

Are we there yet?
**Exploring Black women academics' experiences of navigating their
belonging at a South African university**



COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

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By

Bongiwe Mayibongwe Ngcobo

208505717

Supervisor:

Prof. Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo

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Declaration

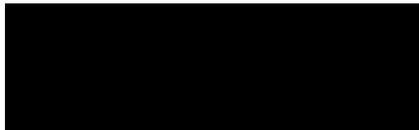
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As the student's supervisor, I, Prof. Mlamuli N. Hlatshwayo, hereby approve the submission of the thesis for examination.



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Dedication

“To my son, Amukelani, I would like to remind you that the sky is the limit. Whatever dream or goal that you want to pursue and set your mind to, there is nothing that will stop you. Dare to dream. Pursue your dreams with all that you got. Be mindful of the environment and the company that you keep. But most important, you are your worst enemy. That means, be careful of negative self-talk and self-criticism. Do not forget to pray. Keep the faith. This degree is my confirmation to you that you need to fulfill your dreams, no matter what in life. I am proud of being your mother, your inspiration, the one you can look up to. Love, MumBee”

Abstract

In this research project, I explored and theorized women academics' experiences of navigating and negotiating their belonging in a South African university. Through an exploratory case study, I purposely recruited 10 Black women academics to explore their experiences in higher education. To gain in-depth data and to respond to research questions, I used 25 qualitative semi-structured interview questions. I relied on intersectionality as a theoretical frame for analyzing and making sense of women academics' experiences in the academy. The findings of this project reveal that women academics often must navigate and negotiate a deeply entrenched environment in colonization and micro-politics. The findings also show that women academics' career progression is further negatively delayed by other factors such as the double burden of womanhood, marginalization, gender inequality, race, and inequality in higher education. I argue that there is need for some sector and institution-wide implementation, and possible policy interventions, for helping women academics enter, negotiate, and succeed at university. I also recommended that higher education institutions further draw attention to implementation and possible policies to have more women academics in an environment, which allows them to further their academic endeavors.

Keywords: women academics, higher education, experiences of women academics, intersectionality

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Chapter One

Overview, Context, and objectives

1.1 Introduction

There is growing literature focusing on the different experiences of women academics in higher education (see for example, Idahosa & Vincent, 2019; Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017; Colissen & Kiguwa, 2018). Research on women academics' experiences in higher education often focuses on: enabling transformation through critical engagement and reflexivity (Idahosa & Vincet, 2019); self-study analysis of academics of colour and their challenges in a university department (Mahabeer, Nzimande & Shoba, 2018); mentoring of women academics in the 21st century, and ensuring their access, retention and success (Chitsamatanga, Rembe & Shumba, 2019), among other focus areas. Maphalala & Mpofu (2017) question the extent to which women academics have succeeded at university, and considers the structural oppression and discrimination that they continue to face. Ramohai (2019), and to some extent, Carolissen & Kiguwa (2018), suggest that women professors in South African institutions must navigate and manage deeply ingrained and pervasive micropolitics of student citizenship, belonging, estrangement, and marginalization (Carolissen & Kiguwa, 2018). Because there are not many women in positions of power, institutions continue to be patriarchal settings where women's challenges and unique demands are disregarded and misrecognised (Jali, 2021). The lack of women who apply for senior and top management positions, as a result of an office culture that prides itself of long, intensive work days that impact on a woman's other responsibilities, are challenges to sustainable women career advancement (Muthui, 2018). In addition, men commonly act antagonistically towards women in senior and top management positions, despite the fact that they perform the same tasks as men but are paid less. In this study, I hope to add to the body of research on women academics' professional and private experiences within institutions, as well as how their lives are shaped to succeed in the academic world, and how they negotiate their place in a South African university.

1.1 Title

The title of this study is: Are we there yet? Exploring Black women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university

1.2 Focus and purpose of the study

The main goal of the study was to examine the experiences of Black women academics and their attempts to negotiate their belonging in South African higher education. Studies on the experiences of women academics in higher education generally concentrate on; the quality of their research, their management responsibilities, why there are still few women academics in higher education, the gender inequity they face, the main reasons and obstacles that prevent women from becoming scholars in higher education, and women's desire to fit in with a setting that is primarily male-oriented and hostile to women (See Zulu 2022; Francis, 2020; Naicker, 2013). The focus of the study was on how people navigate, what their experiences are, and why they do so. These are problematic because Black women academics seem to not belong in higher education spaces because some see leadership as a chore and the requirements of promotion requires one to be constantly working to keep up with increasing their KPA scores. Some women academics mostly enjoy teaching and learning more than researching and publishing.

1.3 Location of the study

The study was conducted in the 2021 academic year in South Africa within KwaZulu-Natal province. It lasted for a year. It was carried out at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, Pinetown. This is a small town mostly surrounded by townships. Edgewood campus is the university closest to this town.

1.4 Rationale of the study

I explored how Black women academics navigated their sense of belonging in a South African university in my study. Based on my personal experience as a university student, and the literature I had already studied, I was inspired to conduct this study. I remember my former experiences from when I was a first-year undergraduate student at a historically white university. There were fewer women academics than male academics, which raised the question of what happens to women once they graduate (Motta et al., 2019). The findings of the present study may further emphasize the need for regulations that would encourage the

hiring of more women in academia and provide them with a setting that enables them to further their higher education without restrictions. This study is also likely to be helpful to academic institutions and higher education development and training in two ways;

- 1) understanding women academics' experiences of negotiating their belonging in a South African academy, and 2) assisting in the creation of necessary policy interventions to support women academics entering, negotiating, and succeeding in universities.

1.5 Literature review

The career paths of men and women in academia are still very different, despite decades of social activism and legislative interventions. Women academics continue to face inequity (Ooms, Wecker & Hopp, 2019). Women students enroll at a relatively high rate, yet they make up a disproportionately low percentage of professors and researchers in senior positions and administrative positions (see Rivera, 2017). Other obstacles faced by women who choose to pursue academic careers include less prospects for growth, unequal pay and maltreatment at work, and organizational cultures and traditions that favor male leadership and management. According to Bagilhole and White (2013), women have been fighting for equality in the academy for decades, but they still have a long road ahead before they can achieve parity with males in this field.

The recruitment procedure and the current atmosphere are two major issues that prohibit equal representation of men and women in academia, according to extensive research (Britton, 2017; Belang et al., 2017; Faleh, 2017). The global issue of workplace discrimination against women still persists (Britton, 2017). Women are subject to implicit and overt bias and oppression, and they are frequently left out of networking opportunities and engagements (Belang et al., 2017). Women's candidacy for senior level positions is frequently taken into consideration through the lens of specific requirements and qualities the woman candidate is expected to meet is often measured through the spectrum of men leadership (Faleh, 2017). Due to the current sexist milieu and the predominance of men in high academic positions, a sizable percentage of women are unable to achieve their goals. These are problematic as women academics have to choose to not pursue higher academic positions because their leadership will be under constant scrutiny and micromanagement.

Women academics must decide whether to excel in their career and succeed in a highly competitive atmosphere, or withdraw to their homes and prioritize family life and child-rearing

at the expense of their career, and miss out on crucial prime years (Elsevier, 2019). Women are structurally required to juggle between caring for their families and household duties, and fulltime employment (Sandstrom, 2017). According to research, women are mostly disappointed by their low achievement in today's university environments, which negatively affect their motivation and job satisfaction. Women academics experience the imposter syndrome, which means that they feel inadequate in their own fields and in their institutions. The imposter syndrome makes them feel as though they cannot live up to the highest standards set by their peers and other women academics (Lewis & Simpson, 2017).

According to Trotman and Greene (2013), ethnic minority women are still not accepted in the ivory towers of academia, despite decades of progressive thought.

Although it may be argued that many women have experienced exclusion in some way, and that this should be taken into account in transformation efforts, this argument ignores the significant imbalances that historically prevailed among racial and gender groupings in South Africa. An Afrikaner woman, for instance, faced sexism but only within the confines of her own larger culture. She could still enroll in a university, but her options would be gender-based and restricted due to her employment as a home-care provider (Ramohai, 2019). She did not have any struggle against a system that constrained human freedom of choice. She cannot compare her experiences with those of a black woman. Therefore, in order to obey state-led directives in South Africa, it is crucial that social justice agendas, which emphasize equality and diversity in higher education institutions, place black woman scholars at the forefront of transformation processes.

Women's history in the workforce and in higher education is now being discussed. When evaluating transformation practices and procedures in higher education, transformation and diversity are inseparable. The social, economic, and political background of South Africa as a nation in general, and of higher education in particular, has contributed to these two notions. Apartheid South Africa's racial, gender, and class barriers posed seemingly insurmountable difficulties for the higher education environment (Breetzke & Hedding, 2017; Bunting, 2006). Institutions still lack gender equality policies that specifically include women in reformation plans, despite state-led directives emphasizing the need to redress past injustices that impacted this most disadvantaged minority (Zwane et al 2022.).

While British higher education institutions confront challenges pertaining to gender

inequalities and need transformation in this regard (David, 2015; Morley, 2005), South African higher education institutions mostly battle with race, gender, disability and class inequalities (Badat, 2010, 2016, 2017). Although it is difficult to define transformation, Breetzke & Hedding (2018) believe that, in the South African context, it is important to consider transformation in terms of the “undoing of the historical injustices that the majority of the black African population suffered in terms of access, availability and representation in the higher education sector of the country.”

In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid contributed to the oppression of women from a gendered as well as a racial perspective. Men and women due to the history of South Africa have been subjected to different oppressions and inequalities due to their gender. Equal opportunities have not been afforded equally to both genders due to the roles each gender was subjected to. Legislation to address these inequities manifested in the Education White Paper 3 (Republic of South Africa, 1996), the National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education, 2001), and the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (Republic of South Africa, 2013). Moodly (2015) and Moodly and Toni (2015; 2017) argue the need for women as role models in leadership in higher education, citing equity and social justice for the basis of their argument. This demands a re-imagining of leadership as part of the transformation process, by introducing women’s ways of leading into the leadership space.

Similar to the rest of the globe, South Africa is working to eliminate gender inequality, particularly in higher education. The South African government made a commitment to eliminate historical social inequities through higher education reform in 1994, at the dawn of democracy. This arose in light of the fact that institutions of higher learning were mimicking the socio-economic structures of the former apartheid period (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017).

Women who attempt to enter these institutions' innately male structures face difficulties. Patriarchy, low research productivity, the lack of women academics in research, and the weight of femininity are few of the fundamental barriers keeping women from making meaningful progress in academia. Women employed in higher education around the world confront comparable issues. According to Maphalala and Mpofu (2017), the difficulties faced by women academics in postsecondary learning can be overcome. This will guarantee that their tales are presented from their perspective. The research program on women in higher education must be established by the women themselves. The formulation and execution of policy, even with the

input of women, should be prioritized in order to achieve gender balance in institutions. Women should be included in the policy discussions because they are suitable candidates to advocate for the issues that they face and more especially to have a voice in decision making that will affect women.

Khunou, Phaswana, Khoza-Shangase, & Hugo Canham (2019) describe the traumatic experiences of being black and being a woman in the South African academia in a book titled "Black Academic Voices: The South African Experience." They emphasize the part played by racism, sexism, the university's obsession with research in a neoliberal environment, and the isolating institutional culture that drives women academics to the perimeter of South African universities. I make a contribution to the growing body of research by focusing on and theorizing the experiences of women academics as they navigate and negotiate their place in South African higher education.

1.6 Objectives of the study

The following objectives guided this study:

- To explore Black women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university.
- To understand how Black women academics' experience navigating their belonging in a South African university.
- To understand why Black women academics, navigate their belonging in the way they do.

1.7 Research question/s

- What are Black women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university?
- How do Black women academics' experience of navigating their belonging in a South African university?
- Why do Black women academics' experience their belonging in the way that they do?

1.8 Research design and method

This section of the study explains the approach that I used to generate data, as well as how data was analysed. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explain that the methodology section clearly describes the research approach, design, and justifying their choice. It is further explained by

O'Hara et al. (2011) as all the techniques and methods the researcher used to generate data, in order to answer the research questions. A qualitative research approach was considered most appropriate for this study. Qualitative research is a coherent and personal process used to describe life experiences and how people make meaning of their experiences. It explores real life issues in the real world (Creswell 2014). This approach helped the researcher to understand the physical environment of where the study is taking place. In this study, the qualitative research approach was suitable because it examines human behaviour and habits. Della and Keating (2008) further explain that the qualitative approach aims to understand events by discovering the meanings that human beings attribute to their behaviour, and to the world at large. The study explored women academics' experiences from one South African university, generating qualitative data that is better suited for addressing opinion and judgment (Shuttleworth, 2008). The qualitative approach is useful to find out how people think or feel (McLeod, 2008). The qualitative approach was useful in this study as I was interested in exploring women academics' experiences navigating their way in a South African university.

1.9 Data generation

Qualitative research involves using a variety of data generation methods. Creswell (2012) explains that a qualitative study uses data generation methods such as interviews, document analysis, reflections, and observations. In keeping with the interpretive paradigm underpinning this study, the main data generation tool was semi-structured interview. Interviews are frequently utilized in generating data for research, and the semi-structured interviews are the most used interview method in research of a qualitative nature (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). According to Cohen, et al. (2011), interviews are one of the most popular methods of data generation for interpretive qualitative case studies. For the purposes of this study, I used semi-structured interviews, which Creswell (2014) explains as usually having set of key questions that are followed in a more open-ended manner, or interview guides that list broader questions to be covered during the interview. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews offers the qualitative researcher the advantage of being able to modify their line of inquiry, to follow up interesting responses, and to investigate underlying motives, allowing for a more in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were regarded an appropriate instrument to use for a small sample such as that selected in this study. This type of interview allowed me to remain in control of the topic, but also allowed the participants to provide subjective responses as suggested by Cohen et al. (2011). Interviews were done on site with all participating lectures. One interview session, which lasted for an hour, was conducted

with each participant at the beginning of the process. The number of participants for this study was 10. Diversity was taken into consideration in terms of age, race, and discipline background.

1.10 Data analysis

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2004), data analysis means a close or systematic study or the separation of a whole into its parts, for the purpose of the study. Lisa (2002) adds that data analysis helps to describe facts, detects patterns, develop explanations and test hypotheses. There are many ways a researcher can employ to analyse data, which can be qualitative or quantitative. In analyzing the generated data, qualitative data analysis methods were used. Specifically, the thematic analysis method was used, aimed at identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic analysis is a method for “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. This forms the basis from which the two sets of data (interviews and observations) are analyzed. Another purpose for the use of thematic analysis is that it organizes and describes data sets in detail. Thematic analysis goes beyond simply counting phrases or words in a text, and moves on to identifying implicit and explicit ideas within the data. This aid the researcher in developing the key facets within the mental space that forms and shapes lecturers’ perspectives.

Firstly, I analyzed the recorded data from interviews, which I played and replayed on tape to ensure clarity. Data generated was organized to facilitate analysis of my research questions. I analyzed the data recorded from the observations. Data was coded according to themes as mentioned. After lesson observations and interviews, I placed the data into different themes that answered the research questions of the study. Perceptions, perspectives, and understandings were analyzed, and then used to create an understanding of what it is like to be women in higher education. The interpretive phenomenological approach was employed to analyze data generated, in order to understand how academics experienced this phenomenon under study. This form of research endeavored to understand what a group of people felt during a phenomenon.

1.11 Ethical issues

Researchers are guided by certain ethics when carrying out studies. Ethics exemplify individual

and communal codes of conduct that require adherence to some principles (Biggs & Coleman, 2007). Ethics offer rules and behavioral expectations about the most correct conduct towards participants. The following ethical aspects were taken into consideration in the process of conducting this study. Ethics has to do with behavior that is considered right or wrong, and is an important consideration in research, particularly research involving humans (Bertram & Christiansen, 2010). Each course has its code of ethics that needs to be followed (Airey, Bowden & Zein, 2006). It was therefore, important to ensure that I followed the ethical procedures stated by the university's ethics committee. This study dealt with human beings; university lecturers. I firstly applied for, and sought to obtain gatekeeper permission from the University registrar for access to the research site, the university. I then applied to the University ethics committee for ethical permission to conduct the study.

1.12 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the level at which the study can be trusted. As my study falls under the interpretivist paradigm, trustworthiness is an important component. It is explained in this research study in terms of what it is, what is included in it, and how it was ensured. Trustworthiness is synonymous with standards of truth and value in the work presented. According to Guba and Lincoln (2003), four issues of trustworthiness are vital in any qualitative research. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The rationale behind working with trustworthiness in a qualitative study is to support the views of the research and to what extent they can be trusted and relied on. Trustworthiness in this regard is the relations between generating data and the way the data generated is recorded accurately.

1.13 Anticipated problems/challenges

There were a number of limitations I was confronted with as I conducted this research project.

- I conducted my study during the Covid-19 pandemic. This presented various challenges such as not being able to meet my research participants face-to-face, and the understanding that their lives may have been disrupted. To navigate this limitation, I used various online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, WhatsApp and others to generate data. I was also understanding in terms of postponements, re-schedulings, and delays so as to ensure that I work around my research participants' convenience.

- My study was only limited to one particular case study, in one South African university. Although this prevented the likelihood and potential of transferability of the findings, focusing on one case study allowed me to obtain in depth, rich and complex experiences of women academics and how they navigated and negotiated their belonging in a South African university.

1.14 Chapter overview

1.14.1 Chapter one

In this chapter, I introduce the study and share the focus of the study, rationale and intention of the study. The location, research questions, research objectives and anticipated problems in the study also shared. Issues of ethics and trustworthiness were discussed in detail.

1.14.2 Chapter two

The literature review provides a review of the experiences of women academics in higher education. Women academics navigate higher education using a variety of mechanisms to adapt in the institutions, while some challenge the status quota. All these contestations and discourses are detailed and critically discussed in the literature review chapter.

1.14.3 Chapter three

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework, intersectionality; a framework coined by Kimberle Crenshaw. It attempts to shine a spotlight on the intersecting dilemmas that women experience in their place of work. Intersectionality explains how women are marginalized knowingly and unknowingly in various structures of the organizations.

1.14.4 Chapter four

In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology used in this study, which is interpretive paradigm, using exploratory case study, to explore the experiences of women academics navigating their belonging in a South African university. I discuss the semi-structured interviews used to interview participants, and purposive sampling used to select participants.

1.14.5 Chapter five

In this chapter, findings are discussed using thematic analysis of themes that emerged from the data generated. Data is presented as chapter one of two chapters that present the thematic,

emergent findings of this study.

1.14.6 Chapter six

This is chapter two of the presentation of findings. In this chapter, I use intersectionality as a theoretical lens to theorize the data that emerged from the study. I also use scholarly literature to discuss experiences of women academics navigating their belonging in a South African university.

1.14.7 Chapter seven

In this chapter, I conclude the study by discussing the conclusions, implications of this research project, as well as the possible recommendations for future research in the field.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed and outlined the background to the study and introduction, outlining the research questions, research objectives and location of the study. In this chapter, I review the literature in this study. The literature review covers international, national, and local literature, and discusses the key literature in the study of women academics' experiences in higher education. I first start by discussing the experiences of women academics navigating their belonging in higher education. I then discuss the challenges and complexities of negotiating the higher education space. I end the chapter with some conclusion on the literature reviewed on the experiences of women academics in higher education.

2.2.1 Women experiences of navigating their belonging in HE

In “Never the Right Time”, Eren looks at pregnancy and maternity planning and how these pose a challenge at different tertiary education levels (Rosa & Clavera, 2021). Using in-depth individual interviews with women from four universities in Dublin, the paper discussed how women evaluate maternity-related issues in the field of physics and the physical sciences from undergraduate to postdoctoral level, and how this affected their career progress. Findings indicated that compared to their male counterparts, the need to continually publish, the absence of paid parental leave, contracts of short-term duration, lack of clear institutional policies on maternity, lack of pregnancy/maternity-friendly environments and the non-extension of contracts, put many women early career scientists at an academic disadvantage, resulting in a ‘leaky pipeline’. Moreover, responses from the participants revealed that traditional gender responsibilities were not compatible with women’s identity as scientists or with their scientific career aspirations.

According to Gewin (2020) in “Go the Extra Mile”, Bonache, Carballo, Chas and Delgado examined the fears and barriers towards parenthood experienced by Spanish early career academics in a context in which research excellence and parenthood are often perceived as mutually exclusive. Drawing on data collected via an online survey, this article contributes to the literature showing that both women and men are affected by gender-based biases that

maintain them in traditional gender roles, complicating men's integration into childcare practices and upholding the maternal wall in working women. Findings suggest that while the factor that most influenced the decision to become a parent was the financial solvency to support a child, followed by professional stability and being able to balance work and family time, early-career women perceive more barriers to their academic career after having children and spend more time thinking about how to integrate professional development and parenthood than men do. Nonetheless, being able to stay at home and raise a child was more decisive for men than for women, suggesting that traditional roles linked to fatherhood are changing and men today are more involved in childcare than in previous generations. Finally, the authors stress that further research is needed to determine if there are differences in the perception of academic career barriers between men who wish to be actively involved in fathering and men who do not.

According to Barber et al (2021) in "Sojourning as a Wife, a Mother and a Daughter", where Phan employed a critical autoethnography, as a Vietnamese student (and mother) pursuing a doctoral degree in New Zealand, to explore the navigation between cultures to adapt to the host country while sustaining the bond with Vietnamese heritage. Based on theories of transnationalism, space and place, Phan explored her own spatial production and place-making processes and focuses on the way she grew to become 'a cultural translator' for other family members, making the home a space of cross-cultural exchanges and inter-generational legacy inheritance. Gender family roles (motherhood and daughterhood) and status as a doctoral student are entangled in a complex network of different cultures, lifestyles and social structures. The paper highlighted how the author experienced border crossing as an essential part of her motherhood and daughterhood, and her reconfiguration of family organization, which entailed the negotiation of different languages, cultures, identities and roles. By focusing on how motherhood experiences are influenced by the societal and cultural practices in both home and host countries, and the concomitant neutralization of cultures and generations, the paper gives voice to the marginalized and often overlooked challenges that international doctoral students who are mothers must face, such as the explicit and implicit pressures of childrearing, challenges in cross-cultural communication, differences in educational values and medical practices, the inheriting and fracturing of cultural origins, the mediation between cultures, and intergenerational mix-and-match communication.

