following: "[D]espite the ratification of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other international legal instruments by the majority of State parties, and their solemn

commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harmful practices, women in Africa continue to be victims of discrimination and harmful practices" (AU, 2003:2).

The Protocol aimed to address 22 critical areas, including the elimination of discrimination against women; the right to dignity; the rights to life, integrity and security of the person; the elimination of harmful practices; access to justice and equal protection before the law; the right to participation in the political and decision-making process; the right to education and training; and the right to adequate housing (AU, 2003).

In addition to the above-mentioned international initiatives, the following national key protocols were endorsed in an attempt to eradicate deep-rooted inequalities of the past.

2.5.2.2   National initiatives promoting the empowerment of women

South Africa has made significant progress in promoting and protecting the rights of women. The democratic regime of South African introduced the new Constitution (108 of 1996), which places a high value on human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedom, non-racism and non-sexism. Section 9 of the Constitution states that "all must be equal before the law and all must be entitled to equal protection of the law" (RSA, 1996a:1247). The human rights of women have also been advanced through the enactment of numerous laws and policies that explicitly forbid discrimination against women and that specifically provide for the empowerment and advancement of women, also in all areas of work. The Constitution as well as these policies and legislation are discussed in Chapter Three.

In additional to the above-mentioned, the Office on the Status of Women (OSW) prepared the national Gender Policy Framework entitled South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. The Gender Policy Framework was adopted by The Presidency as well as by Cabinet in 2000. The South African government also established a comprehensive National Gender Machinery, which comprises structures within government and civil society to implement the Gender Policy Framework in order to promote and enhance the process of achieving gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women in South Africa. The South African Gender Machinery comprises the following: the OSW, Gender Focal Points (GFP) in national departments, the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) as well as the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women.

The next section provides a brief outline of South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, as well as the different components of the South African Gender Machinery.

2.5.2.2.1 *South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality*

South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (referred to as the Gender Policy Framework) is a document, prepared by the OSW, that provides a framework by establishing guidelines for South Africa as a nation to redress the historical legacy of inequality. The document was the result of a long consultation process and involved members of civil society, academia, government and the labour movement (OSW, 2000:8).

The purpose of this Gender Policy Framework was to establish a clear vision and framework to guide the process of developing laws, policies, procedures and practices in order to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres and structures of government as well as in the workplace, the community and the family. Although the Framework was concerned with gender, the major focus was on issues concerned with women and women's empowerment (OSW, 2000:4). According to the Policy Framework, the responsibility for gender mainstreaming is that of all government officials, including the President (OSW, 2000:3).

The main objectives of the Gender Policy Framework were the following (OSW, 2000:5):

- To create an enabling policy environment for translating government commitment to gender equality into a reality

- To establish policies, programmes, structures and mechanisms to empower women and to transform gender relations in all aspects of work, at all levels of government as well as within the broader society

- To ensure that gender considerations are effectively integrated into all aspects of government policies, activities and programmes

- To establish an institutional framework for the advancement of the status of women as well as the achievement of gender equality

- To advocate for the promotion of new attitudes, values and behaviour, and a culture of respect for all human beings in line with the new policy.

South Africa is faced with many challenges in its strive towards gender equality and a society free of racism and sexism. These challenges have been translated into national priorities and entail gender dimensions that need to be addressed in order to achieve substantial gender equality in the country. Among many key challenges, the OSW (2000:iii) aimed to address the following:

The alleviation and eradication of poverty. The location of women in rural areas and the underdevelopment of infrastructure in these areas could be seen as the major causes of the poor conditions under which the majority of South Africa's rural communities live. Furthermore, apartheid laws in conjunction with repressive customs and traditions can also be blamed for this problem.

HIV/Aids remains a serious problem in South Africa. The power imbalances between women and men in interpersonal relations can be seen as one of the major issues that contribute to this pandemic.

Violence against women is another serious problem in the society of South Africa. The combating of domestic violence, rape as well as other forms of physical and psychological abuse of women and girls remains a major challenge for South Africa.

Access to basic needs, for example education, housing, welfare, fuel and water, has also been influenced by unequal gender, race and class relations. The inequality of power between women and men can be seen as a major cause that led to the unequal sharing of these resources.

