Gender stereotyping and bullying in Australia: Experiences and strategies of female managers

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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Natalie McKenna

3 August, 2017
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Abstract

There are many factors that contribute to the complexity of barriers that women face in their career advancement. Some female professionals face gender stereotyping and bullying in the workplace. Stereotypes influence the unequal sharing between women and men of working time, income and family responsibilities. They also constitute barriers to women’s career advancement and appointment to decision-making positions.

The focus of this study is on two of these factors: gender stereotyping and bullying. Gender stereotypes are the beliefs and attitudes that are presumed to distinguish between women and men (Rollero, Glick & Tartaglia, 2014), while bullying can be referred to as the repeated acts of an individual or group with the intention to harm an individual holding an inferior position of power (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014). While these two separate issues can occur independent of one another and in combination, gender based stereotyping and bullying both form critical barriers to female professionals.

This study explores the experiences of gender stereotyping and bullying of thirteen senior managers in Australia (eight women and five men). It fills a gap in the literature by connecting women’s experiences to strategies to overcome the barriers and move ahead.

The strategies women in this study used to attempt to address gender stereotyping and bullying were education, networking, mentoring and behaviours such as adopting masculine leadership and communication styles and using impression management tactics such as physical presentation and dress.

**Keywords:** Gender stereotypes, bullying, impression management, communication, gender.
4.2 Experiencing bullying and sexual harassment .......................................................... 53
4.3 Experiencing gender stereotypes ............................................................................. 57
   4.3.1 Women are perceived as not being capable ...................................................... 59
   4.3.2 Women are perceived as not understanding key aspects of being managerial ...... 61
   4.3.3 Women’s communication is perceived as being weak ....................................... 63
   4.3.4 Motherhood is perceived as meaning a lack of commitment ............................. 66
   4.3.5 Women are perceived as not wanting to be CEOs ........................................... 68
5. Strategies to overcome gender stereotyping and bullying ....................................... 71
   5.1 Networking and mentoring strategies .................................................................... 73
   5.2 Impression management strategies ....................................................................... 75
       5.2.1 Impression management through education .................................................. 77
       5.2.2 Impression management through verbal and non-verbal communication ....... 78
       5.2.3 Impression management through physical presentation and dress ............... 80
   5.3 Behaving like a man strategies ............................................................................. 84
       5.3.1 Adopt a masculine leadership style ............................................................... 86
       5.3.2 Communicate like men .................................................................................. 87
6. Conclusions .............................................................................................................. 90
   6.1 Themes .................................................................................................................. 91
       6.1.1 Gender stereotyping experiences ................................................................. 92
       6.1.2 Bullying experiences ...................................................................................... 92
       6.1.3 Strategies implemented by women to overcome gender stereotyping and bullying ..... 93
   6.2 Contribution to the existing research .................................................................... 96
   6.3 Implications for further research ........................................................................... 97
References .................................................................................................................... 101
Appendix A: Interview guide ....................................................................................... 127
Appendix B: Ethics Approval ....................................................................................... 8
1. Introduction

Female professionals in this study have faced gender stereotyping and bullying in the workplace. These have been prominent issues for each of the women in this study. Gender inequality in society and stereotypes of the innate qualities of men and women translate to gender inequality in the labour market.

Stereotypes continue to influence behaviour, may shape women and men’s choices of studies and jobs, and can lead to a gender-segregated labour market. Furthermore, while bullying (Rollero, Glick & Tartaglia, 2014) and gender stereotyping (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014) are two separate issues, they can be compounded for women in the workplace. Men are typically associated with critical thinking, self-confidence, being dominant, persistent, energetic and active. Women are stereotypically viewed as the opposite: that is, dependent, co-operative, obedient and weak (Blau et al., 2010; Urboniene, 2009; Simanskiene, 2006).

The gender stereotyping of women entering the workforce defines their identity in relation to family, while when men enter a workplace they are stripped of any familial or domestic identity (Wajcman 1998). Thus, gender roles which are performed in private life are often mirrored in the workplace where authority “is organized around family symbolism and power relations” (Wajcman, 1998 p.9). Stereotypes influence the unequal sharing between women and men of working time, income and family responsibilities. They also constitute barriers to women’s career advancement and appointment to decision-making positions (European Commission, 2009).

Over the past twenty years scholars, lawmakers and educators have given attention to bullying and aggressive behaviour in the workplace. Research in this area has focussed on
the key features of bullying behaviour that distinguish it from peer aggression and harassment.

Women experience multiple challenges when advancing up the career ladder. The women participants in this study have dealt with gender stereotyping and in some cases bullying throughout their career journey.

Females are not reaching senior management positions in the same numbers as men. Despite the continuing low numbers of women in senior management and CEO positions, a handful of successful and powerful women, such as Facebook’s COO Sheryl Sandberg and Vice President of Yahoo, Marissa Meyer, have been outspoken and sometimes controversial advocates in raising the profile of women in the workforce. These women are given media attention because they are considered unusual.

In Australia we have several advocates of gender equality, including Catherine Fox, author of 7 Myths about Women and Work, published in 2012, who is concerned with the notions that women do not want to work, and that women should act like men in the workplace. Fox asserts that, if talent can come from any part of the population, then those who succeed should represent a broad spectrum of backgrounds, ages, gender, and ethnicity, and asks whether motherhood can really be the only reason that the ASX200 have just 2.5% women chairs, 3% CEOs, 13.5% directors, and 8% executive managers (Australian Census of Women in Leadership cited in Fox, 2012). A former Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard spoke out vehemently against sexism and misogyny, demanding that the then Leader of the Opposition rethink the standards his words and actions set for the role of women in Australian public life and society in general (Sydney Morning Herald, October 10, 2012).
Equal Opportunity legislation in Australia has been in place since 1986, but despite this, women have continued to be treated differently in the workplace and hindered from reaching levels of senior management (Cullen & Christopher, 2012). In 2014, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) released their inaugural findings from comprehensive gender data provided by over 11,000 Australian employers. This dataset paints a disappointing picture of the extent and nature of gender diversity in workplaces throughout Australia. Around one-third of employers have no female key management personnel (KMPs) or general managers at all. As the following chart illustrates, women comprise 39.8% of general managers, but only 26.1% of KMPs and just 17.3% of CEOs. If we exclude those sectors that have been traditionally more supportive toward female promotion—healthcare, education, administration and support—the rate of female CEOs drops to a mere 7 percent.
WGEA Director Helen Conway said this ground-breaking data confirms Australian organisations are failing to maximise the potential of the country’s highly educated female talent pool. Similar proportions of women in senior management and on boards have been identified in surveys conducted by other organisations in Australia such as Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2010) the Centre of Economic Development (2013) and they are consistent with international reports such as Catalyst (2010) in the UK.

Scholarly studies also have identified a wide range of attitudes, issues and barriers that women face in respect of career advancement, including misogyny, stereotyping, and a variety of misconceptions about capability and ambition. This thesis focuses on strategies women are using in Australia to effectively overcome these behaviours and barriers.

1.1 Research question

The primary research question for this study is: How do women managers in Australia address their experience of gender stereotyping and bullying to advance their careers?

In order to unpack this question, I asked:

1. What strategies do women adopt to overcome gender stereotyping?
2. What strategies do women adopt to overcome bullying?
3. Do professional women adopt any type of behaviour in order to succeed in business in Australia?
1.2 Scope of this study

This study examines on-the-ground strategies that have been successfully used by women to address gender stereotyping and bullying in the workplace in Australia: networking and mentoring, impression management and behaving like a man. It examines the personal stories and opinions obtained through interviews of eight female and five male managers, about gender stereotyping, bullying and overcoming barriers to career advancement for women. The focus of this project is women’s experiences. Though some of the men discussed their own experiences with bullying, their opinions provide context and contrast for the experiences and opinions of the women managers. Although I did not specifically ask all the men and women in this study whether bullying had occurred during their career, it emerged throughout the study that four women and three men from the thirteen participants had been bullied. Further study may address whether women in Australian organisations are experiencing bullying, how they are managing it and whether there are differences in frequency and management to men.

While there has not been a consensus as to the effect of gender on bullying (Samnani & Singh, 2012), Welsh research on workplace bullying in the public sector found that 24 per cent of females and 17 percent of males stated that they experienced bullying (Lewis & Gunn, 2007). Furthermore, research by Salin (2001) found that women were often overrepresented among those classifying as being bullied, with the study demonstrating that prevalence of bullying grows higher with position superiority. American research by Namie (2003) also found that women made up 80 per cent of people bullied, and were more likely to be bullied by other women in 63 percent of cases.
Seven of the participants interviewed for this study are in their forties, one is in her 30’s, two are in their 50’s and two are in their 60’s. Twelve of the thirteen participants are married with children. They are, or have been, high-middle to executive managers in a wide range of sectors: accounting, law, academia, healthcare, printing, construction, air transport and automotive.

All the women in this study experienced gender stereotyping, except one who worked in healthcare.

Seven of thirteen participants were bullied - four women and three men. One female participant was bullied and sexually harassed by a man. All of the bullies were men, either peer or superior males in their workplace.

For the purposes of this thesis bullying and sexual harassment will be treated as one category as, regardless of these having different definitions and status under the law, women in real-life situations are using the same strategies for dealing with both. The women described their strategies for dealing with gender stereotyping and barriers to career advancement and the men described their opinions about what strategies women need to adopt in order to progress their careers in business. One of these strategies is categorised as: networking and mentoring – which was for some interviewees also connected with impression management. Impression management itself was another. This includes presentation, education and communication. Another was behaving like a man, including behaviour such as being open about ambition, communication styles and leadership styles. The women in the study were using male stereotypes to advance their careers.

In chapter 2, I review the literature on gender stereotyping and bullying in the workplace. I also examine the strategies: the nature and effectiveness of networking and
mentoring, impression management and behaving like a man. The literature review is structured to reflect each of the study’s questions in 1.1 and concludes with a summary of the research gap this thesis is aiming to address. I describe the methodological approach, including the open-ended interview style, data collection and analysis processes in chapter 3. I detail and analyse my data in chapters 4 and 5. This is organised around the study questions. My conclusions from this study and recommendations for future research are contained in chapter 6.
2. Literature review: Gender stereotyping and bullying. Experiences and strategies

This chapter reviews the literature relating to how female managers in Australia experience, manage, avert or overcome gender stereotyping and bullying. This is an important aspect of gender equality in the workplace. The literature to date does not connect women’s experiences of gender stereotyping and/or bullying with strategies to address the barriers and move ahead toward career advancement.

Despite an increase in women’s labour force participation (see Blyton & Dastmalchian, 2006; McCall, 2005), the rate of female appointments to the senior ranks of management in big business in Australia and throughout the world continues to lag significantly. There are many factors that contribute to the complexity of barriers that women face in their career advancement. The focus of this study is on two of these factors: gender stereotyping and bullying.

Gender stereotyping and bullying are issues professional women face in organisations. Women who possess power are at risk of a backlash. They suffer social and economic penalties for defying stereotypical expectations (Rudman, 1998). Rule-based gender stereotypes stipulate different acceptable behaviours for women and men and when these stereotypical rules are violated the perceivers react negatively (Phelan & Rudman, 2010).

Bullying includes behaviours, which are designed to belittle, such as humiliation, sarcasm, rudeness, overworking an employee, threats or violence (Dierickx, 2004; Djurkovic et al., 2004).
2.1 Gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping reinforces the subordination of women in the workplace. It impedes career success and justifies ongoing discrimination against women (Bell et al. 2002; Metz, 2001; 2009). The key stereotypes promote notions about the capability of women for management and leadership, such as social capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Palgi & Moore, 2004), networking and impression management, and the notion that managers are men. These stereotypes extend to labelling women’s communication style as weak, the idea that motherhood means a lack of commitment, and that classic explanation for lack of gender diversity in senior management, women do not want to be CEOs. Rudman and Phelan, 2010 in their research on prejudice toward female leaders state that expectations stemming from gender stereotypes play a role in impression management dilemma faced by professional women. Women are at risk of backlash by going against the stereotypes.

Research investigating descriptive gender stereotypes found that men are perceived to be more achievement oriented, competent and confident, that is more agentic than women. Women are perceived to be more people-oriented, warm and kind or communal than men (Basow, 1986; Williams & Best, 1990). These perceived differences in male and female characteristics are thought to come from traditional expectations for gender roles (with men serving as breadwinners and women as caregivers) and subsequent gender socialisation that encourages boys and girls not to behave like “the opposite sex” (Eagly, 1987). Despite the fact that women are now equally represented in the Australian workforce (46 percent of today’s workers are female; ABS (2016)), traditional gender stereotypes that align men with agency and the provider role and women with communality
and the caretaker role remain intact (Fiske & Stevens, 1993; Medin, 1989; Prentice & Miller, 2006; Spence, 1993).

2.1.1 What are gender stereotypes and how are they influential?

The word stereotype, first used by American journalist Walter Lippman in 1922, refers to the “pictures in our heads” of various social groups. Early social psychologists regarded them negatively, as rigid and oversimplified or biased perceptions and beliefs, associated with prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviours (Katz & Braly, 1933; Allport, 1954; English & English, 1958).

A gender stereotype consists of beliefs about psychological traits, characteristics and activities of men and women. Gender roles are defined by behaviours, and gender stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity. Gender roles and stereotypes are influential and establish social categories for gender. These categories represent how people think. Even when beliefs vary from reality, the beliefs can be very powerful (Brannon, 2004). Gender stereotyping involves the use of simplifying generalisations as a means of organizing perception and imposing often negative personal values on the world (Dimnik & Felton, 2000; Lippman, 1922).

Stereotypes are used to form and identify social groups, and influence our interaction with those identified as group members (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994). Stereotypes impact attitudes in workplaces. Emerging managers still perceive they need to act in line with masculine stereotypes, which are associated with leadership and being a good manager (Powell & Butterfield, 2002; Dimnik & Felton, 2000).

Popular representations also shape women’s perceptions of themselves. How a group is represented, presented over and over again in cultural forms influences how
members of groups see themselves and others like themselves. This influences how they are treated based on these representations (Dyer, 1993).

Although females now have an increased presence in middle management, compared with previous centuries and even previous decades, women continue to face difficulties breaking the glass ceiling and manoeuvring into the upper echelons of organisations (Eagly 2007). In the 2013 survey of the business community conducted by the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA), 93.2 percent of respondents stated there are barriers to women’s equality in the workplace and 51 percent of respondents (primarily women) said they have been discriminated against on the basis of gender. The CEDA study found that corporate culture conventions such as the association of leadership with male paradigms, inflexible working hours, home care duties, and the belief that women did not want to work were all barriers to female career success. Similarly, the Catalyst study in the United Kingdom found that senior women in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada agreed that male stereotyping and preconceptions of women’s roles and abilities are barriers to professional advancement, as are family commitments (Catalyst, 2000).

2.1.2 How do gender stereotypes become barriers to career advancement?

Women face obstacles in the workplace that do not allow them to reach full potential; preconceptions that narrow career possibilities, and the problem that women are often not valued according to their personal abilities (Howard & Wellins, 2008). There are firmly established stereotypes that suggest women possess poorer abilities and are not able to perform work that requires high levels of responsibility. Stereotypes of gender roles have been defined as a cultural and social approach towards what is traditionally considered
‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ roles and functions and might influence women and men’s work choices as well as create the labour market that is divided under genders (Kiausiene et al., 2011).

In every society and culture, women and men are perceived differently, and one of the greatest obstacles for women in the workplace is the societal view that a woman’s performance is associated with her private life e.g. home and family, and a man’s is associated with public life and professional performance (Jankauskaite, 1999). Human beings are brought up and educated in the surroundings of stereotypes such as ‘a woman’s job is in the family’, ‘a man has to support a family’ and ‘a woman has to look after them’, a ‘woman is a dependent’ and ‘a man cannot cry’ (Tereskinas, 2004). It continues to be widely held that women simply do not aspire to senior management, despite this myth being dispelled by surveys such as that commissioned by Bain and Chief Executive Women (Sanders et al., 2011) titled “what stops women from reaching the top?” The survey found that 76 percent of senior Australian female executives aspired to leadership positions.