According to Rosa and Clavero, 2022 in *Women and Care Practices in Canadian Universities*,

Gaudet, Marchand, Bujaki and Bourgeault assess care practices and how they offer a new understanding of equity in academia. Academics are routinely engaged in care activities for their students, colleagues, institutions, and families, yet care is often overlooked in the performance-oriented culture of academia. The findings were drawn from interviews with women professors, where the study explored the extent, variety, and lived experiences of care practices in academia. They revealed how women academics perform caring for undergraduate and graduate students and for colleagues through academic tasks. Although these care tasks are at the heart of their daily work at universities, they are invisible. They prevented women from sufficiently attending to their self-care and from speaking out about their health because the performative culture creates a code of silence around vulnerability issues. Taking into consideration these findings, and also the fact that they exclusively interviewed women academics in permanent positions, the authors encouraged future studies to broaden their research sample in order to perform an in-depth intersectional analysis with the aim of identifying how different inequalities interact with gender and the differential impact on care. The authors highlighted that acknowledging care as a value and practice may reduce gender inequalities within an organization by improving its responsiveness to the needs of different community members, and recommend rethinking how universities, as bureaucracies, develop responsiveness strategies to the vulnerabilities of their employees and students.

The career paths of men and women in academia are still very different, despite many years of social movements and legislative interventions (Ooms, Wecker & Hopp, 2019). Women enroll at university at a relatively high rate, yet they make up a proportionately low percentage of professors and researchers in senior academic and administrative positions (see Rivera, 2017). Women who decide to pursue academic careers face additional obstacles that include; less prospects for advancement, unequal pay and treatment at work, and corporate cultures and traditions that favour masculine managerial and leadership style. According to Bagilhole and White (2013), women have been fighting for equality in the academy for decades, but still have a long way to go before reaching parity with men in this field.

The recruitment process and the current context are significant concerns that prevent equal representation of men and women in academia, according to extensive research (Birtton, 2017; Belang et al., 2017; Faleh, 2017). The global politically divisive issue of gender disparity in the workplace still seems to be evident (Britton, 2017). Women are subject to implicit and overt bias and oppression, and are frequently left out of professional networks and collaborations. Women's candidacy for senior level positions is typically seen or considered through the lens of particular requirements and qualities the woman candidate is expected to have. Some women are unable to achieve a senior academic position because of the existing gendered milieu and male dominance. While women get employment, they regularly opt to leave academia for justifiable reasons connected to their professions or opt temporary contracts over tenured posts (Belang et al., 2017). Women in the workforce confront a significant number of institutional impediments that have a substantial negative impact on their professional growth, and reduce their chances of success, which is why these phenomena are seen (Rhoton, 2018). Women academics must decide whether to focus on professional growth or concentrate on family life and childrearing (Elsevier, 2019). Women are structurally obliged to combine having kids with having full-time work obligations.

According to studies, gender diversity in transformational discourses does not advance the goal for restitution (Ramohai, 2019). Gender multivocality entails having more voices in academia, particularly from women, expressing their experiences within their specialisations (Fulkerson, 2019). The notion that a number of women have experienced exclusion in some way should be taken into account in transformation initiatives. However, in the context of South Africa, this generalized assertion ignores the stark imbalances that previously existed among racial and gender factions. For instance, although an Afrikaner woman experienced marginalization, her discrimination-related challenges were resolved within the confines of an ethnic group. Despite the gender-based restrictions imposed by her home-caregiver duties, she is nevertheless, capable of enrolling and excelling in a university. According to Emelsey and Montle (2022) in study where they explored literature teaching in secondary schools where is best positioned to address the dangers of discrimination of gender, which for now has been unsuccessful. The study, therefore, concluded that exclusion of black women writers in EFAL curriculum in democratic SA still promotes sexist and supremacist curriculum, locally failing post-1994 legislation for equalizing gender in the EFAL curriculum reforms and the United Nations Millennium Declaration to combat forms of discrimination against women.

The subject of black women's history in the professions and in higher education is now increasingly being discussed. When evaluating change processes and practices in higher education, transformation and diversity are inseparable. Because of South Africa's social, economic, and political history; these two ideas are interdependent in both general and higher education. Apartheid South Africa's racial, gender, and class divisions posed impassable obstacles for the higher education environment. While state-led mandates emphasize the need to make amends for historical wrongs that affected this most marginalized group, institutions still lack gender equity policies that specifically include black women in transformation plans.

2.2.2 A link between decolonization and Black women academics experiences in HE

Recently, the usage of decolonization (and its verb form decolonizing) has grown exponentially among educators globally. Yet the terms are used without probing their social, cultural, disciplinary, and geopolitical significance (Andreotti et al., 2015; Betts, 2016; Patel, 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The #MustFall movements in South Africa can be seen as part of a 'fourth phase' of decolonization debates in Africa, specifically focusing on Higher Education (Mamdani, 2016). They follow, reignite, and challenge three previous phases: anti-colonial national liberation from the 1950–60s, post-colonial debates on university-state relations, and contesting Structural Adjustment Programmes' neo liberalization of education from the 1980s (Okech, 2020, pp. 315–316). These challenges are significant because educational institutions are situated at a unique intersection. While they are primarily oriented towards knowledge production, they are also sites of social struggle, encompassing material and epistemic concerns, and they speak to immediate needs and longer-term questions of social reproduction, continuity, and change (Platzky Miller, 2019, p. 43). The link between decolonization and the experiences of Black women academics in HE is based on the oppression of women due to the history of South Africa that was strongly influenced by the apartheid regime where people were judged or given opportunities based on a number of factors namely gender, race, background. People of colour were given less opportunities as compared to other races.

Women were given roles that were more of nurturing because of their gender and the careers were restricted. As South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, the White Paper placed forward policies of equality and inclusion in education in all sectors and leadership positions were now also given to women. Women fall under group of the marginalised and excluded majority due to biases and multi oppressions that are found in the world. There are complexities

present in conversations of decolonization, especially within the abstract constructs of race. hooks (2009) point out detractors' refusal to 'acknowledge the link between the political fate of black citizens of the United States' in relation to decolonization sought by descendants of 'indigenous inhabitants,' (25) and argues that, while these gradations are important to contend with, they also can serve as commotions that stymie the obligatory collective work in decolonizing.

2.2.3 Challenges and complexities of negotiating the HE space

In terms of country differences, although the majority of higher education institutions in Britain face issues related to gender disparities and must adapt in this regard (David 2015; Morley 2005), higher education institutions in South Africa predominantly struggle with race over and above gender, disability, and class (Badat, 2010, 2016, 2017). Although it can be challenging to conceptualize transformation, Breetzke and Hedding (2017) opine that it is vital to think of transformation in terms of "undoing the historical injustices that the plurality of the black African population faced in terms of access, availability, and participation in the higher education sector of the country" in the South African context. Apartheid's legacy in South Africa led to the racial and gendered oppression of women.

The need for women role models in leadership in higher education is acknowledged by Moodly (2015) and Moodly and Toni (2015; 2017), who use equality and social justice as their points of reference. In order to achieve transformation, leadership must be reimagined in order to incorporate women's leadership styles. South Africa is working to eliminate gender inequality in higher education, just like the rest of the world. The South African government made a commitment in 1994, at the onset of democracy, to reshape higher education in order to eradicate previous societal inequities. This need arose in light of the fact that institutions of higher education were emulating the sociocultural structures of the former apartheid era (Maphalala & Mpofo, 2017).

Inherently male-dominated institutions pose difficulties for women who try to enter. Patriarchy, poor research output, the lack of women academics in research, and the double weight of womanhood, are just a few of the main obstacles keeping women from making considerable gains in academia. Women operating in higher education in South Africa and around the world confront comparable issues. According to Maphalala and Mpofo (2017), the difficulties

faced by women academics in higher education can be overcome. One way to achieve this is for women's tales to be told from their own perspective through research on women in higher education. The development and implementation of policy without the input of women does not serve to achieve gender balance in institutions.

In 'Black Academic Voices: The South African Experience', Grace Khunou, Edith Phaswana, Katijah Khoza-Shangase and Hugo Canham (2019) narrate the pain of being black and women in the South African academy. They lament the racism, sexism, neoliberal exploration at university, and an alienating institutional culture that continues to push women academics to the periphery of South African universities. In this study, I contribute to this focus on theorizing women academics' navigation and negotiation of their belonging in South African higher education. For illustration, Khoza-Shangase (2019) argues below on how navigating her belonging in an exploration-ferocious university, her redounded in her tone- diagnosing herself as suffering from intellectual and emotional toxin;

I have diagnosed myself as suffering from intellectual and emotional toxicity induced by racism, harassment, discrimination and white privilege within the academy. Toxicity is defined as the degree to which a substance can damage an organism or the degree to which it can be poisonous (Campbell 2007). In audiology, my field of practice and research, there is a phenomenon referred to as ototoxicity. Ototoxicity is the property of being toxic to the ear. This form of toxicity is commonly medication-induced, can be predictable but not always preventable, but can be identified, monitored and managed to varying degrees of success. Imagine I, as a black female academic, with this culture, systems and policies – this substance. My journey through higher education, through a black female student to associate professor in a historically white university, resonates and mirrors this phenomenon of ototoxicity exceptionally well (Khoza-Shangase 2019: 42).

In the above, Khoza-Shangase argues that her journey in higher education is explained through the ototoxicity term because of the extant culture, system and policies in higher education. She strove against all odds as a black female academic.

One of the most essential values in human civilization is human resources. It is essential that all institutions, especially higher education ones, establish and put into practice, policies and processes that assist staff in advancing their careers. Academics are under pressure to manage their own career progression due to the individualistic nature of an academic career, which also promotes the idea that they are solely responsible for own career growth (Coate et al., 2015). Longitudinal research (Bagilhole & White 2011; Frank Fox et al. 2011; Pereira, 2007; Vrceelj 2014; PrijiSamardija, Avelini Holjevac & Turk, 2009) have discovered that women with leadership potential in various business sectors, including higher education, confront various challenges in their professional lives.

Studies on women and the workforce must also take into account the particular challenges that women encounter when race, class, and gender come into play. Because of this, women academics normally start their careers later than their male counterparts and are less likely to follow the conventional career path of moving from lecturer up the ranks to become senior lecturers, associate professors, and full professors (Bagilhole & White, 2011). Women in administrative roles are more likely to have interrupted careers, and to work part-time, than their male counterparts because of many hats that women wear. Women in universities face increasingly precarious career paths due to lack of job security, the impact of managerialism, and heavy workloads (Bagilhole & White, 2013; White et al. 2011; O'Connor, 2014). Although the representation of women in leadership roles has increased, it is mostly in administrative areas (Burkinshaw, 2015). Sandberg (2013) argues that women in leadership can improve working conditions for all women in organizations because they are women themselves and better understand the challenges women face. However, one of her critics asserts that relying on one woman at the top, or even a handful, to understand what all women below them need and to act on that is simply naïve (Covert, 2013).

Given the current gendered environment and the majority of elite intellectuals, who base their decisions about the hiring of new members on a patriarchal ethos and masculine standards, a sizable fraction of women are unable to get prominent academic jobs. Women who are employed normally decide to quit academia permanently at key stages in their careers, or opt for interim roles rather than established ones. As a result of the many institutional and organizational impediments that women professionals face, which have a substantial negative impact on their professional growth and chances of success, several phenomenon are seen. Women experience stress from attempting to balance job growth and family and household

duties. Alternatively, universities have the capacity to be transformative revolutionary institutions, where conventional paradigms can be challenged. Because of this, the university holds a special position where it can, either propagate unfairness through bourgeois and imperial knowledge and experiences, or serve as a hub for imaginative envisioning of both the past and the tomorrow (Gatwiri, 2019).

Carolissen and Kiguwa (2018, p.1–2) acknowledge that power dynamics in HE may have an impact on feelings of belonging. Such power relations result from a variety of factors that are not one-dimensional, but require extensive intersectionalities (Carolissen & Kiguwa, 2018, p.3). Variables like color, sex, class, or ideological leaning are efficient in these setups. According to Saurombe (2018), the decolonization process entails reinstating African agency, their cultures, and their history into the curriculum. Given the exclusion of indigenous South African people's epistemologies and practices by a colonially inherited educational system, such a process is crucial (Saurombe, 2018, p. 122), an observation Fomunyam & Teferra (2017) concur. The underrepresentation of women in higher education has been shown to begin at the senior lecturer level, despite the consistent rise in women enrollment and employment (Moodly and Toni 2015a). The lack of women in leadership roles in higher education is a problem, not only in South Africa. According to Husu (2001) in Tessens et al. (2011, p. 655), "women's underrepresentation in positions of power and prestige in academia appears to be an international problem." Men typically place the burden on the women themselves, whereas women at the top see structures and men's involvement as a hurdle on the way up. In order to develop women's lives and careers, Tony and Moodly emphasize the need to take into consideration a life-career progression continuity that is unique to women. In order to advance women in HE leadership, Tony and Moodly (2015) emphasize the existence of a life-career development continuum that is specific to women. This continuum must be taken into account when implementing policies. The growth of women in HE leadership has also been impeded by HEIs' lack of accountability in carrying out national and international imperatives regarding women and leadership. Tony and Moodly present the fundamentals for expediting this through policy implementation, that changes the gendered culture of HEI environments, suggests support systems, places the lifespan spectrum for women in context, and provides recommendations for different interventions at various life-cycle stages.

2.2.4 Race, gender and other complexities in higher education

Issues of racial identity and belonging appear to be foregrounded in current struggles around

the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa. In dealing with the aftermath of colonialism and apartheid in SA, higher education institutions have been an important site for discussions on transformation (Kessi, 2013) and more recently, decolonization. Most of these discussions are centered on race and gender to ensure that the demographics of the students/staff match those of the larger South African populace. South Africa has recently experienced turmoil in its tertiary education sphere. While much of the tension derived from students' financial grievances, an equal amount of discontent emerged because of ideological disgruntlement (Angu, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2016; Pillay, 2016).

The argument presented is that, while higher education institutions in South Africa strives to transform socially, the voices of black women academics need to be considered if institutions are to make progress. This claim is made against a background where, through the years, black women involved in higher education have been facing many forms of marginalization (HESA 2014). Attempts to marginalize black women have ranged from cultural oppression within familial and societal traditions of masculinity and femininity (Mans & Lauwrens, 2013), to marginalization imposed historically by legislative rules (South Africa, 1953). The consequence of marginalization has been that women academics could not fully benefit from transformation agendas of institutions (Badat, 2010). This means that any attempts at transformation need to redress the imbalances of the past, by understanding the needs and experiences of this most marginalized group; black women academics. The argument that genders multivocality in transformative discourses does not serve the redress agenda. While the argument could be made that in the South African context, all women have faced marginalization in one way or another, and must be considered in transformation plans, it overlooks the gross disparities that used to exist among racial groups. Beyond the demographics, scholars have also noted the difficulty of changing university structures and cultures encompassing discriminatory habits, practices, processes and taken-for-granted ways of doing things, especially at Historically White Universities (HWUs) (Govinder, Zondo, & Makgoba, 2013; Seepe, 2017).

In a society where discriminatory practices and assumptions have become normalized and routinized, the ability of individuals to see and acknowledge the need for change, and to imagine the possibility of a different set of relations, is significant. However, the extent to which an individual seeks to dismantle existing systems of oppression is, at least in part, determined by individual interest. Structures confer privileges and benefits differently on their

occupants. Thus, those whom the structure privileges will have scant reason to want to forego their privileges in order that those marginalized and excluded may benefit (Booi, Vincent, & Liccardo, 2017). If the pace of change is to be accelerated, it would be helpful to better understand the conditions under which those in positions of privilege and power may come to use their position to effect change, even when it appears not to be in their interests to do so. Acting towards changing structures that perpetuate marginalization requires actors' critical engagement with their social context, and an understanding of their interests in the transformation of the system rather than its preservation. Once the reformulation of interests occurs, it opens the possibility for change.

Universities are operating in an environment characterized by strong competition and funding pressures. They are competing for resources, students, and high-quality staff, both within their own countries and globally. Research is increasingly requiring a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach that transcends national boundaries. To be internationally competitive, universities need to be able to attract, retain, develop, and promote high-quality staff. Many universities have large departments devoted to developing and implementing a range of human resource policies and practices, and to providing professional development for staff. Institutions need to nurture and invest in their researchers from very early in their careers. They need to provide resources, not only for formal professional development, but also for the other activities vital to developing an active research environment. These include attending conferences to share their research, developing networks, instigating collaborations, getting assistance with developing grant applications, gaining access to students to supervise, and to mentors.

Emerging research leaders also need access to good quality leadership training. In most industries, other than academia, professional development is not left to chance. For researchers, the decision of where and for whom to work will increasingly be influenced by the quality of institutional support for career development. Building research capability is about encouraging and supporting individuals. Becoming a leading researcher, and a research leader, often requires motivation and dedication above and beyond what would be considered normal in other professions. It requires institutions to invest in individuals. Developing research leaders from leading researchers requires planning, investment, and commitment from individuals and their organizations. Universities need to nurture and invest in their researchers from very early in their careers by providing resources, professional development, and mentoring, and not leave

it to the 'survival of the fittest', which is still the case in some organizations. Attracting, retaining, developing, and promoting the research leaders of the future is a priority that universities wishing to remain competitive cannot afford to ignore. Addressing this issue of vital importance to universities will, not only enable the development of human capital in the higher education sector, but also extend to excellence in research and teaching, and contribute to innovation and economic growth. With a better understanding of how the career paths of these research leaders developed, and how professional development programmes can support the next generation of researchers and research leaders, the fittest will not just be surviving, but thriving.

Women who pursue and persist in doctoral degrees face many challenges. Internal conflict between the developing academic identity and other identities may result in denial or discontinuation of aspects of self or relationships associated with specific identities (Eisenbach, 2013; Wellington & Sikes, 2006). While some women experience negative consequences (e.g., stigmatization or isolation) and conflict between their academic work and family (Trepal, Stinchfield, & Haiyasoso, 2013; Yakaboski, 2010), others successfully integrate, albeit not without some struggle, their identities for optimal well-being, balance (Bailyn, Drago, & Kochan, 2001), and completion of their doctoral degrees. They successfully develop from students into scholars, and negotiate their multiple identities and corresponding roles and responsibilities. Researchers, such as Baker et al. (2013), have examined academic identity development in doctoral students enrolled in business and higher education programs as students and emerging scholars during the dissertation process. However, there is currently no theory or model explaining the development and concurrent intersection of this academic identity with other identities, and more specifically, how women students, especially those who are mothers or desire to become mothers, develop and intersect their multiple identities in order to persist in the social and academic context of the doctoral journey.

Moreover, researchers examining womanist identity development theory concur that more research is needed to capture the diversity of a woman's identity that is shaped throughout her life, to provide individuals, educators, and counselors with frameworks that guide the understanding of the complexity of women identity and inform practice (Moradi, 2005). Therefore, the personal struggles and victories women experience as they intersect their identities during their doctoral journey, need to be better understood, so that faculty and administrators can develop programs and policies to empower women who are, or desire to be,

mothers to pursue their academic goals and to help astute and talented women envision themselves as scholars and mothers.

Research shows that women who work in male-dominated fields experience gendered barriers that, not only impede their success, but also make it difficult to combat inequality within the workplace (Amon 2017; Powell et al., 2009; Rhoton, 2011). Diversity-positive environments require involvement and commitment from top administrators, department leaders, as well as the backing of a unified campus community and a sustained diverse workforce (Anicha et al., 2017; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017; Sax et al., 2017). Understanding campus climate using surveys and data through institutional research offices can help to identify current barriers and design effective interventions to counteract sexist behaviors and systemic injustices that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in these settings (Anicha et al. 2017). Beyond the implications for and responsibilities of employers related to providing a safe and supportive work environment for employees and interns of diverse identities, colleges need to consider their role in this relationship. In academia, women experience implicit bias in a variety of interactions and environments, especially from male peers in team projects, where women's contributions are overlooked. Women are expected to adapt to male-dominated, unfriendly, and, often, sexist environments in both academia and in the workplace. More work must be done within the academic and workplace environments to increase awareness of these issues; decrease barriers for women and other underrepresented groups in these fields; and to proactively support their access, persistence, and success. Recent research in the US, drawing on national survey data within a large public universities, showed that women spend more time and on average do more work in internal service, which includes serving on institutional committees, providing direct support for students; what they term "taking care of the academic family" (Guarino & Borden, 2017, p. 90).

Most of the harassment these women reported was perpetrated by students or colleagues, and occurred through email, course-related sites, or social media. The consequences of gendered harassment are significant. In addition to psychological distress, such as fear, shame, or self-loathing for the actions that might have caused the harassment in the first place, women who are the victims of online harassment frequently respond by self-censoring their online participation, deleting their profiles, and generally removing themselves from online spaces (Citron, 2014; Duggan, 2014; Vitak et al., 2017). A small but important body of literature is beginning to explore how women scholars respond in the face of harassment. This is the work

by women who self-identify as having been harassed, and who then subsequently redirect that harassment into research itself, whether indirectly as the topic of an article or essay, or directly as datasets to be worked with and analyzed.

According to Young (1990) coercion makes the oppressed agonize for some restraint to grow and show their dimensions and nonstop their judgements, wishes, and their emotional state. Mostly it succeeded to the people of coloured (Young, 1990). So, all women might suffer from this oppression, the cruel and undue behavior are the biggest problem they are facing. Still, there is a common fact related to this, women of coloured like Black, Latin, Asian, others are the actual victim of this act of racism. One of the women of coloured mentioned that will be discussed is black women. The issues related to black women, such as tyranny is still one of the topics that never has an ending because it still ascends universal and much more complicated to be discussed. Even though it sounds complicated, many black activists strive to find a way to speak their voices of black women and reach their goal to fight subjugation. Being black and being a woman is complicated thing and these are the center of the problem for black women. They can get oppress twice, which is called double oppression. Dual oppression is tyranny that happens to black women because of two factors, gender and ethnicity. According to Crenshaw (1989), black women often experience double oppression which show prejudice black women over their gender and civilization. In addition, Crenshaw (1989) explains the double oppression of black women both similar to and different from the involvement of women and black men oppression, it could be the same with women cruelty and it could be also the same with black men oppression (Crenshaw, 1989).

