LEAVING HOME

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF AFRICAN WOMEN'S POSTGRADUATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION

I, Sheeren Saloojee, declare that:

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As the candidate's supervisor I agree/do not agree to the submission of this thesis.

Supervisor: Prof. Daisy Pillay

Signed: …………………….

Date: ……………………….

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ACRONYMS

APWS - African postgraduate woman student

HE - Higher Education

UKZN - University of KwaZulu Natal

ABSTRACT

This research presents an understanding of the worlds of African women students studying postgraduate education. In documenting their life stories, I composed a research text that explored the resistances and complicities, identities and differences, changes and shifts that characterised how African women performed their alternate self to the dominant domestic keeper identity. Working with Lona, Prudence, Zandile, and Thabile, I composed stories of their lived educational experiences, offering an interpretation of their pathways to becoming postgraduate students at a South African University.

Channelled by a narrative inquiry approach within the critical feminist paradigm, I used a multiple method approach for the generation of data, including long unstructured interviewsand visual inquiry methods, to respond to key research questions that drove my curiosity. These methods helped the African postgraduate women to articulate what is beneficial to their success and acceptance in the university.

Positioned from African feminist standpoint theory, I zoomed into these marginalised spaces to understand how identities and meanings of the African woman self were opened to different ways of being. Positioning my story alongside theirs, as an insider, enabled me to uncover multiple stories, mine and theirs, of marginalisation, oppression, patriarchy, alienation and cultural surveillance inside and outside their homes.

African women's postgraduate educational experiences offered the spaces to practise and express their love for intellectual, emotional and psychological well-being. Using African feminist standpoint theory and narrative inquiry allowed me to zoom into particular educational spaces to understand African postgraduate women as complex, multiple and agentic beings. In postgraduate educational spaces, marginalised African women worked differently in negotiated and complementary ways to their domestic keeper identity. In these educational spaces, the love for embodied connectedness with self and others in different learning communities opened up new ideas and discourses that enhanced their development as women researchers, contributing to knowledge production that was necessary for doing domestic keeper differently.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

And finally to my Co-researchers, I thank you for sharing your life stories with me and for your friendship. This study would not have been possible had it not been for your courage to put your stories in the public domain. Very few women speak of their postgraduate study as a singular heroic path of achievement. Rather, they speak of messy interconnected lives, of stops and starts, panics and pleasures. Through this study, I hope that telling their stories and experience as an African postgraduate woman student was in a way empowering and enabling.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

I have come to accept again and again that what is most vital to me must be talked, made verbal and shared, even at the danger of having it wounded or misconstrued (Audre Lorde, 2007, p. 40).

This first chapter sets the stage for my thesis by explaining how the topic for the study was conceived. I explore ideas and questions around tensions, contradictions, positions and what it means to be an African woman pursing postgraduate education at a South African university.

1.1 My personal stance

When I was growing up in a South African Indian, Muslim home in KwaZulu-Natal, my mother always stressed that education would take me far in life and that I must pursue it at all cost. Taking her advice, I decided to become a teacher after completing my final year of high school which, in South Africa, is called the National Senior Certificate Examination. Teaching, however, was not my first choice; becoming a fashion designer was my ideal choice. My mum was adamant that she was not going to pay my fees to become a fashion designer as she believed that it would not pay the bills. Instead of becoming a fashion designer, I worked full time as a manageress of a clothing store and studied part time towards a teaching degree, something that my mum was proud of. Even after I got married, it was her constant reminder about the importance of education that allowed me to realise that I could futher pursue higher education studies.

Becoming a teacher in the 1990s was an important moment for me as a married Muslim woman, choosing to be a full-time professional instead of staying at home. Although married, there was still a burning desire to further my studies; however, my professional responsibilities were constantly in tension with my domestic responsibilities. If someone asked me, "What does it mean to be a teacher?" I would respond with these two words: negotiation and tension. With the urge to study towards

an honours degree, I decided to go ahead and register. But challenges at home left me unable to secure a seat at the university of my choice and I was forced to study through distance learning at the University of South Africa (UNISA). As a distance learner studying at UNISA, I realised how passionate I was about studying but realised that as a married woman in a conservative Muslim home, I had to keep this facet of my life invisible. This was done to not disturb the status quo at home - being the domestic keeper. I align this postion of the domestic keeper to Hooks (1991) who talks about females traditionally being the keeper of the house, but in a very strong and strategic position. South African feminist, Amina Mama also aligns with a similar position.

Although I only visited UNISA twice a year, first to enroll and second to write exams, it was during my honours studies that I was exposed to other women who were engaging in postgraduate studies. These women were making tremendous sacrifices against numerous personal challenges to succeed in their studies. Like the women I met, achieving my honours degree provided the impetus to further my studies at the prestigious University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

Studying at UKZN, I moved from distance learning to contact learning. Yet again, I veiled my visibility as a master's student by engaging in a full thesis instead of master's course work. Engaging in a master's full thesis meant that I did not have to attend lectures, which satisfied the home front but caused me a lot of stress. Not doing course work meant that I had to research everything on my own, for example, finding out what a literature review is and how to choose a theory. Amidst all the stress of my personal and professional challenges, meeting other postgraduate women students provided collegiality and comfort to the dilemmas of being a postgraduate student. This helped me to succeed and negotiate my personal challenges.

Doing my master's degree in the company of women with whom I shared similar experiences motivated me to complete my master's at UKZN with a great sense of achievement. Two years later, I found myself back at my supervisor's office expressing my desire to embark on a doctoral study. This was with trepidation, knowing that I might not be able to fill the requirements of this complex intellectual project, being a Muslim woman predominately occupied as a wife, mother, grandmother and teacher.

My Turning Point: Meeting Princess[1]

Princess, an African postgraduate student, called me one evening and asked if we could talk. She was one of the friends I had made during our postgraduate study. Princess was extremely hard working and really knew her stuff. Many academics on campus knew this too, given that her name popped up often in conversation and she frequently presented at conferences. I was just a beginner to postgraduate study at the university and was having difficulties with my studies but she was always willing to help me. During the telephone conversation, I could not help but sense a note of desperation in her tone and asked her if she was OK. She first apologised for what she was about to ask and then went on to say that she was extremely hungry. Then there was silence... an uncomfortable silence. It was 6 p.m. and knowing that she was far away from her home and family, I did not hesitant to take her a cooked meal that I had just prepared. The warm plate of food was consoling for Princess so I decided to talk to her the next day. This is when I got to know a little about Princess's real life as a Namibian woman, and of her home circumstances. I got a glimpse into her life as a postgraduate student on campus and realised that being a postgraduate student did not provide enough to meet her financial commitments to her three children at home and pay for her room on campus. Weeping, she said she needed to manage this and see her studies through to the end.

My encounter with Princess left me passionate to learn more about African postgraduate women's struggles and challenges. I wanted to learn how they coped with these challenges in the context of traditional stereotypes that surround them as women in society - stereotypes that dictate that they should stay at home and look after husband and children instead of becoming educated. Princess's story is a painful reminder of what it means to be an African woman studying and in some instances, far from the comfort of home and children. For women like Princess, choosing to become a postgraduate student at a university in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) highlights the dilemmas and prejudices that African women face daily in the world of academia. The fact that she made the choice to remain on this scholarly journey despite her numerous

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[1] A pseudonym.

challenges provoked in me a certain curiosity about the complexities of womens' experiences of postgraduate studies.

This familiar practice of being a student provoked in me the understanding that this everyday familiar thing is not a familiar everyday thing - it is a site where we question what we have taken as routine. The ordinary everyday routine of being a postgraduate student is put under the spotlight in Princess's story to highlight that this space is a site for unfamiliarity and discomfort. It is for this reason that I cast my gaze on the complexity of experiences of women who choose to disrupt their domestic keeper identity in society. This led me to the focus of my study, which is to explore the lived experiences of African women students engaging in postgraduate education at UKZN.

In my study, when reference is made to *African* women, I draw on support from various sources. Former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki (1996) defined African in his speech "I am an African" as being people born on the continent of Africa. Feminist scholar, Ama Ata Aidoo (1997) stated that Africans belong to the continent of Africa. Theorist Ali Mazrui (2009) defined two categories of African: Africans of the blood and Africans of the soil, where Africans of the blood are characterised by racial and genealogical terms; they are identified with the black race. Africans of the soil, on the other hand, are characterised in geographical terms. They are related with the African continent in nationality and genealogical areas (Mazrui, 2009, p. xi). For my study, I aligned the term African with the definitions of Mbeki and Aidoo. I talk about women who reside inside and outside the borders of South Africa but within the continent of Africa. When I make reference to African postgraduate women students (APWSs) I am in no way excluding myself. As an African woman, I take both the insider and outsider positions to understand women's lived educational experiences of postgraduate studies.

1.2 Taking on the researcher stance: Why study African women's lived experiences of postgraduate education?

Traditionally a woman's place has been in the home. Women leaving home to take up postgraduate studies means they are challenging the stereotypes of what it means to be a postgraduate student and the place of a woman. In the literature, home has been theorised and opened up in many ways and it is significant to note that the notion of *home* has taken up a range of different meanings. Using the metaphor of home, I drew on a few scholars to support the notion of disruption of home.

Edward Said's (1994) conception of home is a place of displacement, dislocation and dislodgement. By this, Said did not mean having to leave one's physical home, but to travel, move past repressions, and stay in a condition of interminable outcast. Chandra Mohanty's (1993) notion of home ought not be an agreeable, steady, acquired, and commonplace space, as it may; but rather, be an inventive, politically charged space where recognition and feelings of warmth and duty lie in shared comprehensive examination of social equity. Hooks (1991, p. 6) in her own words refers to home as, "I want to speak about the importance of homeplace in the midst of oppression and domination, of homeplace as a site of resistance and liberation struggle."

It is evident from the above scholars that a home becomes a site of resistance. I drew on these definitions to help me frame my exploration of African postgraduate women who chose to disrupt the domestic keeper identity. I take up the challenge, just as Hooks (1991) who offered us a challenge, to look at the margin as more than a place of pain and deprivation, to also think of it as a place of resistance: a place to locate home. I was encouraged by those scholars to understand how the disruptions of the domestic keeper identity happened. I want to understand what it means for women to leave home - whether a 10-minute drive as in my case or hours away from another country to pursue postgraduate studies. Disrupting the domestic keeper identity for Princess meant leaving home. Leaving home illuminates the complexity one has to negotiate as stated in the excerpt with my encounter with Princess. The metaphor of home becomes a connecting thread throughout my study. To have chosen the metaphor of home is key to my study of African women. To understand the complexity of

experiences of African women who chose to do postgraduate studies, I elicited the stories of their educational lived experiences at a South African university.

1.3 Contextual rationale

As a result of the rejection of black individuals and women under colonialism and politically sanctioned racial segregation, South Africa has encountered social disparities that were established and recreated in all circles of social life. The higher education framework was no special case. Social, political and monetary segregation and disparities of a class, race, sex, institutional and spatial nature significantly formed and keep on shaping South African higher education. Given this, South Africa's new government comitted itself in 1994 to changing higher education and in addition acquired the politically-sanctioned racially segregated social and financial structures. Post 1994, higher education in South Africa has undergone fundamental changes: there has been a wide array of transformation-oriented initiatives seeking to effect institutional change. "Some of the initiatives were to create a transformed, democratic, non-racial, and non-sexist system of higher education" (Department of Education, DoE, 1997, p. 14) which included the increased and broadened participation and access for women and "equity of access and fair chances of success to all . . . while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities" (DoE, 1997, p. 13).

While some white women attended the universities pre democracy, post democracy saw more black women gaining access to higher education (DoE, 1997). Another important initiative was to change the "social, political and geological scenes of the past" (Harris, 2002, p. 169). This meant focusing on becoming an active member of the global community. As a worldwide phenomenon, the concept of internationalisation had gained momentum, with countries seeking to become active members of the global community. The world over, the concept of a *global university* was being advocated (de Wit, 1998). Post-1994 saw the readmittance of South Africa into the international arena, resulting in the need for both higher education institutions and the country as a whole to reconnect with the rest of the world. This was vital,

especially after years of being excluded from the international community (Sehoole, 2006).

The birth of democracy has witnessed an influx of African international women students, especially from sub-Saharan Africa, earning South Africa the title of top host nation to international students within Africa (McLellan, 2006). The reason for this is that South Africa is seen as the destination of choice for African international students. It is reputed to have one of the most advanced higher education systems on the African continent (Rouhani, 2007). This accolade required that universities within South Africa become the "hub for generating and disseminating knowledge" (UKZN, 2007, p. 4). This endeavour cannot be undertaken on its own. It requires the development of networks with other higher institutions of learning in sub-Saharan Africa and the world (UKZN, 2007, p. 5). The production and dissemination of knowledge will pave the way for knowledge interchange and also foster cultural diversity as students from sub-Saharan Africa enter the global arena. In South African universities, increasing women's access is understood and embraced as a strategy to respond to the challenge of redressing past inequities and to transform the higher education system, which the White Paper (DoE, 1997) demands.

The significant aspects of access to and equity in higher education have been a global concern for a long time (UNESCO, 1998; UNESCO, 2004; Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). Further to this, Dhunpath and Vithal (2012, p. 4) reaffirmed the significance of advanced education explaining concerns about the capacity of universities to contain the rapidly expanding and varying student populace in Europe. As a consequence of the initiative of White Paper 1997 (DoE), we are also seeing a diversifying student population in South Africa (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2012). Such diversity which involved an increase in women cohorts is what brings me to my focus of the need for greater understanding and insights for a deep and sustained understanding of the host institutions.

The National Advisory Commission on Innovation (NACI, 2006) produced a report, which noted that increases were evident among women postgraduate students. The National Department of Education has policy on paper, in the form of the National Plan for Higher Education, which encourages further education of women and other

so-called previously disadvantaged or marginalised groups (Boughey, 2004). As I learned in my encounter with Princess, APWSs' experiences studying in higher education are complex and go beyond the need for academic support and their physical presence on campus. I hope that this study of the voiced lived experiences of APWSs will contribute to a more effective implementation in practice of this policy. Why then, is this study so important in a South African context?

In the South African context, UKZN exemplifies its vision for the entire institution as "The leading university of African scholarship" (Karlsson & Pillay, 2011). On its website, UKZN elaborates on its interpretation of African scholarship (UKZN, 2007). UKZN is also home to many international students. It is a university that promotes internationalisation and postgraduate education studies and opens its doors to students from all over the world. While UKZN opens its doors to all students wanting to pursue postgraduate education, this study raises certain questions. What kind of setting does UKZN offer for African women students from the different African countries coming to study postgraduate education? If the university provides support for the women's academic endeavours, what about their personal and social challenges? Surely this opening of its doors to all women students, means that both the academic and social life designed for the UKZN students will make visible key spaces for them feeling at home. The absence of these spaces for women, mothers who leave their homes, will continue to perpetuate the marginal status of APWSs from countries within Africa's boundaries. Martin (1997, p. 2) has noted "postgraduate training's relative quietness and deceptions with regards to women." Within past research, the disregard and misrepresentation of women and also the domestic duties of family and parenting that society has associated with them, has allowed knowledge to be constructed that is in critical need of being explored from feminist perspectives.

1.4 My Feminist stance: African Feminist Standpoint Theory

According to Letherby (2003, p. 62) "feminist research is feminist theory in action." In this study, an African feminist standpoint provides the theoretical framework through which the African postgraduate experiences can be explored and understood. Feminist standpoint theory was established by feminist philosopher Hartsock (1987)

who described the value of feminist standpoint theory as acknowledging women's experiences from their own perspective. Harding (2004) cited women, especially women of colour and racial minorities, as marginal in that they had been mostly excluded from research. The value of feminist standpoint theory lies in its capacity for acknowledging different, equally valid, perspectives rather than privileging a single perspective over all others.

Feminist standpoint theorists for example, sociologists Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill-Collins, political savants Nancy Hartsock and Alison Jaggar, humanist of science Hilary Rose, and thinker of science Sandra Harding (2004) expanded and reframed the idea of the standpoint of the proletariat to mark out the logical space for a feminist standpoint. Their foremost claim with respect to feminist standpoint theory is that socio-political positions possessed by women and by extension, other groups who lack social and economic privilege can become sites of epistemic privilege. These can be productive starting points for enquiry into questions about not only those who are socially and politically marginalised but also those who by dint of social and political privilege occupy the positions of oppressors. This claim was caught by Harding in this manner: "Beginning off research from womens' lives will create less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and of the whole social order" (1993, p. 56). For this reason, I use African feminist standpoint theory involving a group of four African women through deep engagement to make known their described lived experiences of postgraduate education at a South African university. According to Brooks (1997, p. 5) "women's experience of the discourses of the academy is not a 'unitary' experience and is intersected by factors such as race, ethnicity, class, age and nationality."

To avoid essentialising, I acknowledge along with Letherby (2003, p. 57) that "we do not share one single un-seamed reality." However, as Walker (1999, p. 69) confirmed "women do share experiences across cultures, albeit not in some unitary or essentialist way." Further, either overstating differences or ignoring them "arguably offers neither political nor intellectual support in confronting oppression and may well overlook such oppression in ways which hardly serve women well" (Walker, 1999, p. 69). This supports the idea of using African feminist theory to present a representation of, in this case, the experiences of African women in postgraduate study at a university in South

Africa. Therefore, I am convinced that for this study, allowing women to tell their stories of their lived educational experiences of their postgraduate education will raise awareness and understanding regarding the needs of women studying postgraduate education at a South African university.

1.5 The methodological approach

Exploring the wholeness of an experience through a story is what feminist scholar Hooks (1994) did when she used narratives in her studies. I propose that narrative inquiry based upon feminist ideas and practices, is best suited for my study in representing and exploring experiences. From a research perspective, women's lived experiences using stories is not commonly researched. Furthermore, the literature on women's lived experiences using narrative inquiry as a methodology is still gaining popularity. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011, p. 454) assert that "a relatively dismissed territory in educational research is the field of stories and narrating." Narrative inquiry is based on the participants recalling their own experiences. The researcher then writes a narrative of the experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As both an APWS and researcher, I opened myself to new ways to think about what, how, and why remembering myself and other woman embarking on postgraduate studies differently is critical. What spaces exist for women's lives to be reconstituted differently? As an APWS, I wanted to understand these lives before and during their postgraduate studies at UKZN, using the stories of their lived educational experiences. Fitzmaurice (2013, p, 615) after Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described how "narratives begin with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals." Thus, narratives are appropriate for studying either a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals because they simultaneously give a voice while enabling a reflexive process of identity construction in the sociocultural context of institutions.

Although this methodology has recently gained popularity, this study aims to put under the microscope *lived experiences.* After reading up on the different methodologies used to research experiences, I believe that narrative inquiry will provide a different perspective to African women's lived experiences when they recall their memories and

tell their stories. This could perhaps produce a particular kind of understanding of APWS. It is therefore appropriate that this study will employ narrative inquiry. My co-researchers' reconstructed narratives will be presented in Chapter 4.

Participants as Co-researchers

Boylorn (2008) identifies:

> Participants as co-researchers refers to a participatory method of research that situates participants as joint contributors and investigators to the findings of a research project. This qualitative research approach validates and privileges the experiences of participants, making them experts and therefore co-researchers and collaborators in the process of gathering and interpreting data.

Questioning my own prejudice as the researcher, I became aware of the above words when addressing the participants in my study. I however, very early in my study, debated over referring to the women as my co-researchers as I knew that tending to the imbalance in power relations amongst researcher and participants was more than just changing the dialect. It was only after my supervisor pointed out to me that my writing was fraught with ambiguity and a lack of understanding women's issues because of initial methodological choices I made, that I began to develop a feminist consciousness. Prior to this I struggled with the discourse and my own positionality and old traditional notions of being a researcher were challenged when I adopted the feminist position. Changing wording from participants to co-researchers, developed in me a feminist awareness and had a profound personal transformation on me. Although there was a constant shifting backwards and forwards and slippages at times, I was reminded of my position.

 Hood employed similar practice in her study given that the women were the makers and originators of the information and ought to be recognised in that capacity (Hood, 2008). This likewise involved including the co-researchers at all levels of the research process. Reinharz's (1992, p. 179) remarks were of specific help to me in such manner:

> In participatory or collaborative research, those studied, make the decisions on choices about the study. This model is intended to make social and individual change by adjusting the position relations of individuals engaged with the research…In participatory feminist research, the discrepancy between the researcher(s) and those on whom the research is done vanishes. To achieve an egalitarian relationship, the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual

disclosure, and shared risks. Differences in social status and background give way as shared decision-making and self-disclosure develop.

As a feminist researcher, the above words also made me conscious of the way I should make my co-researchers feel when they share their lived experiences. I took cognisance of the fact that I needed to alter my role as the researcher and relinquish any status to achieve an egalitarian relationship when telling their story. The co-researchers in this study have all struggled to recount just one story for, as Polkinghorne (1988, p. 150), reminded us we are "in centre of our stories and can't make certain how they will end; we are always revising the plot as new occasions are added to our lives." While they might be "subject to inadequacy, individual inclination and specific review" (Butt, Raymond, McCue, & Yamagishi, 1992, p. 91) the stories told in this study are the ones I choose to tell, here and now. I share with Art Bochner (2001) the view that the telling of such narratives is important. The alternative might be enforced silence**.**

Choosing women students from other African countries as my co-researchers

There was a conscious decision to choose only African postgraduate women from other countries like Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Lesotho as my co-researchers for the study. As a South African, I must admit that my relationships with the women from these countries was much more comfortable and free of tension and the baggage of apartheid compared to my relationship with the local black students on campus. When Princess came to me, an Indian woman, to ask for food, the question arose: "Why me, and not the local black people?"

The residues of apartheid have shaped and continue to shape how we experience relationships of race. Women from other countries are marginalised and subjected to xenophobic attacks by some local black people who see them as a threat. As the researcher, I found some sense of comfort in wanting to share the stories of women who came from outside South Africa. This group of women did not experience apartheid as the local black people did. I felt I could take risks about asking them about their lives without the fear of racial prejudice, knowing there was no history or

baggage. My focus was on understanding womens' postgraduate experiences and while race and class intersect, it is gender that I am foregrounding. By telling the stories of UKZN APWS I hope to contribute to an understanding of their visibility and invisibility, their silences and less articulated practices, their desires, interests, relationships, anxieties and feelings.

In wanting to share to the stories of other women, I needed to include my story. I wanted to put my story alongside theirs. I must admit, however, that I started my research taking an outsider position and my story was initially not part of the study. My supervisor questioned the absence of the researcher's voice and I responded by saying that I was not ready or comfortable in disclosing my interests and experiences in public because I struggled with exposing my identity as an Indian Muslim woman. Coming from a conservative family background, I doubted my family members' understanding of neutrality and objectivity if I were to put my story in the public domain. I often shared my experiences with people, but feared disclosing these as part of a scholary reflection would not be as simple. Even with a pseudonym to screen behind, not unmasking my self, I believed would be a troublesome and excruciating process for me.

Later in the study when Zandile, one of the women in my study, made the following remark after being interviewed, "We are all the same, Indian and African…It's so great for us to tell our stories together." It was then that I felt a lack of solidarity with the other women and with feminist scholars like Ruth Behar (1993, p. 273) who noted: "We request disclosures from others, yet we uncover nearly nothing or nothing of ourselves; we make others helpless, yet we ourselves stay immune." Taking the cue from both these women, I decided to do some introspection, which made me realise that if the women themselves were taking risks to make a change by telling their stories in public, I too needed to place my story alongside theirs and become vulnerable too.

By revealing my story in the study my status of outsider was changed to insider. The insider status refuelled my feminist conscience because one of the principles of feminist research is acknowledging that the beliefs of the researcher shape the research (Bartky, 1990). Furthermore, feminist work that empowers individual inclusion might be all the more ethically risky (Stacey, 1988). I likewise learned from perusing

numerous feminist studies, that co-researchers might probably be more comfortable to reveal information about themselves if the relationship seems more personal than professional. I agree with Stacey (1998) who contended that we have to assume accountability for our research and be thoroughly mindful while recognising the impediments of our study.