Women hoping for career advancement must defeat such gender stereotypes by presenting themselves as competent, confident and assertive and ambitious (Dodge, Gilroy, & Fenzel, 1995; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Glick, Zion, & Nelson, 1988). Leadership is often seen as a contrast to the feminine stereotypes (Biernat & Fuegen, 2001; Foschi, 2000; Heilman, 1983). Women can attempt to overcome this by showing capability and becoming agentic; however, behaving counter-stereotypically can cause backlash, making women less likable and hireable, unlike men displaying similar behaviour (Rudman, 1998). Women are told they must act agentic to be perceived as qualified and at the same time they are penalised if they do so (see Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Parks-Stamm, Heilman, & Hearns, 2008; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; for reviews,
see Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Some women may choose not to be agentic but to be liked, which may undermine status and power (e.g., Catalyst, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 2008; Valian, 1999).

Gender stereotypes have been categorised in a number of ways. Jobs for the boys includes: the institutionalisation of processes for acquiring know-how and techniques from which women are generally excluded—such as all-male clubs and the old-boy network; using supposed client aversion to working with women to legitimise discrimination; and making inflexible working conditions—such as frequent business trips and late working hours—as criteria for performance appraisal. Men are managers – women are mothers, is the persistent mimicking of traditional attitudes and social values to support assumptions that women are not/cannot be managerial. The Never-ending story is a category of stereotypes that are perpetuated by society, governments, organisations, individuals, and even researchers (Dambrin & Lambert, 2012). This is reiterated by Fox, who points to the ubiquitous nature of gender stereotypes:

Many of us don’t even realise how deeply attached to a powerful male leadership model we are, even to the extent of preferring our leaders to have deep voices and greater height than average, as a number of studies have found. (Fox, 2012, p. 91)

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, whose research is influential in gender stereotyping in the workplace, asserted that

... organisations clearly reproduce themselves. People in power (who are mostly masculine men) mentor, encourage, and advance people who are most like themselves. Not surprisingly then, the handful of women who actually do achieve senior rank in organisations usually resemble the men in power. They have to emulate the masculine model in order to progress in the organisation. (Kanter, 1977 p. 72)
The passage of time has led to a strengthening in support for the stereotypical notion of management as masculine (Powell & Butterfield, 1979, 1984, 1987), a phenomenon that persists in the 21st century and changing it will require a cultural shift, as Catherine Fox asserts:

..., women are expected to be selfless, while self-orientation and competitiveness are accepted in males. As a society, we still struggle with the notion of female authority. .... It is undoubtedly a cultural problem and therefore cultures need to shift for female authority to thrive. (Fox, 2012, p.6)

Cultural stereotypes imply that women do not have what it takes to assume important leadership roles (Koenig et al., 2011) and women themselves having grown up in that culture are not necessarily aware of their attachment to the stereotypes (Fox, 2012). Consequently, women are neither seen, or see themselves as candidates for positions of leadership and authority. The phenomenon called “stereotype threat” occurs when a group is the subject of a stereotype and they tend to act in ways that confirm it, internalising the stereotypical ideas (Steele, 1997). Studies have suggested that women may be less motivated than men to meet the traditional requirements of a managerial role, and may fail to understand that if they emphasise feminine characteristics they fail to meet perceived requirements of a management role (Eagly, Karau, Miner & Johnson, 1994). There is a mismatch or role incongruity embedded within the perceived demands of leadership, which underlies the biased evaluations of women as leaders (Eagly, 2002). There is an inconsistency between the communal qualities such as being nice and being compassionate that people associate with women, and the agentic qualities of being assertive and competitive that are believed to be required for leadership success (Eagly, 2007). In many fields the presence of ‘blokey culture’ where men exclude women from social activities is
common, and may have a significant negative impact on their opportunities for promotion (for example the accounting sector, see Morley et al., 2002).

Stereotypes are often a potent barrier to women’s career advancement to positions of leadership. Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell and Ristikari (2011) stated that this is the consensus view, not just that of social and organisational psychologists, but also of women who have had experience as leaders (see also Glick & Fiske, 1996; Heilman & Parks-Stamm, 2007; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie & Reichard, 2008; Glick, 2007; Heilman, 1983; & Johnson, 2008.). A survey of 705 women at vice president level and above in Fortune 1,000 corporations found that 72 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “stereotypes about women’s roles and abilities” are a barrier to women’s career advancement to the highest levels (Wellington, Kropf, & Gerkovich, 2003).

It has been argued that gender inequality and its associated stereotypes lag behind economic and political changes, and that changes in the values of individuals are due to two factors: confirmation biases and institutionalisation (Ridgeway, 2007). Confirmation biases mean that people either see only what they expect, or forget they saw something different, or remember but dismiss it as an anomaly. Institutionalisation comes from the shared stereotypes portrayed in the media, the law, and government policies etc., which are then assumed to be notions held by the majority even if an individual no longer supports them.

Gender stereotyping can lead to workplace practices that reinforce the subordination of women. Research by Stamarski & Son Hing (2015) proposes that gender inequality in larger society is also seen in organisational structures, processes and practices, thereby influencing the overall culture of an organisation. Therefore, organisational culture can contribute to gender based discrimination within the workplace, as gender stereotyping can result in the devaluing of female employee performance and the denial of credit for
their accomplishments (Heilman 2001). Women may not be portrayed as leaders. Discriminatory behaviour is more likely to occur in organisations where established leaders openly express or act on stereotypes as it conveys permission for others to behave in the same way. (Crandall, Eshleman & O’Brien, 2002). Furthermore, peer endorsement gives credence and legitimacy to discriminatory stereotypes, even for individuals with private doubts about the validity of such notions, who assume that the general consensus must be right (Cialdini, 1993).

### 2.1.3 What specific gender stereotypes form barriers to career advancement for women?

There are a number of specific gender stereotypes that women face in the workplace. As well as describing these stereotypes, this section throws light on how the stereotypes have significantly influenced the methodology and analysis of certain studies.

#### 2.1.3.1 Women are not capable

Many studies over recent decades have shown that men are generally viewed as competent and agentic with respect to the activities that matter most such as instrumental rationality, whereas women are generally viewed as less competent and capable except with respect to care-giving and communal activities, that is, tasks that are less valued. Indeed such myths have even been perpetuated by studies which, for example, examined the performance of male-owned and female-owned businesses and consistently reported that the female-owned businesses underperform. Researchers such as Alicia M. Robb and John Watson provide evidence that most of those prior studies have used inappropriate performance measures and failed to take into consideration demographic differences which in fact explain the variations in firm performance, and they found no significant differences
between female and male owned businesses in terms of survival rates or return on investments (Robb & Watson, 2012).

Other studies have shown that despite some differences in style, female leaders are overall no less effective than males (Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995; Thompson, 2000). Meta-analysis of a significant number of studies suggests that although the differences in leadership style of females and males are statistically significant, the differences in effectiveness are quite small, and the individual’s gender is not a reliable indicator of the type of manager they will be (Eagly et al., 2003). A study at a global pharmaceutical company in Australia by McColl-Kennedy and Anderson (2005) showed that women managers produced the highest levels of optimism and commitment among their subordinates, irrespective of their gender. Such studies confirm that the stereotypical notion of women’s lack of management capability is founded merely on the assumption that if it is not the same it is not as good, and that the stereotype is based solely on perceptions and not reality.

2.1.3.2 Women do not understand key aspects of being managerial

Women are perceived to be unaware of the need for social capital, which is investment in social relations through networking that brings expected returns. Women often give the impression of not being available (e.g. for overtime) and do not speak in commercial terms such as profit and loss and do not network enough (Lin, 1999). These are key aspects of being managerial and are required to advance up the career ladder. Studies have shown that women are fully aware of them but may be prohibited by “a number of underlying organizational processes that impact negatively on their ability to access these networks” (Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2010, p. 537) or that in fact they do successfully utilise these strategies. Social capital, a key aspect of being managerial can be a source of
competitive advantage to both individuals and their employing organisation (Tymon & Stumpf, 2003), however the literature also indicates there may be a gender related issues which influence the nature of women’s social capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Palgi & Moore, 2004). Bourdieu (1984) states that women have fewer social resources than men, and that this may contribute to their paucity in senior organizational positions. Gender has an impact on social capital in that women usually have less of it.

One interpretation is that men excel at strategically building crucial professional relationships.... Despite this perception that women ‘don’t get it,’ women as well as men are generally aware of the importance of social capital (Eagly & Carli 2007, pp. 144–5)

There is a general perception that women are not as effectively networked as men, which may be accurate, but this position is a consequence of a number of underlying organisational processes rather than a reflection that women do not understand the reality of how organisations work (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Networking activity can require long hours which can be an obstacle to women (and men) with family responsibilities, however there is a danger in this as women not working long hours can feed into the stereotype that women do not understand one of the key aspects of being managerial, which is long hours. Many organisational norms follow assumptions about men’s rather than women’s lives and situations, (Sheppard, 1992, p. 152) which often includes the expectation of overtime when work is demanding. Firm based socialising is also considered a normal part of the sacrifice of family or leisure time (Anderson-Gough et al., 2005.) Informal activities such as after work drinking can often be a primary form of organisation communication, whereby informal networks are created and a wealth of business information is exchanged (Rutherford 2011). The exclusion of women from these forms of workplace socialisation stems from gender
stereotyping and is a form of bullying, as ex-director of British Gas Hilary Williams found that she was often excluded from networking with business clients when it included activities such as golf, dinner parties and clay pigeon shooting (Rutherford 2011).

Women are often perceived as not being assertive and decisive. These are stereotypes of male leadership, which results in a ‘lack of fit’ between women and leadership (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983, 2001). Although women are often increasingly being perceived as more agentic (e.g. ambitious, self-reliant, and competitive) these traits are seen as less desirable for women (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). For example, Ely (1994) found that female subordinates in male-dominated law firms (those with less than 15 percent of the partners being female) had negative attitudes towards female partners in their firm, criticising them for acting like men, perceiving them to have unpleasant personalities, and viewing their authority as illegitimate.

2.1.3.3 Women’s communication is weak

Female communication styles which are less direct and authoritative, more supportive, collaborative and inclusive, are often perceived by male managers as tentative and lacking in confidence, and as such are used as grounds for women being evaluated as less capable and competent (Sheridan, 2007). Female communication styles, such as the tendency to share praise and not to boast, although they contribute to team solidarity and confidence, are also perceived as reflecting women’s lack of achievement, lack of ambition and lack of desire for promotion (Sheridan, 2007).

Research in linguistics (for example Brenner et al., 1989; Eagly et al., 1992; Mulac & Bradac, 1995; Tannen, 1994; Thimm et al., 2004) as well as popular management sources (for example Bolinger, 1980; Harragan, 1976; Hennig & Jardim, 1977; O’Brien, 1993; Rosener, 1990; Tannen, 1986; 1990; 1994) have addressed women’s communication styles
at work. Women’s communication is more indirect, quieter, more narratively focused and towards the private sphere, not the public (Cameron, 2005). Tannen (1994) and Cameron (2005) point out there is nothing subordinate about women’s typical communication styles; rather women’s styles are constructed as subordinate in women’s interactions with men, the dominant group in most societies. Barrett (2009) says many of the management advice sources either explicitly or implicitly advise women about gender related speech practices and how they can help or hinder career progress. Some advise women to adopt the powerful direct speaking styles stereotypical of men. The overall theme of Lois Frankel’s bestseller “Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office” is that women can reach senior positions by becoming more like men. Frankel states that from early childhood, girls are taught that their well-being and success is dependent upon acting in certain ways such as being polite whilst smiling, soft-spoken, compliant and relationship oriented. Throughout a woman’s life this is reinforced by media, family and social messages. It is not that women consciously self-sabotage, rather they act in ways consistent with learning experiences (Frankel, 2004). Powell and Ely agree with Frankel and state women may achieve success but do so by acting and behaving like men (Powell, 1993; Ely, 1994). Others argue that if women act more like men they will become uncomfortable (Weiss & Fisher, 1998.) Case (1993) believes imposing male norms on women means they may be penalised for not conforming to feminine norms and ideals.

According to DuBrin there are several communication style differences in women. For many women conversation is used to build rapport and connect with others, while listening intently and being supportive is intended to connect with the other. Men use talk as a means to preserve independence and build status. Women compliment more than men and also use phrases “I’m Sorry” and Thank You” more often even when this is not
necessary. This could be perceived as ‘soft’ which is not necessarily the right impression to make when trying to gain a position on the board or a senior executive position in the company (DuBrin, 2010).

Women may find it easier in organisations that are more in tune with a feminised style, which is more nurturing and relational (Maxwell and Ogden, 2006). Frankel (2004) agrees with both Ely (1994) and Powell (1993) that although women may naturally communicate successfully in such an environment, women can do equally well in a male dominated environment when communicating like a male. A study conducted by Barrett in 2004 investigated the communication styles of senior female managers in Australia and questioned whether they valued masculine, feminine or mixed ‘adaptive’ communication strategies for a set of specific workplace dilemmas. That study found that senior female managers valued masculine approaches (Barrett, 2004).

2.1.3.4 Motherhood means lack of commitment

Another enduring myth or stereotype is that motherhood signals a lack of commitment to the organisation. Ironically, it has been observed that male accountants with children are perceived to be more stable and reliable and are viewed more favourably for advancement, while female accountants with children are perceived to be less economically viable for the firm’s long-term business (Windsor & Auyeung, 2006).

Cuddy, Fiske & Glick (2004) report that when “working women become mothers, activating a traditional role, they lose perceived competence and gain perceived warmth” and that managers are less interested in hiring, promoting and training working mothers than childless women. A study by Correll, Benard & Paik (2007) showed that higher standards of punctuality and performance are expected of working mothers.
This myth persists even in countries such as France, where women are encouraged by government policies to return to work after maternity leave, and indeed do return, but continue to be penalized for pregnancy and maternity in their career prospects in sectors such as audit firms (Lupu, 2012).

In a study conducted by Kumra and Vinnicombe (2010) female consultants reported that they were careful about how being unable to meet work priorities was handled when they needed to leave work early or could not work overtime. A participant of their 2010 study spoke about keeping quiet about her children as commitment needed to be given to the firm, not the children:

“I think it’s definitely a requirement to show great commitment to the firm, which means not having children, or if you do have children, keep extremely quiet about that. It’s long hours and not just that; flexibility, foreign travel, being able to drop everything and go off to the other side of the world”. (Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2010, p 531).

2.1.3.5 Women do not want to be CEOs

The myth that women simply do not aspire to senior management should have been dispelled by surveys such as that by Bain and Chief Executive Women in 2011 titled “what stops women from reaching the top?” which found that 74 percent of senior Australian female executives and 76 percent of senior Australian female executives aspired to leadership positions (Fox, 2012). According to Anna McPhee, the Director of Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency

Australian women are just as ambitious as men and want the opportunity to develop their skills. Persisting the gender bias and old school policies regarding flexible working conditions and work life balance continue to hamper female’s positive participation in the workforce” (EOWA, 2008, p.9)
The 2008 Generation F (women between 16 and 65 years) report found women and men have the same aspirations for their careers. ‘Australian women – Generation F – are highly skilled, just as ambitious as men and want the opportunity to develop their skills. But persisting gender bias and old-school policies regarding flexible working conditions and work-life balance continue to hamper Generation F’s positive participation in the workforce,’ said Anna McPhee, EOWA Director at the time.

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However, as the findings of this study will show, the stereotype still persists. Power motivation, defined as an interpersonal difference in the desire to influence others, (McClelland, 1985; Miner, 1978) could be an important factor linked to the desire to become CEO. Individuals who score high on this motivation strive to attain positions that provide them with impact and authority. Examining gender differences in power motivation as one reason for the underrepresentation of female leaders is not new however; the majority of primary studies on this topic was conducted between 1970 and 1985 and was explorative in nature. There have been no recent studies on this topic (for reviews of the traditional studies, see Eagly et al., 1994; Winter 1988). It is plausible to expect that during the past 30 years, the profound societal changes that have taken place may have altered patterns in power motivation (Diekman & Eagly 2000). Supporting this argument, a recent meta-
analysis demonstrates the overlap between the female gender role and the leadership role has increased in recent decades (Koenig et al., 2011).