2.2.5 Reasons for adopting intersectionality as a theoretical framework

In most cases intersectionality is directly tied to oppression (Crenshaw 1989). Oppression is the force that permits, through the authority of customs and classifications, the unjust conduct or control of people. Intersectionality shows us that social identities work on multiple levels, resulting in unique experiences, opportunities, and barriers for each person. Therefore, oppression cannot be reduced to only one part of an identity; each coercion is hooked on on and outlines the other. "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives." These words, spoken by Audre Lorde, capture the essence of intersectionality. it highlights how discrimination and exclusion are not simple and can't be

solved by focusing on a single issue. Instead, it can help us understand how the experience of people is gendered and racialized and how it differs within different social contexts. This approach is crucial in understanding the inequalities different groups face and by extension, how to overcome them by considering the complexity of the identities and patterns of oppression that individuals face within a given society. Intersectionality is a widely adopted theoretical orientation in women and gender studies. In this study I adopted intersectionality as a theoretical framework because in the study I focused on the experiences of Black women academics of navigating their belonging in a South African university. I wanted to know how their experiences might differ as they are in the same institution but their oppression or marginalization could be due to different factors as they have different backgrounds, beliefs, education, views and social contexts. Black women academics experiences may be multifaced. Intersectionality as a theory would be able to give name the experiences of Black women academics in HE.

2.3 Chapter summary

In conclusion, this chapter reviewed literature highlighting women academics' experiences in higher education, and the way they navigate their belonging in a university, drawing from international, national and local literature. In the next chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework which underpinned this study.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framings

3.1 Introduction

Intersectional approaches have become prominent in several empirical studies, although some scholars argue that the body of work is insufficient and lacking when it concerns unpacking black women's mutually constitutive forms of oppression in an African context (Rodrigue et al., 2016). In this chapter, I discuss the way an intersectional perspective may illuminate the key features of the women's lived experiences – considering aspects such as space, place and location. The chapter also briefly outlines the framework's strengths and limitations. I provide some of the counter-arguments and perspectives that critique and challenge the contemporary use, misrecognition, and distortion of the framework.

3.2.1 Political currency of intersectionality

There are varying definitions of intersectionality that exist, and the theory has gained popularity and political currency in scholarship over the years (Collins, 2015; 2019). Crenshaw (1991) is often credited with coining intersectionality and introducing it into academia as a legal concept and prism in her research on Black women's employment experiences and the dynamics surrounding the discriminations they face. Crenshaw (1989) observed that discrimination tends to be viewed through the single axis of difference rather than through mutually constitutive forms of social oppression. In her observations, she found this exercise tends to 'erase Black women in the conceptualisation, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise privileged members of the group' (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). This means that it is a difficult and inadequate exercise to claim you have fully encompassed Black women's lived experiences and their intricacies, if you privilege certain narratives and lenses over addressing all the forms of oppression they may face, that may be unique to them. Their experiences may encompass their own unique traits dissimilar to those of black men or white women. For Crenshaw (1989), whose academic contributions were grounded in the legal discipline, and emerged from the critical race theory movement; it was inadequate to simply conclude that racism and sexism together are sufficient to explain the ways in which black women are marginalized.

Similarly, there have been many other scholars who have employed metaphors commonly attributed to intersectionality, to challenge the structural marginalization and perpetuation of injustices upon Black women (Hancock, 2013; 2019). Scholars who are part of the progression of a larger intellectual discourse attending to race, gender, Black women's experiences and their self-determination include Anna Julia Cooper and Harriet Jacobs (Hancock, 2013; 2019). Maria Stewart – another Black woman intellectual who influenced Black feminist thinking – was a proponent and champion of Black women's self-definition and self-reliance as a matter of survival. She was clear with her appeal for African-American women to reject the dominant negative images of Black womanhood at the time; arguing that race, gender, and class oppression were the fundamental causes of Black women's poverty (Richardson, 1987, Hancock, 2019). These dominant negative stereotypes may vary, but common to them is the widely-held stereotype that still persists today, that depicts Black women as domineering, hostile, and overly-aggressive in the workplace. This stems from the 'Sapphire' racial trope (Asare, 2019). There are other common stereotypical identities depicting them as unintelligent, welfare queens, the hypersexualised 'Jezebel' archetype, or the fictionalized 'Mammy' character that associates Black women with the domestic role in the economy (West, 1995; Harris-Perry, 2011; Jerald, Ward, Moss, Thomas & Fletcher, 2017). The origin of this reductive mammy caricature that is portrayed as a desexualized, obese, dark-skinned, motherly figure; served the interest of mainstream white America at the expense of Black women (Christian, 1980; West, 1995, Warren-Gordon & McMillan, 2022). This has had a longstanding historical effect of influencing how Black women were denied other opportunities, and were dictated as to where they belonged and did not belong (Christian, 1980; West, 1995). These false representations have devastating impact on the perceptions and treatment of Black women in various spheres of life, and in social locations (Warren-Gordon & McMillan, 2022).

In my understanding, it is significant to also comment on what Phoenix and Pattynama (2006, p. 187) indicate about intersectionality as foregrounding a 'richer and more complex ontology than approaches that attempt to reduce people to one category at a time'. According to Hopkins (2019), since Crenshaw's intervention, intersectionality has been used in different ways by different scholars: as an analytical framework for social justice (Hancock, 2016); as a political orientation, epistemological practice (May, 2015); as an approach of framing interactions (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991); as an emerging or major paradigm (Collins, 2013; McCall, 2005); as a feminist theory (Davis, 2008); and as an analytic sensibility and heuristic device (Cho et al., 2013). However, Collins (2019, p. 3), a Black feminist scholar whose work is also of an

intersectional logic, and a counterpart of Crenshaw, proposes that ‘if intersectionality does not clarify its own critical theoretical project, others will do so for it’. Although much of intersectionality’s success and appeal has been due to its broad framing and application, I am equally of the view that its tenets should be clearly articulated so as to avoid its meaning-making being misinterpreted.

Crenshaw (1991) suggests that the construction of three forms of intersectionality; structural, political and representational. It is critical to elucidate the nuances between the forms, and what they reflect in the lived experiences of women academics, and their negotiation of their being and belonging in the academy.

3.2.2 The case of structural intersectionality reproducing social hierarchies

Crenshaw (1991, p. 1245) identifies structural intersectionality as the ways in which Black women have to deal with ‘multi-layered and routinized forms of domination’ including legal discrepancies, housing inequalities or unfair employment practices. Although structural intersectionality may focus on how institutional practices and policies replicate inequality, in truth, how it is enacted is often interwoven with the other two forms (Crenshaw, 1991). Durfee (2020) contributes to this understanding by way of analyzing the domestic violence civil protective order process in most US states, and how this causes further harm by reproducing broader social inequalities. The provisions and enforcement of protective orders is widely used to prohibit or place restrictions on contact between a petitioner that may experience domestic violence and a respondent (DeJong & Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Logan & Walker, 2009; Richards & Gover, 2019). Conversely, this process has had the effect of leaving many survivors even more vulnerable to violence and system entanglement, despite its efforts (Durfee, 2020).

Part of the challenge with protective orders and mandatory arrest laws is that they were developed in a historical context where criminalization became a common response to social problems, rather than resource provision (Richie, 2012; Goodmark, 2018). The fundamental structural changes that needed to be addressed to deal with the underlying social issues linked to prevalent violence in these communities were aborted. These include unemployment, the wage gap, workplace discrimination, inadequate child care and social financial support, and barriers to education. Instead, the attention shifted to reforming institutions through the

institutionalization of domestic violence ‘service provisions’, criminalizing domestic violence, and calling for harsher criminal penalties for abuse (Bumiller, 2008; Coker, 2004; Goodmark, 2018).

In US these laws and policies were designed to be ‘victim-friendly’ but, in the essentialist manner that the said victim was framed as ‘every woman at universal risk of domestic violence’, it resulted in the exclusion of others, in practice (Goodmark, 2008; Durfee, 2020). This exposed a key element of structural intersectionality - that those seemingly neutral institutional practices and policies have differential impact on individuals with the effect of replicating broader inequalities (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990). The “every woman” the system recognized was modeled after, centered and privileged a White, middle-class, heterosexual cisgender woman as victim (Goodmark, 2018; K’im, 2015). Civil orders were fashioned to present an ‘alternative’ to the criminal system, but in reality, the two systems has become increasingly interwoven to the point where most survivors with protective orders cannot access and enforce them without using the criminal legal system (Durfee & Goodmark, 2019). Often those who petitioned to obtain orders were met with various barriers, and described the process as a difficult and traumatic process instead of an empowering alternative (Durfee, 2015). I am of the view that institutions rarely reproduce inequalities in isolation, but rather depend on one another to sustain hierarchical relationships that propel their mutual agendas (May, 2015; Durfee, 2020). It is also of no assistance when barriers identified in the process are frequently categorized as individual or group issues (i.e., this particular survivor or group of survivors need these specific forms of assistance), and then addressed on a case-by-case basis, rather than as systemic issues (Durfee, 2020). More critically, some of the corrective measures may have worked to erase some of the stigma associated with being a victim of domestic abuse, but also erased structural factors that shape many survivors’ experiences and choices, including the role of ‘intersections of systems of power’ and oppression that disproportionately affect Black women victims (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p. 43).

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3.2.3 Representational intersectionality as a key place of struggle

As I have previously mentioned, in many contexts, the forms of intersectionality are entwined.

¹ 1 Cisgender means denoting a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex (ibid)

Representational intersectionality focuses on how images of Black women - and the debates

that surround these representations - tend to overlook the intersectional interests of women of colour, and the political and structural ramifications thereof (Crenshaw, 1991). This has been a key place of struggle (hooks, 1989) as it has been critical for Black feminists that these crafted representations of Black women, stemming from how they are depicted in the media, be confronted (Crenshaw, 1991). Representational intersectionality uncovers the urgency of analyzing how power works to classify, label and define actions and individuals in a manner that directly shapes research, policy, law, and practice (Berns, 2004; Comack & Balfour, 2004; Durfee, 2020). In the everyday context of contemporary society, including higher education, the gendered and classed forms of racism that Black women experience are also evident. This reveals the broader, nuanced dynamics of both privilege and oppression in the way that ‘projected stereotypes and socially constructed images of Black women are used as micro assaults, insults, and invalidations in Black women’s daily lives’ (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood & Browne Hunt, 2016, p. 772). Representational intersectionality is reflected in the power to create, define, and enforce controlling images of a particular group of people that influence how others see them — including people in positions of power (Aizeki, 2019; Weissman, 2019), which they too may later internalize (Lewis et al., 2016). Some studies have indicated that Black women academics have experienced students and colleagues undermining or challenging their authority, intellect and competence, as a result of their racialized and gendered identities (Gutierrez, Muys, Niemann, Gonzalez & Harris, 2012; Lewis et al., 2016).

3.2.4. Political intersectionality

Crenshaw (1991) sees political intersectionality as focusing on the ways in which Black women belong to more than a single marginalized group that often requires them to engage with different political agendas simultaneously. Crenshaw (1991, p. 1296) does not deny that ‘intersectionality might be more broadly useful as a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identities and the ongoing necessity of group politics’. Therefore, although it may be specifically moulded for the experiences of women of colour, it may serve to be useful in other assertions. Policies and practices can be created based on inappropriate assumptions about constituencies, which reflects that they center the perspectives, interests, and needs of those in power, and work to further subordinate those who are multiply marginalized (Durfee, 2020, p. 12). An apt exploration of the multiply marginalized is if I

examine queer Black women and how they are socially located – taking into consideration the multi-layered nature of the experiences they are faced with. What I can gather is that their belonging to the various social categories of women as well as Black and queer, creates various political agendas stemming from each grouping, which need to be consolidated. Hence, within coalitions such as queer movements, intersectionality has been incorporated into the political strategy of social justice activists. Some advocacy organizations have used political intersectionality as a normative framework for developing political agendas and strategies (Tungohan, 2016; Zavella, 2017; Price, 2018). Adopting an intersectional framework comes from their desire as ‘activists to cultivate flexibility and negotiate dynamics of difference and solidarity in relation to axes of power in local movement contexts’ (Zavella, 2017, p. 509). Moreover, a focus on political intersectionality addresses the ways in which the intersections of identity, oppression, and privilege are entrenched in public policies and their respective processes (Price, 2018). It also further indicates how some constituencies may be politically marginalized even within the social justice movements they are a part of; which may create the developing of other political coalitions and alliances within the main coalition, and between other social justice movements (Price, 2018, p. 583). According to Price (2018), intersectionality becomes the organizing principle for coalition building to foster a political organizing strategy.

3.2.5 Collins, Black feminism and intersecting oppressions

Sociologist Collins (2000, p. 9) continues to highlight the unique traditions of social justice and women’s lives in Black feminist thought, asserting that social theories developed by multiply marginalized women ‘reflect women’s efforts to come to terms with lived experiences within intersecting oppressions’. Collins’ (2000) approach surpasses merely identifying oppressive entanglements in Black women’s lives. It is preoccupied with transcending those group-specific politics through a Black feminist epistemology. The relevance of intersectionality is in reconciling the two powerful systems of racial and gender oppression. Understanding this position opens up the possibility of identifying and understanding other cross-cutting oppressions that may enable transforming the reality of Black women (da Silva, 2021, p. 698).

Collins’ articulation of intersectional-like approaches and concepts includes her earliest ideas

of the ‘matrix of domination’, to describe the social organization of Black women’s lives ‘in which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained to highlight the necessity of recognizing the intersecting structural dimensions of lived oppression (Collins, 2000, p. 228). As her continuing contribution evolved, it relied less on concepts solely emphasizing the spheres of domination, and rather focused on analyzing power relations that developed intellectual resistance and explored intersectionality’s connections to it’ (Collins, 2019, p. 10).

This gravitation towards terms such as ‘domains of power’ resembled a theoretical angling that engages power relations, grappling with their intersections (such as racism and sexism), as well as their defining interaction with the domains of power. Such domains include the structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal (Collins & Bilge, 2016). This framework of domains of power provides a ‘heuristic device or thinking tool for examining power relations’ (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 29). Collins, like Crenshaw, applied intersectionality as an analytical tool (da Silva, 2021). It is in her work, *‘Outsider Within’*, where she speaks of the ‘interlocking nature of oppression’; a recurring theme in Black feminist traditions (Collins, 1986; 2019). However, the actual references to the term ‘intersectionality’ are found in *‘Black Feminist Thought’*, which came out later. Nevertheless, both in *‘Outsider Within’* and *‘Black Feminist Thought’*, Collins enriches our understanding of the phenomenon. In the former, the ‘interlocking nature of oppression’ indicates the need to change the scope of previous investigations around systems of oppression and recognize them as interlinked (Collins, 1986, p. 21). In the latter, the term is to be read in conjunction with the ‘matrix of domination’, which would explain how intersecting oppressions are organized (Collins, 2000, p. 18).

To broaden our understanding of the axes of identity and difference in Black women’s lives, we must see them as operating as sites of intersectionality (Collins, 2000, p. 134). Collins (2000) incorporates the investigation of the social practices that govern Black women’s experiences in areas such as their sexual identity and sexual justice –in relation to pornography, prostitution, and rape. This presents an understanding of how groups that have power at their disposal regulate Black women’s bodies, and formulate sexual ideologies that aim to justify the social practices and social forces used to maintain the desired social order. It is a necessary exercise for Collins to reclaim Black women’s voice and their power over their bodies and narratives. Her work has expanded to encompass new trajectories that serve, not only as an academic invitation to produce sound science, but also as the result of political effort by intellectual activists (Black or not) to engage with a social justice project (Collins, 2019, p. 5).

Collins (2019) took upon herself this task of exploring the implications of intersectionality as a critical social theory that challenges existing social orders and opens possibilities for social change.

3.3 Mapping out the rise of intersectionality

Scholars across disciplines and theoretical perspectives have embraced the deployment of intersectionality frameworks, whether approaching intersectionality as a theory, a methodology, or as a resource for social analysis (Ilmonen, 2020). Some of these moments have exposed the ongoing debates and scholarship, controversies, and some of the field's major nuances (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). In what follows, I continue to focus on intersectionality's changing meanings and divergent perspectives since its original conceptualization, up to the point where it has theoretically and methodologically become a 'feminist success story' (Davis, 2008, p. 67). Discovering some of these movements as emblematic rather than unique, intersectionality has become visible in social science to engage a wide range of sociopolitical issues and discursive fields, including Psychology. However, they often depart from conceding Black women's visibility in that success (Warner, Settles & Shields, 2018; Cole, 2020). Many scholars argue that, to do justice to intersectionality, researchers must unequivocally orient to issues of power, positionality and difference throughout their research processes (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019).

Rice, Harrison and Friedman (2019) identify three critical engagements with intersectionality's theoretical and methodological developments; aims, scope, and axioms. While these frameworks offer a means for distinguishing strands of contestation — namely, who intersectionality is for, what its purposes are, how it might be operationalized, and what its main assumptions are — they do not dismiss that the fluidity, non-linear, and overlapping nature of the theory (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). A major point of contestation concerning the theory's uptake in research is that, when it is deployed, it concerns itself with conveying and managing complexity rather than with the serious undertaking of understanding or changing oppression. Alexander-Floyd (2012, p. 19) asserts that, to be applied with integrity, intersectional research must retain its 'focus on illuminating women of color as political subjects, and the intersecting politics that impact their lives'. It should deploy research methods that give authority to marginalized voices, while de-centering the experiences and interests of privileged groups. According to this point of view, appropriating intersectionality invalidates Black intellectuals' endeavors to formulate the experiences of Black women into theory.

Politically, intersectional analyses arose, not from isolated imaginations, but from Black women's grounded efforts to name intersecting oppressions in their lives, as an intermediary to changing them. Bilge (2013, p. 405) describes erasure of this history as part of a trend toward 'depoliticising intersectionality', to whiten it and eliminate its function as an instrument for sociopolitical change. Bilge (2013) explains that a recurring theme in research is the co-opting of the language of intersectionality, and in turn, a failure to undertake intersectional analysis or to challenge inequalities.

For Anthias (2013, p. 129), intersecting oppressions cannot always be interpreted as strengthening each other. It is better imagined and understood as mutually constituted as 'dialogical and contradictory'. Intersectionality has become an important analytic device for researchers to interrogate how their positionalities affect research processes, to unmask how their positions of privilege/ disadvantage influence their research, and to explore the dynamic and contradictory workings of power (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). da Silva (2021), for instance, interrogates the disproportionately high rate of Black Covid-19 victims in the United States, concluding that this indicates that inequality may as well be identified as a co-morbidity to accessing public health. Intersectionality-informed approaches reveal the interplay of the root causes of health inequities and the interaction of structures and systems of power with multiple and simultaneous identities for diverse individuals within the population (Krieger, 2014; Kapilashrami & Hankivsky, 2018). The poorer, marginalized populations, with their overlapping social stratifiers, lacked access to health care, endured unstable and low-paying jobs, affecting living and nutrition conditions and making them disproportionately exposed to risk (Nixon, 2019; da Silva, 2021). Anyone may die from Covid-19, but some die more than others because of the disproportionate existing social conditions (da Silva, 2021). Similarly, in Brazil, when we look into violence against women and femicide, women are murdered but some are at a higher risk, because public policies targeting violence against women do not take into account that the protection of Black and non-Black women might require different measures for each group. Violence, or the lack thereof, suggests that it may not fall equally on everyone, and one can largely reach this conclusion by adopting an intersectional lens (da Silva, 2021).

Intersectionality's application to research remains dynamic as the term infers, but a self-conscious awareness of its origins, a deep commitment to re-centering Black feminism, and its

advancement of radical social transformation, must remain consistent (Aguayo-Romero, 2021). Politically, intersectionality aspires for robust interpretive communities to house necessary dialogues among neglected ideas and disparate people (Collins, 2021). Substantively, communities that incorporate people who do the intensive work of theorizing from the bottom up as well as from the top down, gather a wealth of alternative interpretations and knowledge more concerned with changing the existing social order than in explaining it (Collins, 2021). Methodologically, going back to a dialogical relation produces knowledge that elevates and favors collective intellectual and political coalitions above individual intellectual contributions (Collins, 2021). Therefore the building of participatory, democratic interpretive collectives through the intellectual work done across differing positionalities, has been the hallmark of intersectional projects, according to Collins (2021).

Shifting the lens to assessing the existing dynamics within the framework, some scholars have been accused of rewriting the genealogy of intersectionality to better align with the dominant knowledge systems in their field (Atewologun, 2018). Indeed, many researchers in long-standing disciplines may have difficulty adopting and extending the scope of intersectionality as an analytic tool because of their disciplines' ongoing rootedness in Euro-Western frameworks and methodologies, and rather opt to flatten it (Salem, 2016; 2018; Davis, 2019). Gail Lewis (2013) maintains that intersectionality's appropriation in the European academy serves as a means of disavowing and evading racism within that academy. For Nash (2016, p. 17), any argument that stresses intersectionality's importance 'by re-making the analytic apart from Black women's bodies' must be questioned, as this subtly implies that 'an analytic centered on black women would not be palatable or desirable as a field-defining analytic'. Scholars should abort narrowing intersectionality's scope, and enhance its wide applicability without necessarily needing to appropriate it. Some of the tensions may also arise from scholars who claim that European feminists have long been using intersectionality-like theories in their work. Marcel Stoetzler (2016) argues that intersectionality originates with German social psychologist, Moritz Lazarus and sociologist, Georg Simmel. Ange-Marie Hancock (2007) has attributed it to American feminist anarchist Emma Goldman, while Nina Lykke (2011) mentions its utilization in the works of early 20th-century Russian feminist revolutionary - Alexandra Kollontai.

Other scholars have accused intersectionality of being divisive in nature as it focuses on

differences – seeing it as promoting ‘identity politics’ and forestalling coalition building (Cho, 2013, p. 292). However, Crenshaw’s understanding of identity is to locate it as inherently coalitional, which prevents single-axis approaches that may foreclose possibilities for solidarity, and take away from its critical edge (Salem, 2016; Collins, 2019). Given that the globalized world encompasses multiple interconnected localities and multiple positionalities, and that these interdependent localities are infused with various worldviews to global forces, like capitalism and imperialism; a social justice-oriented theory and political action strategies employed have to correspond with cross-linguistic borders in their pursuits (Collins, 2019; Ergun, 2021).