Taking an insider position gives my study an overwhelming sense of authenticity. I take heed of Humberstone (1997) who suggested that in feminist research, the researcher is encouraged to place herself within the research process. I took up this challenge of exploring African women's lived experiences of postgraduate studies through narrative inquiry in the hope that it will also provide the first steps towards change and transformation in my understanding and framing of women like Princess and the many others who will choose to claim this path.

1.6 Research questions

The questions I was seeking answers to related to the issue of how the methods of research that I selected would contribute to me understanding and representing the lived experiences of African womens' journeys through postgraduate studies. As an African postgraduate student I had questions I wanted to explore regarding my place in the university. Consequently, this study posed the following critical questions:

1. What are the stories of African women students choosing to engage in postgraduate studies at a South African university?
2. What meanings of self inform the African woman postgraduate student identity?
3. What are African women's experiences of postgraduate study at a South African university?

This study is guided by two research paradigms, namely, the interpretive and the critical paradigms. The reason for adopting two research paradigms was due to the complexity and the intricacy of the data that I required to respond to the critical questions. Ina ddition, interpretivist and critical paradigms lean more toward the use

of qualitative approaches and emphasise the existence of multiple realities. I adopted the interpretive stance to respond to my first critical question because this stance allowed me space to understand the women's narratives as seen from the subjective experiences of the APWSs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I used the narrative inquiry methodology to understand how the co-researchers constructed reality because the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the interpretive position are that reality cannot be separated from our knowledge of it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

I adopted the critical position to respond to my second and third critical questions because these questions explored the agency and power relations for the emancipation of self. It was important for me, to take cognisance of the manner in which I presented this study. I believe the way in which I have picked up the women's agencies and conducted and analysed this study, situates it in a critical paradigm. A critical feminist stance holds that women experience the world differently from men given the patriarchal structure of society. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the primacy of the women's perceptions of their experiences.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) confirmed that the critical paradigm adopts a more transactional and subjective epistemology where the investigator and the participants are assumed to be interactively linked. Although the APWSs can act to change their intellectual status and state of well-being, as a researcher within the critical paradigm I am aware of the fact that there are challenges that can counteract their attempts. Reeves and Hedberg (2003) viewed the critical position as a force of liberation that engages an ongoing conflict with powers of oppression with an aim of bringing about educational reform. I now provide a detailed explanation of why these critical questions were constructed for this study.

Research Question 1: What are the stories of African women students choosing to engage in postgraduate studies at a South African university?

To respond to this question my co-researchers were interviewed and further data was elicited through collage inquiry and artefacts retrieval. Feminist methodology has stressed the significance of allowing women's voices and personal experiences into the inquiry process by allowing them to tell their stories from their perspectives.

Historically, quantitative needs assessments of women students have been utilised to measure students' experiences and the literature contains little regarding the students' experiences qualitatively (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002). In order to answer this research question, a feminist methodology, narrative inquiry, argued that the best way to capture this data is through a story.

Research Question 2: What meanings of self inform the African woman postgraduate student identity?

The rationale for this question was to show how meanings of self are negotiated. Before the women embark on postgraduate studies, they create new and different roles and constructions of self, as the narratives in this study suggest. En route such a journey, they reflect the different identities they construct in relation to other areas of life such as family, schooling and working life before their postgraduate studies. All by itself, this can achieve changes in the lives of the women presenting new complexities, better approaches for considering and seeing the world, which can be trying for all concerned. African feminists have laid the foundation in exploring the lives of postgraduate women on the African continent. When we talk about the concept of the identity of postgraduate women, we are referring to the *socialized part of the self* (Rosseel, 2005) interrelated with the roles of mum, housewife, daughter, teacher, student and so forth. In this study, the identity of the postgraduate woman student therefore needs to be understood as that of a scholar and as a human being with many roles and responsibilities.

Research Question 3: What are African women's experiences of postgraduate study at a South African university?

This question looks at the educational experiences of African women studying postgraduate studies at UKZN. Many African women students have different educational experiences when they pursue postgraduate studies, but not all of them are ready to unveil these experiences to the public. Some stories are embarrassing, while others are very personal in that they may cause problems to students if their families or friends know about them. Indeed, talking about personal experiences is a very sensitive issue, thus, there seems to be a significant gap in the available knowledge related to the subjective thick description of educational experiences of African women postgraduate students. To respond to this question, my co-researchers were interviewed. Key concepts particularly the Capabilities Approach (Sen, 1993) and Edward Said's (Notion of the intellectual) informs the write-up of the analysis for this question. These research questions will therefore provide a lens to understand the lived experiences of African women as postgraduate students at a South African university.

1.7 Definition of key concepts

1.7.1 African student

I aligned the term African with definition of our former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki and feminist scholar Ama Ata Aidoo. I talk about women who reside inside and outside the borders of South Africa but within the continent of Africa. When reference is made to APWSs in my study, I am in no way excluding myself.

1.7.2 Postgraduate student

A postgraduate student is one who has procured a degree from an unversity and is seeking studies for a further progressive qualification (Collins English Dictionary, 2000).

1.8 A map of this thesis

Having provided important issues relating to me embarking on this study, I now turn to the organisation of my thesis. The lived experiences of the co-researchers can be understood as a series of ongoing and constant border crossings, literally across national boundaries, but also across racial, cultural and gender lines (Tastsoglou, 2003).

To this point, this introductory chapter has prefaced my research and introduced my research topic, focus and purpose of the study, research questions as well as the methodology and the rationale for my research paradigm. The chapter has provided an explanation of the different theories used and the reasons for the metaphor of 'home'.

The second chapter is concerned with a review of literature in order to ascertain an understanding of women in postgraduate studies, as well as the body of knowledge pertaining to the research questions. Included in this is a succinct survey of

international and local literature. Chapter 2 provides a scaffold from where we proceed to the experiences of the lives of African postgraduate women within the milieu of higher education. Also discussed in detail are the different theoretical frameworks that are used for the analysis of the research questions.

The focus of Chapter 3 is on the methodology and methods proposed to facilitate the creation of the answers to the research questions, the criteria for the selection of the co-researchers, the data generation and analysis of data. I have also detailed my own personal thoughts on this journey with the women whose stories I have shared.

Chapter 4 presents the co-researcher's storied narratives as reconstructed in response to Research Question 1. It is written against two different backdrops. The first space pertains to them in their home countries in relation to their families, communities and schooling. The second space pertains to their learning experiences as APWSs at university in South Africa. In addition, it provides my first layer of analysis for Research Question 1.

In Chapter 5, I present my analysis of the data in storied vignettes in which I describe some of the themes that came up. These themes provide a response to Research Question 2 within the scope of the study. Key concepts of gender, race, culture and class frame the analysis of the data.

In Chapter 6, key concepts of Edward Said's Notion of the intellectual, and Sen's capabilities approach frame the analysis of the data.

Chapter 7, the final chapter, abridges, translates and concludes the study. It provides an overview of the new knowledge produced, demonstrating the ways in which the current study has contributed to the body of knowledge on African women pursuing postgraduate education and previously held beliefs about this group of students.

1.9 Conclusion

I hope that you, the reader, will accompany me in journeying across these different chapters of leaving home. I am exploring the journey of leaving home because, metaphorically, I am understanding the lives of African women who take up postgraduate studies. Walk with me, stage by stage, as I explore what leaving home means. In Chapter 2, I present multiple views of developing the frames for understanding the lived experiences of APWSs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Orientation

Universities, in particular South African universities, are regarded as "spaces where relations of equality, respect for difference, and concerns for contributing to society are nurtured; and where original creative and life enhancing knowledge is produced" (Walker & McLean, 2013, p.16). It then becomes important to understand how African women students experience postgraduate education in a South African university and what opportunities and freedoms, they gain from this education. By making visible lived experiences of African postgraduate women students, the study provides important information on their personal, social and academic experiences that contribute to or hinder their scholarly journey.

I commence the chapter with Section A by exploring the concept of Higher education in terms of access and participation of women and show how this concept is conceptualised in this study. In Section B, I explore wider literature on the transformation of higher education in South Africa which talks to its achievements in South African universities. In Section C, literature on postgraduate education in South Africa is explored. It provides a snap-shot of women's postgraduate identity and their experiences of postgraduate education to understand how they navigate their university lives which influences their postgraduate identity as intellectual scholars. Lastly, in Section D, I will link the debates in the literature review to the frameworks of my choice which is African Feminist standpoint theory, Intersectionality theory, Sens's Capabilities Approach and Said's Notion of the Intellectual. I will explain why these theories are the most suitable to use in this study. The reviewed range of debates that I have engaged with are offered in the following form:

- **Section A: Women's access and participation in Higher education in Africa**

2.2 Section A: Women's access and participation in Higher education in Africa

In this section, I map out the history of the higher education context that speaks to the access and participation of women in higher education in Africa. Traditionally the prevailing essentialised perspective of higher education institutions was seen as high and mighty, frosty, and aggressive in blocking and retaining women students (Ismail, 2011, p. 277). Scholars like Woolf (1938), Hayes (2001), McClintock-Comeaux (2006), Kurtz-Costes, Helmke and Ulku-Steiner (2006) and Haake (2011) share the same conclusions in that they all also note that the higher education context was seen as an organisation for men with the prohibition of women from higher education. Woolf wrote that "men have been educated at universities for 600 years; women for 60 years" (1938, p. 17) and McClintock-Comeaux (2006) Mama (2009) added that males have been made out to have untouchable intellectual knowledge and abilities compared to women. Woolf (1938, p. 19) added that "Women were referred to as the gender of 'fruitful wombs and barren brains'. As recently as the early 20th century, an obstetrics textbook stated that "a woman has a head too small for intellect but just big enough for love" (Hayes, 2001, p. 35). This essentialised perspective was also important for me to consider, especially in universities in Africa where the situation was gravest for African women (Sawyer, 1994; Morley & Lugg, 2009; Mama, 2009).

According to Altbach and Sevaratnan (1989), Mackinnon, Elqvist-Saltzman and Prentice (1998), Lulat (2003), Mama (2003), Mama and Barnes (2007) and Jansen (2017) there was the perspective that universities in Africa are like those of Western-modelled universities that were established to meet the needs of male student and seen as a dangerous environment for women. The university curriculum and knowledge production were heavily biased towards male preferences and power and information flow were modelled on masculine expectations and experiences (Jansen, 2017). This perspective of higher learning institutions in Africa, prepared women psychologically for perfecting domestic and reproductive roles in order to blend them with the Western model. Women were therefore often denied academic opportunities because it was assumed that they would be unable to combine studying with their reproductive responsibilities. This is manifested in the invisibility of women and exclusion of them from accessing and participating in higher education (Jansen, 2017).

According to Hyde (1999), Sen (1999), Nussbaum (2000), UN Women (2014) and Endalcachew (2015) the higher education system in Africa, did however experience a transformation in terms of allowing women access and participation to universities. Transformation in terms of access and participation plays an important role for women's education in fostering economic, social and human development (Nussbaum, 2000 and Endalcachew, 2015). To gain the developmental benefits related to women's education, many countries, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa, have put into practise policies aimed at broadening women's access to and participation in education. This includes affirmative action which has paved the way for more women to access, participate and progress through higher education (UN Women, 2014). Chilisa (2002) and Onsongo (2009) stated that the impact of this transformation in terms of policy change also saw the expanded support of women as a method for them to completely practise their rights. This further affirms that that higher education must be viewed as a road through which women can gain their freedom and liberation.

A study by Hassim (2005) presents a more positive perspective on transformation of higher education in Africa. His study indicates that transformation in Africa has a positive twist to it but it is largely dependent on society acknowledgment of women's participation in advanced education. The study called for a parallel change to be made in that if customary practices that have halted and controlled women's access to university could be addressed, then women will have a better chance in Africa to become active participants in higher education.

Transformation connected to the access and participation of women (Dunne & Sayed, 2002). Quinn (2003) and Kamlongera (2007) also justifies for the remarkable increase in enrolment of women students in universities. However, it has been observed that the rate of women's enrolment in higher education in sub-Saharan Africa is by far the lowest in the world, with strong gender disparities and inequalities (Bloom, Canning, & Chan, 2005; Morley, Leach, & Lugg, 2009).

The rate of low numbers of women enrolled in the universities in Africa is a starting point for understanding the patriarchal cultures still prevailing in universities in Africa (Teferra & Altbach, 2004, Mama, 2003, 2009, Dumont, Martin & Spielvogel, 2007 & Dilip et al., 2011). These scholars indicated that several factors contributed to the low

rate of enrolment of women in African universities. These incorporate hostile and dangerous surroundings for women, few female mentors and role models and financial challenges. Benshoff and Lewis (1992); Moyer, Salovey, and Casey-Cannon (1999); Hayes, Flannery, Brooks, Tisdell, and Hugo (2000); Mbilinyi (2006); and Corder (2011) have also demonstrated that there is an increase in the number of women entering into higher education on account of their desire to finish their instructive interests, yet vast numbers of them drop out for various reasons including competing roles and an absence of family support. Sifuna (2006); Mwiria (2007); and Mama (2009) conclude that although many universities are transforming their policies to address the gender inequality in universities in Africa that were historically regarded as a bastion of male privilege, Morley (2013) maintains that the enrolment of women in universities in Africa is still low.

A closer scan of statistics on the gender disparities in Africa across universities and additionally across disciplines of study around women's participation uncover that many disciplines of study is still male dominated (UNESCO, 2015a). This is despite the fact that the total number of African women in higher education outperforms that of men in countries like Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. Burke et al's (2013) investigation reveals that the under-representation of women in certain disciplines of study is because of societal values, beliefs and cultural practices that halt and control women's participation in disciplines like science and technology.

According to Sifuna (2006); McMahon (2009); Nussbaum (2011); and Gould (2014) education promotes human and social developments by enabling individuals to make choices, advancing equity and social cohesion and in addition creating well-functioning institutions which are democratic in its functioning. However, Nussbaum (2000); Cameron, Dowling, and Worswick (2001); and UNESCO (2015b) claims that if education for women is restricted to a particular discipline of study by the universities, the chances of empowering women to lead lives deserving of human respect, being economically stable and having their status raised in society are slim. Mama (2000, 2003), McCowan (2007), Brennan and Naidoo (2008) and Lynch (2008) and have pointed out that although there has been a transformation in higher education in Africa by allowing more access and participation of African women, it remains a challenge for the women in terms of the discipline of study that they are allowed to

access and participate in, due to male-dominated spaces, both numerically and culturally.

Scholars like Branson, Garlick, Lam and Leibbrandt (2012) alluded to the fact that although transformation is taking place, gender disparities issues are still visible at universities in Africa. Women attending universities in Africa, rarely participate in areas like conferences and workshops where issues pertaining to higher education are discussed. It is because there are no deliberate attempts being made for them to attend. This space remains the domain for males and the opportunities for women developing their capacities through exchange of experiences, networking and exposure is controlled. Where a few women get such opportunities to participate, their ability to share their experiences and networking is also limited by the mere number of men participating. Their voices may be listened to at times, but this would generally be done through a deliberate move for men to be acknowledged as being gender sensitive in response to developments on advocacy on gender disparities issues.

In summary, overall gender disparities are common trends across higher education institutions in Africa. These disparities is most severe in different disciplines of study. Although initiatives have been implemented to remedy the situation, only a few initiates were productive for example, allowing women more access and participation in university, while others have not seen any real change.

2.3 Section B: The transformation of higher education in South Africa: How much have we achieved?

The term 'transformation' is often loosely defined. Sometimes described as a complex, open-ended concept (Venter & Tolmie, 2012, p. 1) and even dismissed as "so vague and indistinct that it is basically an unusable term" (Venter, 2015, p. 175). According to Moultrie and Dorrington, Dunne (2014) the term 'transformation' in South Africa with regard to higher education, is referred to as a comprehensive, deep-rooted process wanting to achieve reconstitution and development of our universities to reflect and promote the vision of a democratic society. This entails an ongoing process of

eradicating all forms of imbalances of the past and creating a higher education sector that includes all South Africans, particularly African women.

Badat's (2010, p. 5) study found that much transformation has been achieved in South African higher education in terms of wanting to achieve reconstitution and development of our universities by addressing the imbalances inherited from the past Apartheid regime. Scholars like Du Preez, Simmonds and Verhoef (2016) believed imbalances in higher education which included race, social, educational inequalities and allowing women equal opportunities, received considerable attention especially as a result of policies including the South African Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997) and the work of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education (DoE, 2008). Other policies on gender equity to redress women's issues, included the Department of Education and the National Plan for Higher Education (2011). These policies spoke to the issues of access and participation of women in higher education and the promotion of women in research in higher education in terms of affirmative action strategies (Chisholm, Motala, & Vally, 2003; Maharasoa, 2001 and Boughey, 2004). These policies have provided some relief for women (Kok & van der Westhuizen, 2003; Keet, 2015).

The different policies implemented to help eradicate the dehumanising practices of the past in South African universities, pointed to a transformation in terms of women empowerment. In practice however, this was not fully happening and we saw this been illuminated in the 'Fallism movement' which included the 'Fees must Fall campaign' and #RapeMustFall campaign of 2015. The 'Fees must Fall campaign' and #RapeMustFall campaign arose not only in response to ongoing dehumanising practices at some universities in South Africa (Griffin, 2015) but also to the slow progress of social transformation, an increasing decline in government funding and the perpetuation of inequality (Bozzoli, 2015; Munusamy, 2015). These protests allowed women students to exercise their agency to think, reflect and act on societal matters that concern them at university.

To exercise one's agency is important, not only to cultivate a healthy democratic environment where women students can articulate their free will, but also to challenge

hegemonic structures that limit the agency of them. One common way in which the protesters have challenged the structure of higher education during the various Fallism' movements is by asserting that "nothing in higher education has changed after Apartheid' (Bozzoli, 2015; Munusamy, 2015).

This above assertion has come about because of the existence of narratives such as patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism that continue to dominate the structure of higher education. It is these narratives that are being challenged during the protests when the naturalisation of male dominance is challenged, when the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum is questioned and when demands are made for free education and safety for women (CHE, 2016). The Fallism Movement is therefore a social movement that highlighted that the policies implemented to address gender inequality, was not working and there are still injustices that are going on. It was here, that women felt it was their time to exercise their agency to foreground their issues (CHE, 2016; Le Grange, 2016; Soudien, 2010).

In summary, after outlining the debates on women's access and transformation in universities in South Africa, it is visible that there is transformation taking place but there are still many issues marring this transformation in reality. A more complete framing of higher education transformation in universities in South Africa should recognise the interconnectivity of race, class, gender, disability and other markers of social difference (CHE, 2016). It further needs to recognise how such differences are constructed and reproduced in determinate relations of power and inequality in South African universities. We must reject essentialist and one-dimensional conceptions of transformation. The critique of the nature and pace of the critical aspects of higher education transformation, such as women student access and participation, curriculum choices and so forth, can hardly be sustained without also simultaneously asking hard questions about the role of the government in shaping the terrain of higher education. Furthermore, the impact of social dynamics in civil society on universities needs to be critiqued (CHE, 2016, p. 283).

2.4 Section C: African women's participation in postgraduate education in South African universities

Postgraduate education in South African universities

In this section I provide an overview of postgraduate education in South African universities. This will be done by addressing the key challenges of access and participation that researchers in South Africa are pointing to in terms of African women in postgraduate education. Women's experiences of postgraduate education will also be discussed.

According to CHE (2016) the production of university postgraduate students is a significant component of higher education institutions in South Africa. Such graduates have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to produce new knowledge. In a globalised world their skills are in high demand, whether they are in Engineering, Technology, Medicine or the Social Sciences and Humanities. It is recognised that South Africa has very low numbers of highly skilled people in most professions, hence the priority given to a host of initiatives by state departments, focused on fast-tracking skills development (CHE, 2016). The greatest shortage is at postgraduate level and recent initiatives such as those by the Department of Science and Technology and the National Research Foundation to accelerate the production of PhDs in the system, target this reality. High international demand for South African graduates, together with the continuing brain drain of professionals, provide an urgent imperative to increase the production of postgraduate students in order for the country to remain competitive and to be able to generate knowledge that is responsive to a wide range of societal needs.

Herman (2011) states that postgraduate education can be believed to open up numerous conceivable possibilities for the development of research in South African universities. A postgraduate degree speaks to the zenith of accomplishment in their educational pursue. Those with master's or doctorates embody hope for continuing discovery, generation of new knowledge, teaching of future generations, and national and global social and economic well-being (Williams, 2005; Golde, 2006). The path taken to

postgraduate education in South Africa usually follows the attainment of an initial undergraduate degree, followed by an honours degree and then master's and doctorate degree.

Who is the African postgraduate woman student?

African women students in postgraduate education is of particular interest in this study. More specifically, African women students in South Africa, within the historically white University (UKZN) context as they continue to be under-researched (Herman, 2011).

Significantly, the University of Kwa Zulu Natal (UKZN) context itself is seen as reflective of the disparities of post-apartheid South Africa. For example, as Mabokela and Mawila (2004) explains, full participation of African women is under-represented particularly at the level of lecturers and scholars at post-graduate level (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004). Parallel to this is that African women continue to be located at the lowest level of social hierarchies as they strive for economic, racial and gender-based equality. African women struggle the most economically in the country (Statistics South Africa, 2011) further indicating that the historical differences instituted by apartheid are still evident (McKay & de la Rey, 2006). The racial suppression of the apartheid regime, in addition to its patriarchal nature, served to place African women in "second class citizenship" (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004, p. 397).

Whilst being marginalised, African women are still faced with pressures of being perceived as representatives of an entire race category (Madsen & Mabokela, 2000) and having to prove their worth. For many there is the additional experience of being subjected to scrutiny of their competence to succeed with regards to participation within the university context (academically, in social relations and otherwise). Ultimately, such pressures and experiences form an integral part of identity construction for women generally and specifically for African women. It was viewed as important to understand identity constructions in light of this. This study therefore explored how African women students navigated postgraduate education and how this education may have shaped their identities. This was achieved with an understanding that identity was not "free-floating" but molded significantly by socio-historic context,

by "social relations of power, by ideology and by historical patterns of privilege" (Hook, 2003, p. 108). UKZN, as an educational social medium, held (and continues to hold) the directive to prepare all students for meaningful participation in the academic, economic, political and social spheres of South African society (Mabokela, 2000). Therefore, it was critical to examine the patterns within this context as well as the institutional cultures which produced and shaped African women postgraduate student's identities (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).

The enduring consequences of South Africa's past at the level of identity were furthermore illuminated through an understanding of the interconnectivity of race category, class, gender and other constructs which is significant in understanding the African woman as a postgraduate student (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). The relevance of exploring notions of identity as espoused by APWS within the South African context, with cognizance of the lingering effects of the patriarchal apartheid regime (Hocoy, 1999) enables one through the method of narrative research and analysis, to create continued awareness of the need for the advocacy around this issue. The consciousness-raising achieved through narratives with similar others stories (Mama, 1995) was thus of significance in this research. Being able to tell their stories of their experiences of their postgraduate journey created a space where African women could have a voice and thus served as a liberating conscientisation tool in this regard.

Key challenges around African women's access and participation in postgraduate education

Studies conducted by Bengesai, Goba and Karlsson (2011) indicates that postgraduate education research in South African higher education institutions since 1994 continues to be shaped by race, gender, institutional specificities, disciplinary field and philosophical approach. These institutional arrangements has controlled and halted women's, particularly African women's access and participation to postgraduate education. As a consequence of this, knowledge production in South Africa still remain the domain of white men. The democratisation of knowledge therefore requires special measures to induct previously excluded social groups such as African women, into the production and dissemination of knowledge. If South Africa is to accelerate greater opportunities for access and participation by African women students from

postgraduate study it must invest significantly more funding in postgraduate education particularly doctoral level study.