2.2 Bullying

Bullying has been defined as repeated exposure to actions intended to injure or demean another person through words, physical contact, gestures or exclusion from a group of peers, over a period of time (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014). It involves a difference in power between bully and victim derived from physical, verbal, intellectual, financial, racial, gender, or sexual status or capability (Olweus, 1992). Workplace bullying includes behaviors, which are designed to belittle, such as humiliation, sarcasm, rudeness, overworking an employee, threats or violence (Dierickx, 2004; Djurkovic et al., 2004). It can also include name calling, sexual harassment, making the victim a scapegoat or applying undue work pressure (Harvey et al., 2006).

Researchers have described as many as seven types of bullying, including direct physical bullying, direct verbal bullying, relational aggression, scapegoating (drawing attention to a victim to reduce attention on the bully for a failure of the group), sexual harassment, increasing work pressure and/or load, and destabilisation of the workplace through failure to credit the individual for his or her successes or setting up the individual for failure (Harvey et al., 2006). Furthermore, there are many kinds of organisational misconduct that contribute to the creation of negative workplace events, where some acts of workplace bullying also being workplace corruption (Vickers 2014).

It is difficult to confirm the prevalence of workplace bullying as estimates vary. In Australia, the government of Victoria conducted a survey of 14,000 public sector workers and found 20 percent of employees had been bullied or harassed by managers or colleagues.
in the past year, with another 40 percent witnessing others being abused (Tomazin, 2006). In the UK, a survey of 3,000 nurses found that nearly 25 percent of respondents reported being bullied or harassed at work in 2005, in comparison with only 17 percent revealing being harassed or bullied in 2000 (Lipley, 2006). In the United States, several studies indicated rates of bullying in the workplace varying from 38 percent to 90 percent throughout individuals’ work careers (Glendinning, 2001). In the United Kingdom, Lewis (2006) conducted a qualitative study exploring experiences of bullying among ten British women targets, all of whom worked in professional public sector jobs. After data were collected using interviews and analysed through grounded theory methods, several themes emerged from these women struggling to identify and cope with bullying. These terms included: (1) minimizing interpersonal difficulties, (2) preserving self, (3) maintaining commitments to professional and organizational values and cultures, (4) sickness explanations, and (5) naming the problem. While these may be seen as having developed positive strategies to being bullied (e.g., preserving self, maintaining commitments to professional and organizational values and cultures), others are maladaptive, both for the employee and the organisation and it does not address changing the culture (Crothers et al., 2009).

2.3 Career advancement strategies: Networking, finding a mentor and impression management

There is current literature that focuses on the importance of networking and mentoring, in particular females using networks to find new positions (Sheridan, 2001; Portes, 1998) and use of impression management tactics to advance career.
Mentoring programs are increasingly popular within graduate programs and leadership programs. Prior research demonstrates that when women work with a male mentor they may have more success than with a female mentor (Dougherty, Dreher, Arunachalam, & Wilbanks, 2013; Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2010). There is literature on impression management, particularly the work of Goffman (1959); Leary & Kowalski (1990) and Wayne & Kacmar (1991) that demonstrate creating a favourable image is linked to career advancement.

### 2.3.1 Networking and mentoring


Studies undertaken by Dougherty, Dreher, Arunachalam, and Wilbanks (2013) and Kumra and Vinnicombe (2010) have confirmed that having a mentor, and in particular having a high-status senior male as mentor, is measurably beneficial to career advancement and remuneration for women. Having a high-status, established male mentor provides women with increased visibility, legitimacy and credibility, as well as organisational sponsorship, which are particularly needed for women in male-gendered occupations or organisations. It is also critical for the mentor or sponsor to be the right sort of person: “... someone who is themselves well thought of in the firm, has access to key career-enhancing resources (for example, to challenging and career enhancing assignments) and who has ‘clout at board level’.” (Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2010, p. 538)

Tymon and Stumpf (2003) argue that career success depends on the nature and
quality of personal relationships that we now refer to as social capital. Empirical evidence also shows that managers’ social capital, especially their relationships with people in other organisations, aids advancement. These relationships can provide valuable information, special access to help and resources and career sponsorship.

Studies have shown that access to social capital becomes particularly helpful when seeking to advance to senior management positions (Metz & Tharenou, 2001) and also to boards of directors. Managers with more social capital get higher returns on their human capital (the sum of an individual’s knowledge and experience) because they are well positioned to identify and develop career-enhancing opportunities. For example, knowing the right people and being well connected can provide access to opportunities essential to gaining relevant skills and experience (Anderson-Gough et al., 2005).

Although it is helpful for women to network and know the right people, women are often excluded from both formal and informal networks, which negatively impacts on their ability to accumulate both human and social capital (see Coe, 1992; Charlesworth, 1997; O’Leary and Ickovics, 1992; Ohlott et al., 1994; Travers & Pemberton, 2000). Women have historically faced exclusion from access to important organisational circles (Kanter, 1977; O’Leary and Ickovics, 1992; Powell & Mainiero, 1992; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Although engaging in networking behaviour is one means by which women facilitate their advancement, the barriers they face are more difficult than those faced by men.

2.3.2 Impression management

Impression management is set of techniques adopted by the individual and aimed at making a favourable impression. It is often referred to in public relations and professional communications to describe the process of image creation or personal branding—
increasingly significant in this age of social media—and includes establishing and maintaining a particular image or identity inside and outside the workplace (Rosenfeld, Giacolone & Riordan, 1995; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Tedeschi & Riess, 1981; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984).

Impression management can be an effective tool for career advancement. Managing favourable images has been linked to higher career advancement for women (Wayne & Kacmar, 1991; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Impression management has multiple elements and characteristics. Women and men often use the various tactics in different ways and for different means.

The work of Erving Goffman is influential in this research, namely his seminal work of 1959, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Types of impression management include self-promotion, opinion conformity, or defensive behaviours used to repair or protect one’s image (van Iddekinge, Raymark, Eidson & Attenweiler, 2007).

Communication skills and styles are important for impression management and leadership, which as a theory has its roots in the study of non-verbal communication. Research by Alex Todorov and colleagues from Harvard University indicates that people make their initial assessments within 100 milliseconds of meeting someone. Judgements are made on the other’s attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, competence and aggressiveness. Once these impressions are formed they are likely to become ingrained (Todorov, 2011). Balancing two important aspect of one’s image—warmth and competence—via verbal and non-verbal communication styles, is central to impression management. Warmth can be signalled in a variety of ways such as: eye contact, nodding, smiling, orienting the body toward the other, leaning forward, postural openness and relaxed, and non-intrusive hand gestures (Cuddy, Glick & Beninger, 2011). Whereas
competence is inferred by others from non-verbal behaviours such as expansive and open postures, firm handshakes. Furthermore, people feel more competent, and therefore give the impression of greater competence, when they practice posing in powerful postures just prior to stressful situations, such as speeches, negotiations and job interviews (Cuddy, Wilmuth & Carney, 2011).

The literature on charismatic leadership identifies self-image and self-presentation as two key elements for charismatic image building (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Gardner & Avolio, 1998; de Vries, 1988). Self-image being one’s perception and description of oneself in terms of relevant features, characteristics and identities (Schlenker, 1980).

Impression management involves two discrete processes: impression motivation and impression construction (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Impression motivation is the degree to which people are motivated to control how others see them and is a function of three factors: the goal-relevance of the impressions one creates, the value of desired outcomes, and the discrepancy between current and desired images. The second process, impression construction, involves five factors which determine the kinds of impressions people endeavour to construct: the self-concept, desired and undesired identity images, role constraints, target’s values, and current social image. Once motivated to create certain impressions, behaviours may be altered to affect other’s impressions of them.

Men and women use impression management differently to gain power and success in an organisation. For example, men will apply for roles where they only meet three out of five of the key selection criteria whereas females will not apply for the same role unless they meet all of the selection criteria (Swift & Gruben, 2000). Females will often not speak of their achievements in the same way men do.
Managing the impression of availability is important for women and confirmed by Kumra & Vinnicombe 2010 in the study named ‘Impressing for Success’. Women managers in the study said that impression management relating to availability was most significant. There is an assumption that women will need to take care of family responsibilities and responding to this with the impression of being there (in the workplace) and being fully available is important. Underpinning this is the implicit model of the ideal employee, i.e. the person who will be available, make personal sacrifices, travel at short notice and relocate to address an organisational problem. The employee who can meet these needs is someone with either no or very limited family obligations. Women are less likely to fit this model of the perfect employee (Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2010). Even women without children are unable to fit the ideal if it is perceived that they are mothers or potential mothers (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

2.3.3 Behaving like a man

Gender inequality is still prevalent in organisations. Since the 1980s, attention has been given to how masculinity is experienced, performed and negotiated in work (Godfrey et al., 2012; Kerfoot & Knights, 1993; Morgan, 1992; Simpson, 2004; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). Existing scholarship focuses on men, management and patriarchy (Acker, 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 1997; Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Kerfoot & Knights, 1992, 1998; Morgan, 1992; Pringle et al., 2011). These studies show how management is closely linked to masculinity and is centred on effectiveness, toughness and control.

Emerging female managers perceive they need to act in line with masculine stereotypes, which are associated with being a good manager (Powell & Butterfield, 2002). There are social practices expected in organisations that comprise of social practices using
masculine models, stereotypes and symbols in management (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Kanter, 1977; Kerfoot & Knights, 1993; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Knights & Tullberg, 2012). A successful manager is by definition male and will embody masculine values and norms commonly associated with the techniques and style of management embedded in a ‘discourse of masculinism’ (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993). When women do not adopt a masculine style of leadership and behave like a man, they risk being perceived as lacking qualities expected of strong leaders (Rudman & Phelan, 2010; Wajcman 1998).

A 2009 study conducted by Barrett investigated the communication styles of senior female managers in Australia and questioned whether they valued masculine, feminine or mixed ‘adaptive’ communication strategies for a set of specific workplace dilemmas. The study found that senior female managers valued masculine approaches (Barrett, 2009). A survey of 461 auditors by Maupin and Lehman (1994), described in ‘Talking Heads: Stereotypes, Status, Sex-Roles and Satisfaction of Female and Male Auditors’ reported that 100 percent of the male and female auditors who achieved the level of partner displayed “high stereotypic male characteristics”.

Women leaders in traditionally male dominated environments are under pressure to adopt non-threatening leadership selves, to camouflage aspects of their gender, their children, and their sexualities, and to making themselves appear more male (Thomas, Mills & Helms-Mills, 2004; Thomas & Graham, 2005).

Watkins and Smith (2012) reported that for women working in male dominated organisations, political skill “… the ability to understand situations, influence others, and identify and capitalize on powerful coalitions at work” (p. 207) can enhance career advancement. They also suggested that such political skills could be learned and cultivated through training and mentoring.
2.4 Research gap

There are numerous barriers to career advancement for female professionals. This study covers a very small area of this complex topic. To date there have been studies on gender stereotyping, bullying, impression management, female leadership, gender, money and power, which explore some of the challenges women experience.

However, gaps remain in the literature that relate to connections between the barriers, such as gender stereotyping and bullying. Are women bullied when they behave counter to the gender stereotype e.g. express ambition? Research by Heilman (2001) suggests that prescriptive gender stereotypes of what women should be like have a negative effect on women’s workplace progression. When women behave in a way that contradicts gender norms, for example are competent or assertive, they elicit criticism and are at a disadvantage in regards to upward mobility (Heilman, 2001).

The other gap is in connecting barriers and strategies used to address and overcome these barriers. For instance, learning how to deal with bullying early in a career could be linked to strategies used to overcoming barriers to later career advancement, such as networking. Mentoring can help women avoid gender stereotyping and/or bullying.

This lack of emphasis on strategies used to overcome barriers also means that ‘behaving like a man’ is not recognised as a strategy to overcome gender stereotyping or bullying.

The gaps in the literature connecting gender stereotyping, bullying, networking, mentoring and impression management means that some questions remain unasked.

a. What strategies do women use to address gender stereotyping at work?
b. How important are networking and mentoring for women in the workplace?

c. Which impression management tactics work best when dealing with gender stereotypes?

d. Does ‘behaving like a man’ help a woman’s career?

e. How can organisations modify their culture to ensure women at work are enabled?

In this thesis I addressed the first three questions.
3. Methodology

In this chapter I begin with a brief discussion of the methodological choices that underpin the approach I have taken and how the themes of the study emerged. Then I describe the research processes: evolution of the research question, recruitment of participants and conducting the interviews. I reflect on how my business experience and previous quantitative research shaped the question, the process of interviewing and memo writing. I detail the way in which I analysed the data with the help of NVivo, a software program used to analyse qualitative data.

3.1 My rationale for this study

It is important to note that my personal experiences led me to research in this area. I have become aware that it is important for researchers to understand the role of self in the creation of knowledge and to self monitor the impact or influence of their personal believes, biases and their own experiences on the research (Berger, 2015). The researcher’s personal position include personal characteristics, such as gender, age, race and personal experiences, beliefs, biases, preferences and personal responses to the participant (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Finlay, 2000; Hamzeh and Oliver, 2010; Horsburgh, 2003; Kosygina, 2005, Padgett, 2008; Primeau, 2003). The positions of the researcher can affect the research in various ways according to Berger, 2015. Participants may be more willing to share their experiences with a researcher whom they perceive as sympathetic to their situation (De Tona, 2006). This can cause participants to become more willing to share with someone they feel comfortable with. The world view and background of the researcher
affects the way in which he or she constructs the world, uses language, poses questions, and chooses the lends for filtering information gathered form participants and making meaning of it, and thus shaping the findings and conclusions of the study (Kacen and Chaiten, 2006).

My work as the founder and director of a communications agency and as a lecturer in media and communications has impacted my research. Impression management and personal branding is one of the areas of core business in my communications agency. Throughout my career in business and media I have held the view that impression management can make a positive contribution to female career advancement. My interest in female career advancement comes from my background and career to date. I have observed that in media and business, men are paid more and gain more senior positions than women. Females are expected to look a certain way for on-camera and administration positions.

I have field experience in assisting others improve their career success through personal branding, a modern umbrella term used to encompass image and impression management. This includes training on verbal and non-verbal communication. I have assisted politicians, executives and celebrities improve their physical presentation and public image by improving their personal brand. My personal experience led to my original research question ‘do influence, image and impression management contribute to female career success in business and politics in Australia?’
3.2 Methodological framework

There are two commonly used paradigms in conducting research (Patton, 1998, p.37). The first, a logical-positivist paradigm uses quantitative and experimental methods to test hypothetical-deductive generalisations. The second, phenomenological inquiry which Hassard (1993) also called an interpretive paradigm, uses qualitative and naturalist approaches to understand human experience in context-specific settings inductively and holistically. My study uses a qualitative-interpretive approach, seeking to identify behaviour, beliefs, attitudes or knowledge that are implicit as well as explicit in the interviews.

Interpretivism employs inductive reasoning, which begins with specific observations and attempts to make sense of the situation. This process requires an understanding of the multiple dimensions that emerge from the data, therefore immersion in the data is essential. It must occur without the researcher imposing pre-existing theories or expectations that do not match the patterns in the data (Urquhart, 1997; Patton, 1998). Interpretivism works hand in hand with grounded theory, as by inductive reasoning ‘a theory is induced or emerged after data collection starts’ (Glaser, 1978, p.37). I have consistently adopted an interpretivist approach, endeavouring to immerse myself in the data, to identify themes and exceptions, and trying at all times to avoid imposing my own experiences and expectations onto the data analysis. The interpretive methodology interprets meaning and perspectives on subjects and how the meanings are interpreted (Trujillo, 1992). It involves an insider perspective on social phenomena and how individuals construct meanings, interpret and reinterpret their worlds and make their meanings inter-subjectively to others (Hallebone & Priest, 2009). The interpretative point of view is where both reality and
knowledge are constructed and reproduced through communication, interaction, and practice. This paradigm suggests it is necessary to analyse from the actor’s viewpoint and gain empathic insight into other’s viewpoints, beliefs and attitudes (Tracy 2012). Such a method is appropriate to investigate studies such as this, which involve interpreting and understanding of the meanings and experiences of the interviewees.

Qualitative research encompasses a variety of methods variously referred to as interpretive, naturalistic, phenomenological or ethnographic, which identify the form and nature of a phenomenon (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Taylor & Trujillo, 2001). A qualitative methodology emphasises inductive, interpretive methods to describe and explain events in the every-day world (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001). This study has been concerned with words, stories and lived experiences, rather than quantification or statistical analysis. My goal has been to discover what factors are significant to real people in real situations; rather than attempting to test or prove predefined hypotheses. In doing so I have drawn on two key methodological approaches: grounded theory and interpretivism.