In the pursuit for heterogeneous, just, caring, and peaceful forms of planetary coexistence through translation; this can be achieved when we ‘cross without taking over’ (Lugones, 2010, p. 755). Anna Carastathis (2016, p. 17) is in support of this claim, as she explains that recognizing identities as ‘internally heterogeneous, complex unities constituted by their internal differences and dissonances and by internal as well as external relations of power’ helps build coalitional work. Researchers ought to interrogate their own histories/ positionalities while opening to and gaining fluency in others’ histories/ contemporary conditions of oppression and struggle in order to find coalition (Nira Yuval-Davis, 2011; Atewologun & Mahalingam, 2018). There is merit in pointing out how the theory was conceived as a generally applicable means of understanding oppression and privilege, advantage and disadvantage, at the nexus of multiple dimensions of power cross-cutting social groups (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013; Smith & Khan, 2016). Acknowledging this, some theorists advise that intersectional approaches necessitate the analysis of the marked and unmarked positions of social agents to ensure that power relations and privileged categories do not remain unnamed and under-theorised in their work (Anthias, 2013).

Other theoretical tensions relating to the term’s origins require that scholars acknowledge the axiomatic make-up of subjectivities and social realities, and the relationships of these terms to power, oppression, resistance, and agency (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). There are those who characterize the theory as provisional, open-ended, and flexible in its understanding and mapping of identity and subjectivity. The maturing of the term and its applicability to research requires an understanding of the tensions bound in considering intersectionality as simultaneously constituting and complicating social identities. This means that, as the term is used in research studies, an understanding of the complex meanings around it should be a

guideline for researchers. As Falcón and Nash (2015, p. 9) write, intersectional work should be shaped by an ethos of ‘generosity and multitude rather than singularity and certitude’. My careful considerations, similar to other scholars, however, is that it is possible to deploy intersectional analysis to achieve non-progressive, and even reactionary ends, though to do so is to eliminate its liberatory purposes, and disregard that intersectionality should be engaged as a provisional concept intended to change our thinking, rather than an end in itself (Carastathis, 2016).

Beyond critical race and feminist scholarship, employing intersectional analyses has been important to the continued development of disciplines such as feminist geographies (Brown, 2012; Peake, 1994, 2010). Ruddick’s (1996, p. 138) earlier work in feminist geography is significant in that, it engages with the idea of viewing inequalities as mutually constitutive - going beyond ‘viewing gender, race, and class as distinct categories that operate independently in an additive fashion. These categories are recognized as mutually transformative and intersecting, each altering the experience of the other’. Since this work in the 1990s, there has been continued growth in this area, including intersectionality being useful in research on transgender and queer issues (Abelson, 2016; Ruth & Santacruz, 2017; Price, 2018), prostitution (Silva & Ornat, 2014), development and migration (Bastia, 2014), the experiences of students (Foulds, 2015), and that of young people (Irazabal & Huerta, 2016). Some of this research has focused on demonstrating how intersectional perspectives need to recognize space, place and location when examining systemic marginalization (Anthias, 2012). Similarly, Hopkins’ (2018) intervention suggests that research in feminist geography may play a significant role for scholars that employ intersectional analyses if it considers deeply exploring the role of locality, place and social context as crucial factors to understanding oppression.

3.4 Characteristics that underpin intersectionality

In support of the scholars that view the contribution and necessity of intersectional analyses as beyond a theorization of multiple identities, we ought to cast the net wider to deepen the meanings and purposes of intersectionality when employed in feminist research. Scholars that recognise and explore the key characteristics that underpin intersectionality in the manner that Collins and Bilge (2016) have, identified it as encompassing the following ideas: social inequality, power relations, relationality, social context, complexity, and social justice. These six core substantive constructs that may occur in varying combinations would be recognizable

to intersectionality's practitioners (Collins, 2021). Its applicability is grounded on four guiding premises of intersectional projects, namely: (1) race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, ability, age, and similar markers of power are interdependent and mutually construct one another; (2) intersecting power relations producing complex, interdependent social inequalities; (3) the social location of individuals and groups within intersecting power relations shaping their experiences within and perspectives on the social world; and (4) solving social problems within a given local, regional, national, or global context requiring intersectional analyses (Collins, 2021, p. 694).

3.4.1 Intersectionality and social justice

As intersectionality gains traction in the social sciences, some scholars are concerned that its social justice impetus may be deflated, when it is used merely to manage complexity in research (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). It is the contention of this study, that social justice and a move toward social transformation must be at the center of any research that calls itself intersectional (Rice et al., 2019). While social justice and transformational change may be broadly defined, I argue that research that aims to remain true to the radical inception and richly divergent implications of intersectionality as a cultural theory, requires a deep commitment to adopting decolonial, anti-racist, feminist, and other liberatory scholarships and movements (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). For marginalized groups, the concept of intersectionality has shown its capabilities as a resource for social justice; its illumination of the complexities of inequality and exclusionary structures can be applied to induce collective action and resistance (Collins, 2000; Lorde, 2012). Examining the origins of intersectionality, the concept emerged out of Black women and feminist activism (Davis, 2008). In more recent times, it is increasingly and similarly being used in mainstream social movement research (Chun et al., 2013), and more particularly on women's movements, as well as transnationally (Daniel, 2021). It has been claimed that the make-up of many social movements is legitimized by inclusiveness and how they can be representative of members of various social groups with different plights within the group (Laperriere & Lepinard, 2016). Daniel (2021, p. 15) advocates a three-layered approach to the application of intersectionality to social movement studies distinguished as: 1) a movement's collective action frame, 2) a tool of practice, and 3) an analytical perspective.

Although not all these layers of intersectionality need apply, and not all social movements

practise it, it has increasingly become a norm for social movements to prioritize it as an analytical lens (Daniel, 2021). In Daniel's paper, she uses the backdrop of the 'Rhodes Must Fall'² student mass protests in South Africa that emerged in 2015, as a rejection and critique of the ongoing discrimination and many grievances surrounding the colonial heritage in South African universities (Daniel, 2021; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2018; Miller, 2019). The inherited colonial and apartheid ideologies on research and teaching that dominated universities were based on Western knowledge systems and debates (Jansen, 2017). For many Black students, apartheid has ended but access to higher education is still dependent on the intersecting prisms of income, race and gender (Swartz et al., 2018, p. 1).

The protests developed into national mobilization for the decolonization of post-apartheid South African universities and society (Booyesen et al., 2016; Chikane, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2016). It later focused specifically on free or subsidised tertiary education for impoverished and disadvantaged students, under the banner 'Fees Must Fall' (Langa, 2017). Such movements may consider intersectionality as a collective action frame and a framing strategy that may inspire action and define their grievances (Ishkanian & Saavedra, 2018). This activism may have similar arguments to the historical experiences of Black women academics with regard to overcoming structural discrimination, violence and collective trauma. This is part of the body of work that stemmed from feminist and women activism between the 1960s and 1970s (Davis, 2008; Daniel, 2021). As we engage intersectionality in other locations outside of the United States, we may consider what Patricia Hill Collins highlights, as the urgency of transcending national borders to engage in conversations and collaborations that will forge liberatory transnational connectivities among differently situated women of African descent (Collins, 2000). Attempting to accomplish intersectional and transnational justice for all Black women, along with other historically oppressed groups, may be a politically and ethically ambitious project, as it requires a relational ethics of 'mutual stretching, dialogic reciprocity, and polyphonic togetherness' (Lorde, 1988, p. 19).

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Transnational justice for all marginalized individuals and communities requires us to challenge

² Rhodes Must Fall was a collective movement of students and university staff in South Africa that began on 9 March 2015, originally directed against a statue at the University of Cape Town (UCT) that commemorates Cecil Rhodes and colonial legacies. The campaign grew into a wider movement to 'decolonize' education across South Africa and dismantle discriminatory institutional practices, institutional racism, etc (Nyamnjoh, 2016)

ourselves to engage in difficult dialogues across differences and hierarchies, and also democratize and decolonize our transnational, cross-border relations, so that the dissonant stories, theories, visions, and knowledges we (co)produce, serve to disrupt and not assimilate neoliberal globalization (Ergun, 2021). Geopolitical assignments – or politics of location – are typically not determining axes of power, identity, and knowledge in intersectional analyses, and tend to overlook the questions of colonialism and imperialism.

Intersectionality's analytical focus has largely been limited to the localities and constrains of the global North, particularly the USA (Ergun, 2021). Ironically, we have witnessed how the national configuration of the United States is too often taken for granted and erased, rather than treated as a strategically orchestrated geohistorical accomplishment. Hence, the term 'domestic intersectionality' is induced (Patil, 2013, p. 852). Finally, these domestically focused intersectional analyses have ignored the transnational nature of locally or nationally conceived and experienced spaces, permeated by complexities, violence and subversive interactions (Ergun, 2021). We can respond to these calls to spatialize, de-westernize, and transnationalize intersectionality, by factoring in translation as a bridge between intersectionality and transnationality; two predominant analytics of contemporary feminist thought and action (Falcon & Nash, 2015, p. 4). In other words, translation can help reveal that intersectional feminism and transnational feminism are politically complementary theoretical and practical platforms of justice, and for solidarity building amongst Black women. This also requires us to reconcile the term 'Black woman', itself is a broad category that comprises differently interpellated and situated groups of US-based and non-US based women of color – who are often pitted against each other by neoliberal agendas (Ergun, 2021).

For Ergun (2021), translating the works of Black women intellectuals performed the function of expanding the reach of their theories and stories of dissent and protest beyond their immediate linguistic borders - validating and celebrating the epistemic authority of women of color. She translated a critical work by author Octavia Butler entitled '*Kindred*' – which, in her imagination, was an intersectional story that confronted the intersectionally and transnationally interwoven violent history of the United States. She further imagines this can be reproduced in other geographies, where participants can free themselves from the hatred and fears that have been encoded in their minds through distorted historical discourses by accepting an interrogation of the memories, misrememberings and histories they have encountered (Ergun, 2019, p. 9).

The second layer pertains to thinking of intersectionality as a tool of practice visible through a movement's intersectional activism - with many scholars arguing that movements fall short of this (Heaney, 2019). The central argument is that, a movement that is intersectional consists of practice that concern prioritizing the needs of the most disadvantaged groups (Laperriere & Lepinard, 2016). Intersectionality can be perceived as a strategy and practice of inclusiveness (Fisher et al., 2017). The absence of intersectionality threatens the unity of the group, leading to occurrences of a 'compulsory unity that benefits some members of the group at the expense of the others' (Chen et al, 2013, p. 923). In the case of the student uprisings, the involvement of feminist and queer activists influenced the shared feminist and intersectional position on the decolonial agenda that the movement adopted (Daniel, 2021, p. 21). As students that have experienced multiple forms of discrimination in the university space, their active participation and support was critical to encompassing an intersectional practice. According to Khan (2017, pp. 114), the coalition between the feminist and queer activists from groups such as the Radical Black Feminists or the Trans-Collective and other students in the movement, highlights a unity that emerged so that black queer demands were equally visible through the notion of intersectionality.

Zajak and Haunss (2020) emphasize the growing debate on intersectional approaches in social movement research, analyzing how they are shaped by the social inequalities that persist in protest. Considering an intersectional perspective may assist in investigating the apparent internal power dynamics, hierarchy and exclusion within a movement (Zajak & Haunss, 2020). Movements are not devoid of social categories producing different experiences for members. An intersectional lens may be useful to probe into discrimination and forms of oppression that need to be considered and dismantled (Carbado et al., 2013; Fisher et al., 2017). Through the use of intersectionality as an analytical tool or framework, we can identify the alliance building power dynamics and processes of exclusion movements encounter in the pursuit of the goals they have set out to achieve. Intersectionality can be applied in studies of protest; offering a perspective that confronts how these intersections shape movement activism, and revealing differences, contradictions, conflicts or power relations within the movement (Chen et al., 2013).

3.4.2 Intersectionality and social inequality

Continuing the focus on social inequalities and how they may persist in several contextual circumstances, it is helpful to investigate how intersectional analysis has found its way into other new fields of research. One such field where it has traditionally and largely been ignored, is religion. According to Furseth (2021), while intersectionality has relatively been absent in sociological analyses of religion, it would be beneficial to explore how intersectionality might influence debates in the sociology of religion as well as the converse. The dominant discourse in feminist research and intersectionality is a relatively monolithic and binary understanding of religion (Collins, 2019). In her study of women in Egyptian Islamic movements, Mahmood (2001, p. 207) criticizes feminism's coupling of self-realization as belonging only to liberal notions of freedom, where agency is seen as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination. According to Mahmood (2001, p. 208), Collins' contribution changed these notions and expanded the definition of 'self-realization/ self-fulfillment' by considering class, race, and ethnicity, such that individual autonomy had to be rethought in light of other issues'. Even in the consideration of religion, the move beyond feminism's limited view of religion being monolithic, appeared early on in her work, as she envisioned the possibility of women's self-realization taking place within religious institutions. She shows that many Black women scholars, writers, and artists worked within the Black churches in the civil rights movement (Collins, 2000). For Black women, churches represented the buffers against negative stereotyping, constituted 'safe spaces', and were the arena for moral and ethical teachings on social justice and political activism. That sensitized them to gender issues and fostered a growing feminist consciousness (Collins, 2006, p. 128).

Collins (2000) sees the Black feminism that emerged within these churches and other Black civil society organizations, as expressing a more comprehensive commitment to social justice than what has emerged within western feminism at that time. Linking the sociology of religion to intersectional analysis can reveal complexities of multiple intersections of various dimensions, which is beneficial to the understanding of the relationship (Furseth, 2021). While there is still a tendency in current research to either focus on religion and race, or religion, gender and sexuality; intersectionality benefits the sociology of religion by giving attention to the various ways in which religion is linked to a wider set of dimensions, and the ways in which they intersect (Furseth, 2021). In the 1980s and 1990s, a considerable body of multi-disciplinary literature examined religion, gender, and sexuality. Many studies put women at the center of analysis, and this kind of feminist inquiry implied a reorientation in the sociology of

religion, going beyond religious institutions to include religious practices and cultural discourse (Gilkes, 2001; Furseth, 2021).

Intersectional analyses have often been absent in studies of minority groups such as European Muslim women. Some scholars like Nyhagen and Halsaa (2016, p. 58) draw on Collins' and other intersectional theorists in their study of lived citizenship among Christian and Muslim women in Spain, Norway, and the United Kingdom; to display 'the so far limited feminist scholarship on religion and intersectionality' by using 'more complex feminist analyses of citizenship based on intersectional approaches to inequality'. Additionally, Page and Yip (2021) apply intersectionality in their contribution on religion and sexuality, and include global case studies that highlight how religion is a complex phenomenon that can both produce inequality and stigmatization, and be a resource that challenges other oppressions. Furthermore, the sociology of religion can provide a wider understanding of religion. When intersectional analyses focus on religion as oppression/ subversion, there is a tendency to emphasize religious doctrines and ideologies (Furseth, 2021). Collins (2019, p. 282) argues in support of the statement that faith-based ethics are often 'collective and communal', and may provide the basis for political work depending on how they are interpreted and practiced. While some religious communities legitimate and reproduce social inequality, others do the constructive work of confronting social hierarchies, and view religion as a far more complex phenomenon than doctrines, ideologies, and ethics (Collins, 2019; Furseth, 2021).

3.4.3. Intersectionality and social context

Walby et al. (2012) point out that there are specific challenges confronting the place of social class, the balance between stability and fluidity of inequalities and not losing focus on marginalised intersections, and the role of the powerful in reproducing/maintaining the status quo. An intersectional perspective brings to the fore intersecting dimensions that exacerbate already marginalized groups and their lived experience within their defined context (Humphrey, 2016). Some research highlights the multiple layers of discrimination created by the cross-cutting of gender, socioeconomic status, and disability. Humphrey (2016) indicates that these intersectional forces impact the ways in which impoverished women with disabilities experience violence, making them more prone to violence as their able-bodied counterparts and on the periphery of society. Yeo (2001, p. 30) emphasizes that future research on the

relationship between these dimensions and adverse poverty and disability should not be undertaken as an alternative to tackling the exclusion and chronic poverty that marginalized people face. They maintain that this research should challenge power relations and not just reinforce the issues that have already become evident.

In a global South³ context, women living with disabilities may encounter barriers in terms of equality in the workplace, as well as access to resources that may need to be considered - as such access is highly gendered (Priestly, 2001). Emmett and Alant's (2006, p. 446) definition of disability within a social model is as a social construct that extends beyond the context of impairment. It is 'a complex system of social restrictions imposed on people with impairments by a highly discriminatory society'. This serves to identify the isolation that endured by the barriers created because of society's response to social categories such as disability, and how this affects marginalized individuals' ability to fully participate in society.

In many contemporary contexts, misperceptions of women's skills still persist; evoked by stereotypes, culture, religion or other influences that place women in an unenviable position in the labor market (Fad'oš & Bohdalová, 2019). These dominant stereotypes perceive women as belonging to certain sectors and roles in the labor market, segregated by gender (Krainska, 2016). This does not incorporate critical debates on gender, race and social class on the lived experiences of Black women in organizations (Mama, 2011; Atewologun & Mahalingam, 2018; Collins, 2019). There are evident gaps in the existing literature on the experiences of Black African women holding management positions on the African continent (Carrim & Senne, 2019). Carrim and Senne (2019) attribute that to the dominance of Western epistemologies that attempt to illustrate the complexities of experiences in African work contexts. Some studies support the use of an alternative lens to understand the deep influences of systemic oppression, as well as the perpetuation of inequality through their everyday experiences (Carrim & Senne, 2019).

As literature indicates, there are more intricate factors beyond organizational issues that impede the progress of Black African women in management, unlike their white counterparts (Lindsay-Dennis, 2015). Research provides us with this richer context that gives voice to issues such as work-life balance (Chovwen, 2007; Kargwell, 2008; de Lange, 2018; Powell, 2018; Rung, 2021), cultural elements such as women's sexuality (Chepp, 2015; Dickens & El Chavez,

2018), or women's perceived inferior social status or perceived inability to be in leadership

positions (Omar & Ogenyi, 2004; Moorosi, Fuller & Reilly, 2018). Other studies that are localized see ethnic beliefs as discouraging the education of women, their working in close proximity with male teams, and occupying higher-level management posts (Carrim, 2019; Carrim & Nkomo, 2016). More research on cultural-ethnic beliefs and socio-historical-political environments related to local conditions that impede women's advancement needs to be undertaken in African organizations (Carrim & Senne, 2019).

3.4.4 Intersectionality, power relations and politics

Bond (2021) examines intersectionality as both a lived experience and a political analysis, particularly when attempting to understand the true relationship between politics and violence. An intersectional framework must understand that 'the embodied experience of collective violence as both a tool of and a response to domination' ought to be at the forefront of any analysis of political order and change (Bond, 2021, p. 711). This intersectional approach allows for a more thorough evaluation of how violence organizes power relations (Bond, 2021). It can be argued that, through an intersectional lens, violence reflects and operationalizes the pursuit for the accumulation, distribution and management of authority and autonomy. For example, when governments legitimize the use of force within their borders— it is a representation of the power relations and dynamics within and across human communities in that geopolitical location (Bond, 2021). However, they often hide behind systems to evade individual responsibility for violence committed on others, and evade the complicity of their privilege in experiences of oppression (Case, Iuzzini & Hopkins, 2012; Atewologun, 2018).

3

Their privilege is a relational concept pertinent to social groupings, where unearned benefits are afforded to the powerful social groups within systems of oppression (Case et al., 2012). For instance, consider Collins's (2019, p. 239) claim that political domination 'seems hegemonic when violence becomes naturalized and normalized to the point where it becomes invisible'. Acknowledging violence as a saturated site of intersecting power relations invites the invisible

³ By the 'global South', am referring to those countries who share the common experience of slavery/colonization, while the global North refers to the historical colonizers whose economic/ industrial/ military strength is as a result of coloniality, plunder and ownership.

agents of violence to be marked, to escape the anonymity that masks their individual responsibility (Collins, 2019).

Exposing the system configurations of domination together with their individual actors provides an opportunity to gradually dismantle the hegemony of hierarchy, and move toward a politics of self-determination (Bond, 2021, p. 712). Taking the example of women leaders in organizations, despite the privilege they may have due to their position of power, they also experience marginalization and violence, as they are ‘beholden to the trappings of marginalisation within their organisations’ (hooks, 1989). At the person level, it is critical to acknowledge individual-level decision making in the production of violence. However, the violent clashes during the 2012 Jo’Burg Pride Parade in South Africa show how violence may also indicate points of weakness in the complex systems that maintain multiple oppressions (Bond, 2021).

I use this social setting to demonstrate the actions of Black lesbian and feminist activists from the 1 in 9 Campaign that disrupted the Jo’Burg Pride Parade, to express their political stance regarding the invisibility and disregard for Black lesbian lives. As a social coalition within the LGBTQIA community, they demanded a minute of silence to acknowledge members of the South African queer community who had been raped, killed, or otherwise victimized physically as that was a point of contention for them (Bond, 2021, p. 713). What ensued was a display of domination, rejection and prejudice by many of the White attendees, towards the Black lesbian activists during and after the insurgent activists’ dramatization of the physical inertia of (Black) death. The episode clearly highlighted the presence of violence as a means for reinforcing the intersections among race, gender, and class-based domination in the local LGBTQIA community. In the political moment, the presumed powerless and marginalized had facilitated change through deploying the strength of the powerful.

Intersectionality’s embrace of relationality can also help to uncover the deeper meaning of the potentiality of violence as a means of resistance. The inverse idea that the use of violence may be a beneficial, liberatory and ethically justified method for challenging multiple oppressions is certainly not new (Fashina, 1989, p. 191; Coates, 2015; Bond, 2021). However, according to an intersectional theory, to legitimize and acknowledge the moral value of violence as a political act is reflected in the causal and power of the interlocking power relations that shape

it, simultaneously validating the vulnerabilities and agency of those oppressed in multiple ways (Bond, 2021). It continues to strike me that this is the context in which many scholars and activists, living the intersections of multiple oppressions, come to debate the relative value of violent and nonviolent resistance as behavioral alternatives or political ideals (Collins, 2021).