Existing legislation like 'The National Development Plan' (NPC, 2011) intended to increase the number of African women postgraduate students enrolling by means of funding initiatives (NRF) that encourage women students to further their study (Magano, 2011). These existing legislation is often not implemented due to inadequate resources, a lack of skills and the know-how to implement policy (CHE, 2017).

Studies conducted in South Africa by Magano (2011; 2013) and Managa (2013) claim that access and participation of African women students within postgraduate education is a great concern as APWS enrolments are low and sorely inadequate in relation to South Africa's economic and social development needs. Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (2013) stipulates that no woman should be forced to drop out of higher education as a result of family responsibilities. Magano's (2013) study on women in postgraduate education in South Africa reports that women's access and participation are influenced negatively by the combination of their studies because of gender disparities that exist.

Within higher education institutions in South Africa, there are many women students who come from different African and international countries with various socioeconomic status, wanting to pursue postgraduate education. However, there are persistent institutional inequalities that reflect a lack of commitment to gender issues and taking women seriously in the intellectual sphere. Nevertheless, the issue of women students' equitable access to postgraduate education is of global concern. The UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 1998 called for equality of access (UNESCO, 1998; Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). However, there should be a global solution to championing equitable access and enhancing success for all women students who have been granted access to higher institutions.

Currently, satisfying the demand for increasing women's access and participation to postgraduate education has ignored their challenges. Higher education institutions are therefore challenged with increasing demand to provide platforms to act on the issues pertinent to postgraduate women student challenges (Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr, &

Goder, 2001). HEIs in South Africa have equally been acting in terms of developing and implementing policies and intervention strategies to support women students through their postgraduate studies so that they are successful in completing their studies. However, these initiatives need to be assessed as to whether they are appropriate in the context of institutional transformation. Some of these interventions are of a personal nature while others are academic.

In summary, this section has reviewed debates on African women in postgraduate education. It highlights that although women are increasingly accessing postgraduate education there are still issues including gender norms and social relations in and outside higher educational institutions. These issues affect their genuine participation and achievement in postgraduate education. It is also important to understand the notion that women are being limited in terms of what their responsibilities are and are still largely located in their domestic sphere. Furthermore, women are not being encouraged to produce knowledge as scholars. It was therefore important for me to consider 'who are the women' engaging in postgraduate education at UKZN. As a researcher, the opportunity to study African women participating in postgraduate education could help to improve the provision of postgraduate programmes by ensuring a focus on the women's students' needs at hand.

In the next section I explore African postgraduate women's experiences to understand their position as knowledge poducers.

African women's experiences of postgraduate education

This section will have as its focus a review of literature pertaining to African women's experiences of postgraduate education in the South African context. I will present some of the challenges and possibilities that women students experience within the higher education sector in the South African context, as suggested by the literature. These challenges will be gauged from research conducted and the challenges or possibilities explained under the following themes:

Theme one: Personal Experiences

- Negotiating family and academic life
- Managing financial challenges

Theme Two: Social Experiences

- Experiencing xenophobic attacks and abuse
  - ➢ *Experiencing Language as a barrier to integration and learning in postgraduate communities.*
  - ➢ *Experiencing Sexual harassment and sexual violence*
  - ➢ *Experiencing University spaces as unsafe environment*

Theme Three: Academic Experiences

- Managing supervisory relationships
- Positive experiences of women postgraduate students

Theme one: Personal Experiences

Negotiating family and academic life

The postgraduate woman student cannot work in isolation. According to Steyn (2009) and Dole (2014) family support in terms of giving consent to the woman to study and financial aid at university level play a significant role in women students' achievements in their studies. Other studies show that when parents, friends and family take a keen interest in the women's studies it allows them to develop a sense of motivation to keep going to complete their degrees (Downing, Kwong, Chan, Lam, & Downing, 2009). Family support, according to Cryer (2006) is a significant factor that contributes to women students' success, but lack of family support because of cultural norms and elders in the community may become a hindrance to their studies, and they may lose motivation and be unable to overcome their challenges. According to Dole (2014) it is important to get family members to buy into your studies as well. Engaging with a degree is demanding work even if you can devote all your time to your books. But how do you combine postgraduate study with other responsibilities?

Family responsibilities are seen as inseparable commitments, which women pursuing postgraduate studies find challenging (Cryer, 2006). As working mums with multiple commitments, women find it difficult to and will not always have the freedom to put their studies first, which can be a distraction from self-actualisation in postgraduate studies (Dole, 2014). Women experience complex emotions when dealing with the pressures of family responsibilities and academic responsibilities, which has an adverse influence on their postgraduate studies (Rowlands, 2010). As indicated by Bhalulesesa (2010) when scholarly institutions recognise the distinctive roles women play, women will have the capacity to adjust their roles and obligations and cope with the challenges of their postgraduate studies.

The incompatible demands of family and being a women student can lead to role overload (Rowlands 2010). Achieving a balance between social roles, relationships and responsibilities and the interface between that and academic expectations of the postgraduate student often require some support with domestic and childcare duties. Women in families are more likely to be called upon and expected to help with extended family crises involving siblings or the care of aging parents. This adds pressure for the women student and the stress of balancing these roles may lead them to dropping out of their studies.

In summary, complex emotions associated with balancing family and scholarly commitments and having to choose between "head" and "heart" are experienced. Managing family and academic relationships can be both places of solace and generators of stress in terms of lost time and opportunities. Conflicted feelings can emerge over the impact of studies on the family and feelings of guilt over prioritising your own needs over children, partners and extended family or friends. These emotional pressures can be overwhelming and erode at one's confidence, resilience and productivity in being a scholar or producer of knowledge. Family responsibilities and role conflict can overload the life of the women postgraduate student (Rowlands, 2010). Only when the women are able to achieve a balance between managing family and academic relationships will the woman postgraduate student be able to succeed in her studies.

Managing finances

Higher education, in particular postgraduate studies, is very expensive worldwide (Soria et.al.2014). According to AAUW (2003), Davies, Osborne, and Williams (2002), Moss (2004), Blanden and Macmillan (2014) the issues of financial problems and lack of access to resources are challenges experienced by women postgraduate students. The findings of Leonard, Becker, and Coate (2005), Brown and Watson (2010) and Magano (2011, 2013) revealed that the issue of a lack of funds is the most common factor for women postgraduate students to get emotionally depressed and drop out of their studies. Finance can be a central obstacle to women wanting to pursue or continue with postgraduate education.

Postgraduate education can result in financial hardship (Brown & Watson, 2010). Finance is one of the factors that have a great impact on student performance in higher education (Considine & Zappala, 2002). Because higher education is very expensive, together with other secondary factors such as food security, accommodation, transport and living expenses, it means that students with no financial support struggle to succeed, which impacts negatively on their performance.

Budlender and Woolard (2006) directed a study in South Africa for the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and agreed that budgetary constraints were the fundamental reasons adding to students' drop-out rates. This hampered them from bearing enrolment costs, educational fees, accommodation costs, dinners, books and travel costs. They additionally revealed this was altogether a greater factor for African and Coloured students than for White or Indian students (Budlender & Woolard, 2006). Watts and Pickering (2000) also pointed out that financial difficulties are visible, particularly in students having difficulty affording registration fees, accommodation, meals, books and transport fees.

Recent studies also highlight that finance is still an issue for many women students in South African universities. This was highlighted during the #FeesMustFall (#FMF) movement initiated in South African universities in October 2015. This movement further placed the sphere of higher education and its purposes at the forefront of both national and international discourse. The announcement by most universities of tuition

fee increases for 2016 triggered a wave of student-led activism amongst the country's universities (Tandwa, 2015). Violence and brutality surrounded these movements as students were attacked with stun grenades and tear gas during the uprisings (Christian, 2015). The protests resulted in a no fee increase for the 2016 academic year. Whilst the moratorium on fee increases signalled a short term victory for the protesters, it failed to address the deeply rooted structural and systematic problems of higher education and its current financial makeup (Kalla, 2015, p. 22). This decision had immense implications for universities who were already confronted with a decline in government subsidies, increases in the cost of infrastructure and utilities and the depreciation of the South African currency.

In summary, finances does play an important factor in determining whether the postgraduate woman student is able to sustain her scholarly journey. The #FeesMustFall (#FMF) movement that arose at some universities in South Africa (Griffin-EL, 2015) was a significant way to show the slow progress of social transformation and an increasing decline in government funding (Bozzoli, 2015; Munusamy, 2015). It additionally foregrounded access to financial resources in higher education as one of the factors that compromise women postgraduate students' success and wellbeing.

Theme Two: Social Experiences

Experiencing xenophobic attacks and abuse

The word xenophobia is developed from the Greek words *xeno*, meaning stranger or foreigner, and *phobia*, meaning fear (Procter, Ilson, & Ayto, 1978; Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015). It signifies "excessive fear or irrational dislike of foreigners or strangers" (p. 160). According to Longman Exam Dictionary (2006) xenophobia is the "strong fear or dislike of people from other countries." The scale of hatred and violence towards students, especially women students, seems to be escalating in South African universities (Harris, 2002; Tella 2018).

The literature has shown that several factors are responsible for the cause of xenophobia at South African universities amongst women students (Danso &

McDonald, 2001; Masenya, 2017). These include; the anxiety of loss of identity and social status, fear of success on the part of the economy, superiority feeling among the indigenous, fear of boundaries in a national crisis and misinformation from the culture (Danso & McDonald, 2001; Masenya, 2017). According to Dassah (2015) xenophobia is perceived as a highly negative perception and practice that discriminate against non-citizen groups based on their foreign origin or nationality.

According to Ki-Zerbo (2005) and Tella (2018) women are the traditional bearers of culture and the issue of identity and belonging becomes a distinctly gendered problem for women students on university. Their sense of identity in the context of a new country and university needs to be restored through their cultural dress, food, music and rituals: losing these elements could mean the loss of one's self, one's history and one's culture. However, holding onto these aspects of one's identity also impedes integration into a new community because it distinguishes them from the rest of the population thereby rendering them more vulnerable to xenophobic abuse.

African women students who study in universities in South Africa are also vulnerable victims of xenophobic attacks (Ramphele, 1999; Tella, 2018) especially of sexual harassment and sexual violence and feeling unsafe in university spaces. These issues are further discussed separately below.

Experiencing Sexual harassment and sexual violence

Xenophobia, sexual harassment and sexual violence are often thought to be separate and distinct. However, in South African universities there is a significant overlap between the criminal dimension of sexual harassment, sexual violence and xenophobia (Botha, Snowball, De Klerk & Radloff, 2013). The challenges faced by African women students have been described as a 'double jeopardy'. As both foreign and female, African women are at a key intersection of two groups that are particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. It is at the intersection of xenophobia and sexual violence that foreign women are left vulnerable, with little or no intervention from significant role players at university and many tend to drop out of their scholarly journey (Tella, 2018).

Sexual harassment on universities can vary from use of suggestive or derogatory language by male professors and or students to actual physical demands for sex. According to studies by Ackard and Neumark-Sztainer (2002) and Klotz (2016) sexual harassment has damaging and lasting aftereffects for women and their studies. As pointed out by Rabinowitz (1990, p. 38) following an incident of sexual harassment, "many women display behavioural, emotional, and physical symptoms." Other studies have pointed out that victims of sexual harassment may face psychological consequences that could include shock, denial, fear, confusion, anxiety, withdrawal, guilt, nervousness and distrust of others (Jewkes, Sen, & Garcia-Moreno, 2002). This unhealthy state of mind results in them dropping out of their studies (Klotz, 2016).

Various studies on sexual harassment and sexual violence on women postgraduate students have been led on the grounds of African universities (Klotz, 2016). Daniels (2002) and Klotz (2016) provided a broad blueprint of these studies and among these institutions were University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, University of Natal: Pietermaritzburg, University of Transkei, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Venda, University of Agriculture of South-West Nigeria, and University of Malawi. As indicated by Daniels (2002) and Klotz (2016) these studies detailed that despite the fact that women oppose sexual harassment, few postgraduate women attempt to solve the issues by legitimate or formal means on the grounds that the university lacked clear strategies on the best way to distinguish what constitutes sexual harassment. The studies further showed that there was an absence of structures on the best way to report instances of sexual harassment at universities. Given that the definition is so broad, it is sometimes difficult to establish exactly what constitutes sexual harassment. Many women who experience sexual harassment and sexual violence choose not to file formal complaints because of the fear of being victimized.

Recent studies indicate that women are still being sexually harassed at South African universities (Le Roux, 2016). Gender-based violence extends far beyond the act of rape itself in that it is shaped and enabled by the long historical injustice of patriarchy (Le Roux, 2016). The #RapeCultureMustFall and #RapeMustFall movement in South African universities emerged to engage with the culture of gender-based violence at universities. Matebeni (2015) contended that rape, as culture, is made so palatable that it is even stripped of its gruesome harm and violence. Violated and wounded women

are constantly afraid and look over their shoulders and have to sometimes attend lectures alongside their male perpetrators. Gender inequalities and the associated gender-based violence that women endure result from the multiple layers of oppression that plague the sphere of academia (Matebeni, 2015).

During the 'Fallism' movements in South Africa, women students of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities and genders were amongst the key role players in participating in, conceptualising and executing these movements (Martin, 2015). However, patriarchal attitudes marred these movements. An exemplar of this was when Nompendulo Mkhatshwa, the Student Representative Council (SRC) president at WITS at that time, issued instructions during these protests and her male counterparts retorted, 'We won't be told by a woman!' and 'feminism must voetsek' (Pilane, 2015). Female student activists further revealed that they were subjected to misogyny and sexual assault by male activists during the #FMF movement (Seale, 2016, p. 9). These student disclosures highlights the urgent need for universities to interrogate gender-based violence and act against it.

The current policy document designed to address contraventions of a sexual nature at the University Of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) is the Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures document (UKZN 2004). This is a detailed policy that includes definitions and forms of sexual harassment, responsibilities of different university stakeholders, and procedures for resolving complaints of sexual harassment. Addressing serious sexual assault such as rape is embedded in this policy. When reported, rape is treated like any other criminal offence. However, only reported incidents can be pursued, and an important issue that also emerges in the international literature is underreporting of sexual violence (Abbey & McAuslan 2004; Gonzales, Schofield & Schmitt 2005). Since this is also the case in South Africa for a multitude of reasons (including unsatisfactory reporting procedures, fear of stigmatisation and secondary victimisation of victims within the justice system), it is crucial that reporting processes be given serious attention.

Language as a medium of instruction plays a vital role in communicative practices in the lecture theatres and outside informal spaces on campus and is crucial to understanding subject matter (Paxton, 2007). However, language is seen as an issue that causes anguish to many African women students. Engelbrecht and Green (2001) proposed that there is a disjuncture between dialect of instruction and mother tongue proficiency. Its effect on learning is far reaching, and this disjuncture is thought to be a key obstruction to learning. This means that if the students are not competent in the language that is the medium of instruction and in the local language, this will have negative impact on their progression and their well-being. The majority of African women students from other African countries do not speak English well, and many South African students like Indian, Coloured and White students cannot communicate well in isiZulu, which is the language of indigenous persons in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The women feel victimised and left out because they cannot communicate in the local African language, which in turn means they attract the unfriendliness of the local students on campus (McLellan, 2009).

When African women students cannot understand English well and more especially cannot communicate in isiZulu on campus, this is not welcomed by the local population (McLellan, 2009). In addition when women students try to communicate in English, it exacerbates the hostility and xenophobic attacks towards them. The isolation and hostility that they feel as a result of being excluded forces them to stop communicating in their own language. They experience this as an affront and a denial of their identity. The inability to speak the local language alienates them from the local population and may also result in stigmatisation. This stigmatisation and the lack of opportunities to speak their indigenous language may result in their culture being stifled (Mnyaka, 2003). The inability to communicate in a local language is also a red flag in the identification of the African women students (Harris, 2002; Moja, 2006) which opens them up to xenophobic attacks. Thus for many African students the ability to speak the local indigenous language is seen as a way of being accepted and integrated into the local South African society (Reitzes, 1997).

African women students are not necessarily overt or blatant about asserting their superiority but this is indirectly shown in their negative comments to students who cannot communicate in the local language. These women students are looked down upon and seen as being inferior. Their failure to communicate in a local language can also result in them being given offensive and belittling names (Mnyaka, 2003). Their inability to speak a local language has earned them the name *amakwerekwere.* This is a derogatory term that purportedly evokes the phonetic sound of foreign African languages (Harris, 2002). As per Matsinhe (2011, p. 295) since "the fall of politically-sanctioned racial segregation system, the apparition of *makwerekwere* has been created and conveyed in South Africa to render Africans from outside the outskirts orderable as the country's bogeymen."

Xenophobic attacks related to language is reserved for black people, especially the women student from within the continent of Africa (Human Rights Watch, 1998). It was also found that most of the negative reactions and behaviour experienced by African women students was directed more towards Africans from outside of South Africa (McLellan, 2009). The reason offered by Mnyaka (2003) for the dislike of black foreigners was that they are viewed as the ones taking away jobs from the locals. White, Indian and Coloured people on the other hand, were not treated with the same contempt because they were viewed as being investors in the country. South African students also do not take kindly to the competition from other African students over limited resources and job opportunities (Ramphele, 1999).

Experiencing university spaces as unsafe environment

As per Rodriguez, Kramer, and Sherrif (2013) feeling safe at university is an imperative part of the women's students general university encounter. Research has been done on students' experiences of being safe and unsafe at university globally. Majority of the research concentrated on social grouping like female, lesbian, gay, androgynous, and transgender students on university and, of recent, sexual harassment of students, crime and security.

As indicated by MacKay and Magwaza (2008) and Tolsi (2007) research in South Africa exploring safe and unsafe spaces at university is exceptionally inadequate.

Accessible studies appears to approach safety from various edges, for example, exploring hazard and protective factors to guarantee aversion of injury on university (Rodriguez, Kramer, & Sherrif, 2013) and safety and security in lobbies of living arrangement, especially concentrating on issues of rape (MacKay & Magwaza, 2008). Scholarship likewise covers issues of coercive sexual practices and gender based violence (Clowes, Shefer, Fouten, Vergnani, & Jacobs, 2009; Hames, 2009; Gordon & Collins, 2013) and in addition exploitation, with high numbers of women students demonstrating that they have either been sexually hassled or mishandled on university (Sass, 2005; Smit & du Plessis, 2011).

Universities in South Africa provide accommodation to many students from abroad and from other African countries who come to pursue their postgraduate scholarship. Many studies have been conducted around the experiences of these students staying on residence. Although there has been an increasing use of *campus climate* surveys, particularly in identifying and understanding the experiences of students, especially women students in residence, this literature is still not sufficient, taking into account the increasing numbers of women who come to South Africa to study postgraduate education (Cryer, 2006) and stay in a residence. Some studies explore women's sense of being part of the community or of belonging, and for the women students who leave their countries to study in South Africa, this contributes to their satisfaction with HEIs (Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008; Nunez, 2009).

The quality of accommodation and its environment are imperative in facilitating postgraduate women students' learning and well-being (Nunez, 2009; Worthington et al., 2008). The significance of residential characteristics in enriching human sense of wellbeing has been well recorded. Rojo-Perez, Fernandez-Majoralas, Rivera, and Rojo-Abuin (2001) and Prieto-Flores, Fernandez-Majoralas, Forjaz, Rojo-Perez, and Martinez-Martin (2011) have demonstrated that residential contentment is a vital indicator of people's wellbeing, where being happy with the specific residence reduces pessimistic feelings, for example, depression and loneliness. Despite official reports that depicted the atmosphere as "positive" and "tolerating" (Vaccaro, 2010, p. 205) the exploration demonstrated disturbing rise of racism and sexism, especially among female students who revealed feeling barred, devalued and even unsafe on campus. Most women felt exclusion in the residences, especially in informal meetings where

they think they have a right to contribute to the discussions but are denied that chance by the local students. South African feminist researchers such as Dosekun (2013), du Toit (2005) and Gqola (2007) have explored women's experiences of living on residences concluding that when African women students feel unwanted and unsafe, they become depressed and are unable to concentrate on their studies compelling them to drop out.

Although studies highlighted gender-based violence in university residences (Tolsi, 2007; MacKay & Magwaza, 2008) they probed a wide range of issues relating to gendered experiences of living on campus which included fear, personal safety, theft, discrimination and aspects of xenophobia. The studies discussed above reiterate an overwhelming prevalence of feeling unsafe in South Africa in general. Women students' well-being in universities remains a worldwide concern. Studies have uncovered that gender had a key part in how students developed their encounters of safe and unsafe spaces on university. It was likewise obvious that social space and scholastic spaces delivered gendered personalities. Discussions around women and xenophobic attacks at universities must not be tackled in isolation. As Landau and Duponchel (2011, p. 22–23) stated:

> We are not going to address xenophobia on campuses until we can open up the discussion of discrimination. In South Africa we are fixated by racial bias. If we're lucky, people recognise discrimination against women. These matter and should be discussed. However, universities - and state institutions generally - have been relatively unwilling to talk about ethnicity, origin, or class as bases on which people are discriminated against every day. Xenophobia can't just be singled out if we are to find a way to build more inclusive campuses.

In summary, central to African postgraduate women's student experiences of university life as emerges in this study is the experiences of fear from being attacked sexually, feeling unsafe and experiencing isolation (Seekings, 2008; Whitehead, 2012). Intersecting in complex ways, these experiences are reportedly key in shaping feelings of being safe or unsafe. Both social-psychological discomfort in spaces where women students feel 'othered' or marginal, and feelings of physical lack of safety, halt their studies (e.g. Pattman, 2007); Bradbury & Kiguwa, 2012). This may speak to the need to reflect more critically on the geographies of campus life and to assess the kinds of spatial resources available for keeping women students protected on campus.

Theme Three: Academic Experiences

Managing supervisory relationships

The student–supervisor relationship within postgraduate research is very important (Conrad & Phillips, 1995; Bailey, 2002; Brearley, 2003). This relationship plays a vital part in the success of the degree process and "can make or break the postgraduate experience" (Bailey 2002, p. 6). Furthermore, it is noted that "supervisors are the first in line to provide assistance, guidance and support" (Bailey, 2002, p. 6), but should the relationship break down, this could result in conflict and tension (Klomparens & Beck, n.d.). However, many studies revealed that supervision impacted negatively on women postgraduate students.

According to a study by Magano (2011) the findings revealed how the personality of the supervisors impacted upon such aspects as feedback to postgraduate students, especially when the language used by the supervisor undermined or discouraged them. However, negative feedback with comments that are well chosen may be erroneously viewed by students as positive and constructive (Kumar & Stracke, 2007). Kumar and Stracke (2007) pointed out that a supervisor-supervisee relationship can promote a power relationship, where the former is "the master" and latter, "the learner." In such a relationship, the authority may be exaggerated and, rather than the postgraduate feeling empowered, he or she feels frustrated and belittled. Kaiser (1997) argued that the viewpoints of the supervisor and supervisee are pervaded by cultural and gender factors in that the students who have been historically oppressed because of their race, gender, class, or sexual orientation, view supervision with a mistrust of those supervising them. Moreover, with cultural background as a challenge in supervisory relationships, some gestures may be misinterpreted. Nelson (1991) stated that when male students have supervision from male supervisors they respect their theoretical proficiency whereas female supervisors were regarded as more caring in nature and more forthcoming in the supervision meetings. In addressing power relations in postgraduate supervision, Manathunga (2007b) argued that instead of eradicating the reservations about power, effective supervision should be described as mentoring, which only serves to mask the important role played by power in supervision pedagogy.

As indicated by Behling, Curtis, and Foster (1988) and Worthington and Stern (1985) same-gender supervision was all the more consistently connected with a collaborative style, which appeared to be identified with the supervisee's levels of cooperation and resistance. This result is steady with past research that has demonstrated that coordinated gender pairs in supervision brought about the best satisfaction with supervision (Worthington & Stern, 1985; Behling, Curtis, & Foster, 1988). In any case, Putney, Worthington and McCullough (1992) found that cross-gender sets brought about expanded self-sufficiency for the supervisee. Consequently, the manners by which matched gender pairings in supervisory connections influence supervision (e.g., better collaboration for same-sex dyads, better self-sufficiency for cross-sex) seem, by all accounts, to be complex, which additionally underpins the requirement for extra research and supervision practices that attend to gender effects in supervision. Generally speaking, as with the past studies, McHale and Carr (1998) additionally prescribe that supervisors' and supervisees' training envelop the impact of gender on supervision.