Grounded theory, used as an approach in this study, is a term referring to both a research methodology and the end theoretical product (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Weed, 2009). Grounded theory was considered revolutionary in the 1960s due to the social sciences being dominated by quantitative approaches to research. Qualitative research was seen as insufficiently rigorous and scientific (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss aimed at generating (as opposed to testing) theories and focussed on people’s perceptions of their situations as the basis of understanding their actions. They also acknowledged that perceptions could be redefined by social interaction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The basis of grounded theory is to use multiple techniques to ensure there is a fit between the data and theory. This is done by sorting data through the use of codes.
Categories emerge as data that is coded is analysed. Codes are descriptive labels of what the data is about. The term ‘category’ refers to theoretical concepts that classify patterns in the data and enable researchers to explain and predict behavior. Each category has properties that define or elaborate the meaning of the category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The central tasks of much qualitative research are to extract and abstract - to locate significant themes in complex data, consider them together and abstract from them, providing rich descriptions, categories and theories. This involves noting text of importance, differentiating between different threads in data, jotting notes and reflecting on the tiny insights and recognition of themes that are often the beginnings of theory (Richards, 1999 p. 108).

In this research I sorted and coded the data and sought to extract themes while taking notes and memos and then reflecting further. There is a danger in grounded theory that accepting the respondents’ assumptions and beliefs could intrude into the researcher’s analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and grounded theory research is also theoretically sensitive to the researcher’s training and education (Glaser, 1978). Experiences result in the researcher asking certain kinds of broad questions, essential in conceptualising and formulating a theory as the data is analysed. Theoretical sensitivity also means the researcher must be passionate about the research being conducted and must have some familiarity with the area of research and skilled to cultivate insights gained from previous experiences or those that may occur in future (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
3.3 Evolution of the research question

As would be the case for all qualitative researchers, my own stories and experiences motivate me to research, explore and examine the issues that I find most significant and perturbing. Others have also noted that focusing on points similar to that in one’s own life can provide important lessons about larger societal structures and problems (Tracy, 2012). My observations and field work have led to the original research question. My own career experience underpinned the interactions with participants, nevertheless I have endeavoured to remain alert to these issues throughout my project.

The focus of this study changed during the data collection processes; themes emerged that were not anticipated, and the study that had begun with a focus on career advancement and impression management evolved into one where gender stereotyping and bullying became prominent topics. As is to be expected given a grounded theory/interpretivist approach, during the course of this study some key topics of interest changed or changed focus.

This research was originally intended to focus on impression management and the topic of dress. At my fourth interview a participant reported she had been told to stop dressing like a teacher in order to get her promotion (on the executive team). She remarked “the person (male) who got the job was great at impression management. He was tall, charming and wore a suit”. He was also a bully, and at the time of interview was bullying the participant and some of her staff.

This is the point in my study where bullying first emerged. At the fifth interview bullying and gender stereotyping emerged again as that participant shared her story of being bullied in her earlier career. In other interviews, including those with males, this topic
continued to be raised and I started to look at bullying and gender stereotyping more closely. Then the interview guide changed to reflect the implications of bullying and gender stereotyping.

It also emerged that women were using essentially the same strategies to manage or overcome bullying and to manage or overcome gender stereotypes, for example, “I was so determined I wasn’t going to allow it (the bullying) to happen again that I ensured I had two Masters degrees and behaved like a man”. In this way, the focus of my study shifted to look at bullying and gender stereotypes and the strategies that Australian women are using to manage these experiences.

The literature review has informed the research process and theory development of my project. Some researchers see existing literature as merely additional data for study (for example, see Glaser 1978; 1992; 2001; 2003). Others suggest that the literature informs both the research process and theory development but that pre-existing knowledge can prejudice the analytical process, positing that if not overdone initially, the knowledge of literature only enhances theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin 1990; 1998). Strauss and Corbin suggest conducting a preliminary literature review at the onset of study and reviewing the literature again, more extensively, once a grounded theory begins to emerge. This is what occurred in my study and as the data emerged on bullying and gender stereotyping, a review of the literature on those topics was conducted.

3.4 Participant selection

Initially, the participant selection was to be from the big four accounting firms. Extensive contact was made with partners, HR managers and employees at Deloitte, KPMG, EY and Price Waterhouse Coopers and a legal committee from Deloitte met twice to discuss
my request to interview staff. It was decided I should not be given access and consequently the participant selection processes was broadened considerably. The key criteria for participant selection were changed to be professionals in business and government who have reached senior executive or director level in the organisation.

Participants both known and unknown to me in business within Australia were approached. They were selected from my network, the business community, and involved snowball sampling. This approach has been described as the use of individuals and groups to champion a cause to gain access to potential participants (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). There may be an aspect of voluntary participation that arises from the snowball sample called the self-selection bias, that is, participants who may be more open and interested in the topic than the general sample population (Costigan & Cox, 2001).

I began by contacting people via LinkedIn, outlining my research aims and requesting interviews. Although there was initial interest, no interviews took place from this recruitment method. I also directly contacted people, by phone or email, that I had worked with at some stage of my career, knew from my career as a non-executive director and managing director, or had met during my Master of Business Administration (MBA) studies. This recruitment method proved successful. Some of the early participants said they enjoyed their interview and provided referrals to colleagues they thought might be suitable and interested. I approached these potential participants either by phone or email to arrange to meet.

In this study, it was men who were more inclined to follow through with the interview. Women were interested in the topic and expressed support and sometimes enthusiasm; however it was more difficult to schedule interviews with them and multiple
time changes occurred. It is difficult to ascertain why this happened and the interviews eventually occurred.

Eight female and five male managers at senior and executive levels of government, corporate, education and health were selected giving a total sample size of fourteen. I have changed the names, occupations and status of the participants in order to maintain the confidentiality of those who shared their stories with me. The following table describes the research sample and provides general information about each participant, providing context to his or her experiences and opinions.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Parental status</th>
<th>Business Sector</th>
<th>Management Level</th>
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<td>Married</td>
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<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Has children</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Executive Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciara</td>
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<td>No children</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical</td>
<td>Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Has children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
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<td>Married</td>
<td>Has children</td>
<td>Air transport</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Has children</td>
<td>Professional Services</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rani</td>
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<td>Married</td>
<td>Has children</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Printing</td>
<td>Director</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Has children</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were asked to schedule one hour. They were offered a choice of location for the interviews and provided with a consent form, which outlined the project, its aims and the general themes of the interview. It was made clear the project had been approved by the ethics committee. The interviews were conducted face to face or using Skype, either in the offices of the participants or at RMIT University.

3.5 Interviews and data collection

The interviews were intended to be open-ended, to uncover opinions, thoughts and experiences of the participants. The general strategy was to begin with broad questions and follow up on the interviewee’s responses, to capture their meanings and to avoid imposing my personal values on the interviewee.

An interview guide was developed, with questions designed to gain insight into the opinions and experiences of the participants in the context of the professional environments in which they are currently working or of past experiences. The interview guide has been included as Appendix A. However my experience in the early interviews indicated that strict adherence to the interview guide was not conducive to open communication, so in later interviews, it was only used when necessary to guide and facilitate discussion. Interviews were allowed to take a natural course and interviewees were encouraged to speak uninterrupted when recalling their experiences and sharing their opinions.

The interviews commenced with assurances of confidentiality and a statement of the purpose of the study. The consent forms were explained and signed. This was in accordance with the ethics process in the university.

The female participants were encouraged to speak of their experiences, perceptions and beliefs and the male participants were encouraged to speak about their experience as
managers, leaders and employers of women. The male participants were asked questions about female leaders in their organisations, how women are perceived and whether image, leadership and communications styles are influencing factors in the career advancement of female professionals. An open-ended format was the goal, which would allow the participant to tell his or her story in a way they choose.

The interviews were recorded for the purpose of transcribing the interviews for analysis. It has been argued that tape recording helps the researcher be a more attentive and thoughtful listener (Minichello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995). Also that recording interviews, even on sensitive topics, “has been done for decades with no evidence that it affects response. Virtually, all interviewers report that respondents almost immediately forget the presence of the machine.” (Sudman, Bradburn & Schwartz, 1996, p.32). In my experience, the participants did not mind that the interview was being recorded. Each interview began with the participant and myself being slightly formal and perhaps even nervous. It is difficult to determine whether this was due to the presence of the recording device or not. As rapport developed in each interview the dynamic became more comfortable, which indicates it was not the recording device but a normal wariness of the unknown, which caused the initial formality.

In the early interviews I controlled the interview, which was detrimental to openness in the participant. This was due to my nervousness. My previous career roles in media (interviewing) shaped how I managed the interview. I had experience as a journalist for both television and radio where an interview is done quickly and must be carefully controlled by the interviewer. My experience in business also affected the interviews. In business I am an expert and I manage my impression so that I carefully and confidently lead sessions with clients when I’m consulting. I set up the room with a glass of water next to
the consent form and pen that I asked the participants to sign with. I had a form with demographic questions to be filled out as well as interview questions (see Appendix A). I positioned the interviewee’s chair and my chair carefully as to establish rapport quickly. The participants in the early interviews appeared nervous for the first twenty to thirty minutes. They appeared to be managing their impression also. I observed their body language was closed and guarded and their vocal tone suggested they were nervous and formal.

The interviews, in most cases, were limited to one hour, due to the busy schedules of the participants and meeting room rules of use. I observed that rapport had been well established after about 50 minutes of conversation and it was at this point with many of the interviews that the female participants began to share valuable details of the challenges of gender stereotyping and bullying. Unfortunately in many cases it was then time to close the interview. Some interviews went over the time and those provided more valuable data for this study.

Given the time constraints it is possible to see how I attempted to control the interview, as the goal was to cover a few topics within impression management. However when I let the participants speak freely and we both began to relax, data started to emerge that was rich and deep. For example, the topic went from physical presentation and dress to bullying and gender stereotyping when one participant said she was told she had to stop ‘dressing like a teacher’. This led to her talking about her experience of bullying, which also emerged in the other interviews. This did not emerge through a question I asked. When I analysed the data it was identified as a key concern for six of the participants. This led to a change in my research question.
During the interview I took notes, typed on my iPad or laptop. I had asked each participant whether they minded me doing this. The keystrokes may possibly have been a distraction, however no one said they minded or appeared to be distracted by it. After each interview I expanded upon the notes as soon as possible afterward and in most cases immediately. If I had booked a meeting room and still had access I would write up notes on the spot. On a couple of occasions I had to move to another part of the office, or even write up notes in my car. This enabled me to recall more detail from the interview. It was my goal not to lose words spoken, non-verbal communication and other details. These notes, made during and soon after each interview, comprised my field notes.

Some studies have found that female interviewees allow themselves to be more vulnerable in interviews than males (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Costigan & Cox, 2001). In this study the women allowed themselves to be vulnerable possibly because they were more affected by this topic than men. The women were often very passionate and extremely open and some statements made by the participants were surprising and at times shocking. The men were equally honest at times and passionate, but less affected personally. They referred to family members such as wives and daughters with concern that they face barriers to career advancement. Participants stated that although they felt vulnerable it was a good experience to discuss the topic and their history and concerns. These were topics rarely spoken of in such depth by some of the participants.

3.6 Data analysis

I transcribed some of the interviews myself and also had assistance from a transcription service. When reading over transcripts I began to analyse the data and created matrices and categorised the data into themes.
I entered the transcriptions, together with my field notes into the computer based software program NVivo. Using NVivo I was able to organise and track the data, identify common themes, code the data into a variety of categories and sub-categories, then compare and contrast opinions and remarks on these themes and categories for each participant.

I also used the text searching functions of NVivo as an aid to comparing and contrasting the data between male and female participant groups, as well as for identifying negative cases, that is situations where everyone spoke about an issue, concept or problem but one or more participants held very different or opposite perspectives on the matter compared with the others. Two negative cases stood out. One participant in Healthcare stood out as a negative case as she said she hadn’t considered impression management to be important in her career advancement. She stated that this was a female dominated workplace and that could be the reason. A negative case also emerged around bullying. The women in this study were bullied by men. That was their personal experience. One participant who was sexually harassed by a man in her early career was in the process of managing two cases of bullying as a manager at the time of interview. One perpetrator was a woman who was bullying both men and women. The other was a man bullying both men and women. Details of these cases are outlined in chapters four and five.

3.6.1 How the NVivo themes changed

During the course of the study, the themes changed. In July 2015 the parent nodes entered into NVivo referred to the elements and characteristics that make up impression management, which were drawn from the interview transcripts. During the fourth and fifth interviews as bullying and gender stereotyping began to emerge, child nodes were created under impression management such as gender stereotyping and bullying. Aspects of
impression management emerged as strategies participants used to overcome bullying and gender stereotyping. I later entered the strategies linked to bullying and gender stereotyping as parent nodes. Therefore the parent nodes changed significantly. The table below is an example of how this changed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July 2015</th>
<th>June 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impression Management</td>
<td>Strategies to overcome gender stereotyping and bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Behave like a man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diet and exercise</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>Improving Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>Impression Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Styles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.7 Ethics

I applied for and was granted ethics approval from the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee for this study in 2014.

Prospective interview participants were sent a Consent Form, which outlined the project, its aims and the general themes of the interview. I explained the Consent form, the
project goals, and the use of the recording device, prior to the signing of the Consent form by each participant at the commencement of their interview.

Prior to commencement of each interview I informed participants about the role of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee and also explained the steps that would be taken to ensure confidentiality, which included adopting pseudonyms and altering identifying details when using data from the interviews in this thesis. Four of the participants stated that they enjoyed sharing their experiences knowing that they were anonymous.

3.8 Reflection

As a researcher my experiences, views and perceptions of this topic have likely shaped or influenced the interviews and analysis. Upon reflection I now have a deeper understanding of my strengths and weaknesses as a researcher. As an interviewer, perhaps there were unasked questions that potentially could have followed on from points participants were making. For example I did not ask participants how they felt emotionally about being bullied, probably due to my own stoic nature and agentic leadership style. I have also been bullied throughout my career and I do not talk about it openly. It was a harmful and negative experience and to discuss it would make me feel vulnerable, so I do not. My participants would not know that I have experienced bullying as I didn’t share my own personal stories with them. However, it still may have impacted our interaction, as I may have not allowed them to go deeper into the topic. Perhaps subconsciously I expected that they too had recovered from the experience as they discussed how they adopted strategies to overcome it. Upon reflection this is how I also managed my personal experience of bullying. I was bullied in two organisations where I reported bullying to
human resources. This proved to be harmful to my career and not the career of the person who bullied. I left both organisations. I have since developed the opinion that it is best to ‘get on with it’ and adopt strategies to manage, as it is unlikely anyone else will step in and stop the bullying. My observation is that sometimes those who bully others are promoted. I have also worked in a team in a large organisation where a peer bullied another colleague in the team. There was no damage to the career of the bully, only that of the person who was bullied. These experiences have influenced my thinking and beliefs around this topic.

Due to time constraints I had a tendency to rush through the topics I wanted to address during the interviews. My anxiousness to get through the questions could have been obvious to the participants and perhaps led to them also wanting to rush from one topic or question to the next. I did this as I was trying to cover a range of questions in an hour. This may have made me appear like I was chairing a meeting. As an experienced Chair I have a reputation for meetings being on time and having covered all the agenda items. This skill is not one that I should have taken into these interviews. Having only an hour is a challenge that may also present itself in future research. This participant group of senior business professionals are unlikely to give more than an hour of their time when committing to participate.

Some of the questions in the early interviews were more quantitative than qualitative. The demographic questions were necessary, however the interview guide given to participants in the first five interviews was difficult for them to answer. They were not all open-ended questions. I was interested in the facts and I was thinking in ‘excel spread sheet’ mode. In the early stage of this research project I had planned a mixed method study and had prepared a quantitative part of the study including the development of a survey. At the same time I was teaching public relations research at RMIT University and a component
of this was developing surveys and use of software programs, Qualtrics and SPSS. I also had no desire to become vulnerable and allow the interview to go in a direction I had no control over. This was uncomfortable and new territory. As a business person and as a media commentator I manage my impression, including the way I communicate. This means being in control, confident and appearing as an expert. It was difficult to ‘go with the flow’ and allow the interviewee to steer the interview by speaking freely. It was only after five interviews I realised this is how data emerges that shapes the study. It is when I ceased controlling the interview that the topic of dress led to bullying. If I hadn’t allowed this, my thesis would be a different topic. However I did not want the topic to change in the first instance and I resisted it. Deeper analysis of the data meant I could not ignore bullying and gender stereotyping. Impression management remained relevant in that it was adopted as a strategy to overcome bullying and gender stereotyping.