3.5 Debates and contestations arising in intersectionality

There are various debates that often arise about intersectionality. Any longstanding deliberation is related to the multiple axes of difference that may shape people's lived experiences, and whether some of those social divisions should be considered as more prominent than others (Yuval-Davis, 2011). It may seem appropriate in some conditions to consider the intersection of gender and race, or that of gender, class or race, but what becomes of the other additional intersections that may require inclusion (Yuval-Davis, 2011). This requires us to consider the positioning that specific people may assume in particular contexts, where there are certain common social divisions that are more visible to the majority in the way they shape their lives (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Detectable social divisions relating to disability, caste or refugee status that affect a minority group may equally be significant to others in terms of how they construct their social standing (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Therefore, investigating the experiences of Black women needs to take cognisance of the various positionalities that may intersect and be of significance to those individuals' lives through an open, exploratory and participatory approach (Hopkins, 2018). Some research studies have employed this approach – as the critical reflection of ethnic and religious minority young people in Scotland voicing their experiences of racism and misrecognition (Botterill et al., 2016; Hopkins, 2017).

The origins of intersectionality are deeply rooted in radical Black feminist and Third World struggles but there has been a departure from its potential for analysis under the concerns that it has been co-opted by some strands of liberal feminism (Salem, 2018). Intersectional analysis has been stretched in a depoliticized manner by feminists of a different ontological and epistemological positioning, and the only way to bring it back to its genealogy and critical intervention, according to Salem (2018), is through the questions that Marxist feminism

implores. Although my argument is not the assumption that Marxist feminism can be deployed to resolve the current debates around how the intersectional approach has been used by neoliberal agendas, the critique of erasure is an important one. A line of critique by Patil (2013, p. 853) points out that the race–class–gender axis, and how it is applied, will continue to be shaped by context and geographies of colonial modernity, with the effect of mutating the original concept. The use of the concept by the neoliberal academy as pluralistic and elastic remains, and takes away the inequalities that are at the centre of analysis, and replace them with a mainstream approach that is inclusive, albeit sanitized (Ferree, 2013). Many scholars, including Crenshaw herself (the African-American scholar that coined the term intersectionality as a device designed to illuminate the issue of Black women’s marginalization and discrimination as a point of origin), are in agreement with the critique that the framework is now distorted and unrecognizable (Davis, 2019). Crenshaw (2011, p. 223) admits that the way in which it has been adapted by liberal Western feminists to give meaning to social inequalities outside of the US context - as it was originally used - has become quite foreign to its origins, as she had not even intended to utilize and evaluate it as a theory. In some of the scholarship that followed, that used the theory in various locations and disciplines, the subject for whom it had been intended has been displaced (Lewis, 2013; Davis, 2019).

Scholars like Tomlinson (2017) have made the claim that although many scholars have been guilty of misreading or misrecognising Crenshaw’s arguments, the problem of appropriation is regarded as acute by European scholarship. It is in the way that European thinking has attempted to colonize intersectionality with the view that its reflections are superior to the ‘parochial thinking of Black American feminism’ (Tomlinson, 2018, p. 147). We have to ask ourselves what implications this may have for the geographically located in the Global South. How do we manage ambiguities of intersectionality in a way that addresses the social inequalities of Black women academics in the South African academy, without denying the critical intervention that it serves to bring?

As much as the current diverting approaches to intersectionality have been critiqued, the distinctions of ascertaining what the appropriate analysis is, have also been critiqued. In her analysis, Nash (2016; 2019) accuses feminist work that wants all analysis to return to the original and ‘true fundamental’ reading of intersectional work, she terms originalism. Originalism, according to Nash (2016; 2019), is problematic as it is related to the belief that

theories should remain intact and faithful to the original reading and understanding of the text, whereas any reading of theory will always generate new meanings. The critique goes further to mention the supposed lack of reflexivity in US feminist scholars critical of later understandings of the theory. They view it as displaying a dishonest tendency to act as protectors and rescuers of intersectionality, while merely protecting the singular, hegemonic position they want to maintain (Davis, 2019). Nash (2016, p. 8-10) goes on to argue that calls to ‘safeguard’ a theory such as intersectionality from appropriation often fail to attend to the ‘political and institutional questions’ shaping its widespread uptake across universities, which are corporate, neoliberal institutions with ‘rhetorical investment[s] in diversity, difference, and inclusion’.

3.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I outlined the critical considerations of what intersectionality encompasses, as a far-reaching theory. I examined the varying definitions of intersectionality that exist, as the framework has continued to gain popularity and political currency in scholarship across various disciplines (Collins, 2015; 2019). I further outlined the debates concerning Crenshaw and other prominent Black feminist scholars’ intervention to intersectional approaches, with the aim of fully capturing Black women’s lived experiences and oppressions. Although theories may commonly be misread and misused, I draw on some of the outstanding criticisms and claims that have been made regarding their deployment in various social locations and disciplines (Lewis, 2013; Davis, 2019). What is a recurring, pronounced argument is the exploration of intersectional research as a social justice project, which should challenge power relations and not just reinforce the issues that have already become evident, or the existing social orders, but to open possibilities for social change (Collins, 2019).

In the following chapter, I begin to look at the research design and methodology of the study. I also discuss the limitations of the study and ethical considerations made.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the theoretical framework of the study, which is intersectionality theory, explained what the theory means, themes in the theory, and how it will be used in the study. In this chapter, I discuss the chosen research methodology of this study. I first start by discussing the research approach and the rationale for its selection. I then move on to outlining the different methodology aspects, which includes the paradigm, design, research method, and techniques used to generate data, to answer research questions and the suitability of the study. Lastly, the limitations and delimitations of the study are outlined.

4.1.2 Research paradigm

The term paradigm first came from Thomas Kuhn (1962) to represent a philosophical way of thinking (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A paradigm speaks about researchers' philosophical orientation, which decides ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods used. A researcher undertakes his research journey under the guidance of some paradigms, whether known or not (Tuli, 2010). According to Atieno (2009), a paradigm can be understood as an approach or a design. The ontological stand of interpretivism is relativism i.e. reality is subjective (Scotland, 2012). The central theme of using interpretivism is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). As people differ in various ways and have different opinions on the same subject, they can have different perspectives for a social reality (Wahyuni, 2012). The role of the researcher is to become a part of the subjects being studied, to understand the contextual meaning that the subjects are making. A complete effort is made to understand the viewpoint of subjects being observed rather than the viewpoint of the researcher. It is also referred to as constructivism because the reality is socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Gemma (2018), interpretivism argues that truth and knowledge are subjective, as well as culturally and historically situated, based on people's experiences and their understanding of phenomenon. Researchers can never be completely separate from their own values and beliefs, which inevitably inform the way in which they collect, interpret and analyze data. Interpretivism has its origins in the 18th century philosopher Giambattista Vico, who opposed

Descartes, arguing that there is a distinction between the natural and social world, and more importantly; that social organization and social experiences form our perceptions of reality and truth (Costelloe, 2016).

Qualitative research is “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 10–11). This definition emphasizes the nature of the data analyzed in qualitative research, namely non-quantified data. This non-quantified data can be generated through such means as conducting long interviews (e.g., McCracken, 1988), engaging in observation or participant observation in real-world contexts (e.g., Spradley, 1980), undertaking observation and participation in online contexts (e.g., Kozinets, 2020), or using projective or auto-driving techniques (using photos or texts produced by informants to elicit information from them) (e.g. Heisley & Levy, 1991). Aspers and Corte (2019) further highlight that a defining feature of qualitative analysis is that it entails the generation of new concepts and refinement of understandings of relationships among concepts through processes of comparing, contrasting, and categorizing; as they note, in most quantitative research, concepts are defined a priori and do not emerge or become refined in the course of analysis.

Qualitative researchers typically strive to make conceptual contributions of the type that span contexts rather than substantive contributions that are specific to a particular context. This may happen because reviewers tend to encourage more transferable conceptual contributions rather than highly context-specific substantive contributions. In principle, however, there is no reason those considering conducting qualitative research should confine themselves strictly to seeking to make conceptual contributions rather than substantive ones.

The data generated in a qualitative paradigm are descriptive and subjective since they are always informed of words. Where data are in pictures and symbols there is a probability that some words need to be used to describe the pictures (Berg, 2009). The data is reflective of underlying perceptions, opinions, motivations and feelings of people in an environment. Qualitative research approach is more concerned about the processes rather than products since its bedrock is on how understandings are formed, how meanings are conveyed and how roles are moulded (Zireva, 2013). This can be ascertained by the use of descriptive analogy which is a preference of social researchers in digging deeper for the narratives. The data of a qualitative approach are analysed inductively through the use of the general laws. Abstractions and

constructs are built as particulars that have been gathered and grouped according to a specific narrative which leads to theme formulation. Themes and concepts are developed from patterns in data which results in thematic approach. This research approach leads to the development of theory using a bottom-up not top-down strategy (Chisaka, 2013).

Qualitative research is humanistic (Zireva, 2013) and the human aspect is maintained by presenting data in the words of the participant. Expressing data in words is referred to as voice in the text or verbatim which becomes evidentiary proof of participants' views. It emphasises on the perspectives of all participants which are directly quoted for credibility purposes. It is apparent that qualitative research is human centred and its orientation is the discovery of theories as evolved from collected data. Qualitative research creates an in-depth understanding of the attitudes, behaviours, interactions, events, and social processes that comprise everyday life which makes it sufficiently fit into the context of social researchers.

On the other hand Berg (2009) and Mohajan (2018) state the draw backs of qualitative research as follows: Results of qualitative research are not generalizable. Qualitative research scope is fairly limited so its findings are not always widely generalisable (Berg, 2009). Researchers also have to employ concern with these methods to confirm that they themselves do not control the data in ways that considerably change it and that they do not carry too much personal bias to their explanation of the findings. It is difficult to demonstrate the scientific rigor of the data collection exercise due to the results in data which are not objectively verifiable (University Southern California Libraries, 2018). This is factored by the reason that qualitative research is subjective due to its human centeredness. The participants have more control over the content of the data collected because engagement carried out through interviews is open-ended. Replicating results can be very difficult with qualitative research (Mohajan, 2018; & Berg, 2009). In qualitative research contexts, situations, events, conditions, and interactions cannot be replicated to any extent, nor can generalizations be made to a wider context than the one studied with any confidence.

According to Hammersley (2013, p.26), the interpretivist paradigm was based on the notion that methods for making inferences in the social and human sciences are not the same as those employed in physical sciences, partly because humans interpret their world and act appropriately, while the rest of the world does not. Pham (2018) argues that interpretivists adapt a relativist ontology in which a single phenomenon may have multiple interpretations, rather than

a truth that can be determined by a process of measurement. Creswell (2007) similarly emphasizes that interpretivism is where researchers tend to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity, in its unique context, instead of trying to generalize understanding for the whole population. Hammersley (2013) adds that, since multiple interpretation is developed among humans' relationship, interpretivist researchers should understand the diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different contexts and cultures, and avoid bias in studying the events, people, and their own interpretations. The advantage of interpretivist paradigm is that, with the diverse views on phenomena, interpretivist researchers, not only describe objects, humans or events, but also deeply understand them in social context. Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) say the key method of interaction is the interview, which "allows researcher to investigate and prompt things that we cannot observe, researchers can probe an interviewee's thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives".

One of these limitations is that interpretivists aim to gain deeper understanding and knowledge of phenomena within its context rather than generalize these results to other people and other contexts (Cohen, Manion & Marison, 2011). It tends to leave out a gap in verifying validity and usefulness of research outcomes with using scientific procedures. Another reason, research outcomes are unquestionably affected by the researcher's own interpretation, own belief system, ways of thinking or cultural preference which causes to many biases. The last limitation of interpretivism is about not addressing the political and ideological impact on knowledge and social reality. This paradigm targets to understanding of current phenomena rather than focusing the problems related to empowerment of individuals and societies.

Interpretivism is concerned with in-depth variables and factors related to a context. It considers humans as different from physical phenomena as they create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be investigated in a similar way to physical phenomena. According to Alharahshen and Pius (2020), the interpretivist paradigm enables researchers to treat the context of the research and its situation as unique, considering the given circumstances as well as participants involved. The research would focus on the whole experience rather than on certain parts of it. This would enable researchers to explore in-depth, individual experiences through informal discussions and interviews. Kelly, Dowling and Millar (2018) state that the ontological stance reflects one's lived experience, cultural influence and meaning, while acknowledging the potential for multiple realities (Welford et al., 2011; Weaver

& Olson, 2006). Within this paradigm, the recognition of potential ‘multiple realities’, as explained from the emic perspective of the ‘lived experience’, is emphasized (Lincoln et al., 2011; Welford et al., 2011). Within this paradigm, the researcher’s role is one of interpreter, reflecting a subjectivist stance (Guba 1990). Inherent within this role is the recognition by the researcher of their own experiences that potentially shape their interpretations (Crotty, 1998; Guba 1990; Paley, 2005).

Methodological practices in research are influenced by a set of beliefs and practices that guide a particular field and are known as paradigms (Morgan, 2007). According to Salvador (2016), a paradigm is a shared worldview that represents the beliefs and values in a discipline that guides how problems are solved. This study was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm focuses on understanding the context and totality of each situation employing a variety of qualitative methods (Mouton, 2004). The epistemology of this tradition focuses is the relative nature of knowledge, which is created, interpreted, and understood from a social as well as an individual perspective. As such, this paradigm seeks to explain the participant’s behavior from their individual viewpoint, as opposed to viewing them as passive actors who are completely determined by the situation in which they are located. Participants in an interpretive method are seen as active agents who are autonomous and able to create their social reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This paradigm believes that the way in which people respond in each situation depends on their experiences and circumstances, which makes their context important. This study explored women academics’ experiences in navigating their belonging in a South African university. Alvermann and Mallozzi (2010) states that research framed in the interpretive paradigm can be used to justify how and why something is happening, and it can also address what is happening from a particular viewpoint.

Interpretivism is based on the assumption that reality is subjective, multiple and socially constructed. That is to say we can only understand someone’s reality through their experience of that reality, which may be different from another person’s shaped by the individuals’ historical or social perspective. Interpretive approaches rely on questioning and observation in order to discover or generate a rich and deep understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. This is closely associated with qualitative methods of data collection. In this study where I was exploring the experiences of women academics of navigating their belonging in a South African university, the paradigm interpretivist was suitable because the experiences of women academics are subjective to one’s reality. These realities can be explained based on the

context, knowledge, background of each participant and that is subjective. Each participant could have a different explanation and/or view of the same concept or reality.

4.2 Qualitative research approach

The qualitative research approach was the most appropriate for this study. Qualitative research is a coherent and personal approach used to describe life experiences and how people make meaning of their experiences. It explores real life issues in the real world (Creswell, 2014). This approach helps the researcher to understand the physical environment of where the study is taking place. In this study, the qualitative research approach was best suited because it examined human behavior and habits. Della and Keating (2008) further explain that the qualitative approach aims at understanding the events and discovering the meanings that human beings attribute to their behavior and the world at large. According to Levitt et al. (2017) and Strauss and Corbin (2008), qualitative research is inductive in nature, and the researcher generally explores meanings and insights in a given situation. Haradhan (2018) used it to explore the behavior, perspectives, feelings and experiences of people, and what motivated them in their lives. Tong et al. (2012) used it to make explanations on human behaviors, emotions, attitudes and experiences.

Several authors state that other qualitative research refers to a range of data generation and analysis techniques that use purposive sampling and semi- structured interviews, and open-ended interviews (Dudwick et al., 2006; Gopaldas, 2016). Gentles et al. (2015) add that it is observations and interpretations of people's perceptions of different events, and it takes a preview on perceptions. I concur with Punch (2013) that qualitative research deals with data that is non-numerical, which seeks to interpret meaning and understand life through the targeted population. Haradhan (2018) says it deals with understanding and investigating knowledge of certain group experiences, their meaning and interpretation of the context, and factors that only marginalized people experience in a given context. Domholdt (1993) emphasizes that the aim of qualitative research is to gain a deeper insight of phenomenon. It describes and interprets issues or phenomena in a systematic manner, and through the eyes of an individual or population being studied, to gather data to develop new concepts and new theories (Domholdt, 1993). It explains how and why a certain phenomenon is experienced in a particular way within a specific context (Haradhan, 2018). I concur with Tong et al. (2012) about the focus of qualitative research being to give a detailed explanation and understanding of human

behavior, experiences, attitudes and emotions.

The study explored women academics' experiences from one South African university, generating qualitative data that is better suited for addressing opinion and judgment (Shuttleworth, 2008). The qualitative approach was useful in this study because it is an approach that enabled the researcher to find out how women academics think or feel about navigating their way in South African HE thus unpacking on their lived experiences

4.2 Case study research

Informed by the interpretive paradigm, and the qualitative research approach, and to address the research questions; I utilized a qualitative case study design that Yin (2009) advocates. According to Shuttleworth (2015), a case study is an in-depth study of a particular situation. Creswell (2009) says a case study is useful when examining an existing phenomenon in a real-life situation. Case studies are anchored in real life, and can provide rich detailed account of the phenomenon under study (Shuttleworth, 2015; Yin, 2009). Stuurman (1997) states that a case study is used to describe the exploration of a person, group or phenomenon. In this study, the case was women academics' experiences. Creswell (2009) describes case study as when a researcher gets into detail about a program, event, activity, process, person or group of people. He also says that the framework of a case study must be the problem, the context, the issues, and the lessons learned. Simons (2009) explains case study as getting a deeper insight from different perspectives for a complex and unique institution, program or event in a real-life situation. According to Yin (2014), exploratory case study is used when there is no single outcomes to answer the how and what questions. Explanatory case study is used to explain presumed casual links that are too complex for surveys and/ or experimentation, and to answer the how and why questions (Yin, 2014). Comparative case study is used to compare two or more cases, and is referred to as multiple case study, as there are many cases studied, and the focus is comparing and contrasting those cases. Intrinsic case study is used to better understand the certain case and could answer all questions, but it focuses on specific questions instead (Stake, 2005). Instrumental case study is utilized to give depth on an issue or theory, and the case is used to support the narrative.

A case study was chosen in this research study to obtain a detailed understanding of the phenomenon under investigation; the experiences of women academics of navigating their belonging in a South African university (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). Creswell (2009)

argues that using case studies in a qualitative research study is important because the phenomenon analyzed in a real-life situation. Furthermore, the case study assisted the researcher to provide in-depth experiences of women academics navigating their belonging in a South African university. Applying the case study allows the researcher to concentrate on a particular context and recognize the different interactive processes at work in institutions of higher learning within the South African context (Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2016).

Most importantly, the case study enabled the researcher to achieve the overarching objective of generating knowledge that can contribute to the creation of new insights in the field of study. The case study helped the researcher to work in a limited context (Creswell 2012), in the case of this study, the experiences of women academics of navigating their belonging in at the university of KwaZulu-Natal.

An Exploratory Case Study is used to develop an initial understanding of the program or phenomenon of interest. The focus is on discovery for the purpose of obtaining an empirically based introduction to the structure, dynamics and context of the subject of interest. Exploratory case studies are particularly useful for developing hypotheses to be tested, research questions to be answered, and/or design options to be used in a more focused and in-depth subsequent study. In evaluation settings, an exploratory case study can be used to explore a program's logic, theory of action (or change), or expectations for results, as well as a program's overall evaluability. While exploratory case studies probe into and shed light on what's essentially unknown, they should be guided by a specific purpose or set of propositions that focus and frame the inquiry.

In this study, I used the *exploratory case study design*. The selection of the exploratory case study was guided by the purpose of this research, which was to explore experiences of women academics of navigating their belonging in a South African university, and why women academics experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university in the way that they did. Through this case study, the researcher is able to better understand the case of the small group of ten purposively sampled women academics within a historically white university in KwaZulu Natal, the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood campus.

4.2 Method, Procedures and Techniques

Qualitative research methods and techniques were used in this research to understand the

meanings academics assign to their experiences. A sample is defined as a group of people or objects from a larger group, for the purpose of a study. Nayak and Singh (2017) say a sample is a mirror to the population that it is taken from, and it should be the representative of the population studied, to ensure that one can generalize the findings.

The technique for the selection of research site and participants in this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique where participants are chosen by the researcher for the purpose the researcher has interest on, who have the potential to help the researcher achieve their research purpose (Tongco, 2007). According to Olivier (2006), purposive sampling is a form of sampling where the researcher chooses the research participants that would form part of the study. The researcher makes this decision based on research participant's specialist knowledge and willingness to participate. I choose a smaller and more manageable sample of ten participants to do my research in greater depth. The participants in this research project were academics from one university. The sample was purposively constructed to include diversity with respect to age, race, class, gender, language, and discipline background. The research project employed semi-structured interviews to get into the professional spaces of these academics, capture their experiences and describe their networks, and make sense of their lived experiences.

4.3 Data generation Methods and processes

Qualitative research involves using a variety of data generation methods. Creswell (2012) explains that qualitative study uses data generation methods such as interviews, document analysis, reflections, and observations. A methodology is the strategy or plan of action which decides the kinds of methods used (Crotty, 1998). A researcher's methodological approach reflects the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions, and decides the kind of methods to be used in a study (Grix, 2002). A methodology is a kind of blueprint to carry out research in a particular paradigm. It guides researchers to choose suitable research methods (Wahyuni, 2012). Methods help us with the instruments used for the collection and analysis of data (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). According to Crotty (1998), methods are the techniques and procedures used for collection and analysis of data. The methods should be free from philosophical assumptions and should be selected based on a research problem under study, and the kind of sources from which data needs to be collected (Grix, 2002).

4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

In keeping with the interpretive paradigm underpinning this study, the main data generation

tool was semi-structured interview. Interviews are frequently utilized in generating data for research, and the semi structured interviews are the most used interview method in research of a qualitative nature (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). According to Cohen, et al. (2011), interviews are one of the most popular methods of data generation for interpretive qualitative case studies. For the purposes of this study, I used semi-structured interviews, which Creswell (2014) explains as usually having a set of key questions that are followed in a more open-ended manner, or interview guides that list broader questions to be covered during the interview. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews offers the qualitative researcher the advantage of being able to modify their line of inquiry, to follow up interesting responses, and to investigate underlying motives, enabling a more in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2014). Interviews are more than just conversation, as they involve a set of assumptions and understandings about a certain context, which are not usually part of a casual conversation. Nayak, Singh (2017) states that interviews are a proposition attractive to the research project. Kakilla (2021) says semi-structured interviews are important for deep conversations. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) says the researcher is able to do follow up in most cases, and take note of all forms of responses; verbal and non-verbal, some of which could be shared as jokes, hunches, deep breath taking, sigh or ignored, silence. This is information that could be useful in the final data as different themes are extracted from the interview conversation.