Access to basic resources such as water and fuel has improved since 1994, but the lack of infrastructure in the rural areas still acts as a barrier for women to gain easy access to basic resources.

Access to employment is still regarded as a major problem for women. Differential access to employment opportunities exists. Despite the fact that women currently have access to a broader scope of positions in the labour market, these new opportunities are accessible to a narrow pool of women who have had access to skills development, education and training. Many women are still employed in the traditional female occupations or in the domestic and farming sectors, which are low paying and which have high rates of turnover.

The economic empowerment of women is another challenge for the South African government. Women constitute the poorest group in South Africa and are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed. The challenge is to ensure that South Africa's

macroeconomic strategy provides for various groups of people regardless of class, race, age, gender, location and disability.

Access to land. Although South Africa has embarked on an aggressive land reform and land reclamation programme, historical factors and unequal gender relations continue to hinder women's access to land and control over these resources.

Implementation of laws. South Africa had already adopted sophisticated rights-based legislation with explicit reference to gender equality. An important challenge remains in making these rights accessible to all women through the provision of information and the development of knowledge and skills.

National Gender Machinery. The institutional mechanisms, referred to as the National Gender Machinery, to promote gender equality in the country should be well developed and efficient. In order to be effective, the following challenges should be addressed: the lack of skills, resources and an integrated co-ordination framework with clear lines of communication and accountability.

The above-mentioned challenges are interrelated and the Gender Policy Framework established guidelines for South Africa as a nation to approach these challenges in an integrated manner in order to promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

2.5.2.2.2   The National Gender Machinery

To attain and maintain gender equality in society as well as the workplace, certain mechanisms need to be put in place. More specifically, it requires a national machinery that can drive and support women's empowerment and gender equality in all spheres of life. According to the OSW (2000:26), "a national machinery for women's empowerment and gender equality refers to a set of co-ordinated structures within and outside government which aim to achieve equality for women in all spheres of life, including the political, civil, social, economic and cultural aspects". South Africa's National Gender Machinery consists of the following bodies and institutional arrangements:

(a)   The Office on the Status of Women

The national OSW is based in the President's Office and has a number of provincial offices. It is the principal co-ordinating structure for the National Gender Machinery on gender equality and acts as the nerve centre for the maintaining and developing of a national gender programme. The OSW is responsible for the development of national action plans or frameworks for mainstreaming gender within government structures, to

advance women's empowerment and gender equality and to monitor the implementation and progress thereof. It also co-ordinates and facilitates the implementation of government policy on gender (OSW, 2000:27).

(b)   Gender focal points

The effective implementation of the National Gender Policy rests with individual government departments at national and provincial levels. These departments are required to establish gender focal points (GFPs), also referred to as gender units. The key function of GFPs is to assist in the formulation and implementation of effective action plans to promote women's empowerment and gender equality in all policies, programmes and projects by national departments (OSW, 2000:28).

(c)   The Commission for Gender Equality

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) is an independent statutory body established in 1997 in terms of Section 187 of the Constitution of South Africa, which allowed for the promulgation of the Commission for Gender Equality Act (39 of 1996) (CGE, 2010a:13).

The vision of the CGE is to create a society free from all forms of gender oppression and inequality. The mission of the CGE is to promote, monitor and evaluate gender equality through the following actions: undertaking research, public education, policy development, legislative initiatives and effective monitoring and litigation (CGE, 2010a:13).

The powers and functions of the CGE are detailed in the Commission for Gender Equality Act (39 of 1996). The broad objective of the CGE (2010a:13) is twofold:

- The promotion of respect for gender equality

- The protection, development and attainment of gender equality.

(d)   The Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women

Parliament plays a key role in facilitating women's empowerment and gender equality. The Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women was established to ensure that all legislation passed by Parliament is engendered (OSW, 2000:29). The Committee's functions include the following (OSW, 2000:30):

- To monitor progress in the advancement of the status and improvement of the quality of life of South African women

- To monitor and assess whether government policy implements national and international commitments with respect to the Constitution of South Africa, the National Gender Equality Framework, CEDAW and the Beijing and Dakar Platforms for Action

- To monitor gender mainstreaming in government policies and programmes, including the national budget and fiscal framework.

From the above it is clear that the democratic government of South Africa is serious about and committed to eradicating all forms of discrimination in society as well as the workplace in its attempt to achieve social, political and economic gender equality in the country. The section below outlines the current employment situation of women in South Africa.