The theme of gender stereotyping and bullying is now the focus of this study, however I cannot go further with the data I currently have. The sample is small and six cases of bullying are not large enough to go further. Additionally, one hour interviews are not long enough to uncover the data required. This topic requires a long conversation and perhaps not in the participant’s place of work, which was the case for four of the females who spoke about an experience of bullying and gender stereotyping. Experiences of both bullying and gender stereotyping are difficult to talk about and they were not treated as the main research question in the beginning.

Through experience and reflection of what I did well and what can be improved, the next part of this study (PhD research) will allow me to address some of the challenges I faced as a researcher.
4. Experience of gender stereotyping and bullying

All the female participants in this study experienced gender stereotyping. Four women experienced bullying from the eight women interviewed. In this chapter I describe and summarise how participants communicated their experiences of bullying and gender stereotyping. All the participants have been given pseudonyms.

As stated in chapter three, the study began as a broad question about impression management and career advancement before the research question changed to: “How do women managers deal with bullying and gender stereotyping to overcome barriers to career advancement?” Gender stereotyping was experienced and viewed as a concern by all participants, male and female, and was discussed in relation to impression management, female career advancement and gender pay gap. Bullying emerged as a concern at the fourth interview and continued to be raised by others as the study progressed. Given the scale of this study, the data gathered on bullying is from a small sample size. However the data showed, from the words spoken, as well as emotions expressed and body language, that the issue was highly significant to the participants in this study.

4.1 Reactions to gender stereotyping and bullying

When participants began to discuss gender stereotyping and particularly bullying, the most notable and consistent emotion expressed was frustration. There were also expressions of resignation and bitterness. Some spoke of it as being unfair that they were the ones who left the organisation they were working in, not the bully. No one mentioned
depression or long-term stress, which have often been associated with the effects of bullying. However, I observed that most participants were particularly strong, determined and mentally courageous. They used terms such as “I'll never allow it to happen again”. It appeared that through their experiences of bullying and gender stereotyping they became stronger and more determined to succeed in their careers. This is why they developed strategies to attempt to mitigate the effects of bullying and prevent it from happening again.

Seven cases of bullying were reported, four women and three men. One female participant was bullied and sexually harassed by a man. All seven were bullied by peer and/or superior males in their workplace.

All participants referred to gender stereotyping, either describing experiences with gender stereotyping or talking about women in stereotypical terms. Interestingly, two of the eight female participants also spoke about women in stereotypical terms. Terms were used such as ‘women should get their act together and just act like a man’ (in relation to childcare) and ‘women need to talk about revenue, not about the children’.

The women participants expressed a sense of powerlessness to change the ingrained thoughts and beliefs of others that gave rise to their experiences, bullying and gender stereotyping behaviours by others could not be prevented, only managed.

4.2 Experiencing bullying and sexual harassment

Clearly in a study of this size and scope, it is not possible to make generalisations on bullying in the Australian workplace, so my focus is on the data collected from my interviews. Four women in the study reported experiences with bullying. However as my initial interview guide did not expressly ask questions about bullying and given the time
constraints of the interviews, I do not know whether the other four women participants had been bullied or not. Bullying was experienced by the four women who spoke of it, as either sexual harassment, being belittled and undervalued, being excluded from work related social activities, being excluded from consideration for promotion and having others take credit for their work. All participants experienced bullying by male superiors or colleagues. One participant had two cases of bullying reported to her as a senior manager. The perpetrators in this case involved and man and a woman.

Meeting with Erin was an energising encounter. (All the participants have been given pseudonyms). A scientist turned executive in her mid-30’s she is a world leader in science and law. She is married with a young child and is currently on maternity leave. Espousing that motherhood is the easiest job she’s had, she has multiple master’s degrees, which she studied to gain confidence after she was sexually harassed at the age of 23. She described herself at that age as being blonde and beautiful in a male dominated workplace. Working within a small team of technical experts Erin often had to work late with a Chinese colleague who had been in Australia for ten years. Erin said he had very different opinions about how women should be treated in the workplace. Often they needed to travel by car together at night to go to another work location. He would often make inappropriate comments of a sexual nature and Erin dealt with a lot of sexual harassment in general from him:

My co-workers made a joke of it. It was only ever comments, which is a shame because if he had touched me I would have had a better defence. Comments are hard to prove and it was my word against his. He said he wanted to be with me and he meant sexually, either in the car or at work. I ended up leaving the organisation. It is the only time in my career that being blonde, beautiful and female has impacted my career.
Now in a high profile position Erin calls her area of expertise a ‘boys club’. It is now more acceptable for women to be here. “We call it the CSI effect”, (a television show with female scientists investigating crime scenes, said to have increased women’s representation in forensics). Erin now manages bullying in her organisation.

I’m not bullied anymore. I won’t allow it. I earn respect because I’m a leader but I can also use the tools and am hands on. That helps and that’s why I do it. I don’t just sit in the office. I do both.

Erin says that a couple of her senior staff are bullying junior staff. She acts as a mediator and must navigate both sides of the argument. Currently she is managing a case with one male (bullying males and females) and one female (bullying males and female junior staff).

“There is one revolting person that has made inappropriate comments to others” she says:

He doesn’t do it to me, as he knows he would get belted. He is old school. He’s on the spectrum and doesn’t understand workplace etiquette. He says things of a sexual nature. He is now spreading a rumour about two colleagues having sex in the mortuary. They would find a better place. I know they’re not.

Erin describes another bullying situation where a female Doctor threatened another staff member with a scalpel:

She was nasty and would give the juniors a hard time. She wouldn’t mess with me. The language in the lab is like a construction site with swearing. Jennifer, the bully said ‘all the women in here are hopeless’. She looked at me. I also had a scalpel in my hand and she said ‘present company excluded of course’. She was a bully.
Susan is on the executive leadership team of a global construction company with over 10,000 employees. She described her career as strategic. She transitioned from being a technical expert in science to an executive specialising in strategy. She has worked with Government, private and public companies and completed post graduate studies whilst working full time and raising three children with her husband, who is a professional. When Susan left university with her first degree, she entered a graduate program with a high profile Government department. She describes that as a great experience. It gave her the opportunity to learn various parts of the operation and gain valuable experience.

In Susan’s early career she was bullied in that she was excluded. She was overlooked for certain roles because she was a female. Her male superiors had told her that she could not do business in the Middle East because she would not be accepted.

I was excluded from many functions. As a female I was not allowed to work with clients from the Middle East as they had the belief that they wouldn’t interact with a female.

I’m Middle Eastern myself so I found that to be nonsense.

In Susan’s experience, women were often bullied or just not valued in that workplace.

Margaret, a media executive in her 40’s was also bullied in her early career. One of seven children, Margaret grew up on a dairy farm and was the daughter of a former nun and a farmer. Prior to spending 10 years in the United States building her profile as a media personality, she completed a graduate program at a big four accounting firm in Australia. It was only in her exit interview that she told her boss she was leaving because she had been bullied. Too afraid to speak up at the time, Margaret now feels she should have been more assertive and proactive. But she was so inexperienced at the time, she just let it (the bullying) happen.
I worked with a young man who took the credit for all my work and did everything he could to walk all over me and destroyed my confidence. He was promoted above me and I didn’t speak up and say that I wanted a promotion. This is what happens to women. Women don’t speak up and say what they want. I didn’t know how to speak up at the time. I was so naive. I needed to be assertive and stand up to him but I didn’t.

Catherine had a slow and steady rise to career success in the education sector. Married in her mid-fifties with two children, she is also a non-executive director on a not for profit board. She has a strong sense of social justice and spent her younger years as a missionary in a developing country. Catherine had been acting in a senior role for a year. When the position she was acting in, was advertised, she applied (unsuccessfully) for the job. The person who was appointed to the position bullied her and her staff for the next two years. He would speak to her in a belittling manner and would tell her that her work was not good enough. Catherine left the organisation after 30 years of service and moved interstate to another role in education.

4.3 Experiencing gender stereotypes

The gender stereotyping experienced by participants took the form of attitudes, beliefs and opinions of others, such as women are home makers and child carers; they lack ambition; they do not communicate as well as men; they are more emotional than men; and women do not think commercially.

All the women participants described experiences with gender stereotyping and the men discussed gender stereotyping as they had observed it or perceived it. Many of the participants (female as well as male) spoke about women in stereotypical ways and in some
cases mentioned stereotypical attitudes as if they were the norm. For instance, Jack, who worked in the printing industry, had tried to recruit females for many years. Those he hired did not stay long in the company due to its ‘overly male’ culture with entrenched stereotypical attitudes such as a ‘woman’s place is in the home’. Although he reported trying to recruit women, he did not report trying to change the workplace culture in any other way. Jane is in her forties, married with two children and works in air transport. She said: “Women should be more like men ... Women need to act like a man and go get a wife. Men do not have the problem of childcare. Women just need to get their act together”. This was not a ‘tongue in cheek’ comment from Jane. Her opinion was strong and she was adamant that if she had to look after children and work full time so should other women. She is an employer and said if she hired a woman, she would not allow flexible working arrangements, as it was inconvenient for her.

CEO Mike, is in his mid-forties, married with four children and works in the construction industry. He also spoke of behaviour in the workplace that reinforces stereotypical ideals such as women being sexual and not professional. When Mike was at one of the big four accounting firms one of the partners said “every bloke in the boardroom looks at the posterior of the female partners when they walk out the room”.

It was clear from the interviews that gender stereotypes had a significant impact on the female participants’ careers in their current and past workplaces. The women spoke about gender stereotyping in a number of areas. They felt others expected them to have children and not put in as much time at work as the men. They reported salary discrimination and negative opinions about their leadership and communication styles. They also reported that women were often attracted to or steered into marketing or human resources and therefore would never be given profit and loss responsibility, considered to
be a pre-requisite to an executive leadership position. When talking about these experiences the women appeared quite frustrated, annoyed and in some cases stressed. Through their body language some looked squeamish and uncomfortable when discussing these points. Vocal pitch was raised and indicated a stress response.

The male participants offered a range of opinions on how women experience gender stereotypes, for instance that it can be difficult for a women to know what to wear or how to communicate in the business setting. One male said “women were too emotional and unstable”. Another mentioned that other men habitually “looked at women in a sexual way in the boardroom.” One male participant, David spoke about being bullied and experiencing gender stereotyping and attributed it to him being homosexual. He said he ‘been treated like a woman’ when he had worked in large organisations. He had always felt different than other men and he started his own firm because of this. A female participant spoke about they way her husband had experienced gender stereotyping because he had chosen to take the kids to school one day per week and that caused him to be late for the weekly staff meeting. He had reported that there was snickering in the board room that and comments made about him doing ‘a woman’s job’.

The remainder of this section will describe reported experiences described in terms of the gender stereotypes identified in the literature review.

4.3.1 Women are perceived as not being capable

The first gender stereotype discussed in the literature review concerned women being perceived as not capable of holding management positions. Some of the participants had experienced this stereotype. Susan suggested this contributes to (or perhaps even causes) the gender pay gap. Susan said that women had lower salaries in the company than
men even if they were sitting in the same chair. If there was a salary range, women were paid at the bottom end of it. Men were paid at the upper range resulting in a gender difference of between $20,000 and $50,000 per year for the same role and responsibilities.

Susan said

... there is a perception that women take a lot more days off, are generally unwell more and emotional, so that impacts on their ability to be productive. I think that type of mind-set is talked about and so by knocking them down along that scale is sort of compensating for the fact that she is going to under deliver.

Susan reported that the senior managers (she referred to them as alpha males) in her workplace believe women are not capable or not as capable as the men, engineers who are predominantly Anglo, middle-aged and male. She needed to gain more qualifications than them to prove her capability. “I think as women we need one extra degree than our male counterparts. It’s the armoury to cope. We need the armoury to be in their presence”.

Susan described working with her male colleagues: “…the boardroom is often a battlefield.”

Susan’s body language clearly indicated her stress as she sat up straight like she was startled and ready to fight.

Mike claimed he has “gender discriminated the other way”. He believes women are capable but they must learn how to show it. Women, he said, need to feign affirmation and acknowledge when the alpha male has said something of note. “Women have to give the impression of being capable”. This suggests that men and women may present capability in different ways.

Ciara is in her forties, married without children, works in human resources in a large pharmaceutical company, and spoke about women giving the impression of not being as capable as men during the hiring process. “Men talk about profit and loss and they can
improve, they can increase revenue. Women will say they need more professional development and talk about things they need. It gives the impression men are more capable than women”.

Jack expressed the opinion that “Having a balanced personality is very important and some women are erratic in the workplace. Men are more even tempered.”

That women are perceived as not as capable as men in the workplace was an on-going frustration for the women in this study and many had dealt with this throughout their careers. It also demonstrates how ubiquitous the stereotype has become, even among women who have already proved themselves to be as capable as men.

4.3.2 Women are perceived as not understanding key aspects of being managerial

The stereotype that women do not understand key aspects of being managerial was experienced by participants in connection with communication and leadership styles.

According to Ciara, women can give the impression that they do not understand key aspects of being managerial when they fail to speak in commercial terms or focus on profit and loss responsibility:

I want to hear them say ‘I saved 120% of the target and I reduced the cost of business’. That you are able to nurture and develop a team doesn’t matter. I don’t mind hearing a little bit about it, like one example, but what I really want to hear about is your financial acumen and your business acumen, the strategy, the vision, how you executed [it] and the results.

Women don’t necessarily talk about this. Women in leadership and management need to have new language.

Erin spoke of her current need to learn how to be political and modify her communication style.
I’m not politically savvy and I piss people off because I say it like it is... Being right and telling people I’m right hasn’t won me any favours. I need to learn the skill of politics for my own preservation.

The issue of not speaking in commercial terms came up as a concern for five participants. Rani is a Partner in an accounting firm. In her mid-40’s she is married with three children, was born in South East Asia and has been in Australia for 30 years. Rani and Ciara thought this stereotype was reinforced by the language women used in the workplace. Rani said women are too “touchy feely” and not commercial enough in the workplace. “Women need to be more transactional and they do not know this and this is a key aspect of management”.

Catherine expressed concern about the gender stereotype associated with a negative perception of women’s leadership styles..

Leadership is predominantly male. I feel different and isolated sometimes as a female leader. I have an inclusive leadership style and the CEO sees this as negative. I wish I could be more male. I don’t think others always see me as a good manager.

Jane is a Managing Director in an independent consulting firm working in the aviation industry. She is in her forties and is married with two children. Jane spoke in stereotypical terms about the different leadership styles of men and women. “Men are business only and women are emotional whingers and far too sensitive”.

Bernie, in his sixties, is married with two children and had spent his career moving around the globe in the automotive industry. He also spoke in terms that sound stereotypical: “Women are more intuitive and are able to recognise the emotional aspects of business decisions. Men are more blunt and direct, however this is a broad generalisation”.

62
Tim is a former CEO in his late fifties. He expressed the view that women care about themselves and work life balance whereas men are willing to work long hours, get up at strange hours and do strange things like write multiple emails at 4am. The implication being that caring about one’s children and work life balance is not managerial.

Men will blow off the kid’s birthday to go to a golf day to engage with a certain leader to get their career on the move. Men are doing that because it may be accepted or expected by male leaders. Maybe that is detrimental to women. Hiring managers, who are giving out promotions, are seeing that women aren’t doing this... Women have emotional intelligence (EI) and some very successful men have not. Very successful men have little EI because at the pointy end in business you’ve got to be ruthless and blood thirsty. You’ve got to be willing to stab somebody in the face to get where you are going and most women won’t do that. You’ve got to be able to sleep at night and you’ve got to be able to make really immoral decisions to get anywhere in the significant business world and that’s my experience.