Research has uncovered that race additionally assumes a part in supervision and the development of the supervisory relationship (Ladany, Brittan-Powell, & Pannu, 1997; Duan & Roehlke, 2001). It is fundamental to remember the way factors (for example race) may amplify or fortify gender differences. Gender is not the sole predictive or compelling element in supervisory connections. Numerous different factors, for example, financial status, clinical experience and culture additionally assume a part (Brown & Landrum-Brown, 1995; Fassinger & Richie, 1997; Ladany et al., 1997; Duan & Roehlke, 2001) and are, in this manner, imperative factors to ponder further.

In the South African setting it is important for supervisors to be aware of how to connect with students as this impacts on performance and progress (Magano, 2011). Besides, departmental atmosphere contributes extraordinarily to student progress for example, peer support has been distinguished as a noteworthy supporter of students's achievement (West, Gokalp, Pena, Fischer, & Gupton, 2011). Strategies, for example, moving from a conventional doctorate model to including coursework, building up graduate schools, and internationalising the doctorate can enhance the maintenance of students (Herman, 2011a). Managa (2013) directed a study in South Africa on how women students experience both scholastic life and work life. She met 46 women;

some had doctoral degrees, while others were still pursuing their studies. Most of the women expressed that one can prevail in doctoral study when one has identified studying as a priority. Additionally, support from the family and the instructive establishment empowered a few women to finish their doctoral studies (Whisker 2008).

In summary, choosing a supervisor wisely can have a determining impact on women students' ultimate success. Support and mentoring should be of such a calibre that women students feel confident about their studies. The supervision culture at university for women students is something to anlayse and transform.

Positive experiences of women studying postgraduate education

While the above discussion in themes one and two points to the negative experiences and the difficulties that were experienced by the women postgraduate students, there are also positive experiences that have been documented (Gouws, 2012). The following positive themes emerged from Forland's (2006) and Dole's (2014) research. Some women postgraduate students valued their active involvement in their learning. They appreciated the individual dialogue with staff and the comprehensive comments and explanations from staff on work submitted. The women students also welcomed the greater freedom enjoyed in the higher education system of their host countries than their home countries. In some instances, independent deliberations and free expression of thought were not common practices in home countries, although this was not universal. These were encouraging features experienced by women students in their host countries that contributed to their learning (Forland, 2006; Dole, 2014).

Brown's (2008) study revealed that despite students experiencing difficulties in language initially, they progressed over time. Despite the obstacles that African postgraduates face in higher education, some women proceed with their studies, propelled by their own objectives (Maher, Ford, & Thompson, 2004; Van Rooyen, Ricks & Morton, 2012). Support from both the family and the departments in which the women are enrolled, is another factor that adds to their completion of studies.

Financial assistance assumes a further part in empowering women to continue against the odds (Maher et al., 2004).

Conclusion

There is a dearth of literature on the experiences of women's postgraduate students in the South African context. The value of this chapter lies in its contribution to the emerging debates in this field in South Africa and the implications for our society and academic institutions. There is still a need for all stakeholders to play an active role in detailed planning for facilitation of women postgraduate learning in order to promote academic success.

Presenting a body of literature of scholars writing on experiences of women postgraduate students in terms managing family and academic roles, experiences of xenophobic attacks and abuse and managing supervisory relationships show how these themes contributed to women student's unhealthy state of mind that contributed to their academic failure. Research is saying that when women students' well-being is not aligned to their academic worth, they cannot perform their roles as intellectuals, one who questions old ways of thinking and producers of knowledge, they drop out of their studies.

My study aims to assess how women's well-being contributes to their academic success. It is important to show that when women students are emotionally and psychologically healthy, their role as intellectuals and knowledge producers as postgraduate students and scholars are enhanced.

2.5 Section D: The Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 Introduction

I begin this chapter by describing my struggles around using theory. As a researcher, I became aware of the need to address my innate resistance to use theory and how I struggled to assimilate theory into my study. My resistance to working with a theory

dates back to when I was completing my master's degree. I could not grasp an understanding of what the theory does for my study and how it was to be used. I wrote honestly, but with very little understanding and joy compared with writing up other chapters. I remember telling my supervisor many times that in international studies, the theory is not emphasised but embedded in the research.

Once I had completed my master's degree, I promised never to deal with a theory again. After several doctoral supervision meetings, my supervisor would ask me, "So what theory are you drawing on? What theoretical constructs are you using?" And my mind would go totally blank. My thoughts would go around in circles, becoming less certain of my ability to do this.

However, I realised there was no safer territory and I could not keep avoiding the theory issue. After a very intense supervision meeting, I decided I had to erase this resistance and begin to explore the different approaches to theory, building on what knowledge it brings, and how I was to show representation. It was the beginning of endless sleepless nights, having to read the raw data over and over to get direction on what theories to read around. This inward journey toward understanding the need for a theory was aligned to a growth spurt that was, at times, painful and always surprising. Finally, I faced my anxieties about theories and discovered that this journey is important and that certainty is a never-ending destination.

For this study, narratives are significant, being illustrated as multiple facets of one's various identities that are simultaneously articulated (as cited in Wetherell, 2008). As this study aims to advocate for a move away from the "taken-for-grantedness of identity" (Wetherell, 2008, p. 76) and concepts of race, gender and other categories as fixed, a more fluid conceptualisation is asserted. Through the accentuation of the complexities of African postgraduate women's articulation of their experiences of this fluidity - whilst simultaneously challenging static notions of their identity is brought to the fore. The exploration of African women experiences of postgraduate education will therefore be taken from the perspective of African Feminist Standpoint Theory, Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory, Sen's Capabilities Approach and Edward Said's Notion of the intellectual.

2.5.2 African Feminist Standpoint Theory

Whilst I adopt an African Feminist Standpoint Theory, I want to first provide an overarching understanding of feminist theory and standpoint theory and argue as to why I want to take an African Feminist Standpoint Theory to be an indispensable tool for exploring African women's experiences in higher education.

According to Hooks (2000); Letherby (2003); Thomas and Davies (2005); Hesse-Biber (2012); Griffin (2015); Hekman (2015); Lorber n.d.; African women's educational experiences of postgraduate study are underrepresented in literature. What is acknowledged, supports a largely negative portrayal of the experience of women in postgraduate education that is written from the perspective of men or from the institution itself, and not from the women themselves (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Acknowledging that experiences and voice of women is less researched in higher education, I argue for a feminist theory to theorise women's experiences starting with their own voice, as adopted and utilised by many feminist theorists, particularly Sandra Harding (1992). Harding argued that exploring experiences, especially experiences of marginalised groups like women will therefore "have a clear political and social commitment to strengthening the truthfulness and objectivity of knowledge claims" and take "the voices and experiences of the silenced and marginalised into account" (Harding, 1992, p. 437). A well-known feminist scholar Hooks (1994, p. 74)) spoke of the importance of using a feminist theory when she said:

> For Black women all around in our country, these are unsafe times. To construct lives of optimal well-being and, most essentially, just to survive, we require a feminist theory and practice that raises awareness as well as offers new and distinctive approaches to think and be, activist strategies that can only be radical as well as progressive because that there is no place in the current structure of colonialist racial male controlled society, where we are genuinely safe, individually or collectively.

From a feminist perspective, I took my cue from the words of Hooks (1994, 2000) when she said that women require a feminist theory to forge new and liberatory ways of knowing, thinking and being to work for change. Therefore, employing a feminist standpoint theory that opposes traditional scientific methods in which a person removes themselves from the knowledge they produce in an attempt to produce

objective knowledge, is a theory that I found most suited for my study. The value of feminist standpoint theory lies in its capacity for acknowledging different, equally valid, perspectives rather than privileging a single perspective over all others (Griffin 2015; Hekman 2015).

I argue that a feminist approach is the most suitable to situate the representations of African postgraduate women students, since it challenges the invisibility and distortion of women's experiences. I argue that for this study it will provide an invaluable basis from which to commence theorising about women's lives. I endorse standpoint theory that only by starting from women's lives can we understand women's heterogeneous experiences their positions and providing for a more objective interpretation of social reality.

Standpoint theory is a feminist theoretical perspective that argues that knowledge stems from social position (Harding, 1991). The perspective denies that traditional science is objective and suggests that research and theory have ignored and marginalised women and feminist ways of thinking. This point of view arose out of the Marxist contention that individuals from a persecuted class have unique access to information that is not accessible to those from an advantaged class. In the 1970s, feminist essayists roused by that Marxist understanding started to analyse how disparities amongst men and women impact knowledge generation. Their work is identified with epistemology, a branch of theory that analyses the nature and beginnings of learning, and stresses that information is dependably socially arranged. In social orders stratified by gender and other different classifications, for example, race and class, one's social position shapes what one can know (Harding, 2004).

American feminist scholar Harding (2004) instituted the term *standpoint theory* to classify epistemologies that emphasise women's knowledge. She contended that it is simple for those at the highest point of social hierarchies to dismiss genuine human relations and the genuine idea of social reality and, in this manner, miss basic inquiries regarding the social and characteristic world in their scholarly interests. Conversely, individuals at the base of social hierarchies have an interesting standpoint that is a better starting point for scholarship. Albeit such individuals are frequently disregarded, their marginalised positions really make it less demanding for them to characterise

essential research questions and clarify social and common problems. Standpoint theory tries to build up a feminist epistemology, or theory of knowledge, that portrays techniques for building effective knowledge from women's experience (Harding, 1986). The focal principle of feminist epistemology is that of the situated knower and, along these lines, of situated information that mirrors the specific points of view of the subject.

Standpoint theory therefore does not only interpret marginal lives but starts from the point to produce knowledge. Adopting a feminist standpoint theory is critical as it is best understood through finding ways for women to articulate their experiences in their own words. Feminist standpoint theory will be discussed next.

Feminist standpoint theory has strong connections to Marxist theory, as was established by feminist philosopher Hartsock (1987). She mentioned the Marxist idea of the proletariat having experiences and views on society that are fundamentally different from those of the elite, and translated this to mean that male and female experiences also differ fundamentally. One of the first to write about feminist standpoint theory was Canadian sociologist, Dorothy E. Smith (1987). She critiqued sociology for the way in which women and women's perspectives have been excluded from the field, explaining how sociology is thought about, and has been based on and built up within the male social universe. She criticised the notion of objectivity, which is used in sociology as a tool to separate "the knower from what he knows" (Smith, 1987, p. 393) and to allow the sociologist an air of transcendence. She suggested that women are not allowed that same air of transcendence, due to the masculine forces shaping sociology. Within the male framework, she argued the female body is considered an insurmountable obstacle whose specific functions and limitations prevent her from seeing objectively, in a way that men supposedly can. In my study, I concur with Smith and therefore, I begin by allowing women to tell their stories of experiences of being postgraduate women students, rather than men's lived experiences of their postgraduate studies because women's experiences have always been ignored or dismissed in the past (Smith, 1987).

However, while theorists Smith (1987); Hartsock (1987, 1998); Hill-Collins (1990); Harding (2004) have argued the benefits and dangers of feminist standpoint theory for

decades, particular critiques have emerged from women of colour. Scholars of colour argue that all women do not share similar standpoints (Hill-Collins, 1990; Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981, 2002). In fact, women of colour experience marginalisation as women and also as people of colour. The intersectionality of racism and sexism makes their lived reality not the same from the angle of their white, female partners. Harding (2004) cited women, especially women of colour and racial minorities, as marginal lives in that they have been mostly excluded from research. Here, I would add African women pursuing postgraduate studies. I argue that African postgraduate women students are often either excluded from becoming researchers or have their lives and experiences reshaped to fit commonly held stereotypes. In the next section I argue for why I employ African feminist standpoint theory.

Firstly, I drew on African feminist standpoint theory as the overarching theoretical framework to make sense of the individual African women's experience as postgraduate students from their own perspective. This theory originated by African women, particularly addresses the conditions and needs of continental African women (Anderson, 2010). By allowing this group of women to relive their experiences by telling them, will make them an expert in this field rather than relying on dominant groups like men or the universities, to represent their experiences. These dominant groups can disadvantage or marginalise women by producing theories of social phenomena that render their experiences invisible (Anderson, 2010).

Secondly, as a researcher, I align myself with African feminist theory with the understanding that emerging knowledge that appeals to the insights of marginalised groups, and begins from the notion that their issues will be more powerful and a more complete version of social reality, is a more valuable position than limiting one's reasoning to the vision and matters of favoured group alone (Anderson, 2010; Harding, 1998). Thinking from the standpoint of marginalised groups is as indicated by Hartsock (1983) more gainful for sober minded reasons than binding one's reasoning to dominant points of view. Thinking from these points of view or standpoints empowers us to imagine and acknowledge all the more simple social relations (Hartsock, 1993; Hartsock; 1997 Anderson, 2010).

Thirdly, in the field of psychology, the voice of African women has been lost in white patriarchal perspectives (Mama, 2009). Feminism in the past has not accounted for the varying forms of prejudice that divide women and thus, has not fully grappled with the experiences of African women (Hooks, 1986). The movement failed to critique white privilege in its one-dimensional focus on patriarchy. On the other hand, Afro-centric paradigms have failed to sufficiently critique male privilege, and here the factor of gender oppression has been largely omitted (Blue, 2001). Masculinity continues to be privileged in the production of knowledge and specifically in academe; moreover the African university as a "deeply subversive symbol of the colonial-era" prizes a certain kind of masculinity (Barnes, 2007, p. 8). The importance of evaluating how gender and race category intersect was thus also raised as crucial for the liberation of African women (Blue, 2001). Hooks (2000) argued that the direction of feminist thought was shifted by a paradigm interlocking gender, race category and class. The importance of evaluating how gender and race category intersect is raised as crucial for the liberation of black women (Blue, 2001).

Through African feminist standpoint, an activist perspective is brought to bear on research that seeks knowledge, organically from the African women themselves as experts of their experience, with consciousness in gaining understanding of this experience and empowerment being a driver for social change (Few, Stephens & Rouse-Arnett, 2003).

Fourthly, seizing an African feminist standpoint in this study, to explore the experiences of women undertaking postgraduate studies which is a priority to my study. Anderson (2010, p. 44) called attention to that "numerous standpoint theorist have changed to concentrating more pointedly on the value of the *experiences* of subordinated individuals." Both women and men experience difficulties and accomplishment amid their postgraduate studies that may affect their choices to remain or drop out. By embracing an African feminist standpoint viewpoint, I propose to make African women's experiences, rather than men's, the point of departure.

Finally, while I am passionate about women's equity, I also concur with Motala (2003, p. 403) who noted that "gender equity should entail meeting women's needs in practice rather than just on paper." I believe that the university's policies alone cannot ensure

that Princess and other women will not go through struggles. Raising consciousness is a way of ensuring that women's basic needs are met and they are given opportunities and freedoms to enable them to take part in the world of academia where they feel valued and have a sense of self-worth. As Motala (2003, p. 403) affirmed gender equality should not be a matter of mere words or "principle". Rights on paper must be translated into practice or real rights. I concur with Brabeck (2000, p. 10) who stated that "good intentions are not enough."

In summary, I am convinced that for this study, allowing African women to tell their stories of their lived experiences of their postgraduate education will raise awareness and understanding of their experiences. While African feminist standpoint theory will help me understand women's experiences from their perspective, it does not allow me to understand more deeply and more specifically how dominant identities of race, class and gender intersect. This is achieved in adjoining the parallel goals of both African feminist standpoint and intersectionality theory. This study will be steered by this mandate. As Hooks (1989) noted "Oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, telling their history" (as cited in Hill-Collins, 1990, p. 34).

Drawing on intersectionality theory will help me understand those dominant identities and how African women negotiate those dominant identities in a South African context. How we think determines what we do and how we do it. Using intersectionality from an African feminist standpoint will allow me to frame the educational experiences of APWSs differently. The standpoint is about the African postgraduate women student's educational experiences, and combining it with intersectionality theory will allow me to see how the dominant identities intersected to shape their educational experiences in complex ways.

2.5.3. Intersectionality Theory

In the context of this study and in line with African feminist standpoint theory, intersectionality theory will be drawn on to understand, in particular, the intersection of dominant identities experienced by African women students in postgraduate

education at UKZN. The theory of Crenshaw (2000) will be applied to the current research to provide a lens through which the analysis of the current study will be viewed. The premise of intersectionality theory is that people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structured power. In other words, people are members of more than one category or social group and can simultaneously experience advantages and disadvantages related to those different social groups.

According to Shin (2014) intersectionality is an analytical theory for studying, comprehending and reacting to how gender intersects with different identities, as well as how these intersections add to the unique experiences of oppression and privilege. The mixing of identities is not additive; instead, the identities interact to produce substantively distinct experiences for women students. Such an understanding for this study may allow an exploration of the connections between multiple identities and personal lived experiences of social actors. Intersectionality likewise recommends that the analysis of complex social situations should not be reduced to independent categories but should include connected roles and situations (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

The study of women's experiences is key to feminist theory (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006). However, women's views and experiences in the past have been ignored (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006). To make the women's stories the centre of the study is to start from allowing African women to tell their stories of experiences which includes them in the conversations they were previously omitted from. However, one of the key debates in feminist thought is around "notions of unitary female experiences" (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006, p. 8). White middle-class experiences have dominated feminist discourse (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006) but women are not a homogenous group. Therefore, traditional feminist theory is restrictive and non-representative of the social differences within the gender group, 'female'.

Consequently, in 1981 black feminist Kimberle Crenshaw introduced feminists to the concept of intersectionality. This was as a reaction to the one dimensionality of feminism at the time (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Crenshaw perceived the constraints of gender as a solitary analytical category (Howard & Renfrow, 2014). Consequently,

she build up on the concept to feature the significance of exploring the different, interfacing, complex social relations that make up a woman. Intersectionality is characterised as "the associations among different dimensions and modalities social relations and subject formations" (Howard & Renfrow, 2014). Intersectionality is often used by researchers to go beyond the individually informed perspective that we each inevitably bring to our scholarship. Butler (2015) points out that the attempt to understand intersectionality is, in fact, an effort to see things from the worldview of others and not simply from our own unique standpoints. The intersectionality perspective is thus an invitation to move beyond one's own research comfort zone (Butler, 2015).

According to Shin (2014) intersectionality reflects the reality of lives. Similarly, Robertson (2013) states that intersectionality mirrors the truth of our lives. The fact of our lives uncover that there is no single identity category that satisfactorily portrays how we react to our social environment or are reacted to by others. It is vital to begin from this perception since concerns about intersectionality from a research point of view has grown directly out of the way in which multiple identities are experienced. Identities are fluid in that they can change over time; at the same time however they are experienced as stable, giving the self a sense of continuity across time and location. Some identity categories, perhaps most notably gender, are found in all historical periods and cultures, though how and to whom the identity category applies can vary as do the social meanings attached to the category (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013).

Distiller and Steyn (2004) address the need of an intersectional perspective of identity, especially in the South African setting. This is as South Africa's past inhibited a society that is segregated along racial lines as well as along class, gender and others. It is imperative to not look at these constructs independently but rather as complicatedly and connected and linked in individuals' positions and identities in South African culture. Berger (1992) through a historical analysis of South Africa, discussed how race category, class and gender have intersected over particular socio-historic periods. Through this he explores the "danger" in the assumption of essence, showing how the constructs of race, class and gender have been unstable, despite being accepted as given. The shifts and changes in these constructs, their meaning, and the resultant segregation of society along them, show how they are indeed not essential or

static. The concept of intersectionality acknowledges the socially constructed nature of these constructs, and is further in agreement with the postmodern move towards understanding identity as multiple and shifting (Davis, 2008).

Therefore, to understand African women's experiences, it is necessary to understand that the gender does not lend itself to a unidimensional experience. It consists of numerous divisions, including race, class, culture, amongst others, that intersect to produce a distinctive experience (Crenshaw, 1991-1992). My research aims to understand African postgraduate women experiences at UKZN. Hence, engagement with this question through an intersectional framework will be the most effective in uncovering information that is representative of their unique experiences and multiple truths (Grabe & Else-Quest, 2012).

Researchers and decision makers working within an intersectionality paradigm share the logic that marginalisation at the individual and institutional level create stratifications that require research approaches and policy solutions that are attuned to the interactions of these realities (Hancock, 2007). Thus, intersectionality is the social inclusion of previously ignored and excluded populations. More recently, it is being constructed in a way that is "applicable to any group of people, advantaged as well as disadvantaged" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 201). An intersectional approach, grounded in lived experiences, provides for the theoretical establishment for the quest of social equity. Unlike conventional ways to understand women's educational experiences, which frequently overlook the complexities of identity information, intersectionality can possibly create more exact and valuable data for making change. In the process, it can help to guarantee that "current endeavors do not unintentionally burden or cause harm to a specific individual or community, or on the other hand be complicit in the strengthening of another" (Rummens, 2004, p. 4). As Collins (1990, p. 29) argued an intersectional analysis is only realised "when abstract thought is joined with concrete action" action that is intended to create coalitions and strategic alliances to alleviate poverty and social exclusion.

As indicated by Guidroz, Kathleen and Berger (2009) intersectionality is a springboard for social equity. It commences from the notion that individual lives are multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structures

of power. Individuals belong to more than one community and concurrently encounter oppression and privilege (e.g. a woman might be a regarded therapeutic expert yet endure aggressive behaviour at home). Intersectionality theory expects to uncover various identities, exposing the different types of discrimination and disadvantage that occur as a consequence of the combination of identities. It plans to address the way in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other systems of discrimination create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women. It takes account of historical, social and political contexts and furthermore perceives unique individual experiences from the combination of multiple identities coming together.

According to Robertson (2013) intersectionality theory which is about studying the intersectionality of race, gender, and class, among other factors, is particularly pertinent to studying women in particular African women who wish to leave home and study postgraduate education (Robertson, 2013). Intersectionality has its roots in the anti-racism movements of the late seventies, fundamentally with respect to Black women and their experience of the crossing points of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation (Grabe & Else-Quest, 2012). By its definition, intersectionality, integrates a huge range of cultural, structural, and social contexts and roles by which people are moulded and with which they identify (Howard & Renfrow, 2014).

Using this theory to understand women's lived experiences will make available all the multifaceted realities that coexist and interact. This theory could show that oppression against women cannot be read through the lens of gender alone (Lipsitz-Bem, 1993) as well as reveal that there were other important positions to consider as shaping the living realities of the African women affected. Such realities (for example, race, ethnicity and culture) can determine what meanings of self they construct for themselves (Lockhart & Danis, 2010). It is for the above reasons that intersectionality theory, inspired by the feminist traditions, demands that inequalities through race, gender, culture, and ethnicity be considered in tandem rather than distinctly. This is on account of these fundamental axes of disparity in social orders are thought to be weaved; they commonly constitute and strengthen each other and, all things considered, cannot be unravelled from each other. Intersectionality theory, therefore, presents a new way of understanding lives of African postgraduate students.

According to Nash (2008) seeing identity as intersectional assists in diverging from the "binary" to more complex views of identity. Nash (2008, p. 89) speaks to how intersectionality is a concept that has allowed for an understanding of the intersection of race category and gender and therefore of the identities that lie within the "overlapping margins of race and gender discourse" acknowledging how these constructs coexist and interact. Intersectionality allows for an acknowledgement of diversity within each of these categories by focusing on identities that "contest" these categorisations. The priority is to give voice to those who have been left out of feminist or antiracist movements, thereby contesting "essentialism and exclusion" (Nash, 2008, p. 89). It is for this reason in this study that Intersectionality is employed so as to give voice to the African women who have been left out.