2.5.3   Women and work in South Africa

In the past, the primary responsibility of all women in South Africa, irrespective of race and class, rested in reproductive tasks such as childbearing, childrearing and domestic work. These tasks were usually unpaid and limited the time, energy and opportunities that women could devote to income earning (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:258). As already indicated, the democratic regime of South Africa initiated a number of actions (see 2.5.2 and Chapter Three) to address inequalities in the country, but also to promote the participation of women in the labour force.

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in women as a percentage of the economically active population (EAP) in South Africa; however, women remain underrepresented. According to the 2011–2012 Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report (DoL, 2012:7), women (regardless of race) in South Africa constitute 45.4% of the EAP (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2:   Profile of the national EAP by race and gender

| Economically Active Population (EAP)							
Male				**Female**			
AM	African male	40.3%		**AF**	African female	33.8%
CM	Coloured male	5.9%		**CF**	Coloured female	5.2%
IM	Indian male	1.8%		**IF**	Indian female	1.1%
WM	White male	6.6%		**WF**	White female	5.3%
FM	Foreign male	0%		**FF**	Foreign female	0%
Total		**54.6%**		**Total**		**45.4%**

Source: DoL (2012:7)

Although women's participation in the workforce of South Africa has increased over the past years, they have lagged and are still lagging behind men with regard to employment in management positions. In South Africa, men continue to dominate top and senior management positions, as clearly indicated in figures 2.4 and 2.5. The figures below represent the workforce profile percentage population distribution at top management level (Figure 2.4), at senior management level (Figure 2.5), at professionally qualified level (Figure 2.6) and at skilled level (Figure 2.7), by race and gender.
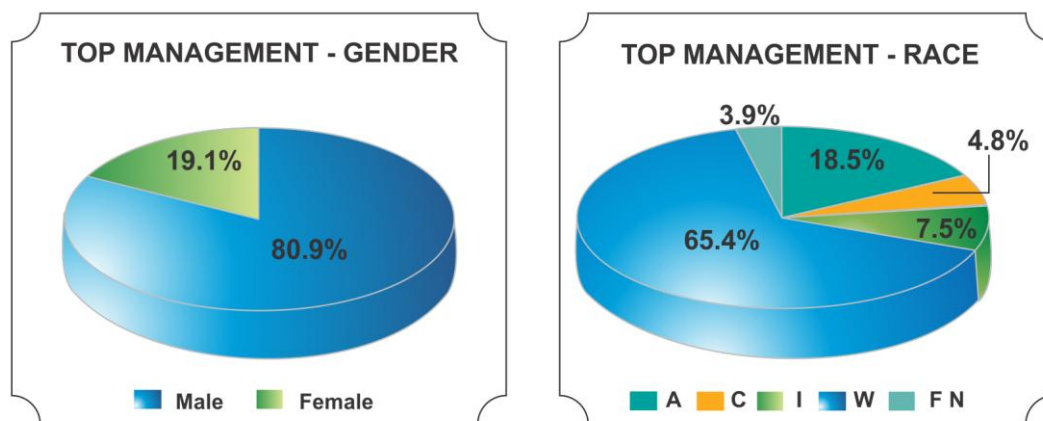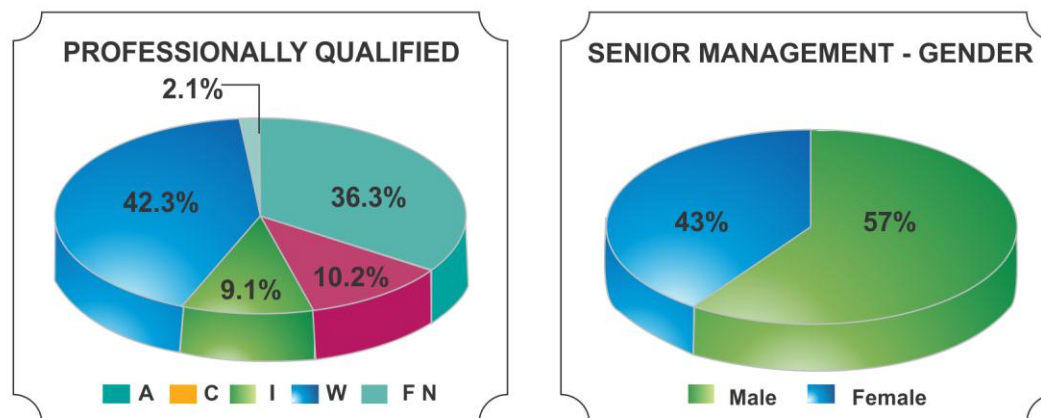