Tim thought women were incapable of the kind of immorality and political ability that was required for working at the top levels of business. That women are perceived as not understanding key aspects of being managerial was experienced by participants as a (presumably unwarranted) problem they had to deal with. But it also appears that at least some women viewed this stereotype as being true.

4.3.3 Women’s communication is perceived as being weak

Women’s communication was perceived as weaker than men’s in a number of ways, including not responding to the alpha male in an appropriate manner and having a higher vocal pitch and tone which lessened credibility in the boardroom. Women who use too
many words without getting to the point was also a concern of six participants. Again the study showed that both men and women subscribe to the same stereotype. Only two male participants spoke about the positive aspects of women’s communication at work such as ‘women are more emotionally intelligent’.

Two male participants spoke of women’s communication in positive terms but also said women’s communication was perceived by others (not them) as weak. The women reported trying to improve their own communication.

All participants reported women’s style of communication is stereotyped as weak. This was seen as women interrupting and failing to affirm men’s opinions, being inarticulate or long-winded, and having a high vocal pitch or tone that lacked credibility.

Mike described ‘old school’ male board members who as ‘alpha males’ liked to be listened to without any interruptions. Mike reported that women he had promoted tended to interrupt and did not nod and rephrase and recode after men spoke. Since the ‘alpha males’ had complained to him about not being heard in the boardroom, he has intervened to make sure women in his organisation communicate in the way he apparently deems to be proper.

Women need to feign affirmation and acknowledge that when the alpha male has said something of note. My female CFO and head of marketing were offered advice last week. It was important that they were nodding and recoding. It’s corporate theatre. It’s necessary. Corporate theatre will help you get ahead.

Ciara also said female communication was weak. She said many women do not articulate clearly and concisely and in a way that resonates. “If someone is longwinded in their communication and can’t get their point across it’s annoying for everyone. A hard-hitting statement is much more effective and efficient”. Ciara suggested that to gain
recognition women need to communicate articulately and confidently in a group setting. Women who are introverted or not comfortable promoting themselves fail to receive the recognition they deserve. She described men as getting to their point quicker and generally communicating in a more professional and articulate manner than women. She also observed that men have better relationships with each other and connect through talking about sport or fatherhood but it was not the same for women. Her opinion was that women should not talk about sport or motherhood to connect with colleagues (Ciara did not say what women should talk about). “They (women) shouldn’t talk about children. It’s ok for men to talk about children, but it makes women look weak and unprofessional”.

She has noticed the differing communication style of males and females during job interviews and has observed that men talk about themselves from a strength-based position and women go from a weakness position:

Women speak to the areas of weakness they would need development in and they also talk about team development. They focus on how they can grow as a team and how their team members have had successful careers due to their leadership so they come at it from a completely different angle. Men come across as more confident and probably a little bit more arrogant when they talk about their achievements. If they have profit and loss responsibility they are able to talk about how they have improved things from profitability or cost basis for the business. Women in interviews talk much more about their own personal developments and things that they need.

David, a Managing Director in his sixties, works in professional services. He is partnered without children. He stated that women’s communication is weak because of a higher vocal pitch and tone. “When women sit around the boardroom table with men, the higher vocal pitch of a woman’s voice can generate an amygdala response (considered to be
part of the brain that processes emotional reactions). Men hear [the women and feel] their mothers telling them off and react negatively”.

Jane shared a similar opinion, agreeing that vocal pitch and tone is very important and causes women to be perceived as weak:

I had to fire a young woman last week because she sounded ridiculous on the phone. She was too high pitched and it was embarrassing. It made her sound stupid, which reflected on me because everyone knows I hired her. I had to let her go. I may get her back to do a few admin type duties.

Anna, in her forties and married with two children works in healthcare and agreed that a lot of females come across as weak. “Men are more self-promoting than women. I am introverted and have to show what I can do through results because I am a weaker communicator than the men I have worked with. I think this is true for many women I know”.

4.3.4 Motherhood is perceived as meaning a lack of commitment

Male and female participants shared the view that motherhood is perceived negatively in the workplace. There was no attempt by any of the participants to challenge the workplace culture and address this stereotype.

Mothers are often perceived as lacking in commitment, without the dedication to put in the hours, always leaving early to pick up the children. The stereotype is reflected in reported views that women are wired to be caregivers and do not want to put in the hard work and hours that men do. Women with children do not dress as professionally as men. Women with children are often perceived as lacking in commitment and participants spoke
about their views and own experiences of this. Most participants had experienced this stereotype and thought that others saw them as less committed. Some female participants actually thought there was truth in the stereotype that women with children were less committed. Anna said, “people just kind of anticipate that if you’re female you’ll have kids, and that some issues will just come with that. You really need to prove yourself”.

Margaret thought gender stereotyping is much more prevalent in Australia than the US, although she has experienced it in both countries, particularly with respect to a persistent and strong gender narrative that men are the provider. She also spoke in terms of gender stereotypes, arguing that women are wired to be caregivers, more so than men, that there is less hunger for success in women and less competitiveness, and that women have to want it and put in the hard work.

Jane said that women with children lack commitment and that women should not get flexible working hours as it was not convenient to the employer. She suggested that perhaps if women decide to have children they should have their husbands stay at home. “I did the hard yards of having to find someone to look after their children, and so should other women... If I employ someone I need them to be here in office hours.”

Mike stated there is discrimination against women who have children. “They (women) can appear that they have less commitment than men because they don’t work as much overtime and they often leave early to pick the kids up from school. It is a significant disabler of women’s potential to advance”.

Ciara suggested women with children sometimes appear as though they lack commitment because of their physical presentation and dress. Women with family often prioritise their children over themselves and do not look as professional as men at work.
“Men often earn more and spend a lot of money on a good suit. Lack of proper attire is one of the reasons that women with children are perceived to be lacking in commitment”.

The women and the men did not speak of work life balance. Women were working with this stereotype rather than challenging the work culture.

4.3.5 Women are perceived as not wanting to be CEOs

The stereotype that asserts women do not want to be CEOs or lack ambition was also discussed by the study participants. It was an issue they had faced in the past and for some, as a view they held with respect to other women. This lack of desire for promotion was reported in terms of women (mostly but not always other women, rather than the female participants themselves) failing to take up opportunities in the way men do and not taking the risks necessary to succeed in corporate life.

When Margaret was a young graduate she was in an accounting firm. She did not speak up when a man was promoted above her even though she wanted that position. She had more experience than him and was more qualified. She said she was very upset that she did not get the promotion. She said:

I didn’t speak up and say that I wanted a promotion. This is what happens to women...

Men will often ask “What will I need to do to make partner by age 30?” I don’t hear women asking that or being open about their ambition. I wish I had when I was younger.

Who knows how hungry you are?

Margaret said that in order for women to succeed they need to show that they want to go further, because there is just a natural assumption that women just want to go off and have
kids and they will sacrifice their career. She holds the view that in Australia it is not the norm to go back to work after having a child, whereas returning to work almost immediately after having a child is the norm in the USA. Margaret expressed the view that men are more willing to take responsibility and push themselves forward for bigger roles and they are not happy just to sit back in HR or marketing. She sees women being funnelled into Marketing or HR rather than roles with profit and loss responsibility. Therefore women do not have a pivotal role in the organisation. Women will not be placed in charge of a business unit with 10 million of revenue to manage if they are in HR or marketing. The people who are going to the top and have a clear strategy do not want to work in marketing.

Ciara does not see any truth in the stereotype that women do not want to be CEOs but she thinks it takes women longer to get to that position than it does a man. Men can join an organisation and learn quickly what it takes to get to the top and very quickly use the right language. Women want to be good at something before they do the next thing:

Men will say ‘I can do this position’. They take opportunities, whether they think they can do it or not, whereas women want to be good at it before they take the opportunity. Men give it a go even if they’re not 100% confident that they’re going to make it work. A bit more risk taking is necessary as you get more mature in your career and women aren’t like that. It’s not because they don’t want to be CEOs, it’s because they aren’t willing to take a risk.

Of the female participants in this study, several are on a career trajectory to become CEO or are already Managing Directors. Clearly some women do want that career path and some women do not, just as not all men want to be CEOs. Again, the stereotype has been assimilated by women as well as men. Again, the onus appears to be on women to prove it wrong by more visibly taking risks and grabbing opportunities, and being more vocal about their ambitions.
5. Strategies to overcome gender stereotyping and bullying

The women in this study who had experienced gender stereotyping and bullying developed strategies to manage, avert or overcome the issues. This chapter describes participants’ perceptions, experiences and effectiveness of the various strategies for advancing their careers: networking and mentoring, impression management and behaving like men.

The case studies demonstrate how women gained increased confidence through impression management and how education and gaining greater expertise gave women confidence to manage bullying and gender stereotyping to advance their careers. Networking and mentoring was important to all participants. No one said it was not helpful to advancing their careers, although many participants said they did not have time for it and therefore did not network or engage with a mentor regularly.

Seven of the eight female participants had developed strategies to address gender stereotyping and bullying that were similar to each other. These strategies were used to further their careers. Having improved confidence motivated seven of the eight women and that is why they adopted strategies such as networking, impression management and education.

The participants reported adopting various strategies for overcoming bullying, which included physical presentation and dress such as dressing down to hide beauty or dressing up to look more like a leader. As their careers progressed, the women developed further strategies for dealing with bullying such as ‘behaving like a man’, gaining extra expertise to be ‘better than the men’ and seeking out mentors for encouragement and guidance.
Two participants reported resigning from positions because they could not see any other way to avoid the bullying they were subject to. All the participants who reported bullying experiences expressed concerns about making sure they had strategies that would enable them to manage or mitigate bullying in the future. The impression management strategies they adopted were associated with education, assertiveness, body language, dress and presentation. Several also adopted networking and mentoring strategies. Participants reported that developing these strategies later gave them confidence to manage career advancement constraints due to gender stereotyping. In both cases of the early career bullying and the later career barriers, the strategies adopted were largely based on changing their own behaviours, supporting networks and skills.

Strategies for dealing with gender stereotypes and barriers to career advancement largely fitted with behaviours we would call impression management, notably physical presentation, dress and deliberate attention to the impression one gives, and the ability to behave like a man in terms of leadership style, not mentioning the children, being vocal about ambition, as well as mentoring and coaching. What is particularly significant is how participants dealt with and overcame gender stereotyping and bullying and the similarities and differences in the strategies they used. Some of the participants described their desire and determination to develop strategies to mitigate bullying and attempt to overcome it, while at the same time developing their careers through education and communicating with a masculine leadership style.

Each of the strategies reported by participants, either used by women or recommended by men, are described in turn in the following subsections.
5.1 Networking and mentoring strategies

All women and men participants used networking, and finding a mentor or coach as career advancement tactics. All thought these tactics were useful, and even essential to going up the career ladder. Seven of the eight women participants used these as strategies to manage, avert or overcome gender stereotyping and/or bullying or both. All participants, both female and male thought they should have done more networking throughout their career. Often speaking with regret about how little time they had dedicated to it. Networking was seen an important strategy by men, although four out of five men said it was difficult to quantify how much it helped. Four males said they could not measure how useful it would have been if they had done more, but wished they had. One male participant spoke of his regret that he did not network often enough by playing golf with other men in the firm. ‘This is where the real business happens’, he said. Women spoke of mentoring more than men. Six of the eight females had mentors in their early careers that had helped them develop as leaders and advance their careers.

Catherine undertook coaching to gain confidence when communicating with her bully, a male superior. Catherine considered herself an introvert and a ‘fairly quiet’ person. She spoke in negative terms in relation to her management style. She said that coaching had helped her become more assertive and stand up to the bully. In her early career she had mentors but as her career progressed mentors were not available so she employed consultants and coaches.

A mentor helped her move into teaching and then to a Government role in another state which led her to a position in a large University where she worked her way up the career ladder. “When I started at the university there was a woman in HR called Jane who
ran a mentoring group and I linked to a mentor. It was excellent. Mentoring is important and helped me get to where I am today”.

She used two types of professional coaching whilst searching for a new role. Leadership coaching was undertaken for dealing with difficult issues and people, and an image consultant to help her improve her image. She describes this as being essential for networking and her job search. “You must use networks to get where you need to go and this sits alongside personal branding because it’s vital to project a strong and confident personal brand”.

Catherine used networking to advance her career and was not afraid to ask those in her network to help her find a position. She said that every position she had in her career involved a person in her network being instrumental in her finding or securing that position.

We need strength in numbers. As there are more female leaders, there will be more mentors and sponsors and those people may hire women. The more there are the more networking and more opportunity. It’s not what you know, it's who you know.

Ciara considers networking to be a very effective tool for career advancement in her global organisation and links the ability to network with impression management strategies. She has used mentors herself and as a HR manager she has also encouraged others to find a mentor. She says relationships with people must be local, regional and global. Ciara has strategically created networks with colleagues throughout the organisation globally because most of the projects the company are working on include cross-cultural teams.

I’ve worked on projects and built relationships with team members from other countries. Doing this means when you're going for a promotion you'll have a better chance of success. Building relationships on all levels and in all countries is so important... To get something done in an organisation of our size you need to have
networks, because if you don’t have networks you don’t know who to go to, to get things done, and you’ll be in a long queue... I think men, when they’re in senior management or above, they do it better than women, but at junior management I think it’s something that people don’t see the value in.

Tim said men are much better at networking than women: “I think men have better work networks. Men create better work networks, women create better networks than men in society in total.”

The women said they wished they had more time for networking however responsibilities associated with children and family left them little time outside of work to network.

For those who experienced bullying, networking was used to assist in finding a new role, which was the successful outcome of one participant during this study.

Finding a mentor was also effective for all participants in relation to career advancement. All spoke very highly of how a mentor has assisted them, usually earlier in their career. Use of a mentor was effective for two participants working through the psychological aspects of bullying. One participant lost confidence in her leadership and communication skills. A mentor was unavailable to her so a leadership coach was employed. This was effective and the goal was to find a new role, which was the outcome.

5.2 Impression management strategies

Twelve of the thirteen participants reported using impression management strategies. These related to enhancing their education, physical presentation and dress, communication, including non-verbal, vocal pitch and tone, and leadership style. Only one
participant who worked in a female dominated workplace (healthcare) stated that she had not thought about impression management or used it as a strategy to get ahead. However she contradicted herself throughout the interview she said a number of times that it is something she considers has become more important as her career progresses.

Ciara, an executive in the pharmaceutical industry, speaks from the perspective of a hiring manager.

Impression management is a lot more than physical appearance, it is about communication and your ability to engage with other people the way you work a room or build relationships. Men have a way of connecting, whether it’s talking about sport or fatherhood but women in a leadership environment have to find different ways of forming relationships.

Anna spoke of impression management as being important; although it was not something she had been concerned about earlier in her career. She stated that when she started her career it was technical expertise that was important, but as a leader this had become less significant and perhaps impression management was important. She said that going forward and progressing to a level where she would be meeting with the Minister frequently she might need to consider managing aspects of her physical presentation and communication style.

When I worked at the consulting firm, presentation and the way you spoke and dressed was very important. I do think it is important as the way you present yourself says a lot about who you are. I am working on managing the impression I give, especially verbal communication and body language... Sometimes you only get one opportunity to express your point of view or you’ve only got very limited time with people and you need to make the most of it. I’ve become more aware of it now that I’m in a higher position.
5.2.1 Impression management through education

Men and women both spoke about impression management and its importance in their career. It was only the women who spoke about education being part of impression management. Each of the men interviewed were highly educated with the lowest level being bachelor degree and highest masters degrees. Mike was the only male who said his education, which was the Master of Business Administration (MBA), gave him confidence. Margaret educated herself to Master’s level and has written three bestselling books. She says women have to be more qualified to gain respect. Men do not need to do that in the same way. Margaret lamented that she does not have a PhD like a lot of people in her field. “I read - contemporary and academic literature so when I present as a keynote or appear on television I sound intelligent and qualified. I also practice speaking clearly so that I articulate perfectly”.

Susan used education as a tool to stand up to the men. She is more qualified than all the males on her senior management team. It was her first experience as a graduate that inspired her to pursue multiple Master’s degrees:

Early on I realised it was the men who ran everything. Males back then were perceived to be at odds with the females. Males control the world and females that were successful were tenacious and resented for it.