Nash (2008) however, also challenges the concept of intersectionality; calling for a clearer conceptualising of the construct. The concept seems to be an overarching concept used, with a lacking dissection of what it encompasses. Also challenged is the over-reliance on the black woman subject as the "quintessential intersectional subject" (Nash, 2008, p. 89). However, the concept allows for a multi-faceted account and understanding of the experiences of black women. Furthermore, this approach assists in transcending "static" conceptualisations of identity (Davis, 2008). Feminist theory and anti-racist theory separately did not account for this as they have attended to women and black people respectively (Crenshaw, 1991). There has been a gap left in not locating the experiences and needs of African women. Thus the concept of intersectionality is a call to enlighten injustices of society; to illuminate the experiences of the subjugated.

It is therefore apparent from the survey of literature from the numerous theorists and researchers mentioned that they rely on understanding identity as multiple and continuously in motion, women persistently negotiate and renegotiate their identity as a feature of the different and distinctive social classes to which they belong (Distiller and Steyn, 2004). In addition, and particularly significant to this study is the concept of how particular identities intersect. The mentioned theorist and researchers declare intersectionality has been characterised as "the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of rejection and subordination" (Davis, 2008, p. 67).

In summary ,while combining African feminist standpoint theory and intersectionality theory has allowed me to see how the dominant identities intersect to shape African postgraduate women's educational experiences in complex ways, I needed a lens to understand what contributed to the women's wellbeing to engage with their responsibilities as postgraduate scholars. Been able to negotiate dominate identities begs the question, "how do they cultivate a sense of well-being to enable them to engage and enact their responsibilities as postgraduate scholars who are engaging in knowledge production?" Based on what the debates in the literature review stated, that without well-being, it contributes to women's academic failure. I therefore need a theory to see how then do women cultivate a sense of well-being in order to enact their role to its full capacity as postgraduate scholars. This is achieved in adjoining the parallel goals of African feminist standpoint theory with Capabilities Approach and Notions of the intellectual.

2.5.4 Sen's Capabilities Approach and Edward Said's Notion of the intellectual

I employ Sen's Capabilities Approach combined with Edward Said's Notion of the intellectual to explore African women's experiences of postgraduate study at a South African university. I will talk to the Capabilities Approach in relation to education and for the Capabilities Approach to be an effective analytical framework, for understanding African women's experiences of postgraduate study it is argued here that Edward Said's Notion of the intellectual should be incorporated.

The first reason for combining the above theoretical and conceptual framework as my analytical framing is that borrowing from these fields and adapting them to my study will help see how ones social identities can be constructed and resisted. I am aware that these scholars are not educational theorists. Edward Said is known for his post colonialism writing and Amartha Sen writes from an economist perspective, but drawing from them will help open up how the dominant identities work for women in education.

The women in my study are African women and they are not only from South Africa but also come from outside the borders of South Africa. Edward Said brings in the

whole issue of the home, homelessness, the intellectual and being in a state of exilic. Sen is concerned with individuals' freedoms and opportunities to live life in a way that makes them feel valued. How might this study enhance an understanding of African postgraduate women's experiences marked by migration, exile, travel, border-crossing, dislocation, homelessness, dispossession, dispersion, diaspora, feeling valued and feeling a sense of well-being. This is relevant to African women in my study. Although this is not surprising as the history of colonialism with its economic effects has been marked by travel and movement, by the settler or immigrant experience, this study however is not a contribution to postcolonial literature neither am I writing from an economic perspective. I am writing in education. I therefore draw on them and adapt them to understand the complexities of African postgraduate women experiences in the educational context.

The second reason for combining the theoretical and conceptual framework as my analytical framing is that the Capabilities Approach (Sen, 1993) talked only of the personal, social, and environmental experiences. For this study, the personal and social experiences are taking place within an environment. We cannot understand the personal and social experiences in a deconstructed way because they are happening within a context, in this case, a particular academic setting, the university setting. Adopting the Capabilities Approach is that it is concerned with individuals' freedoms and opportunities to live life in a way that makes them feel valued (Sen, 1993). This approach also acknowledges human diversity and emphasises people as being agents in their lives who make informed decisions on living a life they value, being what they want to be and to reflect on the kind of life they want to live. However, to understand the professional experiences that the Capabilities Approach does not talk about, I therefore incorporated Said's (1994) Notion of the intellectual, which allowed me to read the APWSs' professional experience from an intellectual lens to show how these women develop their scholarly identity in ways that will break stereotypes and disturb the status quo. These women take risks in order to go beyond the easy certainties provided by the academic environment at UKZN. Therefore, an integration of the Capability Approach with Said's (1994) Notion of the intellectual, is used that focuses on APWSs' personal, social and professional experiences in the university environment. This approach is not an outright rejection of Sen's Capabilities Approach but offers a significant revision to it, especially in the domain of education. Education

is viewed as an approach to free marginalised groups which, for this study, are African women studying postgraduate education.

The following sections provides a description of Sen's Capabilities Approach and Edward Said's Notion of the intellectual.

2.5.4.1 Sen's Capabilities Approach

A description of the Capabilities Approach

In this section, I present the Capabilities Approach through Amartya Sen's view. Since my study is the exploration of African women's experiences undertaking postgraduate education, I will talk about the Capabilities Approach in relation to education. This will be trailed by a discussion on the Capabilities Approach and gender, additionally in the context of education, for education is viewed as an approach to liberate marginalised groups which, for this study, are African women studying postgraduate education.

This approach was first initiated by the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen (1992; 1993; 1999) and further developed by Martha Nussbaum. Sen proposed it as an option in contrast to utilitarian and neo-liberal styles to development with the aim to determine wellbeing. Sen contends that these approaches only underlines the economic aspect of life to characterise or define wellbeing, rather than concentrating on people's lives as a whole.

The Capability Approach has a broad disciplinary audience and application, or in Sen's words "[there are a] plurality of purposes for which the capability approach can have relevance" (Sen, 1993, p. 49). When introducing the Capability Approach it is important to begin with two of the key concepts on which the framework is built namely (1) functionings and (2) capabilities (Sen, 1993; Sen, 1999; Alkire & Deneulin, 2009b; Hart, 2009; Nussbaum, 2011). It is well-known that the Capability Approach terminology with its roots in economics and philosophy employs terms that are not always intuitively clear to a multidisciplinary audience. For this reason, specific

examples related to education and higher education have been included in order to ground the concepts in the practical context of an educational setting.

The first key idea to explore is that of functionings which can be characterised as achieved outcomes, the things that an individual can be or to do. At an expansive dimension, functionings incorporates, for instance, being employed, being educated, being satisfactorily nourished and carrying out a job that is significant and satisfying. If we consider education or higher education more specifically, functioning would incorporate, for instance, having the capacity to read, having the capacity to partake in university life, or having the capacity to pass an examination and being granted a degree. Another essential component of the idea of functioning is that it alludes to outcomes that an individual values or has motivation to value i.e. individual choice (agency) and the need for this to be explicitly recognised. An achievement or outcome is certifiably not a functioning in the event that it is not something that is valued by the individual concerned (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009b, p. 32). For instance, a young woman who has recently completed a gardening course at the insistence of her dad, regardless of the fact that she is an energetic and passionate writer, would not really view her gardening qualification as a functioning or an achievement that she has reason to value.

The second key concept, the Notion of capabilities, in-corporates the concept of functionings with opportunity and freedom. Capabilities are the freedom an individual has to enjoy valuable functionings (Sen, 1979; Sen, 1999; Deneulin, Nebel & Sagovsky, 2006; Alkire & Deneulin, 2009). Put very simply, "A functioning is an achievement [outcome], whereas a capability is the ability to achieve [potential]" (Sen, 1985b, p. 48; see also Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 4).

The comparison between capabilities and functionings is important, since understanding outcomes or achievements does not provide adequate information to understand how well somebody is truly doing in terms of their personal well-being. Consider the following fictional case of two African women who both accomplish and achieve their undergraduate degree in commerce (adjusted from Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 4-5). Nandi attended a rural secondary school and walked 10 km from home to school everyday. She lived with grandmother and four siblings and they lived off their grandmother's pension.

The rural school she attended was very under-resourced and there was little commitment from the teachers to deliver quality teaching and learning. Nonetheless, Nandi was dedicated and hard-working, studying until late at night. This paid off as she managed to meet the entrance criteria to university on completion of her Grade 12. At university she found it difficult to produce good results due to the poor quality of teaching she received from her secondary school which did not prepare her well for university.

The other woman Ntombela schooled in an urban area very near home and came from a relatively privileged background. Although she was transported to school, she was late for classes most of the time as she loved to socialise during the school nights. She however made good grades to be accepted at university. At university she found it difficult to concentrate in lectures and spent only the minimum time possible on her studies due to her social commitments and was not performing as she expected. Despite these very different experiences and learning trajectories, both young women obtained a commerce degree.

Although the educational outcome is the same (a commerce degree), the capability sets of Nandi and Ntombela differ tremendously. Considering only the educational outcome thus masks areas of injustice and inequality that should be tackled. Understanding differences in capabilities such as those highlighted in this fictional example are of particular importance in seeking to transform university in a manner that builds a socially just university environment.

"The capability approach requires that we do not simply evaluate functionings [outcomes] but the real freedom or opportunities each student had available to choose and to achieve what she valued. Our evaluation of equality must then take account of freedom in opportunities as much as observed choices. The capability approach, therefore, offers a method to evaluate real educational advantage, and equally to identify disadvantage, marginalisation, and exclusion" (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 5).

Capabilities Approach and education

It has only been in the last few years that many scholars have employed the capability approach for researching education so it is a developing area of theory and practice (Saito, 2003; Walker, 2006; Lanzi, 2007; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007; Hart, 2009; Nussbaum, 2011). One of the above scholars, Hart (2009) explores the spaces and new ways that the Capability Approach potentially opens up for philosophy of education research. She also makes specific reference to understanding higher education from a capabilities point of view noting that:

> When looking at what a person is able to be or do this encompasses (but is not restricted to) looking at what a person has. For example, a young person may be able to gain a university place provided they achieve certain qualifications (having). However, their capability to achieve the functioning of 'doing' going to university is contingent on the individual being able to operate effectively in that environment socially, psychologically and from a practical point of view. For example, an individual may risk being alienated from family and friends if they come from a social milieu in which participating in higher education is not the norm. This in turn may affect whether they take up and maintain their university place. The capability approach draws our attention to the myriad of complex social, personal and environmental factors which affect what a person is able to (and chooses to) do and be" (Hart, 2009, p. 395).

As indicated by Walker and Boni (2013) universities ought to provide education to all people in general as opposed to exclusively for financial gain. Education could likewise be viewed as a route for empowering women (Murphy-Graham, 2012). Nussbaum (2006) sees public funded education as essential for a solid beneficial democracy. Nonetheless, governments still reluctantly extend women's rights (Stromquist, 2006). This suggests much should be done in society to consider women as competent beings whose rights should be perceived on a similar dimension of those of men.

Education reacts to the fundamental need of a person to be educated and, when obtained, it assumes a critical role in the extension of different other abilities (Terzi, 2004). Higher education must concentrate on the student's critical and imaginative capacities. As per Unterhalter, Vaughan and Walker (2007) the Capabilities Approach contends that every individual can build up a critical comprehension or understanding of her valued beings and doings. This interlink works well with education as

education's purpose is to enable students to choose the kind of lives they want for themselves.

As the Human Development Report (2010) states the wealth of the nation is its citizens. It is through education that individuals create curious personalities and not simply grasp direct information without addressing it. Education empowers individuals to trade ideas with respect, notwithstanding when they do not concur with what is being said (Nussbaum, 2006). The world comprises of different countries and one must have the capacity to resolve conflict and difference peacefully regardless of ethnicity, religion and different regions of contention. One needs to find out about different countries and additionally, participate in discussions with individuals who are not quite the same as oneself (Nussbaum, 2006).

According to Dreze and Sen (1999) and Robeyns (2006) education is crucial and valuable for different reasons. In the case of women, the chance to be educated allows them to secure important knowledge that will help them in the battle against oppression. Men, interestingly, could discover that it is also their obligation as guardians to deal with the kids. Above all, being knowledgeable and educated can add to the development of different capacities, for instance, a women has a decision to leave an abusive man since she would have the capacity to take up a job to be financially secured (Nussbaum, 2003).

Capabilities approach and gender

For the Capabilities Approach, social structures and organisations need to be just (Sen, 1999). Social conditions should enable individuals to achieve their desired functionings. In this regard, the Capabilities Approach argues for equal opportunities for individuals to choose lives they have reason to value. For example, women are usually the ones who experience inequality thus, the Capabilities Approach argues for equal opportunities and freedoms to be what and who they want to be. According to Nussbaum (2000) women worldwide lack support for basic functions that make decent human life possible. Unlike men, women are prone to sexual abuse, physical violence and have less chances to be educated than men. Laws in some parts of the world are such that women do not own land and that they take care of the children and the family

without earning any significant income. Women, given the necessary support such as good nutrition, education and family support, are capable of human functions (Nussbaum, 2000). Nussbaum (2004) gives an example of a woman who is empowered to leave an abusive husband after acquiring some form of education. Education has in this case, expanded the capability of liberation. As indicated, Brown and Watson (2010) and Murphy-Graham (2012) mention that some married women end their marriages in pursuit of education. This resonates with gender socialisation and patriarchy being the main factors that shape society.

This means that women could "do gender" differently depending on the situation they find themselves in. For instance, regardless of the freedoms and opportunities that African woman has to acquire postgraduate education, these could be hindered by societal expectations of her. Stromquist (2006) argues that in order to address women's rights, women must have equal participation in the public sphere, taking into account their different needs in the private sphere that might deny them equal opportunities to men, such as childcare and domestic violence.

The Capability Approach - Development as freedom

Indeed Sen's most influential and comprehensive account of the Capability Approach - Development as freedom (Sen, 1999) explicitly draws on and synthesises many of these particular and often quite technical contributions. Sen argues that expanding freedom or capability, is both "the primary end" and "the principal means" of development (Sen, 1999a, p. xii). Freedom is central to development because the effective freedom to live a life one has reason to value is intrinsically valuable and thus the best evaluative dimension of progress. But agency freedom is also the most effective means for development since it not only directly enhances wellbeing, but also enhances people's ability to help themselves and to improve their world (Sen, 1999a, p. 18). This interconnectedness implies that it is not only directly desirable but also often most effective for development to strive to enhance multiple capabilities simultaneously. Thus, the five fundamental capabilities Sen chose to focus on in Development as Freedom – the rather opaquely named political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security. These

were particularly chosen for their empirically supported positive instrumental linkages to each other and to other valuable freedoms (Sen, 1999a, p. 10).

Development according to Sen (1999) requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, historical unfreedoms, institutional unfreedoms as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states. The relation between individual freedom and the achievement of development goes well beyond the constitutive connection, it is what people can positively achieve which is influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives. The institutional arrangements for these opportunities are also influenced by the exercise of people's freedoms, through the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public decisions that impel the progress of these opportunities.

In summary, I have explored Sen's work as far as possible in its own terms. Sen (1999) speaks to unfreedoms and it is established that there are structural unfreedoms as well as there are historical unfreedoms. These notions of unfreedoms and disruptions are important in this study as I explore how African women can open up and disrupt the domestic identity. While these women may be challenging and opening up spaces for unfreedoms they could also in a way be perpetuating their own unfreedoms. Using Sen (1999) as the theorist that is outside of the education field, drawing on his conceptual thinking tools, like 'unfreedom' and 'well being' which are a thinking construct will allow me to explore African women's experiences and how the different forces play out - the institutional, the personal, the social and the environmental. I want to also see how unfreedoms work and how its gets negotiated by different stalkholders, e.g. what role men can or cannot play and what role women can and cannot play in removing the unfreedoms or if there are new forms of dominance or new forms of freedoms. I explore how it plays out in the lives of African postgraduate women's well-being to enact their role to its full capacity as postgraduate scholars. This is achieved in adjoining the parallel goals of Capabilities Approach and Notions of the intellectual.

2.5.4.2 Edward Said's Notion of the Intellectual

When Edward W. Said delivered the Reith Lectures in 1993, a series of annual lectures by contemporary thinkers for the BBC, he formulated his ideas about who an intellectual is and the role of the intellectual in society. According to Encarta Dictionary, *Intellectual* is often used to describe intensive reasoning and deep thinking, particularly in relation to subjects that tend to spark deep discussion, such as literature or philosophy.

However, Said (1994, p. 88) defines intellectuals as being amateurs in the sense that they cannot allow themselves to be bound by their field of specialisation which they present only in a classroom, in a lecture room or in an organisation. He further defines the intellectual as outsider, "amateur" and disturber of the status quo as one who would then be able to speak the truth to power in order to stand up for what is right, by choosing the most accurate 'truth' and communicating it in a way most understandable to a wide enough audience so that it will bring about change for the good of society (Said, 1993).

So as to elucidate how intellectuals could approach doing this, I utilise the two classifications of intellectuals, the *traditional* and *organic*, as portrayed in Antonio Gramsci's work (1971) to consider if the African women in my study can be considered intellectuals by Said's definition, and if they are, which classification of intellectual they aspire to be. The difference between the two is not so much with respect to class or profession but instead on function in society (Gramsci, 1971, p. 3). The *traditional intellectual* comprises of the individuals who are professional intellectuals, such as artists or scientists, but who do not really function to genuinely impact society outside of their particular field (Gramsci, 1971, p. 3). Then again there is the *organic intellectual*, who can emerge from any social class and profession, yet functions to impact the thinking and actions of a certain social class of society (Gramsci, 1971, p. 3).

Said (1993) feels the significance to talk about the issue of being an intellectual in exile as he himself spent his entire life being one. Born a Palestinian Arab who was an

American citizen living in New York, Said did not belong to one place but lived everywhere and anywhere and thus, lived in permanent exile. However, Said understands that his case is a quite a unique one: "I think exile seems to me a more liberated state, but, I have to admit, I am privileged and can afford to experience the pleasures, rather than the burdens, of exile" (Said, 1992,p.55).

When talking about intellectuals in exile, Said in no ways perceived it only in a negative light but reflects on the positives of being in exile. Said comments on the contrasts between the individuals who never experienced exile and the individuals who did:

> Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision give rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that - to borrow a phrase from music - is contrapuntal ... There is a unique pleasure in this sort of apprehension, especially if the exile is conscious of other contrapuntal juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgment and elevate appreciative sympathy. There is also a particular sense of achievement in acting as if one were at home wherever one happens to be (The Mind of Winter 55).

Exile can likewise be an enhancing experience. The individual in a state of exile is exposed to two cultures and when finding out about the new culture, one will notice that the differences is in fact similarities. One additionally needs to make numerous inquiries when contrasting the two cultures and become more sensitive to differences. Said (1993, p. 60) suggests that because "the exile sees things both in terms of what has been left behind and what is actual here and now, there is a double perspective that never sees things in isolation". Without a doubt, one builds up an extraordinary plurality of vision – having the capacity to see one's very own culture through the eyes of the original one and the other way around. Thus being in exile becomes a need of an intellectual that grants certain originality of vision. Being in exile can thus help to develop capacities for criticism and the way of thinking free from debilitating political or cultural circumstances.

So in the end it is the intellectual as a representative figure that matters - someone who visibly represents a standpoint of some kind, and someone who makes articulate representations to his or her public despite all sorts of barriers. My argument is that intellectuals are neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole

being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made cliches, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do. Not just passively unwillingly, but actively willing to say so in public. An intellectual is fundamentally about knowledge and freedom. Yet these acquire meaning not as abstractions - as in the rather banal statement "You must get a good education so that you can enjoy a good life" but as experiences actually lived through. An intellectual is like a shipwrecked person who learns how to live in a certain sense with the land, not on it; not like Robinson Crusoe whose goal is to colonise his little island, but more like Marco Polo, whose sense of the marvellous never fails him, and who is always a traveller, a provisional guest, not a freeloader, conqueror or raider.

In summary, Edward Said says that a professional is someone that goes according to a formula e.g. teachers have degrees which is in keeping with the formula of the department of education policy. According to the Notion of the intellectual, Edward Said says that we must learn to work beyond the formula so as to want to be thinkers. He further states that one must not be happy with that degree but move beyond the degree to be in a state off exilic and be an organic intellectual instead of a traditional intellectual. He states that one must question and always be in a state of discomfort. For the women, searching for spaces for unfreedoms, in this study, drawing from Said's concept of the intellectual, will allow me to see if the women in this study go beyond the formula and status quo of being African women to achieve their freedom. Edward Said's (1994) conception of home is a place of displacement, dislocation and dislodgement. By this, Said did not mean having to leave one's physical home, but to travel, move past repressions, stay in a condition of interminable outcast and discomfort and be in a state of being. Home in this study is very appropriate to the African women. Borrowing from Sens's concepts of wellbeing which is where we need to question why we feeling comfortable and really know what we capable of to achieve freedoms, will allow me to see if home is a place of discomfort for the women and if they are able to achieve a state of exilic where they do not leave the space physically, but emotionally and intellectually. Being in a state of exilic is an emotional and intellectual displacement. Borrowing from Sen and Said will allow me to gauge if the displacement of the women is physical or if they are able to leave the existing state of mind.

2.6 Conclusion

The sections in this chapter reviewed past and current debates on the higher education, its transformation and experiences of postgraduate women in higher education, particularly those of African women. Based on the review of available literature, the chapter has shown that the increased number of women accessing and participating in education particularly postgraduate studies has been successful, at least, in challenging the traditional status of a woman as primarily belonging to the domestic sphere. However, this participation has not transformed the deep-rooted gendered attitudes, perceptions, stereotypes and practices which exist in the larger society, and which continue to be reproduced at educational settings. For instance, whereas universities (and postgraduate studies) thrive and pride themselves in values of equality, this chapter has shown that they bear and reinforce gender inequalities portrayed in the society at large. Nevertheless, we should note that postgraduate studies differ across many countries depending on their institutional contexts, academic standing and broader function within the distinctive communities in which they exist (Collier, 2002).

The literature also showed that African women still face numerous challenges and it is not surprising that they often drop out of the postgraduate studies. Although many universities have tried to create a safer environment for African women students, there are still widespread reports of sexual harassment, of unequal treatment by university supervisors, and of societal pressures that make it difficult for African women to succeed in their postgraduate studies. Despite these challenges, there are reasons for optimism. As more African women become prominent in universities, their presence will be accepted and universities' cultures will have to change. The presence of women at universities across Africa has already led to the production of scholarly knowledge and knowledge production in various fields of study. According to feminist authors, the word, voice, is a powerful metaphor for women's intellectual development (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). In studying African postgraduate women's experience in a South African university, utilising the data generated from the feminist studies as a backdrop, empowered me to make presence their voice and

intensify their involvement, as individuals or groups inside HEIs in South Africa - the exploration of African women's experience and hopes of their postgraduate study journey through the voices of the women themselves.

Using an African feminist standpoint perspective in my study places women's experiences at the heart of the research process in order to understand social reality from their experiences with the aim of improving their situations (Hesse-Biber, 2012). This is because knowledge is socially situated as it is based on the lived experiences and realities of people (Collins, 2000). Thus, a feminist standpoint allows me the researcher to use women's diverse experiences as a lens through which (injustices in) any given society are examined and the legality of male authority is questioned (Brooks, 2007). This framework was of particular relevance to my study for it enabled me to construct knowledge from the social reality of diverse African women through their interpretation and perception of their experiences in and beyond their postgraduate studies. In the process I was able to voice their experiences.

My aim is therefore to use the knowledge derived from this review to form a basis for suggesting interventions that are aimed at transforming postgraduate education at UKZN to be more just and equitable. This follows Collins' (2000) argument that the knowledge obtained from women's lived experiences can be used to highlight the inequities and injustices in society as a whole, and also offer potential solutions to make a society more just. This aligns well with Intersectionality theory, Capabilities Approach and the Notion of the intellectual which formed the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

A feminist perspective allowed me to integrate Intersectionality theory, Capabilities Approach and Notion of the intellectual to explore how gender intersected with other complex inequalities to shape women's wellbeing in becoming the intellectual scholar within and beyond postgraduate education. These frameworks are cardinal to this research as these delineated the viewpoint of identities as complex and multi-faceted. Shown to be significant to African woman, particularly their educational experiences, the concepts allows for an illumination of everyday interactions between people and the contexts within which these occur. This discussion located the symbolic, intangible, resources established through historical patterns. It thus transposes the

focus beyond merely the categories of race, class and gender and beyond just having the opportunity and freedom, but about the lengths to which the African women would go to achieve a sense of well-being that will contribute to their academic success.