Semi-structured interviews were regarded an appropriate instrument to use for a small sample such as that selected in this study. This type of interview allowed me to remain in control of the topic, but also allowed the participants to freely give subjective responses as suggested by Cohen, et al. (2011). Interviews were done using zoom and WhatsApp call. The number of participants for this study was 12. Diversity was taken into consideration in terms of age, race, and discipline background. The demographic profile of the research participants is captured in the below table:

Table 1: Profile of the research participants who took part in the study.

Name⁴	Race	Gender affiliation	Highest qualification	Discipline background
Grace	African	Woman	PhD	Curriculum studies
Isabella	African	Woman	Masters	Geography education
Melokuhle	African	Woman	PhD	Curriculum studies
Felicia	African	Woman	PhD	Tourism education
Azande	African	Woman	PhD	Curriculum studies
Owami	African	Woman	PhD	Maths and science education
Princess	Coloured	Woman	PhD	Gender education
Esethu	African	Woman	PhD	Teacher development
Lebohang	African	Woman	PhD	Education sciences
Sarisha	Indian	Woman	PhD	Early childhood development

4.3.2 Data Analysis

After the researcher has generated data during the field work, it needs to be analyzed. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2004), data analysis means a close or systematic study or the separation of a whole into its parts, for the purpose of the study. Lisa (2002) adds that

data analysis helps to describe facts, detect patterns, develop explanations, and test hypotheses. There are many ways a researcher can employ to analysis data e.g., qualitative, or quantitative just to name two. In analyzing the generated data, qualitative data analysis methods were used. According to Thorne (2000), data analysis is the most complex phase of qualitative research, and one that receives the least thoughtful discussion in the literature. Several authors state that data analysis should be conducted in a systematic approach and transparently communicated to others (Malterud, 2001; Sandelowski, 1995). In most cases, qualitative researchers often leave out the detailed description of how analysis is conducted within published research reports (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Tuckett, 2005).

⁴ Please note that these are anonymized in line with the University's ethical commitment for protecting the identity of those who took part in the study.

However, many authors have argued that researchers need to be clear about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and include a clear description of analysis methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Malterud, 2001; Thorne, 2000). When conducting data analysis, the researcher becomes the instrument for analysis, making judgments about encrypting, theming, decontextualizing, and recontextualizing the data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) each qualitative research approach must have specific techniques for conducting, documenting, and evaluating data analysis processes, and each researcher has the responsibility to ensure thoroughness and honesty in their study. Qualitative researchers can demonstrate how data analysis was conducted through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis, with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Co't'e & Turgeon, 2005; Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2007).

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis should be an introductory method for qualitative analysis, as it provides essential skills for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. We argue that thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be widely used across a range of epistemologies and research questions. It is a method for recognizing, examining, establishing, reciting, and broadcasting themes found within an information set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this case, thematic analysis methods were used, aimed at identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic analysis is a method for "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. This forms the basis from which the two sets of data (interviews and observations) are analyzed. Another purpose for the use of thematic analysis is that it organizes and describes data sets in detail. Thematic analysis goes beyond simply counting phrases or words in a text, and moves on to identifying implicit and explicit ideas within the data, which aid the researcher in developing the key facets within the mental space, that form and shape lecturers' perspectives. Firstly, I analyzed the recorded data from interviews. Interviews were played and replayed on tape to ensure clarity. Data generated was organized to facilitate analysis. I analyzed the recorded data from the observations. Data was coded according to themes. I placed

observation and interview data on different themes answering the research questions of the study. Perceptions and understandings were analyzed, and then used to create an understanding of what it is like to be women in higher education. The interpretive phenomenological approach was employed to analyze data generated, and to understand how academics experienced this phenomenon under study. This form of research endeavored to understand what a group of people felt.

Thematic analysis can be modified for the needs of many studies, providing a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Thematic analysis offers a more reachable form of scrutiny, particularly for those early in their research career (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004) argue that thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the standpoints of different research participants, highlighting resemblances and variances, and generating unforeseen insights. A simple thematic analysis is limited when compared to other methods, as it does not allow researcher to make claims about language use (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.4 Trustworthiness of data

Trustworthiness is referred to as the level at which the study can be trusted, and is an important component. It is explained in this research study in terms of what it is, what is included in it and how it was ensured. Trustworthiness is synonymous with standards of truth and value in the work presented. Trustworthiness is one way researchers can assure themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refined the concept of trustworthiness by introducing the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to parallel the conventional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability. According to Guba and Lincoln (2003), these four issues of trustworthiness are vital in any qualitative research. The rationale behind working with trustworthiness in a qualitative study is to support the views of the research, and establish the extent to which they can be trusted and relied on. Trustworthiness in this regard is the relation between the avenue of generating data, and the way the data generated is recorded. Validity refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of the instruments, data, and findings in research (Nayak & Singh, 2017).

4.4.1 Confirmability

One of the trustworthiness concerns in qualitative research is confirmability, which is taken to

mean that the findings are a depiction of the participant's answers to the questions asked, and not the interpretations of the researcher (Polit & Beek, 2012). Confirmability is concerned with establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached (Tobin & Begley, 2004). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. Koch (1994) recommended that researchers include markers such as the reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study, so that others can understand how and why decisions were made.

To keep up with the concerns of confirmability, I had to take back the findings in the semi-structured interviews as transcribed to the research participants, so that they could check and verify that the responses were a true reflection of what they had said, and had not been influenced by my biases as a subjective human being.

4.4.2 Credibility

Credibility is the confidence we have on the data (Amankwaa, 2016, p. 121). It is taken to be the truthfulness of the data or the resemblance of the viewpoints of respondents (Cope, 2014). Credibility is placed on the question of how believable or authentic the data is, in terms of being a representation of the actual views of the participants. To facilitate credibility in this study, I had to make sure that the semi-structured interviews reflected the views of the participants as true and reliable data by using verbatim from participants directly in quotations to support data findings.

4.4.3 Dependability

Dependability is also another trustworthiness criterion involving the explicit revealing of the steps taken in generating data, and making sure that it remains unchanged (Cuthbert & Moules, 2014). Dependability is about making sure that the necessary steps to generate data are clearly stated, and that there is consistency within the data. To achieve dependability, researchers can ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). When readers are able to examine the research process, they are better able to judge the dependability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way that a research study may demonstrate dependability is for its process to be audited (Koch, 1994).

Dependability is achieved in a study by an audit trail that involves reverting to what was used to generate data, and the type of analysis used in the study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). For an

audit trail to happen, I needed to provide the crude data as taken down in the interviews (Anney, 2014).

4.4.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the likelihood of transferring the results of one research study to another different setting or context (Moon et al., 2016) involving different groups of participants (Anney, 2014). According to Li (2004), the researcher of a study makes the phenomenon researched upon transferable to another study by making use of thick descriptions. Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that the credibility of a study is determined when core searchers or readers are confronted with the experience, they can recognize it. Credibility addresses the “fit” between respondents’ views and the researcher’s representation of them (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Transferability has to do with the general theoretical aim and interest of the study, and that the study’s result can be generalized, as suggested by Ketokivi and Choi (2014) and Yin (2013). Gammelgaard (2017) states that traceability has to do with openness about research protocol, and sometimes even data base, data-collection guidelines, informant selection and number of participants within the case study, as well as their nature.

Thick descriptions are broad details on the procedures of data generation, which include the geographical area where data was generated in the research report to give the person who reads the ability to critique and review the suitability of the research outcomes for another study (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Thick descriptions involve the researcher describing and explaining the investigation process and the place in which this investigation happened, which then facilitates the transferability of the research. Transferability refers to the generalizability of inquiry. In qualitative research, this concerns only case-to-case transfer (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The researcher cannot know the sites that may wish to transfer the findings.

The findings of this research are only for the research participants in one South African university, hence transferability cannot occur. Moreover, it is a study conducted in the current academic year, whereas another study in another academic year may yield different outcomes. Context is also key in research. This study took place at University of KwaZulu Natal, at the Edgewood Campus in the School of Education. Another study in a different context could yield different results as context would be independent of that of the current study.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Researchers are guided by certain ethics when carrying out studies. Ethics exemplify individual

and communal codes of conduct that require adherence to some principles (Biggs & Coleman, 2007). Ethics offer rules and behavioral expectations about the most correct conduct towards participants. The following ethical aspects were taken into consideration in the process of conducting this study.

4.5.1 Gaining access

Ethics has to do with behavior considered right or wrong, and is an important consideration in research, particularly with research involving humans (Bertram & Christiansen, 2010). Each course has its code of ethics that need to be followed regarding processes of that course (Airey, Bowden & Zein, 2006). Therefore, it is of importance to ensure that I followed the ethical procedures stated by the university's ethics committee. This study dealt with human beings, so I firstly applied for permission from the University registrar for access to the research site; the university. I then applied to the University ethics committee for permission to conduct the study. Consent was granted to conduct the study by the university and each participant gave consent to be interviewed and recorded for data generation.

4.5.2 Recruiting participants and consent

In recruiting participants, I firstly applied for permission from the University register to grant me access to the research site, that is the university. I then applied to the University ethics committee for ethical permission to conduct the study.⁵ After being granted all this, I then personally engaged the selected academics on what the study was focusing on, and how they could participate in the research process. Once participants had agreed, I then gave them the consent form, an agreement between the researcher and the participant.⁶ This meant that prospective research participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, as well as the procedures and risks involved in the research (Cohen, et al., 2011), and freely give their consent to participate. Schofield, (2014) says that informed consent promotes autonomy and trust.

⁵ Please see appendix A for a copy of the ethical clearance

⁶ Please see appendix B for a copy of the consent letters.

4.5.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

One of the principles of ethics about research is that the participant must have anonymity during the generation and analysis of data. To ensure anonymity, the researcher used pseudonyms instead of real names. The research made sure that the participants were given consent form to sign to confirm their availability. The consent form specified that they could withdraw from the study because participation was on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality refers to separating or modifying any personal identifying information provided by participants from the data. According to Coffelt (2017), the interviewer knows the name of the participant and may know the address or other personal identifying information. The researcher has the responsibility to protect the participant from harm by altering any personal identifying information that may be revealed during the interview. For example, researchers assign pseudonyms to the participants. When participants refer to others by name, the researcher also assigns those individuals a pseudonym. For confidentiality, the participants are allowed to have access to the finished report received from generating data, records as well as transcribes can be shared with them. As a researcher, I had to make sure that participants feel as comfortable as possible, and had an opportunity to respond to question in their mother tongue, and to stop and ask when they did not understand the question properly (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

4.5.4 Data protection

Data protection is designed to protect personal data stored on computers or in an organized paper filing system. Individuals have legal rights to control information about themselves. To ensure that the data generated was safe, I was guided by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal ethics office. Data from this research would be available in the university library, and the protection held by the university in terms of the copyright. My academic supervisor was responsible for protecting this data in a storage system of a computer, and a hard copy in his office locked cupboard.

4.6 Limitations and delimitations of the study

There are limitations that I was confronted with as I conducted this study during the global pandemic Covid-19 pandemic. This presented various challenges, such as not being able to meet my research participants face-to-face and understanding that their lives could have been disrupted. To navigate this limitation, I employed various online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, WhatsApp and others, to try and generate data and to also accommodate the choice of the participants in terms of their comfort levels with specific online

platforms usage, hence the variation. I was also understanding in terms of postponements, re-scheduling and delays, to ensure that I worked around my research participants' times. This study was only limited to one particular case study, in one South African university. Although this does prevent the likelihood and potential of transferability of the findings, focusing on one case study allowed me to obtain in-depth, rich and complex experiences of women academics and how they navigated and negotiated their belonging in a South African university.

4.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I discussed the methodological aspects of this study in terms of the paradigm used, research approach of the study; the qualitative research, as the data collected was non-numerical and textual in format. The case study design was used as what was studied was a single case studied using semi-structured interviews for data collection. Thematic analysis, a method of data analysis, was used where the trustworthiness of data was taken into considerations in terms of confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability. Ethical issues were considered. These included gaining access, recruiting participants and gaining their consent to participate in the study, and ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the data protection in terms of the university protocol. The limitations of the study were also discussed, and how they were overcome described.

In the next chapter I discuss and theorize the study findings.

Chapter Five

Data presentation and findings

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the methodology used to guide this research study. The principles of qualitative research were explained, and the design chosen for this study justified. In this chapter, the data that was generated using semi-structured interviews is presented, interpreted and analyzed. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and categorized, using different codes, and grouped into themes. In this chapter, the purpose is locating the findings within the research study's main objectives captured in the first chapter. The major objectives of this research study were to explore Black women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university.

The following were the primary research questions that guided and informed the study:

- What are Black women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university?
- How do Black women academics' experience navigating their belonging in a South African university?
- Why do Black women academics' experience their belonging in the South African university in the way that they do?

Ten women of colour of academics from the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood campus were sampled and used for data generation. Pseudonyms were used to ensure participants' anonymity, and to comply with ethical requirements. The participants' direct quotations from the semi-structured interviews are included in detailed data presentation presented below in order to support research findings. This is chapter one of two that deal mainly with the findings of the study. This chapter presents the findings of the study and attempts to theorize the findings.

The findings of this study were discussed and analyzed using thematic analysis, where major themes were discovered. Literature was used to support the findings to ensure credibility of the study.

5.2 Findings and discussion

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), presenting data in detail using direct quotations from participants ensures the credibility of the study. I presented data here in themes. Discussion of findings is linked to the related literature review. The quotes below each theme are taken from the responses of the participants during the data generation process. It should be highlighted that although these themes are broken down and written as separate analytical categories, they intersect and are related to each other. This means that the data is interconnected and in harmony with the study as a whole. The generated data was analyzed and presented in themes. The following themes were identified and are discussed in detail:

5.3 Key themes

5.3.1 Teaching philosophy

5.3.2 Role of mentoring

5.3.3 Love/ hate relationship with research

5.3.4 Support

5.3.5 Teaching load

5.3.6 Community engagement

5.3.1 Teaching philosophy

Before I proceed with this theme, I explain the meaning of teaching philosophy in the context of this study. Sumardani and Dujali (2021) note that teaching philosophy is a reflection on the growth of the teacher and dedication to achieving goals and values. Laundon, Cathcart and Greer (2020) add that teaching philosophies enhance the beliefs of the educator, related to what learning should consist of. Most participants in this study have some approach or philosophy governing their teaching in class. There were quite a few approaches that came up in the responses, such as behaviorist approach, active learning, constructivism, social constructivism, student engagement, intersectional approach, participatory approach, to mention just a few.

Grace used behaviorist approach stated that they used it mostly when explaining concepts that needed to be learnt, such a procedure and/or methods to be followed. Some were using active learning or constructivist theory, where students' participation and their involvement in the learning process is important and key in terms of assessing whether learning has taken place. Felicia made the point that she used all theories by taking the elements in each philosophy that is beneficial to her teaching. Therefore, she could not single out the one approach that she was

leaning to most. Although some participants indicated that they just teach, and for their teaching to be effective, they need to master their materials and ensure that they did thorough preparation before class. Their students must engage with the module concepts and understand them, to ensure effective teaching and learning.

Grace shared in her response that her teaching philosophy was mostly from the behaviorist approach although she considered herself to be using different elements of each philosophy depending on the content and need in her teaching:

I view myself as a person that takes different elements of pedagogy practice like for example as I am teaching at a university, I am teaching large classes as I said. So, sometimes I lecture mostly from behaviorist philosophy or approach so especially with first year students, they get into university, and they are sometimes unsure of some pedagogical concepts then I must lecture in a sense just to get them from a behaviorist approach when you get them to speak. But other times, of course depending on the topic as well I use some of the philosophy from constructivist approach where I include students in my lesson and then I ask question to allow students to discuss issues.”-
(Grace)

Isabella added that for her teaching to be effective, she leant more to the constructivist school of thought, as student engagement is important, and since students have some knowledge and are not “empty vessels”. Hence, it is important to find out where they are and what knowledge they have, so that her teaching could be beneficial to her and her students. Her teaching philosophy emanated from her experiences as a learner, where some of her teachers were treating them like empty vessels. She then told herself that she would not be a teacher like that. Student engagement for her, would be important. She noted that:

Yes, it is ummmmh active learning constructivist. It is coming from that school of thought where we are saying that you are not teaching like you are the only person in class, so student engagement is very important. I shift the focus from myself to learning. That’s how I teach, and I like that because I feel that it’s liberating. In our time when we were students, we didn’t get much of that. A person would come to class and then lecture and then you leave a lecture hall, you are not even sure of what that person was saying. It’s almost like I should have just stayed in my room. So, I didn’t even want to provide a similar experience to my students where they leave the lecture hall

disengaged so I decided from there in my experiences that I am not going to be the type of a teacher. (Isabella)

Sorisha also argued that her teaching philosophy was participatory learning, because she believed that students should be actively participating in their learning. She believed that students should have a voice and that they should build from the knowledge that they have prior, because students are not just sponges who are supposed to regurgitate knowledge. She explained that:

Okay, I'm sure by now you notice that I love participation. You know participatory learning is going to be an advantage where the learner, students have a voice. The student can express himself and bring in his/ her prior knowledge into class or into the lecture room. You know how I can build on it, so that's one of the things. The other thing is that, I think we don't give them a choice of what to do. You know, giving them that choice allows them to do something that they are good at. You know so, that includes participation. It's getting that choice and voice and getting them to speak and something that they love. That's important in participatory. Also, I need to realize I am not just a sponge in learning as they have knowledge, attitudes and values that they bring in class. They bring a lot in classroom such as feelings and we shouldn't feel as lecturers as being more than our students. (Sorisha)

In the above quotes, Grace, Isabella and Sorisha explained the importance of having a teaching philosophy in their teaching experience because students should have the ability to use their prior knowledge as building blocks in gaining new knowledge. Also noting that students are vessels with content should trigger engagement in class.

Other participants like Azande showed that their teaching was mostly governed by thorough preparations of her content, and ensuring that her students know the subject content and can understand the materials. She explained that:

I just teach B, but I do believe. I don't know whether you call that a teaching philosophy or what. Firstly, I believe in thorough preparation. I prepare thoroughly for class because I don't want to be as tough in front of my students. Secondly, I believe in those students must know the content of the module, you understand what I am saying. If I am teaching you module X, I would want you to understand the issues related to module X, because at the end of the day, it is not about passing the module. It is about

understanding the issues and thresholds concepts in the module. So, that's my philosophy grounding my students in content of what I am teaching. Also making sure that at the end, they pass of course, I very conscious of that and that once I'm done teaching, students need to pass and apply that which they have been taught. I set a particular standard as well, I don't just want people to repeat what they have been taught, but I want to see the application of what they have been taught. But what I believe in the most, is that students must know what I am teaching them because I'm not teaching for assessment. (Azande).

Most of the participants in this study had some teaching philosophy as stated by Yoem, Miller and Delp (2018) that one's teaching philosophy should be a living document that is integrated in and actualized by the art and sciences of one's teaching. The research participants in this study expressed having philosophical positions that guided them in preparation of their teaching to cater to the needs of the students.

5.3.2 Role of mentoring

Mentoring is defined as a relationship where mutual learning occurs and the professional and personal development of those involved are supported by trust, respect and commitment (Higgins & Kram, 2001). It is a relationship where the mentor and mentee agree to be in a partnership that is mutually beneficial in terms of growth and reach more development in their pathways. Few of the participants who took part in this study expressed that they did have research mentors and were somehow, being mentored. Some participants saw it as non-existent in the institution.

For Isabella, mentoring happened incidentally while she was looking for assistance with something, and that developed into a mentorship relationship. In her response:

You sort of like create that, sometimes you are not even aware that you are mentored until for a very long time where you realize that oh... so this is what is meant by a mentor. In the past, I wasn't even used to having mentors. I can see now when I started understanding the concept of mentorship to say that oh... people have always been there. Lucky for me, I say I am a people's person, not to say that I go around looking for people for assistance. People generally like me and then because I like hearing stories, I will be there to hear their stories, and then at the same time, I am very open

and vulnerable in a sense that I can say that I do not understand that/ this. How do you do this and then you find that people are able to respond? So, for me, it hasn't been like prescribed support, but it's been about me when I see that advert for writing retreat, I am the first one to apply because I'm also qualified to teach Tourism, so we have been teaching about these attractions, but you have never been there. So, now when you see there's a writing retreat at Umhlanga, I want to be there, and it doesn't matter. There's a writing retreat at Amanzimtoti, I want to be there. So, having to open myself for those opportunities has really paid off, because it seems like I was going everywhere, but that knowledge is coming together now to shape the type of person I am becoming as an academic. (Isabella)

For Isabella, her personality helped her in developing those mentorship relations that were now benefiting to her as an academic. While that was the case for her, Owami shared a different view where, for her, because she came into the institution as a tutor, the senior lecturers responsible for the module/s that she was teaching constantly checked upon her work as they were accountable for the students' performance. She highlighted that it helped her in terms of growth, although she could not really say it was mentorship. It felt more like shadowing and being checked on. She said:

First, for me when I came into higher education, it is different from others because I came as a tutor. Then at that time, for each module, I was shadowing others, the senior academics. Yes, because now when I am teaching, the senior lecturer would be checking the module to supervise because when students fails and that is his module that he will have to account for. Although I felt being checked upon, but it helped me. It was too much because I was coming from now to share my lesson plans because this is his module that I am teaching. Especially at first, because I joined the university in the second semester and already people were given the teaching loads and I didn't have my load. In that semester, I was more being mentored because I was shadowing people. (Owami)

Isabella and Owami were mentored as compared to other participants like Esethu who was not mentored by their supervisors. This was important as it helped them navigate and negotiate their belonging in the university. Esethu said:

Yes, I do have a research mentor. You remember that I told you when I started that I have written a paper which comes back with comments. Because I had this thing, which

was being scared to share my work and being talkative, I was also afraid of troubling people too. It is also because they have responsibilities same as mine. They must research, write papers and publish. Then, here I come and say, 'please look at my paper'. It felt as if I am troubling them up until my mentor took initiative in being keen as to what is it that I'm currently doing. Then, I would feel free to share my work and she would want to see it. She was more interested. Even when she saw calls, she would share because it relates to my thesis. She would instruct that I write a paper and she would guide me. - (Esethu)

For Esethu, her supervisor's willingness to assist in her writing made a difference because she was now able to share her work without feeling like she was troubling anyone. There were also participants like Princess, Lebohang and Azande who indicated that they did not receive any formal mentors or mentorship.