Susan found education helped her gain the confidence to work at the senior executive level she now works at in construction. Most of the men she works with are engineers and scientists, and only a handful of them have a MBA. Susan has an undergraduate degree, a MBA and a Juris Doctor and is thinking about doing a PhD. “I feel like I have to have a lot of
qualifications to get a guernsey. I’ve had to overachieve. It has given me the power and confidence to have a seat at the table”.

Erin used education to manage her experience of bullying which took away her confidence. Having more qualifications than her colleagues, especially her male colleagues made her feel like she was in a position of power and that she was in control. After completing her MBA, she thought it made her a better leader and helped her develop emotional intelligence. When she spoke about how qualified she was, her body language was confident and she sat up straight and appeared happy that she had done the work to achieve the qualifications.

All the women in this study had high formal qualifications and/or experience. Only one did not have a degree. All other women had one, two or three Master’s degrees. Education was a major contributor to confidence and was spoken about as portraying a positive impression. Five female participants used education as a tool to overcome gender stereotyping. Four women used education as a strategy to help build confidence after being bullied, which occurred prior to gaining the extra education for all those who were bullied except Christine. Christine was highly educated in her mid- senior career when she was bullied. Employing a coach and undertaking training in communication and leadership helped her build confidence and manage the bully.

5.2.2 Impression management through verbal and non-verbal communication

All participants spoke of communication, both verbal and non-verbal as an important strategy in their career success. Non-verbal communication and predominantly body
language was spoken of in the context of impression management, communication and physical presentation.

When Catherine missed out on that promotion she realised it was time to work on her communication and overall impression. She said the leader of the organisation was tall, good looking, well presented and an excellent communicator. The person hired instead of her was similar. The way he spoke and his huge presence and charisma got him over the line, not because he was especially intelligent or delivered outcomes.

That’s when I knew I had to work on my communication and the way I looked. I did employ a coach and we worked on being assertive. I even worked on my deportment so I could appear more confident when I walked. I want to look more authoritative.

Susan had also taken a number of steps to improve her communication and was undertaking vocal coaching to improve her communication, increase her confidence and perceived authority. She said that her voice was too high in pitch and this could be perceived as less authoritative in the all-male boardroom.

She said “I don’t employ soft skills anymore. It’s not required here. I speak in business terms only”. She explained that ‘soft skills’ are understood in her organisation but when the business is confronted with significant profit shortages or issues that relate to shareholders expectation, soft skills are not endorsed or encouraged and now is one of those times. Strategies used by other female participants were non-verbal communication to give the appearance of authority such as standing straight at workplace events and other networking functions, deliberately lowering vocal tone so as not to be seen as feminine, and ensuring not to smile too much or look ‘too friendly and feminine’.
5.2.3 Impression management through physical presentation and dress

Impression management through physical presentation and dress was a strategy adopted by all but one of the participants. It was used as a confidence builder and for presenting an image of power, managerialism and professionalism, even in workplaces where dress tends to be casual.

Erin said she “hides her beauty and alternates between scrubs and corporate clothes”. She expressed presenting appropriately professional in the workplace. And avoids being overtly sexual.

I am conscious of how I look. The corporate clothes I wear are quite boring and although I’m professionally dressed, I try not to draw attention to myself through my clothes. I have confidence about how I look and I utilise the way I look to feel confident. I speak to a lot of large groups and international delegations and I present appropriately. I don’t have cleavage hanging out.

Susan uses physical presentation and dress to project professionalism and power. “Working in the construction industry it is not always a suit” says Susan, for men “smart casual is fine”. She explained:

Today I regard myself as casual and I’ve dressed this way because the males are not around. On a typical day I would be very formal when I’m with my male counterparts. I use it to represent my qualifications and experience and as a confidence boost for myself. The way I dress and my education gives me the armoury to put myself out there and have confidence. I need the armoury to make sure the perception is that I deserve a seat around the table.
Susan felt strongly about the need to be fit and healthy as it contributes to looking like everything is under control and appearing successful. “It is unprofessional to be overweight and looking tired”. Exercising every day at lunchtime was important to her. She monitors her food intake to maintain her weight and she has a personal trainer. She had done this for over 20 years. She was also specific about how her hair should look. Susan has naturally curly hair, visible during the interview (she said that was because the ‘alpha males’ were not around at the time) however she usually straightens her hair because curly hair looked messy, feminine and unprofessional.

When Catherine was unsuccessful in her application for a promotion for a university position she had been acting she asked the deputy chancellor why she had been unsuccessful. She was told: “You need to stop dressing like a teacher”. Catherine started wearing suits and dressing more like an executive. She was subsequently appointed to a more senior position in another University.

Ciara holds the opinion that women do not prioritise the way they dress as men do. She spoke about physical presentation and dress in relation to her organisation:

Men wear suits to work every day. I think a lot of women who have family, prioritize their children. Men often earn more so it’s fine to spend a lot of money on a man dressing for work. If women have children they take more responsibility for the children so ... they become a bit more practical and don’t spend as much on clothes as they might have done when they didn’t have children. It’s easy for men to look OK whether they are wearing an average grey suit or an expensive grey suit but it’s not the same for women.

Jane says, “People judge those who are overweight as if they don’t have discipline. Those who exercise look like they are on top of things. A ten tonne Tessie looks lazy!” Jane
spoke about impression management and dress at length and was passionate about the importance of how people presented themselves. Jane said that she always dressed professionally and that she targeted her dress for particular audiences, such as her Middle Eastern clients in the airline industry and celebrities she worked with. She was adamant this contributed to her success.

Margaret uses physical presentation and dress to gain confidence. She said smart women use image and impression management to improve their chances of success:

I always wear tailored clothes and heels in the US. Never flats. I always have my nails done. I had my nails done yesterday because I’m doing a keynote in a couple of days and I have to look professional in every way. That’s what people expect from me. People are very casual here and wear loose fitting clothes. It’s very unprofessional. You would never be able to do that in the US and have respect.

Rani spoke passionately of her Asian sensibility and how she has adapted to understand the Australian sensibility, seeing things from both perspectives. She said Asian women “carve out a much stronger pathway” than Australian woman and that the Asian woman is “a stronger navigator in her world”.

If you are too manly that can act against you. If you try to act sexy then your intellect is probably clouded from you. You might want to strike a balance between the two though neither place is the right place to fully express your femininity. You are a woman so you dress like a woman and that’s how you should dress. You should dress like a woman. You should have self-belief.

Jack spoke about image and how important it is to look fit and healthy. In the corporate and hiring space one needs to be well dressed and groomed and in good shape. “There is an association that well-presented people are in control and they manage their life
and their time. Overweight people look undisciplined. Corporate leaders should be well presented and trim and that also helps with wellbeing.”

Bernie reported similar views: “Diet and exercise is very important because people draw conclusions about effectiveness or potential based upon a person's perceived level of fitness and weight. Sometimes this opinion is a false conclusion”.

The males and females in this study had similar views on dressing professionally in the workplace including the importance of appearing fit and healthy. All but one of the participants of this study expressed the view that impression management is important to career success and had adopted or developed impression management strategies. Attitudes towards these impression management strategies varied, however, one participant expressed annoyance at the requirement to dress in a certain way, as she thought it should not matter how she looked. She delivered outcomes successfully and ran an area of the organisation for over 25 years. She noted how annoying it was when someone noticed she had had a haircut and mentioned it. “No one mentions when a man has a hair-cut. I wish others judged me on my performance and not how I look” (Catherine).

All participants considered impression management an important and effective strategy for career advancement. Not all used these strategies to overcome gender stereotyping or bullying.

All thirteen female and male participants reported that impression management strategies had merit. Although a small sample, the data generated from these interviews shows that these women consider that use of impression management tactics is an important strategy for dealing with the many barriers to female careers advancement.

Two female participants from the healthcare sector stated that impression management was not important at all times of their career, but as they have moved up the
career ladder it has become increasingly significant. All females in this study used impression management as an attempt to overcome gender stereotyping, usually through controlling the way they dressed and communicated. Four of the female participants acknowledged that impression management tactics and professionalising their image was linked to building confidence. This needs to be explored further. Two female and two male participants highlighted physical fitness as very important. This included not being overweight, which was judged quite harshly by these participants. They expressed that others made negative judgements about overweight people. The male participants thought appearing physically fit was part of looking professional and this was important for both males and females in the workplace. Jack said ‘women may be judged more harshly than men if they were overweight’ and that ‘women are judged on appearance more than men in the workplace and often look unprofessional’. The participants that spoke about physical fitness were physically fit themselves and exercised regularly. Some of them exercised at lunchtime. It is not clear whether being overweight impacts women more negatively than men in terms of being judged as unprofessional or undisciplined. Further study is warranted in this area and also to determine whether dressing in a certain way assists women or men equally or differently in relation to career advancement.

5.3 Behaving like a man strategies

In popular literature and the media the topic of women behaving like men and adopting masculine styles of leadership and communication sparks debate. The participants in this study felt strongly about the subject of behaving like a man although the viewpoints differed. Not all participants held the opinion that a woman should behave like a man.
Some of the female participants thought it was very important to adopt a masculine leadership style and some spoke about the need to be assertive and how that was ‘male’. Females spoke about how they wish they were better at negotiating pay and how they often tried to behave like a man, such as Jane who said “women have to play the game just like men to get ahead. They have to put in the long hours like men”. Rani, who speaks in a colourful style, using metaphors and analogies said that because men have ‘maids at home’ they expect women to be like maids in the workplace, so women have to be strong and ready for the fight. She expressed her frustration about how difficult it is for women trying to succeed in the corporate world. She spoke in a raised voice when she said “…women must behave like a man to get ahead” and:

Women need to be combative to be successful and that definitely means behaving like a man. Women must learn this. It’s not very attractive, but it’s necessary. You can’t be beautiful or feminine. You’ve got to shoot back and get through the fierce male wall. It’s like a scrum in footy. You’ve got that wall of people standing there so the ball can’t get through. It is the same in the corporate world in a sub conscious way. You must fight like a man.

Some of the male participants expressed the view that the traits and skills of women, such having a high degree of emotional intelligence and adopting a softer approach to communication, is highly valued, although sometimes the same participants also contradicted these views. It was also framed within the context of women being softer because they are mothers. Some participants held strong opinions about women needing to communicate more like men with one participant quite deliberately working on the pitch of her voice to sound more masculine to her male colleagues.
5.3.1 Adopt a masculine leadership style

A number of participants adopted a masculine leadership style and some of the men interviewed thought it was a good idea to do so. Susan has deliberately adopted a masculine leadership style *in certain respects* and views this as giving her the necessary tools to interact successfully with male colleagues and superiors.

You need to be perceived as one of the blokes at times, but not too much or else you would have to be very masculine, drink with them and swear with them you have to give up the traditional elements of femininity. In my experience they (the men) don’t welcome that either.

You have to identify sufficiently with them. Some of the language is colourful and they will apologise for swearing in front of me. I don’t participate. That they need to be on their best behaviour only stifles them. I play the ball, not the man. I talk about the work, the issues, solutions and the job at hand.

Jane was adamant and serious when she said: “Women should be more like men ... Women need to act like a man and go get a wife. Men don’t have the problem of childcare. Women just need to get their act together”.

Rani disagreed, stating: “If you are too manly it could go against you”. Rani also said that women need to be “fierce like a man”.

Mike observed that the most successful women he knows behave like men. He said:

A woman should act like a man, but she should never think like a man as women think creatively and that is so important. She needs to appreciate that unfortunately in a male environment she must adapt a communication and listening style that is masculine. She must cut through the unfortunate bullshit of how you look, speak and listen.
Mike implied throughout the interview that it was up to women to act like a man, have a masculine leadership style. It was all about performance and adapting to the male dominated environment, however he also stated that it was not good when a woman thought like a man. This view was held by some of the women also. There was no mention about changing the culture. These comments were made in the context of women needing to perform and communicate in a masculine fashion to be successful in the workplace. For seven of the eight female participants certain aspects of behaving like a man was a strategy used to manage and succeed in the workplace which was predominantly about communicating in a masculine manner to suit the style that suited male interaction.

5.3.2 Communicate like men

Mike observed there are not many women in senior management and that women form only a small proportion of the CEO Forum he attends. He has noticed that those women stand out because they act like men at that level and thinks it might be necessary when the majority of people in the room are male.

   My HR manager has developed a great relationship with the board of directors now but she wishes she had acted like a man in her first interactions. ... She has adapted to their way of communicating. She has lifted her credibility and it’s allowed her to be heard. Her and my CFO, who is a gun have learned to communicate in a testosterone filled enrolment. They’ve learned to adapt to a male way of communicating.

   Mike described how he and his female CFO and HR Manager attend toastmasters, which has been great for him but especially the women. Mike talked about them all developing the skills needed to pitch to the board and clients—how to develop a strong opening and clearly communicate, a necessity for dealing with the men in his industry.
Seven of the eight female participants said they felt they needed to adopt a masculine communication and leadership style to overcome gender stereotyping. Four out of the five male participants spoke positively of the communication styles that emphasised feminine qualities however, they framed women’s communication and leadership in the context of women being ‘child-bearers and child-carers’ for example: “women are great leaders because they look after children and are good at multi-tasking” (Mike) or “women are great at taking leadership at home” (Tim).

For seven of the eight female participants certain aspects of behaving like a man were used as strategies for managing and succeeding in the workplace and were crucial for communicating with men at work. These strategies included speaking in commercial terms such as profit and loss, not talking about weaknesses, being better at negotiating pay, putting in long hours like men and adopting a masculine (agentic) leadership style. For the women in the study who had experienced gender stereotyping and bullying, behaving like a man had become a tool to help them overcome the psychological aspects of bullying for example damaged confidence.

Anna was the only participant who said she had no reason to behave like a man. She worked with predominantly females and her manager was a female and supportive of Anna’s childcare responsibilities because she also had children. Anna spoke about her time in a consulting firm and said that if she had stayed there, she may have to behave like a man to get ahead.

The women in this study found it necessary to behave like a man and adopt masculine leadership and communication styles in order to succeed, even if some did not want to do this. Even those who said that women should not act like men, at other times stated that they had done so in order to survive and/or succeed. The women felt like they
were dealing with gender stereotyping and unconscious or conscious bias in their workplaces, such as, being feminine is not managerial, only men are managers, and therefore women have to be more like men.
6. Conclusions

The participants in this study have used impression management strategies to help overcome, manage or avert gender stereotyping and/or bullying. They have also used these strategies to advance their careers. All the participants were ambitious with a desire to progress to the senior levels of their current organisation or another organisation. In this study there is a connection between the experience of gender stereotyping and/or bullying in the workplace, to strategies for dealing with these phenomena and the strategies for dealing with barriers to career advancement. In this study there is a connection between the creation of strategies for dealing with experiences of bullying and experiences of gender stereotyping. These two separate barriers to career advancement often elicited similar coping strategies from women in the study, regardless of being distinct issues.

Bullying was an important issue for women and some men. Gender stereotyping was important to women who had experienced it. The men who had experienced bullying did not speak about developing strategies to manage it. The men who had been bullied mentioned it although did not expand in detail. There was an attitude of ‘this is normal’ and ‘it’s to be expected’ by Tim who had worked in accounting and Jack, a chief financial officer in the print industry. David spoke about being bullied and experiencing gender stereotyping and attributed it to him being homosexual. He said he had been treated like a woman when he had worked in large organisations. He started his own firm because of this.

Some men were adamant they were attempting to deal with gender stereotyping in their workplace by employing more women, mentoring women and trying to create an inclusive culture. There was not a lot of detail given about what that meant or no mention
of addressing the stereotypes with actual strategies that could be adopted by the organisation.

Strategies used by the women in addressing bullying, gender stereotyping and advancing their careers in business involved ‘behaving like a man’. Networking and impression management were the dominant strategies. Gaining further education, improving verbal and non-verbal communication and physical presentation and dress were employed as tactics.

It appeared that many of the women had internalised the need to adopt male stereotypes of how to succeed in business. There was no challenging of them in the contexts of debates on work life balance or a more gendered workplace. This could have been related to the industries in which the women worked. Anna who worked in healthcare did not deal with issues of gender stereotyping or bullying. She had not given much thought to impression management, although when Anna joined a consulting firm for three years she did experience some gender stereotyping. There were beliefs others had such as ‘women were expected to not last long in the workplace before they went on maternity leave’. Anna also dressed more formally when consulting. When she moved back into healthcare and was working with females she did not experience this.