African woman expressions of their own sense of self, coupled with an acknowledgement of the context of UKZN, and of the raced and gendered nature of South African society at large, are prioritised. The review has therefore conveyed the intricateness of African women's identities, well-being and intellectual stance in surveying various aspects deemed as integral to understanding the educational experiences of African postgraduate women students studying at UKZN.

The purpose of the next chapter is to unpack the research design and methodology that I adopted to understand the African women's postgraduate experiences.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Ours is a field characterised by extreme diversity and complexity. There is no single way to do narrative research, just as there is no single definition of narrative (Riessman, 2008, p. 155).

3.1 Orientation

In the previous chapter, I offered various views of emerging frames for understanding the lived experiences of African postgraduate women students. In this chapter, I shift the focus to theorising the research design and methodology of my study titled, "Leaving Home": A narrative inquiry of African women's postgraduate educational experiences at a South African university. The purpose of this chapter is to unpack the research design and methodology that I adopted to understand the women's postgraduate experiences. This study is conducted within the interpretive and critical paradigm. Adopting these approaches that would generate a three-dimensional understanding of who the African postgraduate women students are, what meanings of self were negotiated, and how they experienced their life as postgraduate students at university influenced my choice of the research design and the methods for data generation. The reflective nature of narrative inquiry and the three dimensions of temporality, sociality and place Clandinin & Connelly (2000, p. 211) provided space for me as a feminist researcher to make sense of the lived experiences of APWSs.

This chapter is divided into five sections. In Section One, I provide an explanation of the qualitative research approach within which this study is conducted. In Section Two, I provide an argument of why I chose a narrative inquiry as my research approach. In Section Three, I present the research design and I explain what I did during field work, text work and head work (van Maanen, 2011, p. 218). In Section Four, I discuss the the data generation process and the co-researchers. In Section Five I discuss the empowering research methods used which included long unstructured interviewsand visual inquiry such as collage and artefact retrieval. In Section six, I explain how the data generated in this study was analysed.

3.2 Section One: Qualitative research approach

This study is located within a critical paradigm as stated in the opening chapter. After reading many feminist studies, deciding on taking a qualitative approach for this study was made easy because it was imperative that I took heed of what Reinharz (1992) stated about why feminists do not engage in quantitative approach in their research but prefer qualitative research. Firstly, because a feminist approach to qualitative research views the co-researchers as the experts and allows for an in-depth exploration of their complex lived reality. It underlines singular point of view and setting of the implications that individuals give to their experiences. Parker (2005) talked about treating our qualitative research "subjects" as specialists in their own particular lives. They are, along these lines, best ready to convey the data that researchers require, keeping in mind the end goal, to create knowledge (Parker, 2005).

Secondly, as the researcher I am keen on various meanings, encounters, subjectivities, and points of views that the co-researcher conveys to the study. The meaning that they ascribe to their experiences are explored with reference to how those meanings influence the way they comprehend the world. In other words, qualitative research moves the concentration from the lab trial condition to the setting where the phenomenon being considered is human subjectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Parker, 2005).

It is for the above reasons I believe that a quantitative approach, is not appropriate within this research design, as it cannot account for in depth experiences given the qualitative nature of the information required in order to explore the research questions. The aim of qualitative research in this study is not about the numbers of women interviewed, but to be able to provide a thick description of each woman's experience. According to Geertz (1973) a thick description is a detailed description must precede any attempt at generalisation. I have therefore chosen the qualitative research approach with the aim of understanding a situation from the participant's point of view (Maree, 2007) making sure that the most important voices are those of the co-researchers and that the aim of the study is to explore the value of the data, not the quantity.

3.3 Section Two: The research methodology - Why I chose a narrative inquiry as my research approach

For all women students who leave their homes, regardless of whether it is a 10-minute drive to campus or resettling into another country to make the postgraduate journey, it can be extremely daunting as they face multiple and sometimes contradictory roles. This study shares the journey of four women, all of whom are balancing their personal, social and professional roles as African postgraduate women students. As the reader of this study, you will have the opportunity to engage with the voices of these four amazing women as they share their experiences of postgraduate study at a university in South Africa. Ultimately, I was interested in producing the stories of the four African women students undertaking postgraduate studies. The stories of these African women students' experiences are not often made known and can therefore provide a challenge to the stories written earlier either from the perspective of men or from supervisors. This study has been carried out through engaging critically with women's lives as constructed by women's own narratives. This is the reason narrative inquiry was selected for this study.

Narrative inquiry has developed as a research methodology over the last 25 years in educational research (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000). I recognise the importance of my co-researchers experiences and I acknowledge their narratives. My co-researchers told their experiences and it is within this context that I give status to their position. Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett (2008, p. 3) wrote, "It is important to recognise that stories that people tell about their lives are never simply individual, but are told in historically specific times and settings"; it provides a way of producing and analysing stories of experiences and events. Webster and Mertova (2007) stressed that narrating is the most widely recognised type of human communication and that it is utilised to convey the fundamentals of experience that have influenced an individual or a bigger group. Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2008) additionally contended that the story form is the universal manner by which individuals comprehend their experiences - individuals correspond and reinterpret their life experiences through narratives (Riessman, 2002).

Hatchell and Aveling (2008) concurred that stories can be utilised to uncover the ways by which individuals make sense of their experience through narratives, while in the meantime, elucidating common threads of understanding. They offered "an approach to reap insights into this mind boggling connection between people and their specific experience, meanings and action strategies and their social and societal settings" (Stroobants, 2005, p. 49, as refered to in Hatchell & Aveling, 2008). Therefore, using narrative inquiry to explore stories of African women's postgraduate experiences is not only important from a feminist research methodology perspective as outlined in Chapter 1, but is also a useful method for understanding the African women's lived experiences and exploring the potential for providing a "road-map" for those who wish to follow their own postgraduate journeys.

This study did not just explore the experiences of African postgraduate women, however, it took an individual and connecting position towards the world. It placed importance on the women and their status and positions in the public arena, which differed from the emphasis on men. This study is therefore emancipatory in nature since it considers women to be the most proper researchers for managing womens' issues - in light of the fact that no one but women can really comprehend women and their exceptional position. It is foreseen that this exploration - in having the capacity to utilise these stories to feature the scope of difficulties and challenges faced by women and how they have survived, will give a scope of knowledge to empower other women to adapt or successfully complete their postgraduate studies.

Narrative inquiry is apprehensive with critical analyses of the stories we hear, read, and tell on an individual level, and additionally the grander societal narratives entrenched in our social associations (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrartive inquiry as a methodology can be considered as essential to the generation of *unalienated knowledge*, allowing the profundity of women's lived experiences to be better comprehended, and is consistent with the aim and values of this study as discussed in Chapter 1. Offering voice to the women implies that, as a researcher, I esteem the experiences related by my co-researchers, their convictions, perspectives, points of view, and feelings and consider them important (Hatchell & Aveling, 2008). It further implies that I value transformation at an individual level, personal subjectivity, and the researchers' voice. Therefore, research within this framework endeavors to be both

moral and responsible. Feminists seek a methodology that shifts the focus from men's concerns to women's, and that understands how race, class, and gender discourses interact in unique ways to form African postgraduate women's lived experiences (De Vault, 1999). The point is not only to know about women but to reveal what has been suppressed by mainstream research. It seeks to minimise harm and control in the research process, and supports research of value to women (De Vault, 1999).

In this study, the phenomenon under the microscope is the experiences of African postgraduate women students. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that experiences happen narratively. Although there are many methodologies under the qualitative umbrella, I was convinced that for this study, the one method of accessing the wholeness of an experience was through a story. Just as feminist scholars Hooks (2002) and Mama (2001) used narratives in their research, I too agreed that a narrative inquiry based upon feminist ideas and practices was best suited for representing and exploring experiences.

Finally, when one takes the time to listen to stories of such women's experience of postgraduate studies, it can provide an opportunity for us to experience the teller's world in her own words and, maybe, to place ourselves in a similar story or create for us a new or different story and not to have to feel pressurised in following other expectations. In this study, the women were the drivers of their stories, mapping their own journey and deciding what route to follow and, in this way, breaking away from the stereotypical expectations that they were forced to abide by from a young age. Their stories tell of success against odds or with little encouragement of their postgraduate journey. For the many of us who sometimes doubt ourselves in this field, just listening to their accounts allows us to dream that we have the possibility of not only building our own story, but knowing that we might inspire others to create their own stories. The words from the women I worked with talk of challenges, pain, and failures but, above all, talk of the joy of succeeding as African postgraduate women students.

Critiquing Narrative Inquiry

As with any other methodology, narrative inquiry is not without its criticisers. As the researcher, I found it a struggle to find women who wished to be part of my study. When I did find my co-researchers, many of them hesitated at the beginning of the study to tell their life story because they feared being exposed or identified. Consequently, many cancelled interview dates and times. The process of data production, therefore, became very time-consuming because it required rescheduling and many more visits than anticipated. As the researcher, I also found the status of my relationship with the co-researchers was sometimes a limitation. When the relationships between the co-researchers and myself did not complement each other, this then became a limitation to wholesome rich data generation. At the onset of the data generation process, I had to establish and then build and maintain a rapport with my co-researchers so that they could feel free to express and project their voices in order to tell stories they would not otherwise tell anyone else.

The data produced by the women are "more true" than facts and are therefore subjective (Stivers, 1993). To ensure credibility for my study, I had to employ many applications of numerous strategies. Criticism of narrative inquiry is that it unduly focuses on the significance of the person over the social setting (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2000). Liz Stanley affirmed, in any case, that social structures are as recoverable from single social individual as they are from groups (Stivers, 1993).

3.4 Section Three: Research design

This study uses a South African university, UKZN as a context to construct a more nuanced, less universalised exploration of African postgraduate women's lives. I initially began this study with five women. One of the women decided to drop off the study due to mix feelings about putting her personal narrative in the public domain. The remaining four women were from different African states namely, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Nigeria and South Africa. They were interviewed to obtain their educational and narrative accounts to explore their personal, social and academic experiences as African postgraduate women students.

Mentioning the countries they reside in are not intended to fix their identities but to show how their different racial positions will have affected where they lived, their access to schooling, and which universities they were allowed to attend.

The Campus Dimension: Impressions of the university setting

For this narrative study, the motivation behind my comprehension of setting is drawn from conception of setting as a scholarly narrative component (Coulter & Smith, 2009). From this perspective, a setting frames the background for stories of experience, but likewise has significant bearing on those stories (Clandinin, 2006).

Therefore, in this narrative study I conceptualise a university setting as the backdrop against, or the context which the four women's stories of experiences happen. Using a narrative inquiry lens, a university campus as a setting is not merely a backdrop for a student's lived experience, it is an intrinsic and influential part of that experience.

UKZN's slogan as "the leading university of African scholarship" University of KwaZulu-Natal (2005) articulates a vision that denotes a significant departure from the past, racially separated social framework (Karlsson & Pillay, 2011). UKZN is one of the largest universities in sub-Saharan Africa and enjoys a century of academic advancements. UKZN is the third most gainful university in South Africa as far as research outputs. It offers roughly 2,000 scholastic programmes at both undergrad and postgraduate levels. Worldwide, UKZN exists with establishments in 46 nations, which gives a chance to coordinate interface and worldwide scholastic trade that upgrade scholarship and understanding of student experience. As a South African university, UKZN does offer the possibility for taking the lead in advancing African knowledge systems in the African continent. The presence and participation of students, especially women from diverse regions across Africa, is key to this.

UKZN offers students many opportunities but how can these opportunities open up spaces for African women students from the varied and distant African contexts? If this is the desired direction of UKZN, it means that both the academic and social life

designed for its students will make visible key spaces for encouraging understanding of histories, cultures, practices, and education. Anecdotal data obtained from international students attending the Faculty of Education (Edgewood) campus suggest otherwise. The absence of forums and recreational spaces for interaction, engagement and learning continue to perpetuate the outsider and marginal status of students especially women who come from countries within Africa's boundaries. Working as separate and isolated entities does little to change, challenge and question our normalised and essentialised ways of meaning making narrated through our colonised and oppressive past. This made it necessary for the study to ask the African women students about the nature of their lived experiences. This view enables one to observe the UKZN campus as a setting that arranges, influences and is influenced by the characters and story lines engaged with learning in postgraduate networks. Henceforth, UKZN can be considered an academic setting, and one can consider what this educational setting is from the four African womens' stories of experiences.

3.5 Section Four: Data Generation Process

Research studies are often based on copious amounts of data. I have therefore presented the data generation process in a table (Table 1) so it is visually appealing to the reader.

Table 1: Data Generation Table

Research questions	1. What are the stories of African women students choosing to engage in postgraduate studies at a South African university?	2. What meanings of self inform the African woman postgraduate student identity?	3. What are the learning experiences of African women postgraduate students studying in a South African university?

Why is the data being generated?	To gather information on important issues such as representatively: country of origin (within or beyond Africa), marital status, present or former student, schooling experience.	To gain insight to the lived experiences of the women students and show how identities and meaning of self are negotiated and choices are made to give rise to being an African women postgraduate student.	To explore the important issue of how academic life is influenced by personal social and professional experiences.
What is the research strategy?	Individual, oral, long unstructured interview. Visual inquiry: collage will also be used to elicit different kinds of data that will complement the interviews.	Individual, oral, long unstructured interview. Artefacts retrieval.	Individual, oral, long unstructured interview. Visual inquiry: collage will also be used to elicit different kinds of data that will complement the interviews.
Who (or What) will be the sources of the data?	Present & former African postgraduate women students.	Present & former African postgraduate women students	Present & former African postgraduate women students
Where is the data to be generated?	A venue outside the context of campus and convenient to all co-researchers.	Within the context of the campus. Research commons at a university in KZN.	A venue outside the context of campus and convenient to all co-researchers.
How often will data be generated?	Throughout the research process, or when the need arises. The interviews should	Throughout the research process, or when the need arises via e-mail or telephone conversations. There will be discussions around the co-	Throughout the research process, or when the need arises.

	last about 60 minutes The collage will be created and discussed on a separate day.	researchers' artefacts retrieval on a separate day.	
How will the data be generated?	Interviews will be recorded using a tape recorder. Discussions around the collages will also be audio taped.	Discussions around the artefacts will also be audio taped.	Interviews will be recorded using a tape recorder.
Justify this plan for data production	long unstructured interview: Produce a deeper and nuanced understanding of the APWSs' challenges, views, and experiences. Collage inquiry: To go beyond the spoken word of the APWSs to submerged layers of their worlds.	Artefacts retrieval: Retrieving objects from the co-researchers will assist in the facilitation of memory work and stimulate memory recall relating to critical moments in the co-researchers personal, academic, and social life that have shaped their lives as postgraduate women students. The nature of these sources implies that the researcher must engage at a very personal level with the co-researcher to collect data.	long unstructured interview: Produce a deeper and nuanced understanding of the APWSs' challenges, views and experiences.

The Co-Researchers

In this feminist research, all of the women selected had stories to tell about their lived experiences. One of feminism's principles is to focus on women as a "subject" of

research Beasley (1999, p. 117) while at the same time raising issue with the concept of subject, preferring the terms, *participant* or *co-researcher*. Within this research study, I refer to the participants as co-researchers because they are the creators and originators of the knowledge and should be acknowledged as such.

Finding co-researchers wanting to be involved in my study proved extremely difficult. In the beginning, I assumed that it would be straightforward because I had many women friends engaging with postgraduate studies. However, when I made contact with some via e-mail and telephonic calls, I felt very vulnerable as I sensed their reluctance to get involved. I have heard of many other studies, especially those that use survey-type methods, which offer incentives to draw co-researchers. Narrative inquiry avoids such measures. This methodology affords a voice for women to be free to want to talk about their lives when they want to. No tangible incentive could equate for their time to tell their story. However, I kept asking myself the question: what if the women felt that it was too time consuming to be part of a study when they themselves have to complete their own study within a time frame? As Limerick, Burgess-Limerick, and Grace (1996, p. 453) noted the "equilibrium of power in the contact phase of the interviews appeared...to rest with the interviewee."

After a while, my supervisor sensed my disillusionment at having only two women who were interested. She then made contact with a few random postgraduate women students who agreed to meet with me at the coffee shop on campus. It was at this meeting that I introduced myself and spoke about the study. I explained the topic, research process and the anticipated level of involvement. Material from my research proposal was given to them and while we discussed these materials, I stressed that things would not always proceed as planned in the proposal and that they were entitled to withdraw at any time. At the end of our meeting, four women signed the consent form, and a date and place for the interviews to be given by the co-researchers was noted. It raised my hopes!

Using a non-probability sampling plan was, according to Sarantakos (1993) less restrictive. Within the scope of non-probability sampling, I adopted the purposive sampling strategy for the study. This appeared the most suitable strategy, for it permitted me the researcher, to utilise my own particular judgment in distinguishing

the co-researchers. This strategy empowers the researcher to choose unique cases that are particularly enlightening in tending to the research questions, with the cases giving a rich contextualised picture of the educational phenomenon under study (Mertens & McLauglin, 2004).

Criteria for the selection of co-researchers

Given the fact that the purpose of the study was to explore African postgraduate women experiences at UKZN, the co-researchers chosen were all postgraduate students. The co-researchers who wished to participate in my study had to meet the following criteria:

- They had to be present or former postgraduate students.
- They had reside in one of the African states.
- They had to be studying or have studied at this university.

The rationale behind selecting women students from different countries within Africa was to examine the differential impact this would have on the women's postgraduate experiences and their perceptions of the postgraduate scholarship. My selection of these particular co-researchers was deliberate for this in-depth qualitative research. But most importantly, they wanted to tell me their stories and wanted to be heard.

Diversity among the co-researchers

The acknowledgment of diversities among women (e.g. age, economic status, social position or status, well-being status, race, ethnicity, political and religious influence) is the generally accepted attributes or criteria of feminist research (Reinharz, 1992). A significant part of the standard research in all disciplines (including nursing) has been incognizant in regards to such diversity among women. I concur with Anderson (1985) that sound feminist analysis must involve a comprehension of race, class, and gender, and different axes of disparity given that researchers look for both the shared traits and the distinctions over women's experiences. Be that as it may, narrative researchers contrast in the degree to which they incorporate and consider the bigger social setting in which stories are rooted (Riessman, 1993). At one end of the spectrum, conversation

analysts limit their focus to what participants say and do in a particular interaction. We situate ourselves more closely with other feminist narrative analysts, such as the Personal Narratives Group (1989) in making a conscious effort to consider how race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, immigration status and other contexts of diversity and inequality surface in research participants' multilayered daily life experiences, their telling of their stories, and the multiple contexts within which these stories may be represented and interpreted.

For my study, the women telling their story would not only sensitise others to the particular struggles they face, but help them to appreciate there are many other women on a similar journey. To set the scene for the reader, a short description of each co-researcher's biography will now be given. Each of these profiles will be brief. Each of the co-researchers has been given a pseudonym in order to safeguard her anonymity.

Thabile

At the time that I interviewed Thabile, she was a month away from submitting her master's thesis for examination. She was in her late 20s, of Sotho background, and enrolled at UKZN for a Bachelor of Science degree. After excelling in her undergraduate degree she decided to pursue her master's. She had a romantic idea of what studying might be like in South Africa at UKZN. Thabile's story is one of a woman who, although she had deferred her studies, persevered and conquered the challenges to reach her goal. Thabile's narratives speak at length about the challenges she experienced with the lecturers and curriculum offered at UKZN, and indicate that she will never return to UKZN to pursue her doctorate.

Prudence

Prudence was the only woman I interviewed who had completed her doctorate. Prudence is from Zimbabwe. She completed her master's degree in her country. She commenced with her doctorate after the loss of her husband. This tragic episode, together with money issues and leaving her family including her young children, made her postgraduate journey away from home immensely difficult. Prudence's narrative

fixated on the need to push ahead and conclude her doctorate and discussed a solid sense of struggle with the power differential in her supervisory relationship.

Lona

Lona lives in South Africa, the same country she studies in. Lona was on the brink of giving up her doctoral studies. She related an increased burden on the time available for her research because she had met with resistance from her husband who asked her to give it up because it interfered with their family life. Her narrative spoke of juggling the care responsibilities of being an educator in the day, focusing on her family, and trying to study at night when all members were asleep. This spoke of the negotiation and renegotiation that took place with both her study and family responsibilities. However, although her need to have the support of her family altered her progress during her doctorate, she still wanted to conutine and complete her degree.

Zandile

Zandile was born in Nigeria, but was living with her family and studying in South Africa. Her narrative speaks of the good support system she has from her husband who persuaded her to enroll for her postgraduate degree and supported her financially. She joined UKZN and believed it would become her umbrella of hope, shielding and accommodating her as a foreigner but later she states how her world was turned topsy-turvy. Another key factor in her narrative was her resilient sense of agency in which she negotiated her study load with her responsibilities at home. It was important for her to keep her family happy first. She also reported feeling that the master's (course work) was taking too long and she switched to full time dissertation, which she completed in a year. She felt despondent and demotivated when she was unable to graduate. Nevertheless, with all the hiccups, she was ready to fly and develop her scholarly identity.

Relationship with the co-researchers

Matsumoto (1996) noted that women as researchers, create their own account of their past and personal experiences into their position as a researcher and the research

process. The feminist researcher may adopt the status of being both an insider and (or) an outsider to the contexts and subject matter she is exploring. When the researcher is an insider to the context, she would have a firmer comprehension of the dynamic forces and play of the societal relationships that can enlighten the situation under the microscope. This then helps to overcome the issue of inequality as the co–researchers will then feel more at ease in sharing their experiences with someone who is within the context, and familiar with the context (Matsumoto, 1996).

I have therefore taken on the role as an insider, researcher and the researched in this study. As an African woman postgraduate student at UKZN and living in South Africa, I too recognised some of the positives and conflicts associated with belonging to the postgraduate community at UKZN. Being an insider and the researched was a significant part for the study because it allowed for my lived experiences to be a collaborative constituent of the research.

On account of this, I had to be cautious of various positional powers at work. As a postgraduate student, I had to be cognisant of leading the study in "my own particular backyard" (Banks, 1998, p. 8). As a women and a postgraduate student myself, I had to be mindful of the conceivable gendered inclinations that crawled their way into the study. Having faced many challenges and dilemmas whilst undertaking this study, I was constantly confronting my feminist ideologies. Whilst writing up my study, I did not realise that the manner in which I wrote sometimes contradicted the position of women. I would often use the terms data collection, participant, and investigate to name just a few, until I was challenged by my female supervisor to rethink my choice of words when describing my co-researchers and the research. This was because those words dictate a hierarchical relationship between researcher and co-researcher when, in fact, I was to be sensitive to such issues.

Along these lines, amid the exploration travel, I wound up aware of Foucault's (1980, p. 97) words that "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere." Hence the unequal power connection between the co-researchers and myself was rebuilt to approve the point of view of the researchers. The preface was to evacuate the various leveled connection between me, the researcher

and the co-researchers. Changing research wording from one of chain of command to one of equality was one of the initial steps I took.

In this study I refer to the women as co-researchers and not as participants. The word data collection was changed to data generation. I was aware that addressing the imbalance in power relations between researcher and co-researcher was more than simply changing the dialectal. It also entailed involving the co-researchers at all levels of the process.

3.6 Section Five: Empowering methods for data generation

Empowering methods for data generation that I use in my study include long unstructured interviewsand visual inquiry (collage and artefacts retrieval). I give a brief account of why I chose to use the above empowering methods, and each is discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Numerous feminist methodologies underline non-hierarchical interactions, understanding, and mutal learning, where close consideration is paid to how the research inquiries or questions and techniques for generating data might be entrenched in unequal power relations between the researcher and research members (Moss, 2002; Bondi, 2003). According to feminist researchers Cook and Fonow (1990) methods that allow for women's realities from their own perspective to be the focus, value women's experiences and this is an important feminist concern (Harding, 1992). The kinds of data generated in narrative research are wide ranging in nature.