For Princess, she shared that:

No, I didn't have a mentor ummmmh from honors. We just got there. I didn't know where the library was. It was still in one of the campuses. To find the library was a mission. I had to find, and it took a lot of time. and I knew where everything was, as a student as opposed to being a lecturer- is different. You get more help when you are a lecturer. You just got to say Dr so and so speaking, and you get help. That's what happens and that's the reality. When I did my masters with Prof. M and he was my supervisor, and I had no mentor, I had to just work with him, and I would meet with him probably like once a month. I would send him emails of drafts. Doing my PhD, I was with Dr. B. She was my supervisor, no mentor. I was on my own basically, because the supervisor you meet once in whatever and you send them work. There was nobody to guide me on how to do things outside of my supervision. Those who were allocated to supervise me, no. no mentor. No assistance. No kind of somebody to contact you to ask if you're coping or do you need anything. Is there a way in which I can support you in your doctoral studies? No, it was just me and my supervisor. (Princess)

Lebohang argued that she did not have any mentoring, and that made her to be torn between research and. This made her to feel that her growth was slow due to lack of mentors. She said:

No, not really. I find myself torn between research and my other teaching. I am just a lecturer, so I don't have a lot of space to do the research, so I feel that I am growing

very slowly, and I don't have mentors. I have worked with one or two people that I would say have mentored me, but I can't say that I am there yet. So, I'm still doing my baby steps in research. (Lebohang)

Most of the participants in the study like Sorisha, Lebohang, Princess, Felicia and Azande did not have mentors, while it was different for Melokuhle, Owami and Isabella who had some sort of mentorship. For Esethu it was evident that she had mentorship offered in her journey by the supervisor. Mgaiwa and Kapinga (2021) argues that mentoring is hailed as an important workplace learning and career development activity for women and men across a variety of organizations including universities and schools (see also Higgings & Kram, 2001). They argue that mentoring is an important part of career progressions and professional development.

I now move to discussing the next theme, which is the love/ hate relationship with research.

5.3.3 Love and hate relationship with research

Most of the participants in this study loved publishing but found that the writing part of research was daunting and difficult. Several authors note that it has become a norm for academics to arrive on campus with an already established publication record; an expectation that has evolved over the past 25 years (also see Bartwoski, Deem & Ellison, 2015). Some participants reveal that they enjoyed publishing but not the writing process, because it was time consuming and frustrating for them. Other participants only published what could be considered the “bare minimum” of one article a year.

Owami commented that:

I enjoy publishing, it is nice when your article is published, but writing is difficult. To enjoy that part of having my articles to be published, I must undergo this difficult part. So, no. While I don't enjoy the part of writing, but I must do it so that I enjoy the publishing. But for me to be getting published, I must endure the part of writing and to be published in credible journals it means I must be writing something that adds value. So, I have no other choice except to love it. I must say that as you get used to it, at first it becomes a difficult part, but as you get used to it, you find yourself enjoying it to a point that when you have not written anything, then you feel bad that you are not generating new knowledge. Now compared to when I started to know, I am enjoying that part of writing and getting papers published. (Owami)

In the above response, Owami comments on the complexity and challenges of publishing, even though she loves seeing her research published. She nonetheless, dreaded the process for academic writing itself.

Despite her enthusiasm, Princess was very much challenged by writing, but later developed the love for writing for to publication. She also noted her anxiety when a paper was rejected. Although one is not supposed to take it personally, it has a negative effect on one. Writing for publication is an unpredictable process as it depends on the reviewers or journal publishers.

Writing up is time consuming, very much time consuming. It's very very ummmmh, challenging in a way that you need to bring your theory together with your literature and your data to do the analysis, which is the actual center stage of your paper, which is your analysis section because that is your knowledge that you are producing. So, ummmmh Ya. Writing, researching and publications. The research part is a yes, the writing is ummmmh it's time consuming. You can spend six months writing a paper and send it to a journal and they reject it. Then you feel hopeless, useless, stupid, and that happens. They reject your paper, or it can be an oh there's revisions, we like your paper, we want to publish it if you are prepared to do the revisions, we will publish it. So, that's the thing. It's a rollercoaster ride, because you think you are writing something that's very interesting then somebody might find that its highly problematic and they reject your paper then you go into depression. I do, I literary go into depression if I just see that a journal has rejected my paper saying that it's not relevant to this journal, or the theoretical this doesn't fit with whatever. I feel it's an attack on my personal, my person, it's not. It's academia. (Princess)

For Princesss, research is a tiring and complex task. She enjoys the research part while dreading the writing up aspect, although she understands that it is part of her duties to perform. Grace has a different experience on researching and publications, as she added that they were what she enjoyed in higher education, and she was very much keen to keep writing and publishing in her career.

As I said earlier on when I was asked about myself, I love researching. So, that's the component of academia is very exciting for me really. If a person would say to me let's write a paper, I would always say yes. Obviously, it must be in my specialization or what interests me or what is interesting to me or my areas of expertise. It is including technologies, student teacher mentorship and assessment. So, if anyone could ask me

to write on that, so that's just one. (Grace)

Melokuhle, Lebohang and Azande expressed how challenging it was for them to publish due to their teaching load fluctuation every now and then.

Mmh the publishing part, for example it's too much, it's a bit too much. The research part I feel you know; I am not saying the females aren't good at. Listen to me very carefully. So I'm not saying that they are not good at it, but I feel that the research part at academic was mostly ummmmh made or introduced for the males. Because treats like I am a daughter, a wife, I am XXX, I've got focus on and they got their own focal/focus area. So, it's not for us, but for the males because they are a breadwinner. That's the main goal if you are a breadwinner, just go out there and make money and if the wife is crying, give her money, if the baby is crying give money. Just provide the financially and then just keep quiet. For us it is different. We have different roles to play, so it becomes very difficult for us to publish. We really don't have the time. (Melokuhle)

Melokuhle expressed how publishing was too much for her because of other roles that she played as a woman. She was very selective with the choice of her words not wanting to be misread. When she mentioned the roles she must fulfill as a woman compared to that of a man, she felt that it was too daunting a task to fulfill, although she was not saying that it cannot be done. This gender inequality that Melokuhle was commenting on, reflects the argument in the literature regarding Black women's experiences of being discriminated by society based on the relationship between race and their gender, and often being left out in movements fighting for their cause and rights to equality (Lewis, 2019).

Lebohang felt that she had not published much. She had only a few publications around her research interests. She added that her not having a research mentor could have been the reason why her growth in this area was slow. Another reason that she gave was that she was teaching, which is taking up most of her time and efforts.

I haven't published much. I have published quite a few things just all around what is happening in the classroom and why. I am just a lecturer, so I don't have a lot of space to do the research. So, I feel that I am growing very slowly, and I don't have mentors. I have worked with one or two people that I would say have mentored me, but I can't

say that I am there yet. So, I'm still doing my baby steps in research. (Lebohang)

Azande felt that no one reads the research, and writing is not a task she enjoys doing. In fact, she was frustrated with writing but was not able to mention the reasons why writing was not one of her strongest points. However, she had produced publications with colleagues here and there. Her emphasis was on that she was a lecturer and not a researcher.

I don't like researching and publishing. I like teaching and learning. I like teaching students. I'm not a researcher. I do it because it's a requirement, because the university wants to generate money and for them to get more money, we need to publish. But I hate researching and publishing, but because in performance management it is needed, I must be seen to be doing it. But I just don't like publishing. I don't like writing, writing for what? To write something that no one reads about. We do read as knowledge is contested. – haisuka! this thing. You may say knowledge is contested but the publications are not read by anyone. It is only you who is writing them and your reviewers and student. No one is reading that. But it's not- that mmm I think (sigh) (Azande)

Most of the participants in this study knew the well-known notion of publish or perish (Heffernan, 2018). The publish or perish discourse refers to the constant expectation that scholars should publish and at a higher rate because their performance is measured by the number of papers they have written for publication. Several authors also argue that this phenomenon has a direct impact on the individual due to the pressure it exerts on the career development of a scholar. One is deemed successful based on the number of publications done yearly, which are then used for salary increments, promotions, and professional recognition (Weisshaar, 2017; Neil, 2008; Glick et al., 2007). According to Heron et al. (2020), the mantra publish or perish comes at a cost of the scholars' performance. They argue that it is not helpful since it has the ability to bring productivity as the core value of academic writing, overlooking other factors such as creativity and desire (see also Solms, 201; Lee, 2012). Heron et al. (2020) also argue that to write for publication should be paired with learning opportunities for early academics, which will help them to grow as researchers.

As much as women academics are expected, some were not meeting the target, or did bare minimum publishing to secure their jobs, and were not keen for promotion because of the pressure they are facing.

I now discuss the next theme, which is support women academics are offered within the institution.

5.3.4 Support

Support for women academics in the academy refers to the various ways in which they have access to resources, contract staff, invigilators, markers, seminars for their studies, writing retreats, and caring line managers who are accommodating and helpful. Most of the participants who participated in this study noted that the support they received mostly was the provision of resources, for example technological support, technical and human relations support. This support was much needed, although Azande felt that the support she got was not speaking to her needs. She found herself having issues with students and the management being on the side of the student and not the lecturer. Issues where the Student Representative Council (SRC) were on the lecturer case neglecting the accountability of the students for their studies, discouraged morale and the teaching spirit on the lecturers' part. They felt that the academic leaders did not support them, but they let them become challenged by the students' representatives. This resulted in them just doing as they were told and feeling not supported.

Azande, Princess, and Lebohang felt that there was no support given to them since the one given was not speaking to their needs.

I wouldn't say that it is support but they are providing resources. Providing resources would be support, but it's not support if we find ourselves having issues with students. For instance, the university supports students more than us. When a student has a problem, the SRC is quick to support them, and they bully you in front of academic leader, and you will never hear an academic leader coming into your defense when the SRC is bullying you or when you are being bullied by the SRC. They keep quiet, you know. So, I don't think that there is support. Also, when students or you can't report a rude student when a student is disrespectful towards you. For instance, B, these students write on Facebook our names and say everything that they like and say how rude we are. I can't take a student head-on for that because there is no one who is going to support me. I think these are the areas that are important where we need support on rather than being given contract staffers and what what. The thing that makes teaching and learning effective is the right attitude for me. You know where there is mutual respect and understanding that students should be responsible for their work. But when we talk about these things, no one listens. So, I don't think we are getting support. There

is no support for me. What we have is the contract staffs and marking and what a few. But the issues of irritation that kills the morale of a teacher and student is lacking. (Azande)

Azande explained why she was saying that there was no support because only resources were provided as well as contract staff, but the issues of irritation were not ironed out. She expressed now a lecturer is on her own when students are rude and do not do their work. For Azande, having the right attitude towards learning was important in teaching and learning, but it was lacking.

I didn't know where the library was, it was still in one of the campuses. To find the library was a mission, I had to find and it took a lot of time. When we moved to this campus, it was a little bit more to navigate a lot easier and I knew where everything was as a student as opposed to being a lecturer is different. You get more help when you are a lecturer, you just got to say Dr so and so speaking and you get help. That's what happens and that's the reality. No assistance. No kind of somebody to contact you to ask if you're coping or do you need anything. (Princess)

In the quotation above, Princess commented that she had to constantly figure things out on her own. She also added that being a student was different from being a lecturer as you get assistance just by a phone call. However, she mentioned that the kind of support she got was from her supervision, and not on other areas of her academic life.

Well, I don't know. Although there were sessions, but for me, it was a big move coming to this specific university. I mean the previous one, the demand for all of these was not so high. It was just a matter of doing your job. Yes, publish, yes do this, but it wasn't at this level here, the way that things are being done here. So, for me, it was really a daunting task because I came in the middle of my PhD and moving into a new space. Now, having to balance a new job and being a student at PhD level, and when I did my PhD, my Masters was over 10 years old. So, I hadn't been in that academic space for some time. So, it was a matter of also coming back to it and now I'm in a new job, new space and location, and I have a young child ummmmh. So, it has been quite a journey. The support I got at school, I remember that once after I think I was how many years here, I was a bit so coming to get used to the job, to this life. I mean being at university as well working with students that could not read a textbook that expects you to Mmh do course things for them. (Lebohang)

For Lebohang, she could not say she was clearly supported as she vaguely remembers some support she got when she was already used to the job and had adjusted. It was also frustrating for her as she came during her PhD studies and had moved into a new environment, which required her to adapt.

Esethu mentioned that she was supported, and her line manager was caring and helpful, which made the transition for her easier. They worked as a team and collaboratively in terms of which sections to teach and how assessment should be done. Her line manager was accommodating, and the module coordinator⁷ was supportive in her teaching of the students.

I got enough support because she had experience of teaching the module as she had time. Also, the lady who is XXX had been teaching the module as well in the previous year. So, it was very collaborative. I could say that we worked collaboratively and she welcomed new ideas that I had and in terms of doing assessments. We agreed on assessments, and we had sessions where we could go through the questions together, you know, formulate questions together and answers, and so forth. I think I had excellent support, especially from my line manager. I think that's another thing which is important when you get into a new teaching environment or working environment, for your line manager to be building and very accommodating. (Esethu)

The women academics in this study agreed, to some extent, that there was support although some indicated the support was not catering for their needs.

5.3.5 The teaching load

Several authors have argued that excessive workload problems are among the factors that influence the quality and performance of teaching (Heffernan, 2018, Benjamin & Olajumoke, 2013). University academic staff are required to perform complex duties, ranging from conducting competitive research publications, teaching and supervision, making research funding applications, and attending to administrative tasks, doing all of these while working in a demanding environment. Most of the women academics participating in this study were passionate about their work and loved teaching because it brought meaning to their lives and made an impact on training teachers. However, most of the participants were frustrated by heavy workload due to the increase in the number of students in each module, as the university admits more students yearly for the academic year.

⁷ Module coordinator is responsible for making sure the module is delivered and assessed in the way it should be, as laid out in the module descriptor.

The increase in students meant more administrative work for as their classes ranged from 40-1400 students depending on the modules. Some felt that teaching had been compromised due to these high numbers.

The other factors which affected their teaching was remote learning due to Covid-19 pandemic which forced the institution to adopt online learning to save the academic year for the past two years (Armstrong-Mensah, 2020). The students attended online sessions, but were not participating in discussions. Some students missed the classes due to load shedding, and others missed assessments deadlines, and the lecturers were forced to accept late submissions because they were not permitted to fail students when they explained why they could not submit on time, thus increasing academics' workload.

Remote learning was also affecting the assessments that they gave to students because it is tricky to monitor students because the level of cheating and/or plagiarism is quite high as some students share work and assignments. Some even share answers to the quizzes that they are supposed to write. For Princess and Felicia, teaching load was too much to handle as their number of students was high.

As you know honors students and their groups should be small. It should be in the range of like 25, we, I work with just the two of us, myself and Prof Mel-B, there is two of us in Gender studies and we always ask our admin people to keep the numbers around 25 because if we are teachers and we want the lectures to be interactive. With big numbers, you can't, and it is difficult to interact. But I will tell you know I'm sitting for the last couple of years, the numbers have been like 40+ something. This year, there are 44 students in Gender curriculum and identity as well as generation and justice. I'm sitting with 70 some odd in gender education and management because there are electives that students take, that's a load. When it comes to marking and assessments, it's crazy. That's the first load in terms of teaching. The second load, and then we do IRP which is Independent Research Project which is in the second semester which is a lot of marking as well. It is a whole even though it is a small piece of research. It's a lot of marking to do drafts. The second thing is I supervise Masters and PhD students as there are dissertations. (Princess)

Princess commented that for honours it was best to work with small numbers, but currently the numbers were large for her. She also had supervision, where she had to read drafts and assess IRP. Even though it was micro research, there are drafts involved. Then, her Masters and PhD supervision added another workload.

Well, it was difficult. I don't want to lie to you because for so many years I haven't been having a high teaching load. So, when I came into higher education and they gave me, I can't remember whether 5 modules to teach, and I was like HELLO! Really? And to say on one end, you've got to do research, you've got to publish. And I was doing PhD when I was with the Department of Education. But because they didn't appreciate much studying and I was like higher education is interested, so I went there. So, I was doing the PhD with this new workload, large numbers. Mmmmmmmh that Covid-19 thing (deep sigh). Yoh, it really affected me a lot. One, teaching people you've never met. It's quite not nice. You know, I mean, there is a human factor that is removed from the entire process of teaching and learning. Remember pedagogy is about leading someone to somewhere and you are just leading the names, the numbers. You are not leading people. Because in teaching, there is a human factor, that interaction, that relationship that you develop with the students as you work with them. For them calling/coming into your office, Ma'am when is the assignment due? That's quite very much important and create a particular feeling between both of you. But now, when you must deal with the machine.-(Felicia)

Felicia commented on how difficult it was for her to transition into teaching high number of students in class. She was shocked and her line manager came to her rescue. She also added how Covid-19 had impacted the physical lectures as they now taught students they had never met, which removed the human element in her teaching. Teaching online for her was not the same as contact teaching.

Dorenkamp and Ruhle (2019) argue that the increase in workload and other demands have caused a decrease in career commitment on the management of universities. Jameel and Ahmad (2020) argued that academic staff find that their work satisfaction has decreased due to increase in teaching loads. Kenny (2018) emphasized that demotivation and decline in work performance are a result of high workload, an observation supported by Chin and Rasdi (2014). Some studies focused on how excessive workload perceptions led to stress and general apprehension (Nugraha et al., 2018). In her study, Urbina-Garcia (2019) showed that there was a link between depression and anxiety in staff members and increased workload and other work

pressures they are faced with. although they might not have disclosed their mental health statuses publicly, they were showing that they were doing the bare minimum to meet the requirements of their careers, and to keep afloat. Some were publishing the required number of papers per annum and doing supervision as per university policy. Hollywood et al. (2020) argue that academics are seemingly overwhelmed due to the changes of their working environment as they are constantly assessed as to whether they are performing up to the standards, and fulfilling all their duties from individual research, the quality of teaching, academic performance, and also community engagement. I now discuss the next theme community engagement.

5.3.6 Community engagement

Most of the women academics who participated in this research said that they were involved in community engagement because they believed that universities were part of communities. They also noted that it had become a norm that the researchers go to communities to generate data and not give back. That notion needed to change because communities are change agencies for their environments and should be empowered to develop themselves in order to improve their situations. Community engagement is increasingly seen as crucial to achieving high quality, efficient and collaborative care (Weger et al., 2018). The community engagements academics did ranged from motivational talks, working with ECD centers, training in-service teachers, Non-Profit Organizations, Professional Learning Communities, and youth empowerment. They also indicated that community engagement was important because, as researchers who gather information for analysis from the community, that means they should be involved in communities, since they are the ones who understand their contexts and could offer tangible solutions. Communities also deserve to be acknowledged and not only studied. They must be given access to the reports at the end, and have follow-up meetings after the study is done and action taken. Some were not involved in any community engagement due to various reasons like there being a blurred line in terms of the definition of community engagement within the institution. Some had not found their specific research niche, others thought the multitasking was not friendly, and they also did not aspire for leadership and/or promotion.

Isabella expressed that:

As a researcher now, I also believe in change in that teachers are change agency. So,

when I came in as a lecturer, I discovered action-research and that's where they were saying teachers are researchers. They know better about their teaching and see where they can do better and then change. And I was like Oh, but I have been that ever since I started teaching. When I was a student teacher, I get into the school, I can see that maybe the problem is here. I speak to the learners. They confirm that and then I would do something about it. So, when I discovered that there's something called action-research. I was like Oh, so they have labelled that process, so I've always been that action researcher. (Isabella).

In the above quote, Isabella commented that community engagement was expressed as action-research.

You see now my PhD uses a method that is called participatory research. So, this kind of method is not just about interviews, you will have engagements. It is like an 8-month engagement with a group of eight people. I did my work at an ECD center and training center. It was the teachers and students' trainings. I also used the teachers from the center. We formed a group and we worked on all the issues of diversity and exclusion. So, that was my one directed to the PhD. I started one, which is a group collaboration with few academics at the university. It is also with ECD centers and here we are looking at learner wellbeing because it is between certain manners, and we got three ECD centers. It is five academics involved in it and obviously three ECD centers and managers of the centers. We are in the proposal writing stage and it is doing well. (Sorisha)

Sorisha was doing her PhD using participatory research that resulted in her being involved with ECD centers for community engagement, to train teachers in those centers to be effective teachers and looking at the wellbeing of learners. Other four academics were involved as well in this project.

Mmmmmmmh aaaahhh community engagement means that you must project that you do outside of school. Yes. I don't have that, and I don't do any of that, maybe because I don't have a niche area in research. For you to or for one to be able or to want to be involved in the community, you need to have a niche in the community for research. I don't have that for one. Number two, B, I don't like critical spaces because of my childhood experiences. To be in a critical space traumatizes me for real, and I lose confidence very easily. So, being involved in community acts means you must be challenged in public. By in public rituals and academics are very much critical and secondly, I feel like there is too much pressure as well when you are in community engagement because you write this and that. I am not comfortable in doing that in the public space. (Azande)

Azande commented that she was not involved in any community engagements because it kept triggering her childhood experiences, and she was not comfortable with being in a critical space.

Community engagement has variations as is its understanding and implementation across universities (Aurora, Bernado, Butcher & Howard, 2012). According to Perkman et al. (2021), academics follow the lead of their departmental peers, and others in their networks both within their institution and outside when deciding to engage. It is also noted that research and publications play a major role compared to engagement, which plays a smaller role in terms of recruitment and promotion in university (Perkman et al, 2021). Universities and departments intending to encourage engagement may provide enhanced visibility to those who already engage, particularly if they are scientifically productive.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter constitutes one of two that presents findings and discussions of the study. This chapter began with a discussion and analysis of themes. The findings showed that women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university had successes and challenges for them. The themes identified were teaching philosophy, mentoring, love/hate research relationship, support, teaching load, time management, social life and community engagement. In the following chapter, I turn to theorizing the findings of the study in terms of what they mean for the field broadly.