### 6.1 Themes

This study examined the personal stories and opinions obtained through interviews of eight female and five male managers. The themes that emerged were gender stereotyping, bullying and overcoming barriers to career advancement for women. On-the-ground strategies that have been successfully used by these women to overcome barriers to
the own career advancement often were intertwined with addressing gender stereotyping and bullying.

6.1.1 Gender stereotyping experiences

All participants spoke about gender stereotyping and the concerns raised were: women taking time off for children, women being less committed than males due to a focus on home duties, women’s lack of ambition and the weakness of women’s communication. In some sectors the stereotypes were more prominent such as in construction, professional services, accounting and science/law. The female participants in the air transport and pharmaceutical industries were not particularly supportive of other women facing gender stereotyping. They even contributed to reinforcing it. In healthcare, with its predominantly female workforce, gender stereotyping was less prominent. Stereotypes were reported by the participants as being more prominent in Australia, as opposed to both the United Stated and South East Asia.

Positive stereotypes of women such as, women are more emotionally intelligent and are better communicators than men, were reported far less frequently than the negative.

6.1.2 Bullying experiences

Six cases of bullying were reported by four women and two males. One female was bullied and sexually harassed by a man. The perpetrators were both peer and superior males in their place of employment. Types of bullying that occurred were exclusion (from social events), belittling behaviours and deliberate humiliation about the quality of work delivered. Sexual harassment was by way of sexual comments namely the perpetrator’s
desire for sexual relations. This was reported by one participant and was early on in her career. Experiences of bullying of the female participants occurred in the education sector, construction industry, science/law and professional services.

The experience for these participants was that bullying generally made them more determined to get ahead in their careers. Although they may have experienced the negative effects of bullying at the time it occurred, such as stress, these participants did not speak of it. Rather it was identified by a change in body language during the interview such as slumped shoulders, eyes looking down, and the disappearance of a smile etc. There was a surprising determination in this group of participants. Perhaps I was expecting that there would be more incidence of depression or lack of confidence that was a result of being bullied. There was a collective thinking of “I will not allow this to happen again”. This is what led to the strategies developed by participants to manage or avert bullying in their future career.

6.1.3 Strategies implemented by women to overcome gender stereotyping and bullying

The strategies used by the women in this study were similar for bullying and gender stereotyping, but not all the strategies were used by all women or for both sorts of experience. The strategies adopted by women were networking and finding a mentor, education and impression management techniques such as verbal and non-verbal communication and physical presentation and dress. Some participants adopted a masculine leadership and communication approach to behave like a man. Networking and mentoring were often discussed together and the terms used interchangeably.
In the education sector, finding a coach to work on leadership and communication skills (mentor availability was lacking) was used to build skills and confidence after the experience of bullying. Coaching around being assertive was helpful in standing up to the bully.

Networking was used in education, pharmaceutical, construction and professional services and helped participants gain a new position, which removed them from the bullying situation. It was also used to build relationships and social capital, which was considered to be effective in career advancement and to overcome gender stereotyping and/or bullying. Networking helped to overcome gender stereotypes such as the belief that women are not available and not ambitious. The act of being present at networking events proved this to be incorrect.

Impression management was useful to those in all industries but especially for females working in male dominated industries such as construction, science/law and accounting. Education was used as a tactic to impress others and build confidence, which served as an effective tool for those in the male dominated industries. It was mostly used to make the point of being as qualified or more qualified than males in their place of work. It was observed that those who employed this strategy had quite a competitive attitude and also behaved like a man to get ahead.

Physical presentation and dress was a prominent aspect of career advancement and overcoming gender stereotyping and bullying. All participants used it as a career advancement strategy, however only females used it in relation to overcoming gender stereotyping or bullying. It was used in the context of dressing down to ‘hide beauty’ in science/law and used to create an appearance of authority and professionalism in construction, air transport, accounting and professional services.
Communication, a part of impression management was important to all in the study. Some female participants reported using less direct and authoritative communication in their early careers and lacked confidence to speak up and state their ambition. It sometimes led to not managing experiences of bullying, such as standing up to the bully or having the confidence to report the behaviour. In their later careers some of the women communicated more confidently and directly, more agentic and masculine in style, which was a useful tactic across industries, but especially for those in construction, accounting, science/law and professional services.

Behaving like a man also worked best for those working in accounting, construction and science/law, which are predominantly male dominated. This tactic was used to overcome both gender stereotyping and bullying. Behaving like a man meant adopting a male leadership style and communication, being assertive and speaking in commercial terms such as being involved in discussions about profit and loss, rather than marketing of human resource issues. Not mentioning the children and giving the impression of being available for overtime or social events or networking were others ways that participants behaved more like men.

The strategies employed by the participants in this study worked best for those working in male dominated industries. Those participants had given much thought to gender stereotyping in particular and the problem that females are not reaching the senior ranks of business as men have done. They were, in general, highly ambitious, well-qualified, successful women, who experienced frustration about the stereotypes held by others in their organisations and in society. They reported that these views hindered their career advancement. This is what led to the development of strategies to overcome gender
stereotyping and bullying such as impression management, education, networking, finding a mentor and behaving like a man.

6.2 Contribution to the existing research

To adequately report how this research has contributed to existing research I go back to the research question: How do managers in Australia try to deal with their experience of gender stereotyping and bullying to advance their careers? In order to unpack the primary research question I also considered three secondary questions: What strategies do women try to overcome gender stereotyping and bullying? How effective are networking, mentoring and impression management to overcome gender stereotyping and bullying and advance a woman's career? Do women need to behave like men in order to succeed in big business in Australia?

In considering these questions, my study contributes to existing research in that we can now see women successfully dealing with both bullying and gender stereotyping through the use of specific and deliberate strategies, such as improving education, impression management tactics, networking and finding a mentor, in order to avert, manage or mitigate the issue and advance their careers.

This research contributes to existing research by connecting the experiences of bullying and gender stereotyping to the strategies used to overcome them. This study has identified education as another impression management tactic. It has also established a link between impression management as a strategy for averting and managing both bullying and dealing with gender stereotypes. This research contributes further to current literature on gender, masculinities, gender stereotyping, bullying, impression management and
communication. I have achieved insights through this research project that will lead me to further study. That the issues of gender stereotyping and bullying emerged during the interviews changed the study and further work can now be done in this area.

6.3 Implications for further research

This study contributes important findings to warrant further study in the area of gender stereotyping, bullying, networking and impression management. Future research would examine the subject in more detail with a larger sample size involving a wider section of the professional community.

Expansion of the study will enable a comparison of gender stereotyping and bullying across the industries in this study and include others with larger numbers in healthcare, professional services and media. This in turn will lead to new research questions.

In future research I may have two separate data sets for the males and females to do a comparative analysis of men and women’s experience of bullying. Two data sets will enable deeper analysis of men’s perceptions of gender stereotyping and bullying of women. It is by studying the experiences and the strategies that may bring to light solutions for change. Future research could also investigate further the reason why gender diversity policies appear not to be working and why many women still experience and internalise gender stereotyping.

All the participants of this study were proactive in adopting strategies to help themselves, or they sought help from others to ensure they would not experience bullying or gender stereotyping again in future. Some sought mentors, others found help in their networks, others attempted more intrinsic solutions such as educating themselves with
multiple degrees, adopted a masculine approach to communication and leadership to behave like a man and/or used impression management tactics such as vocal pitch and tone, physical presentation and dress. However, if the sample were larger, it may be that not all personality types would adopt strategies to overcome. Some may feel defeated by gender stereotyping or bullying in a way that causes them to leave not only the organisation but also the workforce. This could be part of the reason for the lack of women at the top ranks of organisations, or even one of the reasons a significant number of women start their own businesses. So for instance, future research could compare how introverts and extroverts differ in their responses to bullying and gender stereotypes, as could measuring the personalities of participants on a personality type indicator such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator Test. Future study may include a mixed method with the development of a survey. This would also add rigour to future research.

The completion of this stage of the research is only the beginning to associating gender stereotyping, bullying with strategies to manage and/or avert, such as impression management, networking, education and behaving like a man.

This study confirmed that gender stereotyping is a problem that is not adequately dealt with in the Australian workplace. Although it is a popular topic in the media and many organisations are attempting to eradicate gender stereotyping for a more inclusive workplace, there is much yet to be implemented and adopted. Many large multi-national companies including those where the participants were employed have policies around gender diversity and have implemented women’s leadership programs with much fanfare and media attention. However, the aims of these company policies have apparently not translated into positive impacts on the careers of the participants of this study. The women
shared much frustration that this was a constant challenge. The males in the study were equally concerned. Only one person in this study spoke up and reported the issue to human resources where no assistance was given. Others reported that they did not want to speak up, and although there was not an explanation as to why, it was implied that this was fraught with problems, and rather, it was easier to leave the organisation. It was something to manage and overcome, not report.

All the participants were mature and strong enough to seek help or help themselves, to ensure that it would not occur again in future. Some sought mentors, some found help in their networks, and most attempted solutions. These strategies included educating themselves with multiple degrees, adopting a masculine approach to communication and leadership, behaving like a man, and/or using impression management tactics such as vocal pitch and tone, physical presentation and dress. For the women in this study and for women that are still on the pathway to career success, my goal is to continue this research as my personal contribution to solving this problem.


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Appendix A: Interview guide

Interview Guide, 16th December 2014

You have been approached with this invitation to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University as you have been identified as a senior business leader in Australia. This questionnaire has been developed as part of my research, and will provide focus and data for my thesis entitled ‘The power and perception of influence, image and impression management in female politicians and business leaders: A study of influence, image and impression management’. My research will investigate how verbal and non verbal perceptions of female leaders in the business and political arenas are formed and viewed. Your interest and participation in this research is valuable and most appreciated. I will ensure your contribution remains anonymous. This project has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee. The opportunity to discuss your career in detail will enable you to think, explore and reflect on your career.

Research Aim

Does influence, image and impression management contribute to female career success in business and politics?

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<th>Demographic questions</th>
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4. What type of school did you attend?

Private
Public
Other e.g. Catholic

5. What is your highest level of education of your Mother?

High school graduate, diploma or equivalent
Certificate/Trade
Bachelor’s degree
Master’s degree
PhD or Doctoral degree
Other, please specify

6. What is your highest level of education of your Father?
High school graduate, diploma or equivalent
Certificate/Trade
Bachelor’s degree
Master’s degree
PhD or Doctoral degree
Other, please specify

8. Position in organisation
Sole Trader
Owner/Founder
Middle Manager
Senior Manager
Partner
Non Executive Director
Minister of Parliament
Senator
Political Staff
Other, please specify

9. Which Myers Briggs Classification are you?

10. What is the size of the Organisation you work in? (Number of employees)
1-10 small
11-40 medium
41 – 100 large
Over 100
Please specify

11. Marital status: What is your marital status?
Single
De facto
Married
Divorced
Widow/er
Other

12. Number of children
   Nil
   One
   Two
   Three
   Four
   More than four
General themes of the survey

The general themes will be gender equality, influence, image and impression management in the context of career advancement within the business and political arenas.

Multiple choice questions

Section 1: What are the main reasons for gender inequality in politics and business in Australia?

13. What do you consider the main reason for gender inequality at senior levels in business and politics? (Please list in order from 1 to 7 1 being the top factor)

Lack of opportunity
Biological reasons e.g. time spent away from workplace to raise children
Lack of support at home
Lack of education
Difficulties obtaining childcare
Lack of respect for women
Lack of respect for men
Other, please comment

14. How has your career advanced? (Please list in order from 1 to 10, 1 being the top factor)

Opportunities offered and taken
I had a personal strategy and a career plan which I carefully executed
Luck
I took a job that was available
I fell into the job which lead me to my current career
Parental influence
15. **What are the factors that have helped your career?** (Please list in order from 1 to 10, 1 being the top factor)

- Education and qualifications
- Gender
- Having a mentor
- Having a family
- Networking
- Support from partner/family
- Respect from colleagues/supervisors
- Working long hours
- Communication style
- Leadership style

Other, please comment

______________________________________________________________________________________
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______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

16. **What are the factors that have hindered your career?** Please list in order from 1 to 9, 1 being the top factor

- Lack of education and qualifications
- Gender
- Lack of a mentor
- Having a family
- Lack of networking
- Communication style
- Leadership style
- Not working long hours
17. **What steps have you taken to influence your career advancement?** Please list in order from 1 to 5, 1 being the top factor

- Obtained education and qualifications
- Networking
- Leadership and/or communication coaching
- Image consulting, personal branding or personal styling
- Obtained board or committee positions

Other professional development, please comment

18. **If you are in a relationship, what job or career does your partner have?**

- House duties and family responsibilities
- Career or profession

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*Section 2 - Which facets of female influence, image and impression management are important to men, and to women?*

19. **Do you consider impression management to be more important to men or women for career development?**

- more important to men
- more important to women
- equally important
- not important to men
- not important to women

Please comment

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20. If important, which facets of impression management do you consider more important to the career development of women? (please number in order from 1 to 13, 1 being the most important)

Physical image and presentation
Intellect and knowledge of job
Experience in job or related area
Confidence
Balanced personality
Sex appeal
Network
Mentors
Earning the respect of work colleagues and superiors
Dress
Vocal pitch and tone
Communication style
Leadership style

Please comment

______________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________

21. Which facets of impression management do you consider important to the career development of men (please number in order from 1 to 13 1 being the most important)?

Physical image and presentation
Intellect and knowledge of job
Experience in job or related area
Confidence
Balanced personality
Sex appeal
Network
Mentors
Earning the respect of work colleagues and superiors
Dress
Vocal pitch and tone
Communication style
Leadership style

Please comment

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

22. Do you think tattoos and body piercings have a negative or positive effect on a professional's career?
   Yes
   No
   Sometimes
   How? please comment

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

23. Do you think drinking alcohol has a negative or positive impact on managing one's impression in networking situations?
   Yes
   No
   Sometimes, please comment

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

24. Do you think a diet and exercise regime is an important in career advancement?
   Yes
   No
   Sometimes, please comment

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

25. Have you found your ethics challenged in your career?
   Yes
   No
   Sometimes
   How? please comment

______________________________________________________________________________________
26. Do men and women work and communicate differently in the business environment?

   Yes
   No
   Sometimes

   How? please comment

27. Do you consider personal branding to be important in career development?

   Yes
   No

   Why? please comment

Section 3 - How do male and female professionals in politics and business use influence, image and impression management while working towards reducing gender barriers to success?

28. Can an impression management strategy be useful for advancement of the career of female professionals?

   Yes
   No

   Please comment

29. Who is it more important to use influence, image and impression management with – colleagues, superiors, clients or constituents (please number from 1 to 5, 1 being the most important)?

   Colleagues
   Superiors
   Clients
30. What do you think will increase the number of senior females in business and politics (please number from 1 to 11, 1 being the most important)?

Change of employer attitude towards flexible working hours for females
Networking
Use of an influence, image and impression management strategy
Leadership and communication programs
Flexible working hours
Availability of childcare
Mentoring
Sex appeal
Intellect
Knowledge of the job
Other, please comment
Appendix B: Ethics Approval

Notice of Approval

Date: 24 July 2014
Project number: 18659
Project title: Making Partner in the Big Four: Overcoming barriers using impression management for success in Accounting firms.
Risk classification: Low risk
Principal Investigator: Professor Supriya Singh
Student Investigator: Ms Natalie McKenna

Terms of approval:

**Responsibilities of the principal investigator**

- It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by BCHEAN. Approval is only valid while the investigator holds a position at RMIT University.

1. Amendments
   - Approval must be sought from BCHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment submit a request for amendment form to the BCHEAN secretary. This form is available on the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from BCHEAN.

2. Adverse events
   - You should notify BCHEAN immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

3. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)
   - The PICF must be distributed to all research participants, where relevant, and the consent form is to be retained and stored by the investigator. The PICF must contain the RMIT University logo and a complaints clause including the above project number.

4. Annual reports
   - Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report.

5. Final report
   - A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. BCHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

6. Monitoring
   - Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by BCHEAN at any time.

7. Retention and storage of data
   - The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Regards,

A/Professor Cathy Brigden
Acting Chairperson RMIT BCHEAN