Therefore, within this narrative representation of the study I was mindful that although my priority was to accord voice to the co-researchers, the methods I employed for the generation of data, relevant to a qualitative approach to allow for voices and differences in the research process, had to be in no way harmful. It was therefore important that the multiple methods I employed such as long unstructured interviewsand visual inquiry (collage and artefacts retrieval), did not cause any harm or discredit the women as individuals or as a gender group, and that their knowledge was furthered by these multiple methods.

Utilising these numerous methods enabled the co-researchers to discuss their experiences in a way that valued its complexity and diversity, and the uniqueness of every women's life history. This was in keeping with Creswell's comments that qualitative studies enable participants to voice the significance of their lived experiences and qualitative researchers "take seriously what participants say: they leave the way open to hear what they did not expect" (Creswell, 2003, p. 211). Therefore, aside from wanting to acquire the valuable data and making sure that the co-researchers were not harmed or discredited, these multiple methods provided the women with the chance to speak about their story and give a voice to their experiences, which itself can be valuable.

Setting the scene for the data generation process involved the reawakening of our past experiences and development of a deep, confidential bond based on respect, valuing confidentiality and being empathic. The long unstructured interviewswere the main research method that I relied on to generate the data. Collage inquiry and artefacts retrieval were alternative methods that complemented the data generated during the interviews.

3.6.1 Long unstructured interviews

Preparing for the long unstructured interviews

I started the data generation with the long unstructured interviews, which is a typical strategy in research that is utilised to generate subjective information by making a circumstance (the meeting) that permits the co-researchers, the time and degree to talk about their considerations and opinions regarding the matter of inquiry. Interviews offer a setting for women to share their lived experiences from their viewpoints. In her section on using interviews in feminist research, De Vault (2004, p. 228) argued that "what it means to talk or listen 'as a woman' is based on the concept of women's standpoint" and that interviews can uncover women's "multiple versions of both oppression and resistance."

Using long unstructured interviews as a data generating tool, allowed me through probing, to get a glimpse of the lived experiences of the co-researchers. The parts that were related to me depended on what the co-researchers remembered and what they wanted others to know (Atkinson, 1998). Feminist researchers suggest an approach characterised by reciprocity, friendship, collaboration, a sense of connectedness, trust, empathy, openness, honesty and non-hierarchical research relationships (Finch, 1984; Maynard & Purvis, 1994; De Vault, 1999). These researchers took a stance that foregrounds ethical issues around power and control, listening, motivation and involvement before, during and after the interviews. In order to achieve this, I had to create an environment where the co-researchers could feel safe to talk and it was imperative that I presented myself in a way that would gain the trust of the women.

At the beginning of this study, I spoke about creating a space for the women's voices. During the interviewing process the issue of voice and how I made the women feel about their voices was critical. By providing a secure and comfortable environment, listening attentively and making sure that what they said was important, I gave them a sense of power and representation in this research (Pillay, 2003). They felt empowered by the fact that there was interest in their lives as African postgraduate women students. Creating this environment for the co-researchers respected the fact that we were keen to articulate their voices that have been marginalised in the past. Just as Witherell and Noddings (1991) believed that a comfortable setting is important in creating a trusting relationship between the interviewer and the participant, the interview served a useful purpose because it gave a detailed picture of a participant's attitude, beliefs, perceptions, or views on the topic (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2002).

With the adjusted power relations, this study turned into a chance for them to "tell all." Hence, I turned into a conveyor of their stories and had an obligation to respect everyones' story (McInnes, 1994). By managing voices and discovering voice in research, power relations are influenced (Fine & Weis, 1996). To listen to the women's stories is to empower them. This implies that I not only had to provide a comfortable environment but I needed to be a person that the women would want to talk to openly, knowing that they would be heard. In order to capture my co-researchers lived experiences and diversity, I attempted to introduce an unmistakable picture of myself

- a Muslim, South African, mother of three, working class and a teacher. This implied that I was comparable in many ways to some and diverse in many ways from others within the study. While at times this was a smart thought which drew me to the co-researchers, in other occurrences it produced a sense of detachment and perhaps even intimidation. Attempting to introduce myself as a noble listener, I felt I engaged trust from most if not all of my co-researchers once they had agreed to be involved in the study.

However, the issues of whether and how women are able to speak are fundamental to the data generation process. I have read a vast amount of literature on research methods and each reading commented on the importance of ensuring that the co-researchers are made to feel comfortable during the interview process and that, as researchers, we must be good listeners. However, very little speaks of preparing the researcher for the process, and I found that prior to each interview I was anxious about the ensuing process. I was concerned whether my questions were too restrictive or what would happen if I did not listen well enough. At one level, asking women to speak about their experiences and listening to their accounts seems straightforward, but there were struggles in getting my co-researchers to make it to the interviews. It felt like an obstacle course. For example:

> **Researcher:** When would it be the best time to conduct the interviews and where?
>
> **Zandile**: Weekends are out of the question as I have kids and there was no one to look after them. On weekdays it is very hectic as I am lecturing but I will manage to slot you in during my free time on Thursday, 9 May 2014 at 10 a.m. in the commons room.
>
> **Prudence**: Unfortunately I am unavailable this month. Please contact me at the end of May to set up time and a place.
>
> **Thabile:** Anytime is ok with me, just not on the weekends - but when I am free. The commons room is fine with me. (Transcripts, 27 April, 2014)

I recall how making contact with one of my co-researchers after our initial meeting at the coffee shop became a roller-coaster ride. I initially contacted her via telephone to remind her of the date and time for our first interview. Telephonic contact was therefore made on several occasions over a period of a week after that, during which time she spoke about how hectic it was at work and how she did not think she would have time to be part of my study. I was disappointed but at the same time I had to adhere to the terms set up for my study, which clearly stated that the co-researcher can at any time withdraw from the study. I thanked her for her time. However, three weeks later I made contact with her again and she agreed to be interviewed at her time and venue - in the commons conference room on campus a week later. I got to the place early to set up and 20 minutes later she called to say that her children's caregiver was not well and she had to leave for home immediately. Feelings of professional frustration got the better of me but at the same time I hoped it was not my research that was causing her to be reflexive and find her situation difficult to cope with. She did not call back, which led to me e-mailing her to contact me if she wished to continue. Several weeks later she contacted me and a second interview date was set up.

Another co-researcher who chose a date and time according to her free time was nowhere to be found close to the date of the interview. I tried contacting her telephonically and via e-mails. It was only later that I learned that she had to leave for home (Lesotho) because she had to attend to family issues and was not sure when she was to return. Sadness overcame me and I tried in vain to contact her. Eventually I managed to get her second cell phone number and immediately called her. She apologised for leaving but indicated that she still wished to continue as a co-researcher. I then indicated that we could conduct the interview via Skype. However, there were too many technical hitches and this process was abandoned. I was not prepared to lose her so I eventually asked her if she would not mind coming back to South Africa at my expense so that I could conduct the interview in person. There was no hesitation on her part and the following week she arrived and we met to discuss a new date for the interview.

I have come to consider this is exactly what research is about. As researchers we appear to set up our co-researchers for occasions that could not go as arranged yet only seldom do we set ourselves up on how to manage such deviations. This bears declaration to

the fact that long unstructured interviewsare tedious and never as arranged (Patton, 2002; Boyce and Neale, 2006; Marshal, 2006). The work of other scholars regularly portrays interviews where the researcher is the visitor of the participant Oakley (1981), (Finch, 1984), Limerick, Burgess-Limerick & Grace (1996) proposing a power offset in favour of the participant. The balance of power in this period of the study seems to be a complicating and fluctuating dynamic. Eventually, all interviews were conducted, lasting for about one and half hours per co-researcher. Three interviews took place at Commons Room at UKZN, one at my home, and the fifth at the office of the co-researcher. I used an audio-recorder to record the life-history interviews.

The interviews allowed the women to articulate their own experiences and offered opportunity to understand the complex and contradictory discourses that the women adopted in constructing their lives, told histories and experiences. According to Anderson (1990, p. 103) the interview "is a snapshot of how a women comprehends herself in her reality, where and how she places esteem, and what specific meaning she appends to her activities and spheres in her reality." The flexibility of the semistructured format allowed for the women to be able to speak about anything they felt was relevant to their own experience in relation to the questions. Although I had a set of predetermined questions, the interviews were guided by the spontaneous flow of the exchanges Sarantakos (1993) and I remained flexible about the order and direction of the interview in as sensitive a manner as possible.

Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) pointed out that one should be skilful in controlling the development and direction of the interview, to keep the conversation focused on the researcher's concerns. To avoid bias, there was no attempt to tailor the responses to questions posed below in the interviews (Sarantakos, 1993). The questions revolved around the following:

- Childhood upbringing
- The community and social environment where the women grew up
- Schooling education
- Tertiary education
- Learning experiences as postgraduate students at UKZN

The long unstructured interviewsprovided me with a lens into each co-researcher's personal and academic identities and culture. Although three of the co-researchers came from beyond the borders of South Africa, and the fourth from South Africa, their stories were not restricted to place and time. They cut across generations and boundaries (Creswell, 2009). This coincides with Bell's (2002) view that stories are universal and exist in all societies, but the stories themselves vary extensively. The long unstructured interviewsrevealed important facets of the co-researchers' past. They brought to light the dominant discourses around traditions and systems like the family, school, and university in their respective countries. Life history allows for the understanding of the co-researchers within their historical, political and social spaces.

While leading the interviews, I knew that there are numerous moral contemplations in the research that are typically restricted to informed consent, the privilege to exist at any stage, confidentiality and the privilege to data about the procedures and motivations behind the research which I could manage. Notwithstanding, as a young researcher, I found that there were numerous hazy areas in the issue of ethics (McCormick, 2012). It is sometimes not possible to follow ethics in their absolute sense and that we are not fully prepared to handle the ethical dilemmas that arise when research data is based on interviews with participants who have to recount their experiences.

On interviewing my co-researchers, I was completely mindful that they would think about their past and review certain recollections. I respected the work by Bartlett (1932) who depicted memory as development and which is complex. He further contended that narrative memories are generated through collaboration between two components, individual recollections and social discourse. Accordingly, the precision of recollections relies upon both the individual, that is, the significance of the occasion and the social discourse of the time. So, I prepared to get rich data from the co-researchers.

I likewise came to understand that the directing of feminist research is a typical practice that is laden with moral quandaries (McCormick and Melinda, 2012). If one considers the principles of feminist research important, one is endeavoring to meet a

high moral standard, however, I found that these attempts are not always supported by the processes of research. Although I presented myself as a good listener, I found that it was personally cathartic for one of the co-researchers to speak about aspects of her life that had, in the past, been ignored or traumatic.

During the interviews, she became highly emotional. Relating an experience from her youth and trying to make it in the world made her cry. She discussed an incident of abuse where she ended up compromised and how ashamed it made her feel. She then became very afraid at the thought that her secret was now exposed. I, as a young researcher, must admit that I was not adequately experienced to handle the kind of trauma this co-researcher had experienced. I immediately questioned myself as to how to handle this sensitive issue because there is always a concern that this research should always remain ethical in that it must not cause any harm to those being researched and that it provides a voice to the voiceless. The fact that she expressed such extreme emotion saddened me because I felt that I was a woman inflicting pain on another woman was something feminist scholars vehemently warn against. In the words of De Vault (1996, p. 33), "feminists pursue a science that reduces harm and power in the research process."

I remember reading ways for managing trauma set forward by Herman (1992) where she proposed that people who have endured trauma are inspired simultaneously to overlook (repression) and to recollect (through intrusions) the trauma. I could see that the remembrance of this traumatic episode was debilitating for her, so I stopped the recording and assured her that everything was fine. But she kept questioning me and her hand movements made me extremely fearful. When this co-researcher became unsettled by the data generating process, it became an ethical dilemma for this study and brought up serious ethical concerns about whether or not I, as a young researcher, was in the position to research women's lives directly.

I took a decision that no data was more important than the wellbeing of my friend and so I erased all the interview data. There was a sigh of relief from her. After many failed attempts to contact her, she did eventually take my call. We chatted, but she never allowed me to interview her again and opted out of the study. I knew that I had taken steps to mitigate the challenges and dilemmas I faced with her but I was left feeling as

though I did not do much for her. A sense of failure dawned on me. As I engage with my study, there remains this unresolved ethical dilemma that burdens me. Maybe I will have to come to terms with the following words:

> Researchers who strive for the benefits of close, interactive relations with participants must accept the concomitant risks. These risks include the potential for relationships to end abruptly and for participants to feel that they have been misunderstood or betrayed, especially in moments when participants' and researchers' priorities diverge, as many times they will (Kirsch, 2005, p. 163)

Although I feel this study could have been a platform for her to tell her story as an African postgraduate woman student, I have learned that these ethical dilemmas are unforeseen especially when asking co-researchers to reflect on their lives. Furthermore these stories are seldom found in literature. After my experience with this co-researcher, I hope as feminist researchers we can unearth ways to help prevent possible harm in relationships with co-researchers.

Nevertheless, the remaining interviews went off well and it was gratifying to realise that all of the co-researchers, with the exception of one, was keen to contribute to the study. What I have learned from the interview process for this doctoral study in relation to the interviewing process in my master's degree (where I interviewed both men and women) is that some of the women in this study were reluctant to tell their stories even though the invitation was sincere. At one point in the interview I became frustrated with a particular co-researcher because I felt that I was engaging with the traditional stimuli response method with her, something that as a feminist researcher I wished to avoid at all cost. Despite this, I kept true to the words of De Vault who considered feminist researchers as "united through countless endeavours to incorporate women's lives and apprehensions in accounts of society, to reduce the harm of research and to assist transformation that will develop women's status" (1996, p. 29). I persevered knowing that African women's experiences of the postgraduate journey have been traditionally subject to interpretation by men and there has been an assumed intergration of women's experiences as being the same as men's (Smeal, 1984). As a feminist researcher, I sought to assist and inspire the co-researchers.

3.6.2 Visual inquiry

I was inspired to use visual data in my research by my own experience of taking part in a collage-making project that was conducted by my supervisor. I was interested to perceive what kind of images the women would use to outline their postgraduate voyages. Different researchers talk about the visual "turn" in qualitative research. Emmison and Smith (2000) for instance, talked about the manners by which the visual recounts an alternate story. For this study, the visual data was generated through collage making and artefact retrieval.

Preparing for the collage-making activity

It has become increasingly distinct since the concluding half of the 20th century that knowledge or comprehension is not always reduced to language. Thus not only does knowledge come in dissimiliar forms, the forms of its creation differ. The idea of ineffable knowledge is not an oxymoron (Eisner, 2008, p. 5).

For this study, I came to realise that words might not always capture all that the co-researchers wanted to convey. Consequently, collage was used as a data generation tool to help the co-researchers create a visual representation of their educational journey through their own eyes and creating a collage using pictures assisted in bringing to the fore significant incidents which also corresponds with Eisner's (2008) quotation above. This perspective was likewise shared by Creswell (2003) who contended that there are complex realities and complex ways of understanding these realitiess. Collage making is along these lines a valuable method for "listening visually" and getting into "liminal spaces," where "learning . . . never arrives . . . it is dependably on the edge" (Nielsen, 2002, p. 208). Using collage as a data generation method moves the co-researcher from the interview mode, which is directed, even loosely, to a freer mode, where they may articulate and also relive noteworthy memories (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009).

Through the data generation of long unstructured interviews, I was able to get an insider account of my co-researchers' experiences. The experiences that were narrated

were those incidents that the co-researcher could remember. Collage making was therefore used to trigger memory (van Schalkwyk, 2010). This is important because collage making allows for deeply embedded memories and incidents that may lie just below the surface of consciousness, to emerge.

My request whether collage making could be done in a group was turned down because most of the co-researchers felt they were not comfortable or ready to talk about their lives with others present. I respected this and therefore arranged different days for them to create their individual collages mapping out their postgraduate journeys. As when creating a pleasant environment for the interviews in which the co-researchers could tell it all, I made sure that the environment to make this all happen was relaxed and bursting with creativity. Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 265) characterised collages as "the way toward cutting and pasting discovered pictures and picture parts from well known print/magazines onto cardstock". I provided a selection of local and international magazines that included an array of colour and black-and-white pictures and words, scissors, Pritt, and A3 paper. The co-researchers were given the opportunity to peruse the magazines and pick out pictures and words that they could use to describe their experiences of postgraduate journey.

Collage making took approximately 3 to 4 hours with each co-researcher, all of whom expressed that it was not daunting at all. I did, however, sense that those women who showed some hesitation about expressing their feelings during the interviews, freely expressed their thoughts on paper. Thus, changing feelings into images can be less threatening. This is supported by Stern (2004) who argued that collage as a research method can reveal hidden understandings that are found in our communications and contacts with and in the world.

After a co-researcher had completed her collage, she delivered a short discussion based on the collage. Raht, Smith, and MacEntee (2009) expressed that the utilisation of pictures, images and metaphors in a collage help to pass on a message and that collage is an approach to connect with a topic. It likewise causes one to talk about and reveal one's story and the co-researchers told a story as the discussions indicated the symbols used represented their identity and their past and present lives. All the co-researchers within the study encompass diverse identities. Not only are they African, woman,

postgraduate students but they also come from diverse backgrounds with their own ethnic, social, religious and cultural identities. The identity of the co-researchers came through in the words and pictures they selected. The pictures selected were those that had the most impact on the co-researchers. Therefore, in the co-researchers telling about the pictures, images and words that they selected, they felt less inhibited to express whatever came to mind as bona fide authors of their own life stories.

Collaging ended up accommodating this study in fleshing out various features with a specific end goal which was to get a nuanced comprehension of the women's educational experiences of their postgraduate journey. Although I had used this method for producing data for my Master's degree, I was left intrigued by what was created by the co-researchers; it allowed me to go beyond the spoken words of these women to submerged layers of their worlds. I believe that looking at the women's lived experiences in this way removed their passive, researched status and affirmed their participant roles in the research process.

As a researcher and the researched I, too, for the first time had to create a collage of my own, mapping out my postgraduate journey. As the co-researchers mentioned making the collage was not overwhelming as regardless of whether you are an amateur or prepared, one can cut and paste and get a feeling of fulfillment with their creation. I was charmed to perceive how I, as a researcher who never considered having imaginative ability, could pick up confidence utilising this visual medium and had gone ahead to produce this magnificent occurrence of collage inquiry (Promislow, 2005). I must confess becoming totally captivated and inspired by the work I had created (Butler-Kisber, Davis, & Stewart, 2007). I felt that my co-researchers shared the same joy as I did upon seeing my completed collage.

Employing collage making to complement the long unstructured interviewsenabled the co-researchers to use visual stimulation with verbal engagement for the recollection of memories of experience. Although collage making is a different research method it was not a separate exercise from the long unstructured interviews; however, the collage complemented and added to data generated during the interviews. In view of that, life story narratives offer a credible and integrative scaffold for identity research (Hermans, 2001). Using collage as a device, people are able to present the

various voices of their social and private lives and identities, including those that perhaps interact below the level of consciousness (van Schalkwyk, 2010).

Preparing for Artefact retrieval

This study uses artefact retrieval as a research method for data generation. Retrieving objects from co-researchers can assist in the facilitation of memory work and stimulate memory recall relating to critical moments in the co-researchers' personal, academic and social lives that have shaped their lives as postgraduate women students. The nature of these sources implies that the researcher must engage at a very personal level with the co-researcher to generate data.

Mitchell (2011) attracted thoughtfulness regarding how the potential benefit of functioning with objects is frequently neglected in social research, even in visual research. She proposed that studying objects "as texts of visual research in and of themselves" Mitchell (2011, p. 37) can "[expand] the possibilities of what counts as evidence in research" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 37). Building on the ideas of Riggins (1994) Mitchell (2011) offered examples of how everyday objects such as a toy or an item of clothing can be studied as visual research data in terms of their connotative and denotative meanings. In exploring the connotative meanings, the researcher considers personal meanings that rely on the autobiographer's memory and stories associated with the object, whereas the denotative meanings relate to factual and social aspects of the object (Mitchell, 2011). Mitchell (2011, p. 49) underlined that this multidimensional study of objects in visual research can encourage access to the complex personal, social and authentic stories that these objects convey, hence enabling us to "arrange the thing or object inside more extensive societal inquiries."

I contacted the co-researchers via e-mail to set a date to bring an artefact and talk of its significance in relation to their lives as African postgraduate woman students. I disclosed to them that an artefact is typically an object that is not recently acquired however has existed in their living setting and is related with an emotional connection (Mitchell, 2011). The emotions may range from frustration to enjoyment (Samaras, 2011).

The co-researchers brought artefacts including a photograph of a late husband, an old Cosmopolitan magazine, a story book about Cinderella and a picture of burning cow dung which served as a tool for reflection on their lived experiences and with associated meanings for them. When the co-researchers were asked to reflect on their artefacts, Prudence displayed feelings of sadness to the extent that she asked me not take a photo (figure 1) of her artefact because it triggered powerful and painful emotions of the past and signalled an uncomfortable relationship with grieving for her loss. Reflecting on her artefact of a picture of burning cow dung (figure 2), Thabile displayed feelings of empowerment and memories of the women back home. Zandile proudly presented her artefact, a copy of a Cosmopolitan magazine (figure 3) that expressed her desire to make it big like the designers. Lona's presentation of a book (figure 4) signalled her desire to become someone more than herself, like the princess in the story book.

Researcher: Could you express an emotion that this artefact brings forth for you? Describe where that emotion generates from, and how it might extend to your learning as an African female postgraduate student?

Prudence: I chose this photo (see Figure 1) of my late husband because it takes me back to the days before I started my PhD. It's sadness and motivation . . . it actually creates such sadness because when I look at the picture it reminds me of what I had and also because we were supposed to graduate together . . . he should have been there for my graduation but it also motivates me to carry on and to make him proud.
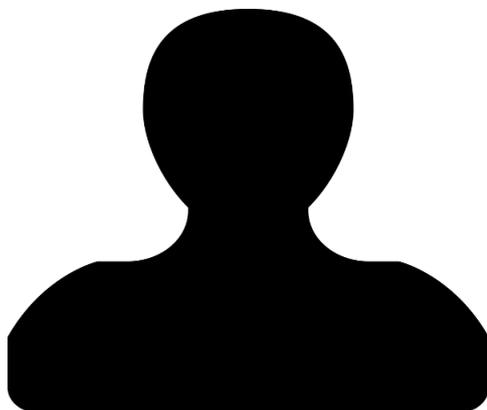
Figure 1: Prudence's late husband (she did not want to disclose photo)
(Transcript from artefact activity, 17 August 2014)

Thabile: This reminds me of the poverty in my area and that as an African woman it is my duty to study not only for myself but also for the women in my village who wake up every morning to cook breakfast with dried cow dung (see Figure 2). It brought humility to me. I come not only from a poor African country but a poor community. As an African female student, it keeps me humble and makes me aware of how fortunate I am to be studying.

Figure 2: Picture of burning cow dung
(Transcript from artefact activity, 31 August 2014)

Zandile: This magazine (Figure 3) is a constant reminder that I can make it big in this world, just like the designers who take risks with styles and colours.