Figure 2.4:   Workforce profile percentage population distribution at the top management level by race and gender
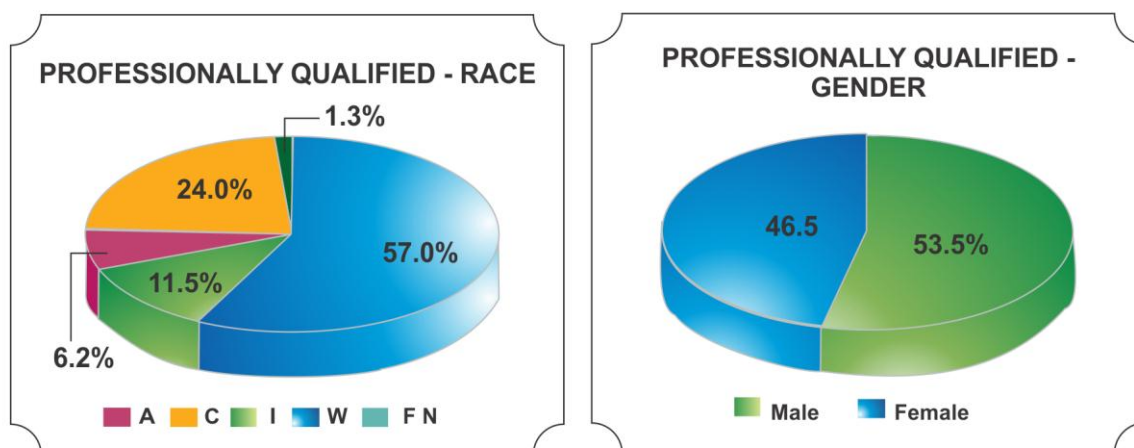
Source: DoL (2012:19)

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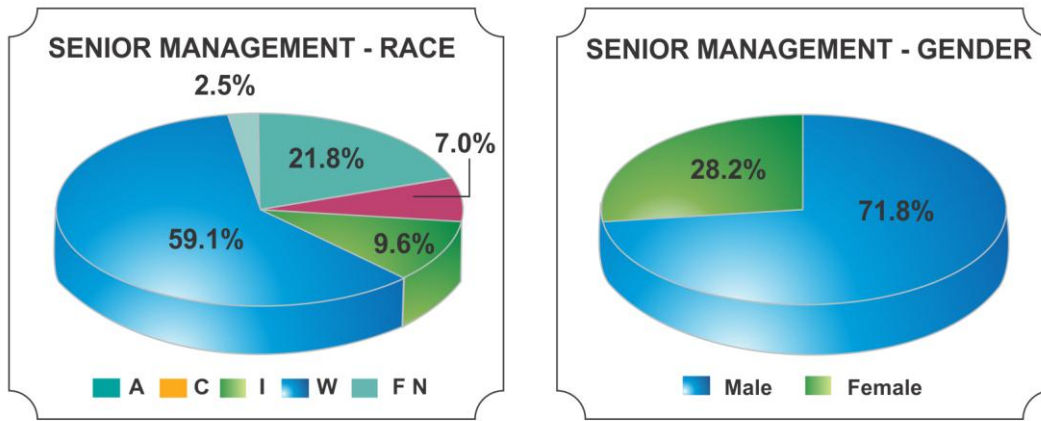
Figure 2.5:   **Workforce profile percentage population distribution at senior management level by race and gender**

Source: DoL (2012:24)

Figure 2.6:   **Workforce profile percentage population distribution at professionally qualified level by race and gender**

Source: DoL (2012:29)

Figure 2.7: **Workforce profile percentage population distribution at skilled level by race and gender**

Source: DoL (2012:33)

It is evident from the figures above that white people and men continue to dominate in the three uppermost occupational levels. It is also evident from the 2011–2012 Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report (DoL, 2012:35) that employers are more likely to recruit and promote men than women. Furthermore, Table 2.3 shows that women are mainly represented in the following sectors: catering and accommodation, finance and business as well as community, social and personal services and also in the lower echelons of these fields. This is also in line with the findings of the literature discussed earlier (see 2.4.2.1), which suggested that women are still mainly concentrated in the caring professions, the public sector, and in health and education, and are under-represented in high-risk sectors, which include mining, construction and manufacturing, as well as in top and senior management positions.