Chapter Six

Theorizing the findings

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the data on women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university. In this chapter, I theorize the data by drawing from scholars' discussions on intersectionality as a theoretical framework. I use intersectionality in conjunction with the literature, to provide a theoretical discussion of the experiences of women academics navigating their belonging in a South African university. I discuss political intersectionality, structural intersectionality and sexism in academia, in relation to the experiences of the participants of the study. I end the chapter with some conclusions on the importance of intersectionality as a theoretical framework for this study.

6.2.1 Political intersectionality

Political intersectionality, as suggested by Crenshaw (1991), indicates how inequalities and their intersections are relevant to policies and political strategies of groups of people who occupy multiple subordinate identities. Women tend to belong to more than one marginalized group that requires them to engage with different political agendas and address the ways in which the intersections of identity, oppressions, and privilege are entrenched in public policies and their respective processes (Price, 2018). Some policies may be political within the social justice movements they are part of, and may create the development of other political coalitions and alliances within the main coalition and between other social justice movements. Verloo (2006) argues that, one aspect of inequality is not neutral towards other aspects, which results in political difference. This refers to the different power dynamics for different individuals where they are not favored in the same manner because of politics. Political intersectionality gives the notion of moving away from the individual analysis level. Crenshaw (1991, p.1252) argues that the failure of feminism to interrogate race will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy. This means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women. Intersectionality scholars note that this provides a platform to offer organizational policies and how social identity groups organize themselves between two or more political movements. Crenshaw

(1995) proposes reconceptualization of social identity groups as potential coalitions waiting to be formed. These need the emphasis on experiences and strategies that gives the indication of

working together in multiple differences. Cole (2008) argues that political intersectionality can be used to show different social identities succeeding in making successful coalitions, based on their shared marginalized positions. Intersectionality is concerned with identifying and addressing the issues that systems of inequity, like sexism, racism and class bias, intersect to produce complex relations of power and disadvantage (Nichols et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1991).

Lebohang noted that:

Tjo! My teaching load fluctuates and it depends on who is the leader in my cluster. Mmmmh and sometimes they will consider the other responsibilities that one has sometimes its teaching and teaching you know like it is a back to back kind of thing. So, with our modules, the other problem is that you also have to do practical work and on this campus we run our own practicals it unlike the other campuses where the lecturer just stops at lecturing and then somebody else takes over the tutorials and takes over the practicals and so forth. For us, you do everything plus you teach methods plus you have to supervise plus you must do the minimum load required. Yah sometimes it can be overwhelming, and you feel like you are just like overburdened. (Lebohang)

Lebohang noted that her teaching load fluctuated, and it depended on the cluster leader whether they consider other duties that are expected from each lecturer. She was overwhelmed and overburdened because of the amount of work she did. This was different for Princess who was enjoying the remote teaching and learning because she could attend all her meetings and classes at the comfort of her home. It was not going to be possible in contact lectures because of the mobility challenge that she was currently faced with. She further explained that:

Unlike other people, look what we are doing now is sitting here. I am disable in a sense that to a large extent, but I'm able to chat to you and I'm able to do my lectures online. I'm able to attend all meetings. I don't have to send apologies to meetings because this is how we do it via ZOOM or Microsoft teams or whatever. To a certain extent, or to a large extent I could say that Covid-19 for me, and I don't mean to minimize the pain and sufferings that a lot of people have gone through during the pandemic. But Covid-19 for me has been a kind of blessing in disguise, because I can sit here and lecture to my students. I can have one-on-ones with them. I can do this kind of thing and participate in everything, whereas if I had to go to campus, I would not be able to." (Princess)

Princess shared how Covid-19 had been a blessing in disguise for her because she was able to be present in everything that required her, without having to send apologies because she was not physically able to avail herself.

For Melokuhle, her teaching experience had challenges as students were not responding to emails and messages due to lack of data and/or poor connectivity. She was used to teaching that large class. The remote teaching and learning experience was taking slower for students due to diverse conditions that students were living in, which was beyond their control. She stated that:

I'm quite used to the 500, its fine. For me, I would say nothing has changed. It's just that we don't get to literally see the students interact with them. That's the only change that I've seen. Everything is the same, assessment is the same. They submit in Moodle/learn 2021 I'm sure this year it's going to be learn 2022 that sort of thing. With me, I don't have any issues with internet where I stay. So, no internet issues, no load shedding, we hardly have load shedding. But with the students, because we are teaching people who are coming from different areas. So, for them shame, it becomes very difficult to even upload or to do a quiz and all of that. I must be understanding, give them a chance and all of that. Some of them do not even respond to our emails, and they will tell you that email came late. Mem, you could send an email Thursday and I will only get it next week Thursday. So, can you imagine what they are going through? I don't even know whether it is the truth but give them the benefit of doubt." (Melokuhle)

This is how participants experienced political intersectionality in their field of work. I now discuss structural intersectionality.

6.2.2 Structural intersectionality

As mentioned in chapter 4, structural intersectionality defines how experiences of people within a particular category are qualitatively different from each other, depending on their other intersecting identities (Cole, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991). It focuses on the individual experiences of people at the intersection of multiple identities. According to Boogaard et al. (2010), a person can benefit by belonging to a certain group as a source of social and political empowerment but be disadvantaged in other social settings of powerlessness and subordination.

Many participants noted their frustrations due to the difficulty of balancing work and social life. They felt that they must constantly negotiate when it comes to living life fully, and take a break and/ or rest from work, without feeling guilty.

Felicia noted the following:

I do meet the minimum requirements of publishing, at least at lecturer level it is one paper a year. If I do two, it is a bonus. So, but ummmmh, I'm just meeting the minimum requirements of the job. If I do more, that is a bonus, but I don't stress myself to stretch over and do more because aaaahhh, I will go crazy, and it also depends. People who stretch more, if you want to be a professor. If you want to be a what what. You've got to have many publications and things. I think I'm not part of, and I'm not much interested in that due to my other personal life that is focused on something else. I just do but I make sure I meet all the minimum requirements of my job and yah. I just feel good with that. (Felicia)

Felicia explained that she did the bare minimal as per job descriptions for her career, because she also wanted to enjoy her life by doing other duties that brought meaning to her. She also emphasized that she was not keen on being a professor in her academic journey. This was quite different for Owami who was single and could manage her time as she saw fit as compared to when she was in a relationship, where she would wake up early to do her work and studies.

Perhaps, that for me is that, what I would say unlike others is that I am single, I don't have children. I am bachelorette so perhaps for me it is not such a challenge. But before because I was married, what I used to do was to use time effectively. Normally my lectures used to be in the morning, then after lunch time I will be preparing my lectures for the next day. When I get home, I'm just focusing on my family. What I used to do was, I used to go to bed early around 21h00 so that I can wake up early, especially when I was still doing my PhD, so that I could wake up around 01h00a.m or 02h00a.m when it is quiet than I do my writing as that is, the time that I would use until 06h00a.m. from there, I prepare for going to work, husband and stuff like that. That's how I used to balance it. I wouldn't say that it is an easy task, you just must find balance and I won't say that there is one single way to do it. You need to assess your situation but right now for me it is quite easy as I am staying by myself. I am only going home on

weekends, and I leave everything behind to be with my family. Monday to Friday I stay

by myself here in my place, so I have all the time to self, to do all that is required of me. Right now, for me, it is more manageable than someone who has children and husband to take care of. (Owami)

While Owami seemed to be managing well, Sorisha had her frustrations that she had almost no social life because of her duties as a wife, mother, daughter, sister and friend. She felt overwhelmed with everything that she went through because she was not able to be in all places and be with everyone who was important to her. She needed to prioritize her work over everything else. Working has made her to spent limited time with her family. Below, she said:

Social life is zero (giggles). Ever since I started working here, I was like, you know, what very minimal but I'm making time every week to spend time with my parents. At least once a week, I will visit them and siblings. Well, I do phone them but not very often. You know like maybe once in two weeks or something like that. But we have like a family WhatsApp, so we interact in that. In terms of my own family, at home here, I have two kids and husband. Look it has been, it hasn't been easy in terms of switching the role of a mother, wife, and housekeeper. (deep sigh) Look, it's quite a challenge you now especially during my studies and studies, work and home situation. I feel like I am constantly juggling, you know, trying to offload, and sometimes it boils down to frustrations because we are not super women. We need help okay, right I got a helper to assist with the household chores three days a week so that's huge. During hard lockdown, she had to go away, and I had to do all the work alone here at home. My kids and at that time I was highly pregnant, and I couldn't do anything.”(Sorisha)

Sorisha commented that she had to prioritize her academic life more than other parts of her life because of the constant juggling around. She also added that she understood that she would not be able to do it all.

Most of the participants found it challenging to manage their social life and work, others could make use of time management skills and diarize important things to be done, and events to be attended, while also making family time to create lasting memories.

6.2.3 Sexism in academia

Intersectionality by Crenshaw (1990) shows that there is interconnectedness between race, gender, and other systems that function in an antagonist manner, oppressing some while privileging others. This means that these components can be experienced differently due to race and/or gender, and have the ability to shape experiences of women in any institution. Intersectional feminism is centered on giving a platform to the voices of the groups that are experiencing overlapping, diverse forms of oppression to be able to explain and articulate with understanding the roots of inequalities and relationships in any given place. In academic institutions, primarily universities, sexism works towards the marginalization and subjugation of a particular sexuality or gender, because of ideologies, practices, and reinforcements that favor one sex or gender over the next. Sexism in academia tends to affect women, who are not accorded the same professional opportunities as men, in their disciplines, in terms of position, tenure, and prizes. Elite racism, as identified by Allen et al. (2000), refers to how women academics are viewed based on race, and in terms of their gender identity in academia. This is particularly the case for women of color, who are regarded as minorities by their peers due to isolation, racism, and sexism, which are intersectional. The bias against and marginalization of a woman in academia is defined as sexism.

Most participants who took part in this study shared how social inequality affected them. Social standards for men and women somehow oppress one gender. The way people are socialized has an impact on how they view and experience different environments. For Princess, she felt that the institution did not cater for the needs of the differently abled as she found it difficult to maneuver within the institution. Her work was making her to choose between spending quality family time without feeling guilty that she should have been using that time to mark, or supervising a student or writing a paper. It was a challenge for her not to feel guilty as much as the global pandemic Covid-19 had made her to rethink and strategize how she spent her time in a meaningful manner. She said:

Basically, I would tell that you don't have a life. Your life is work. That sounds like a lot doesn't it. (yes, because we are social being, that social aspect). Exactly, it will be, it's hard, you must, I feel very challenged when I socialize with my family and I go somewhere. I feel guilty and I feel like I'm wasting time. I could be marking somebody's work. I could be preparing. I could be supervising someone, I could be writing a paper, which is really really ummmmh its unfair. It's an injustice because, as you said that we

are social beings, and we need those social activities. I am a grandmother of four, I have four grandkids. It's difficult to navigate my persona and my roles as a mother. My children are big as I got a 26-year-old and 30-year-old. They are big but they still need their mother. Then I got the four grandchildren and the close-knit family who like to gather often all the time and not always I often got to say to them that you know I can't make it, I've got work to do. And they are, and I feel that they are ummmmh it's unfair or I'm doing this to myself at times because I find that I go socialize for 5 hours and then I come back and feel like I must make up for those hours. You understand that I feel like.... It's crazy. To be living on guilt is terrible. To feel guilt for socializing is terrible, or your family for being there for them. But, I've come to a position where I am now starting to rethink things and I am saying that I'm missing out on very valuable time with my family. I'm now starting to rethink things but there's a reason for that too.

(Princess)

Sorisha explained that because she was a woman, all the household duties were expected to be done by her. In her culture, women are homemakers and when they decided to pursue a career over and above being a wife, then they were in a compromising position, as they would have to think of the way to manage all of the duties of wife, mother, home-maker and career. She further explained that she had reached a realization that self-care was important because we cannot pour from an empty cup. To exercise and eat well was important. She said below:

I think you know what, for men I don't want to generalize but, in my situation, especially here, is that we don't have these kinds of things or developments or obstacles for men in our culture. The women have responsibility for the home like the mother for the house. You know if you just believe that then worry about your career all the times, it is very bad. You know your family comes first. Then, later you worry about your family. Your career comes in last. If you do anything and you have the time, but it is not important to pursue a career. Your job is not as important as that of the man. You know, it is that kind of thing. But, we must find ways to make it work and even if it means like sacrificing on a lot of other things like watching movies, TV. I don't watch TV but also what I learnt is that in this whole process, is that if you don't practice self-care, you are going to break. You will fall and drop out. So, I think we as women need to have learn that and to realize that first you fill your cup before you can pour out to others. In an empty cup, you can't pour. You really need to take care of yourself first and exercise. (Sorisha)

For Melokuhle, being a wife, and mother had an impact on her for not being able to do almost everything in her career like publishing. She explained that men are able to do it all because they can even sleep in their offices, but for her, she will not be able to do that as she is a mother, wife, to mention just a few.

For them, do you know that they can go to campus, sleep in their offices and not go home. And it would be acceptable. But in my case, I've got a 5-year-old son. So, imagine my 5-year-old sleeping alone. He won't be able to do that, but for him, home is home because mom is there, and when mom is not at home, that's not a home. Yes, even the husband too, when he comes, he is going to feel or want to feel that warmly, homely-my wife is home. Those kinds of things and we can't choose to, or we can't spend so much time there, and even if we are at home, we easily disturbed. Because somebody cries, they don't go to the daddy, but they come to us. Somebody is hungry, they do not go to the daddy but come to us, it's just too much. I'm not saying it's not as I've said before, it works better for the guys. It doesn't work for the females. But as much as that the case, but we are all doing our best in every aspect. We need to do the teaching and learning and the publication part. (Melokuhle)

In the above quotation, Melokuhle comments on the fact that, as a woman academic, it is understandable for her to prioritize her family over her work, because women are home makers. It is different when it comes to her male colleagues because, for them, it is easy and acceptable that they are the providers, and can be away from home as long as the mother is there tending to the children.

6.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of the study using intersectionality, using three themes that emerged from the data, namely; political intersectionality, structural intersectionality, and sexism in academia.

In the next chapter, I provide the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Chapter 7

Summary, recommendations, and conclusions

7.1 Introduction

In this study, I was interested in exploring experiences of women academics navigating their belonging in a South African university. The research questions developed were intended to understand women academics' experiences in a South African university, and the reasons behind them having such experiences in higher education. The study was at a South African higher education institution at the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

The women academics were purposely selected as they had experience in higher education, and so would be able to share their understanding of being academics. In this chapter, I first remind my audience what I had set out to do in the study, and whether I achieved the intention of the study. I then go on to summarize the study by capturing the key findings and discussions as shared by participants. This is important to do because it reminds the reader what was key in the study, and shows that the study aligned as a whole. In the following section I discuss the intention of the study.

7.2 The intention of the study

This study explored women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university. This was done with the purpose of giving women academics a chance to develop their voices within the academy, so that their experiences within their higher education institution can be considered, especially when policies are made. This is one of the reasons women academics were given an opportunity to share their views with the researcher on their experiences.

7.3 Summary of the study

The women academics' experiences in this study had six themes that emerged as they navigated their belonging in a South African university. Most of them had a teaching philosophy that grounded their teaching, and was fundamental to their role as scholars and researchers in higher education. Some used multiple teaching philosophies. The role of mentoring, whether formal or informal, had an impact on the professional development of the academic. Most dreaded the publishing aspect in higher education due to various reasons, although others were flourishing

in that aspect. Their teaching loads varied greatly due to various reasons such as; disciplines, seniority, employment contracts, and number of students enrolled in their programmes of study.

The major findings in this study were that:

- Women academics strove to fulfill most of their career requirements as best as they could.
- Women academics published but at a minimal output due to other administrative duties and health challenges, which does put a strain on their performance.
- Teaching loads varied depending in disciplines, and some had heavy teaching loads and were doing their best to stay afloat.

7.4 Recommendations

Presented here are the key issues that emerged in the research study. I recommend that they be addressed through research in the future:

- The role of mentoring in higher education should be better coordinated and formalized for academics, in order to accelerate their adaptation in higher education.
- Quality research and publications should be the prime objective of the institution, compared to the “numbers game” of the publish or perish discourse, which tends to be detrimental to the well-being of the academics.
- Visible support that speaks to the needs of academics should be a priority within the institution. Academics should be given more self-care opportunities, to limit mental exhaustion and burnout.
- Teaching load must be distributed evenly, and/or hiring of staff contractors should be mandatory, to allow the women academics to excel in their career when they are able to find the time to research and publish, once the load is manageable.

7.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I focused on what was happening in the study in general and presented the intention of the study and the summary. I also further elaborated that the experiences of women academics navigating their belonging in a South African university should be given due consideration. Women academics are diverse and dynamic, embodying unique experiences and narratives that shape their lives.

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Annexure A: Ethical clearance



21 July 2021

Mr Mlamuli Hlatshwayo 59225
Ms Thabile Zondi
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Hlatshwayo and Mr Zondi

Protocol reference number: HSS/0240/019

Project Title: RE-centering and re-presenting students' and lecturers voices in the South African higher education curriculum and transformation discourses.

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 18 June 2021 has now been approved as follows:

- Addition of co-investigators: Amanda Mbatha 200100456, Bongiwe Majozi 221116173, Bongiwe Ngcobo 208505717, Cheslynn Van De Merwe 984173687, Nkululeko Majozi 213510100, Daphene Pillay 216074163, Thobile Mabuza 214584579, Zamokuhle Magubane 214501893, Thobile Dlamini 221119575, Innocentia Alexander 212545769, Ayanda Ndlovu 212548717

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

cc Academic Leader Research: Dr A Pillay

cc School Administrators: Ms S Jeenarain, Ms M Ngcobo, Ms N Dlamini and Mr SN Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587

Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Annexure B: Consent letters

University of Kwa Zulu-Natal
College of Humanities
School of Education
Curriculum Studies

Dear Prospective Participant,

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I am Bongiwe Ngcobo, a Masters' candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education. I intend doing research aimed at exploring women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging at a South African university. I would like to ask for your permission to participate in this research study. Should you agree, your participation in the study will be in the form of a semi-structured interview, which will be scheduled for an hour session or less. The times and dates of the session are negotiable to ensure that you are not inconvenienced in any manner.

Please note that:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. Furthermore, you have a right to stop participating at any time. You will not be required to provide a reason for your withdrawal from the study, nor will there be negative implications resulting from your withdrawal.
- Any information that you share cannot be used against you, and the generated data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms when reporting the findings.
- The generated data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes, and there are no financial benefits involved.

If you agree to participate in the interview session, please indicate (by ticking where applicable) whether you agree to the audio recording of the session OR not

	Willing	Not willing
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Audio recording		
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If you have any concerns or questions, please feel to contact me at:

E-mail: 208505717@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Cell phone: 0764321305

My supervisor is Prof Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo, located at the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies (AMCHES) at the University of Johannesburg.

His contact details are as follows:

Prof MN Hlatshwayo

E-mail: mhlatshwayo@uj.ac.za

Tel: 011 5597256

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Ms. Duduzile Dlamini

HSSREC Research Office administrator

E-mail: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 4557

Thank you for your contribution to this research study.

Annexure C: Email to participants

Dear Prospective Participant

Student number: 208505717

Research title: Are we there yet? Exploring women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university.

My name is Bongiwe Mayibongwe Ngcobo, and I am a Masters student in the discipline of Curriculum Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, School of Education. I am supervised by Dr. MN Hlatshwayo. My study is based on exploring women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university. I would like to invite you to be a participant in my study.

Please note that for your convenience, I have attached my approved research proposal, group ethics and consent letters for your perusal.

Would you please let me know when you are able to take part in my research study. I can work around your schedule. Please also indicate if you would prefer Zoom/ Microsoft Teams/WhatsApp call for our interview. I will require only 45-60 minutes of your time.

Kindest regards,

Bongiwe Ngcobo

Annexure D: Interview schedule

Background questions

- Tell me a little bit about yourself. Why did you choose to be an academic?
- What is your current discipline? Did you choose it? Why?

Teaching and learning experiences

- Pre-teaching process: What does that look like for you? Do you have contract staff helping you? Tell me more?
- Tell me about your teaching load?
- When you first arrived, were you supported in your teaching?
- What does a typical class look like? Pre covid
- What does your class/teaching look like at the moment with Covid in our midst
- With covid, do you feel like workload is worse or better?
- Do you have a teaching philosophy or approach? If yes, what it is?
- What do you enjoy about teaching?
- What are some of the challenges you experience when teaching?
- Anything you would like to change when it comes to your teaching?

Research experiences (publications)

- Tell me more about your research?
- What is your research on?
- Do you enjoy researching and publishing? Yes, no why?
- Do you have support for your research, or research mentors?

Community engagement experiences

- Do you believe that community engagement is important for you? Yes no, why?
- Are you involved in any community engagement projects? Yes no, why?

Concluding questions

- Is there anything that I felt I could have asked you that I didn't

Annexure E: Turn It In Report

MED Thesis - 2022

ORIGINALITY REPORT

37% SIMILARITY INDEX	29% INTERNET SOURCES	17% PUBLICATIONS	25% STUDENT PAPERS
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PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	11%
2	Patricia Hill Collins, Elaini Cristina Gonzaga da Silva, Emek Ergun, Inger Furseth, Kanisha D. Bond, Jone Martínez-Palacios. "Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory", Contemporary Political Theory Internet Source	4%
3	journals.sagepub.com Internet Source	3%
4	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	2%
5	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	1%
6	Alesha Durfee. "The Use of Structural Intersectionality as a Method to Analyze How the Domestic Violence Civil Protective Order	1%

Annexure F: Language editor certificate



Dr Jabulani Sibanda
Senior Lecturer: English Education
School of Education
Tel: (053) 491-0142
Email: Jabulani.Sibanda@spu.ac.za
Alternate e-mail: jabusbd@gmail.com
Website: www.spu.ac.za
Cell: 0845282087

25 October 2022

RE: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

To whom it may concern

I hereby confirm that I have proof read and edited the following **Dissertation** using Windows 'Tracking' System to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the author(s) to action:

Are we there yet? Exploring women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging at a South African university

Reference

- Author(s): Bongiwe Mayibongwe Ngcobo
- Student Number: 208505717
- Affiliation: University of Kwazulu-Natal

Although the greatest care was taken in the editing of this document, the final responsibility for the product rests with the author(s).

Sincerely

25.10.2022

SIGNATURE