Table 2.3:   Industry/Sector workforce profile

Sector	Top management		Senior management		Professionally qualified		Skilled level	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Agriculture	86.5	13.5	78.6	21.4	69.8	30.2	60.9	39.1
Mining and quarrying	87.8	12.2	86.6	13.4	80.0	20.0	84.4	15.6
Manufacturing	86.0	14.0	79.0	21.0	73.5	26.5	73.6	26.4
Electricity, gas and water	80.9	19.1	73.1	26.9	67.8	32.2	63.5	36.5
Construction	89.5	10.5	86.2	13.8	81.8	18.2	80.6	19.4
Retail and motor trade/ Repair service	85.4	14.6	69.4	30.6	55.5	44.5	52.2	47.8
Wholesale trade/Commercial agents/ Allied services	84.2	15.8	71.8	28.2	60.4	39.6	57.9	48.1
Catering/Accommodation/ Other trade	74.8	25.2	62.4	37.6	35.5	64.5	38.9	62.1
Transport/Storage/ Communications	80.2	19.8	73.2	26.8	69.7	30.3	67.9	32.1
Finance/Business services	74.7	25.3	66.2	33.8	53.9	46.1	43.5	56.5
Community/Social/ Personal services	71.2	28.8	63.9	36.1	48.4	51.6	43.0	57.0

Source: Table constructed from data obtained from Department of Labour (2012)

It is evident from the figures and table above that although more women in South Africa are involved in the labour force, there is still a long way to go to successfully and sustainably achieving gender equality in all sectors and at all levels in the labour force.

2.6   CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a theoretical framework of gender and gender inequality. Firstly, a conceptualisation of the terms 'sex', 'gender' and 'gender difference' was done in order to create an understanding of gender as such. Furthermore, this section aimed to provide some explanations for the differences between the two sexes and the roles they fulfil in

society. From the literature review it is evident that scientists differ in their views and explanations for why differences exist in the behaviour of women and men and why women and men fulfil different social roles in society. The origin of gender differences could not be solely ascribed to hormones and the brain, socio-biology and biology. The culture of a society also has an impact on the creation of masculine and feminine behaviour. Thus, the socialisation process from birth onwards also plays an important role in shaping women's and men's behaviour and the roles they fulfil in society. These differences between women and men are often related to inequalities that exist between the opposite sexes.

Secondly, a general overview of feminist theory was given, followed by several feminist approaches and their views on the origins of gender inequalities. From the literature review it became clear that feminist theories contributed significantly by not only explaining and providing some answers for the persistent inequalities in society and the workplace, but also by ensuring more equality in society and the workplace globally.

Thirdly, attention was paid to different aspects regarding women and work. Main theories explaining gender inequalities in the workplace were outlined and discussed. Attention was also given to the discourse of the 'sexual division of labour'. Furthermore, main issues regarding women and work were outlined and discussed, namely balancing work and family life, discrimination, the gender pay gap, barriers in career development and progression and sexual harassment. It is evident from the literature review that women in the labour force are subjected to various constraints and that much still needs to be done to break down barriers and to ensure women's equal participation in the global labour force.

Lastly, a contextualisation of 'gender inequality' and 'women and work' in South Africa was done. Women in South Africa experienced numerous inequalities and widespread discrimination, mainly due to South Africa's legacy of the past. A historical overview of the women's movement in South Africa in the struggle and strive towards achieving gender equality and equity was given. Furthermore, various international and national initiatives adopted and introduced by the democratic regime of South Africa to redress these injustices of the past were outlined and discussed. The current employment situation of women in South Africa was also highlighted. Although women constitute 45.4% of the EAP of South Africa, there is still room for improvement to achieve equality in all sectors and at all levels (senior and top management positions) in the workplace.

The following chapter presents and discusses the statutory and regulatory framework that has an impact on women employed in the core business of mining.