Figure 3: Cosmopolitan magazine
(Transcript from artefact activity, 3 September 2014)

Lona: This story book (Figure 4) I hold dear to my heart. I go to sleep dreaming that someday my life would change, I would find my prince, and live in a beautiful place.
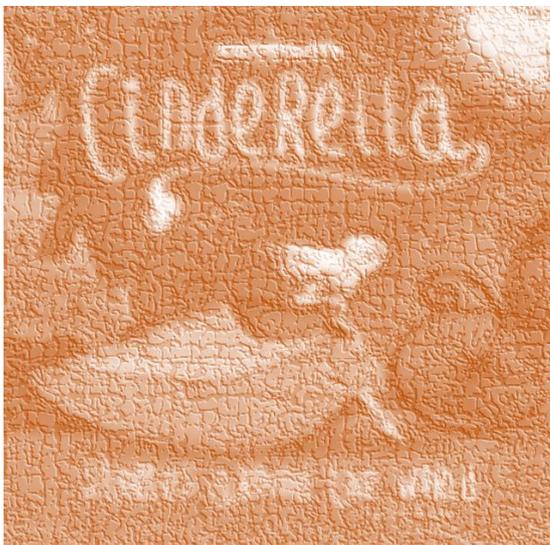
Figure 4: Story book of Cinderella
(Transcript from artefact activity, 8 September 2014)

It was evident that when the co-researchers selected and presented their objects for reflection, the emotions they felt were explored from deep insight. The emotions

ranged from sadness to empowerment to enjoyment. Through reflection on her artefact, the co-researcher could hail specific experiences and feelings that were connected to, or motioned by the artefact and this took into account the reflexive practice where changes in action are conceivable.

In conclusion, the visual data was produced after the interviews were conducted and it was clear from the images and artefact selected by the co-researchers, that they were closely tied to what was revealed in the interviews and that they were very eager to elaborate further on their experiences of their postgraduate journey. As the researcher, I felt that these methods gave them the opportunity not only to elaborate on the surface but to dig deeper which gave me a better understanding of what they were reflecting on and allowed me to understand their journey better. I must concur with others like Khau, de Lange, and Athiemoolam (2013) who have stated that working with visual images can offer powerful statements about the meaning of experience. As my co-researchers reflected on the images and words selected, it brought me closer to understanding what preoccupied them as African women students making their way through their postgraduate education. Finally, I am convinced that the methods this study used allowed these women to expand and reflect on their journeys as African postgraduate women students. It also gave them an opportunity to offer inspiration to the women who I hope will read this thesis.

3.7 Section Six: Analysis

The Transcription Choices

I had learned previously when engaged with my master's degree, how confusing and overwhelming it can become when one neglects to organise the data immediately after it has been produced. My first action was to transcribe all audio recordings of the interviews and the collage and artefact discussions. Like the process of audio taping, transcription involves a number of practical and methodological choices. I debated whether I should transcribe myself or allow others to do it for me. I had the opportunity of paying someone to transcribe the interviews, which would have indeed saved me a lot of time. However, after much personal soul searching and advice from other

colleagues who had worked with audio recordings, I chose to transcribe myself. Given the reality that narrative analysis entails engagement in the transcripts, undertaking all transcription of the interviews myself allowed me, from the beginning, to get a sense of the women's stories and how they were told. I must admit that transcribing the interviews was very enlightening in a myriad of ways.

When I began to transcribe the interviews and discussions, the analysis stage for this study began. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the transcribing of interviews is a crucial stage within qualitative methodology; during the act of transcribing spoken data into text, meanings are created and the act of interpretation begins. Whilst transcribing, I initially found it difficult to comprehend with what some of the co-researchers were saying when responding to a certain question because coming from different parts of Africa, each co-researcher had a different accent to mine. I was therefore inspired by Butler-Kisber (2010) to listen and re-listen to the tapes several times and write and rewrite. On two occasions, I had to call the co-researcher to confirm some details from the interview recording. Once I had completed a transcription, I sent it back to the co-researcher for verification. When it came back, there were some corrections. One was correction to the spelling of the village that one co-researcher resided in and another co-researcher removed a word because she felt when reading it then, it seemed too harsh in describing her experience of interactions with local students on campus.

However, all the co-researchers approved the transcripts were a true account of their stories of their educational experiences. As expressed previously, this study is tied in with offering voice to women. It was therefore crucial to direct this process with humbleness, perceiving that "a few voices (knowledges) are suppressed and other voices and knowledges take over the airwaves" (Byrne-Armstrong, 2001, p. 112). Finally the data from the interviews and discussions of collages and artefacts were saved as computer files using a pseudonym for each file with a password to ensure that I was the only one who could access it. These measures ensured the security of the data.

Moving from transcription to writing up the stories

The narrative process begins by locating the stories. In order to write up the story, I read all of the transcribed data from the interviews and collage and artefact discussions, one after the other, in order to get a holistic overview of the data. Whilst conducting the interviews and engaging with the collages and artefacts, I was alerted to what is referred to by Rudestam and Newton (1992, p. 113) as *data overload* and consequently the analysis of transcribed data was done frequently during the data creation process. I would read and reread the text many times, extracting emerging themes from the richness of the lived experiences exhibited in the data. I then changed the recorded data into narratives making a series of disengaged research elements comprehensible. In so doing, the story can now appeal to the reader's understanding and creativity (Leavy, 2009).

But as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) pointed out, "the researcher craves to reveal their stories too"; and in the revealing of the researcher's story, the stories of the participants unify with that of the researcher's to shape new stories, stories that are mutual and reconstructed. In these reconstructed women's narratives, lives are portrayed as unique (Pillay, 2003). The four stories presented in Chapter 4 are the constructed storied narratives that emanated from the data.

The Restory Process

Some feminist scholars Lather (1991a, 1991b) and Reinharz (1992) suggested that we involve our co-researchers in the process by returning to them what we write about them. Collaboration and negotiation of meanings can then occur. After the reconstructed narratives were produced, I returned them to each of the women accompanied with a letter asking them to respond to the questions below:

- Does this story represent what you thought you were telling me?
- Does it make sense in the way that I have reconstructed it?
- Do you feel like I have omitted significant facts? Please feel free to add any information.
- Do you feel there is a need to remove any part of the story?
- Please do not hesitate to make any other comment.

As elucidated by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 108) member checking or respondent validation is done to "amend accurate errors, offer respondents the chance to add further information or to place information on record and to check adequacy of the analysis." It also added legitimacy and authenticity to this study. However, this process is not without its "complications and quandaries" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 139).

I must admit that, as researcher, I was petrified waiting for the women to respond. Questions that were playing on my mind were: What if they read their story and then are not comfortable with sharing it or they ask me to remove parts of it? It was indeed a very long, anxious wait because all the co-researchers did not respond within the time given. This made me even more worried. After dealing with the co-researcher who opted out of the study as mentioned previously, I worried that another dilemma could be brewing. It was only after sending them an e-mail enquiring about how they were doing, that they began e-mailing me their responses. My fears were realised. Just when I thought I was free from any more dilemmas, an issue with another co-researcher had me wanting to put an end to my study.

When the co-researcher received a copy of her reconstructed story, she reacted by showing that I had incorrectly spelt a few words and that she felt delighted in reading it. This co-researcher had recently finished her master's degree and was choosing to enlist for her doctoral studies. Soon after this a personal catastrophe struck my family. My oldest sister took sick for a day and passed on the following day leaving behind four kids who turned into my obligation. Along these lines, for a year I needed to put my studies on hold as it turned out to be excessively troublesome for me, to prioritise my postgraduate student identity.

When I recommitted myself to my studies a year later and got inundated in analysing the data, I found that while noting my last research question, the vast majority of the data generated on this co-researcher corresponded with the scholarly writings with regard to women's experiences on postgraduate studies. This is certainly not a harmful thing but rather, as doctoral students, we are informed that our study should create new information - otherwise, why do the study? This mandated me to return to the raw data and identify an unexpected component that I could have ignored. This action is keeping

in line with Bell (1998, p. 207) who wrote that "the procedure of co-creation acknowledges the dynamic, participatory connection between and among researchers. Each time we return to the data exclusively or together, the likelihood exists for the revelation of new stories or new translations of stories previously identified". I was stunned when, after reading and rereading the data, I identified that surprise element which I then added to her reconstructed story. She was then invited to read and reflect on the changes made to her story. I must admit I was apprehensive and worried because it was more than a year later. But I knew this process was important because it demonstrated the value of collaboration between me, the researcher and her, the co-researcher. However, when she replied via a text message a few days later, I was astonished at her response. She wrote the following words in her text message:

> So much information of me. It reads like a CV and anyone at ukzn will know who I am
> (Transcript of WhatsApp message from co-researcher, September 2017)

These details pertaining to her biographical history had been given from the initial stages of writing her reconstructed story a year earlier, and were not shared with me as being a problem. Later that day, she followed up with an e-mail indicating that various inserts highlighted in yellow were a misrepresentation of what she had said and indicated that she had rewritten some parts to make the story read better.

At first I was shocked and then, a little angered because I felt I was being accused of not portraying her as she had told and of distorting her data. When I began the co-creation process, I was guided by the words of Patai (1988, p. 13) who said that:

> the ways we decide to re-introduce women's stories include complex issues of "ownership." We particularly need to honour the women who disclose their experiences and points of view to us throughout our research, as opposed to absolutely privileging our "overwriting" of their words and articulations. In the meantime, we have to recognize our role and dynamic commitment in the co-creation and understanding of these stories, and the re-introduction of these stories to different researchers, and women.

As a feminist researcher I had always privileged her as my co-researcher. However, my emotion got the better of me and professional frustration crept in when she asked me to remove chunks of detail from her story. It was overwhelming because time was against me.

The final straw came, when she wrote: "You are supposed to represent me as a women but it seems like this is not happening in my story." These are words that broke me. My anxiety levels shot up and a mild form of depression set in. No amount of theory could have prepared me to deal with this. I was really not coping as a researcher, a mum and a teacher. Plagued by anger, anxiety and depression I went home, relooked at all the raw data, re-listened to all the recordings and went through all my notes again. This exercise proved a godsend and afterwards provided a measure of relief. Feeling confident, I went to my supervisor to inform her of what had transpired with the co-researcher. She listened to my passionate outburst and then calmly said,

> This co-researcher has given you her time and her life story. Not everyone will be brave enough to do this. What is making feel so upset? This is actually what research is about . . . but more importantly, how you will go forward with this? (Supervisor, September 2017)

Feelings of guilt overcame me and deep down I knew that my supervisor was right. How did I get to the point, as a feminist researcher, where I failed to embrace the concerns, emotions and position of my co-researcher and only prioritised my feelings? Why did I fail to acknowledge that she did not want some of her account of her life being put in the public domain? Heeding Sandelowski's (1991, p. 161)) forewarnings and as a scholar engaged in exploring narrative inquiry, I then understood the need to address:

> the vague idea of truth, the figurative idea of dialect in conveying a putatively objective reality, the transience and liminality of people's elucidations of their lives, the chronicled and sociocultural requirements against which people work to bestow information about themselves to different people, who, in turn, labor to listen.

Like other feminist researchers, I had to embrace the interpersonal and mutual relationships I formed with her. I called her and apologised if I had caused her any discomfort. I believe I put her at ease when I explained that she was at liberty to remove any part of her story. The next day, she e-mailed me her changes to the story. I made the changes and in the end, I can sleep peacefully knowing that I have honoured feminist ethical obligations in that although I wrote the story, she is still the owner of her story.

Although feminist research holds many ethical challenges in terms of doing research and holding researchers to high expectations, one of the biggest ethical challenges faced by researchers, concerns potential harm to co-researchers, which feminist researchers seek to avoid. As an African postgraduate woman student myself, I have learned that the opportunities for potential harm are prevalent and unforeseen, especially when asking women to reflect on their past lived experiences and which are seldom found in literature. Given my experiences with the co-researcher who opted out of the study and with the co-researcher with her story, I hope as feminist researchers we can find ways to help avoid potential harm in relationships with the women we wish to study.

None of my other co-researchers made substantial changes. The complexity and uncertainty surrounding power relations is ongoing throughout the research process. Offering voice to the women implies that, as a researcher, I esteem the experiences related by participants, their convictions, perspectives, points of view and sentiments and am considering them important (Hatchell and Aveling, 2008). As researchers, we must always expect these complexities and uncertainties to come to the fore and expect the women to question certain things at different times. This is, indeed, in keeping with the role of being an ethical researcher. All the narratives in this study were constructed out of the data through a reflexive, participatory and aesthetic process. Eisner (1981, p. 9) figuratively portrayed the "extravagance" of qualitative research when he stated: "To know a rose by its Latin name but to miss its scent is to miss a significant part of the rose's signifying."

That quote sums up my feelings when writing up this section. It was this stage of the study that presented particular challenges for me. Working with so many pages of transcription, how do we construct what Ellis (1995) called a meaningful story? All I knew was that I was drowning in a sea of transcription. It was important for me, as the researcher, to find the best suitable method of presentation to represent the co-researchers narratives in a coherent and meaningful way.

Interpreting the Data

Narrative inquiry gives rich, complex and nuanced information that is not really simple to break down. When contemplating the sorts of analysis that are most valuable, we have to consider what we need to separate from the data that has been generated and how it will be utilised. After reading up on so many ways of analysed data, which took a lot of time and effort, it was at this stage that I felt very demotivated and was overwhelmed with the work. I believed that I was going to complete this study in another two months but after six months I was in no way near completion. I was tired.

According to Edwards & Ribbens (1998, p. 16), "Researchers exploring aspects of intimate lives need to consider carefully whether or not the tools provided by the method fit with their own…approach to the topic." Feminist research paradigms make transparent the vagueness that often accompanies the analysis process and situate the researcher within the subjective journey quite openly (Letherby, 2003). The generative process that is symbolic of analysis must be explicated quite clearly within the study and shared with the co-researchers in order to live out feminist research values. Therefore it was imperative that I explored several data analysis processes before I finally analysed the data through multiple processes of narrative analysis and analysis of narratives.

Polkinghorne (1995) distinguished between analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. They argued that analysis of narratives uses paradigmatic reasoning in its analysis, whilst narrative analysis uses narrative reasoning in its analysis. The paradigmatic analysis (analysis of narratives) results in descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings. Hatch and Wisniewski (1995, p. 12) asserted that narrative analysis is when researchers gather portrayals of events and happenings and orchestrate or design them by means of a plot into a story or stories. Analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories. Hatch and Wisniewski (1995, p. 15) said that narrative analys is is the method through which the researcher composes the information components into a rational progressive account. The procedure of narrative analysis is really an integrating of the data as opposed to a division of it into its constituent parts.

By using analysis of narratives, stories are collected as data that include the characters, settings and the plot (Polkinghorne, 1995). To understand the question "Who are the APWSs and their lived stories before, during and after completing their postgraduate studies?", I adopted narrative analysis by synthesising the data generated to come up with reconstructed stories. To make sense of the complexities and negotiation of self and APWSs' learning experiences, my second and third levels of analysis involved analysis of narratives.

3.7.1 Analytical framework

This study adopted a variety of analytical tools to respond to my research questions which were:

1. What are the stories of African women students choosing to engage in postgraduate studies at a South African university?
2. What meanings of self inform the African woman postgraduate student identity?
3. What are African women's experiences of postgraduate study at a South African university?

Using Polkinghorne (1995) narrative analysis and analysis of narratives as a guide to respond to my critical questions, I put together events and actions from the stories told by the co-researchers to come up with a plot. When analysing data I had to develop a plot that revealed the connections among the data elements. I interrogated the data generated by the co-researchers by deeply probing and seeking occurrences of information that contributed to the construction of a story to help provide answers to my critical questions. Through the process of plotting, I was able to come up with the stories from the plots, which enabled me to present background meanings of the co-researchers' stories. Using narrative analysis my first layer enabled me to focus on how a co-researcher's life chronology emerged and the impact it had on the woman's present state (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). It allowed me to look at the co-researchers'

experience through the stories they told and at the reasons why they chose to tell their stories in the way they did (Riessman, 1993).

Narrative analysis is therefore appropriate to the exploration of APWSs' lived experiences because it responds to subjective meaning making of one's self within the social setting. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990) humans lead storied lives and as such, need to tell those stories about their lives. In this study, narrative analysis was useful for understanding women's stories. One of the qualities of narrative inquiry is that it enabled me as a researcher to comprehensively explore the womens' personality, connections and feelings, all inside a bigger culture and social setting (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Reismann, 2008).

I reconstructed the stories using the data generated by the co-researchers so that I could make sense of the themes that emerged. Polkinghorne (1995) argued that the end result of narrative inquiry is a story. While reconstructing stories, I ensured that the content, form and context of stories were kept unchanged and authentic by doing continual member checks. My task was to configure the data elements into a story that provides the deeper understanding of who the postgraduate African women students are. I am aware of my obligations as a researcher when writing up a reconstructed story.

Thematic analysis

This process involved deconstructing the stories, creating columns for each co-researcher under the different critical questions to slot themes under each, which is known as the process of thematic analysis. Clarke (2006, p. 79) said that "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Applying thematical analysis took into account the development of themes inside the study and for deciding how each theme identified with others within the data". It is imperative to take note that thematic analysis is a recursive procedure, implying that the process includes rerunning the procedure (Clarke, 2006). This implied all through the process, I could move forward and backward between the data and the research questions, guaranteeing that all themes included were important. This procedure enabled me to sort and put in order the data while staying thoughtful to the implications of comparable terms utilised by other co-researchers (Aronson, 1994; Parker, 2005). I

also drew up a table that I named "Extra" to capture data that I considered important but was unsure about where it belonged.

At the start of this process, I was overawed by the volume of data that my research had generated. My initial inclination was to try to include everything, assuming that, to be a responsible researcher, excluding anything would be dishonest. But then when I focused on selected elements of the data, I realised that this prevented me making diverse and peripheral linkages. As I engaged in more critical discussions with my supervisor over my reading of the data and on reviewing the literature, my understanding of life history research increased. I began to understand how to reconstruct and interpret, code and categorise the data into themes and to look more deeply for patterns that I may have missed. As Knowles & Cole (2008, p. 36) pointed out, "no matter how I hard I tried, it would always be incomplete; such is the nature of life history/narrative research."

My data included transcripts of interviews, collage presentations and discussions about artefacts by the co-researchers. I employed a thematic analysis technique using thematic networks as tool for an analytical framework for this qualitative research as outlined by Attride-Stirling (2001). This technique provides practical and effective procedures for conducting an analysis; it enables a methodical systematisation of textual data, facilitates the disclosure of each step in the analytic process, aids the organisation of an analysis and its presentation and allows a sensitive, insightful and rich exploration of a text's overt structures and underlying patterns. Applying thematic networks is simply a way of organising qualitative data. Thematic analysis seek to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes. The process of deriving themes from textual data and illustrating these with some representational tool is well established in qualitative research.

The first step in a thematic network analysis is to reduce the data. After reading and rereading the stories, I dissected the text into manageable and meaningful text segments. With the use of a coding framework I followed a process of colour coding parts of the transcription in order to select the experiences that were pertinent to answering the research questions of this study. I used differently coloured highlighters

to compartmentalise issues. I used the colour red to highlight aspects relating to the co-researchers' childhood upbringing and the influence this had on them. I then used green to indicate aspects of the co-researchers' experience with regard to the community and social environment where they grew up. Blue was used to code the researchers' experiences during their schooling years (primary and secondary) and the impact it had on their lives. Purple was used to highlight their experiences of learning as APWSs at UKZN.

Once all the text was coded, I abstracted themes from the coded text segments and arranged the themes in relation to my research questions. After spending many long hours reflecting on the data in order to analyse the experiences of the APWSs into themes that would accurately and fairly reflect the described aspects of their research experiences, I was guarded and mindful of the fact that it is at this stage of producing an analysis that participants in research have their experiences distorted. At this point, I continually reflected on my many readings of feminist scholars who said that it is the researcher who decides on what to report and how to report it. I therefore took every precaution not to distort the co-researchers' lived reality by trying to be responsible in the way I made choices and decisions about how to organise and report the data. In the presentation of the final analysis, as a feminist researcher, it is my understanding of the situation that controlled the final report (Edwards, 1993).

Analysing the data using the African feminist standpoint theory, Intersectionality theory, Capabilities Approach and Edward Said's Notion of the Intellectual, enabled me to recognise that while gender inequality is a major facet in the lives of the women, it is nevertheless modified by its intersection with other critical positions. These position had the potential to provide a theoretical explanation for some of the spheres including racial discrimination and cultural and ethnicity dominance that seemed to co-exist alongside being a woman. It also allowed me to understand the positions that shaped the construction of the women's educational trajectories, as well as attainment of their wellbeing and agency as intellectual scholars.

I was also able to see how practices inside the context (UKZN) reproduced and disrupted gender inequalities in the women's lives. In the end, I was able to show how the women developed through their experiences in different spaces at UKZN to

become agents of change, find voice, and feel valued and appreciated as intellectual beings.

De Vault (1999, p. 243) noted that language is often inadequate for women and that writing is not a transparent medium with which researchers simply convey "truth" discovered in the field. The process of analysis and interpretation is fraught with issues before we even start the research process. However I have situated the analysis and interpretation within the understanding that it is my subjective interpretation and analysis, using language as a resource that is not without problems. This process has been carried out in the best way I know, guided by those who have gone before me through their writings. This analysis must be viewed within this subjective framework and I am aware, as Mauthner and Doucet (1998, p. 51) indicated, that even as I write, "every reader will interpret the text again for themselves."

3.8 Trustworthiness and Rigour

In thinking about my study in relation to trustworthiness and rigour, I firstly draw on my membership in the community of African postgraduate women. My own experience as an APWS enriched my understanding of the co-researcher's experiences (Letherby, 2003). As a feminist researcher, I was very aware that my co-researchers were vulnerable when they divulged their stories and it was therefore important that I develop a sense of trust, respected them and treated them fairly in the research (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995).

In order for the co-researchers and I to work together from start to end, I had to do as Josselson (1996) noted that the researcher must be transparent about his or her interests to create collaboration. Establishing a relationship with co-researchers shapes the authenticity of the findings. Letherby (2003, p. 124) noted that the researcher's role as "kindred spirit" not "expert" can lead to a two-way exchange of mutual support with the emphasis being that "we are all participants" in the research.

Representing my study using narrative inquiry and engaging with multiple methods of data production also ensured trustworthiness because I was able to verify all the data

produced by using member checks at the end of the interview process to ensure that all information was accurate. I humbly believe that, in my research study, I created narrative analyses of the co-researchers' stories and in doing so tried my very best to protect them from harm.

3.9 Conclusion

This study was born out of a desire to shed light on the lives and experiences of African postgraduate women students studying at UKZN which has helped me to find my own voice as an African postgraduate woman student studying at UKZN. I represented my research within the lens of narrative inquiry, employing the multiple data methods like long unstructured interviews, collage making and artefacts retrieval.

I believe the work I produced using this methodology and methods is authentic because firstly it allowed me, the researcher, to explore the ways in which the co-researchers constructed a sense of self through the narratives they choose to tell and secondly the co-researchers tell their stories from their standpoints. Allowing the women the opportunity of a platform (such as this research) to tell their stories and the way they reflected deep into their personal, social and academic lives has been an empowering journey. The next chapter represents the storied lives of these four co-researchers.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE STORIED NARRATIVES

PORTRAITS OF AFRICAN POSTGRADUATE WOMEN STUDENTS

4.1 Orientation

This chapter has three sections to represent the storied lives of the four co-researchers. Section A offers reasons for representing all the storied narratives in the first-person mode. It includes the reason for adopting narrative inquiry as a tool for writing up the storied narratives as well as a discussion of my struggles as the researched and the researcher of the storied narratives and having to deal with the crisis of representation of the co-researchers' voices. It briefly highlights the process of ensuring the trustworthiness of the research stories created. Section B is the representation of the reconstructed storied narratives as:

- Portrait 1: Lona the myhna: *Leaving home to find voice*
- Portrait 2: Prudence the eagle: *Leaving home to fulfil a dream*
- Portrait 3: Zandile the butterfly: *Leavng home to fly with the 'big designers'*
- Portrait 4: Thabile the nestling: *Leaving home to make history*

All reconstructed stories are written in the first person. Section C responds to the first research question. In this section, I present a discussion on the significant lived experiences of Lona, Prudence, Zandile and Thabile.

4.2 Section A:

4.2.1 Representing the storied narratives in the first-person mode

I certainly did not lose sleep over or wrestle with the issue of whether to write the stories of the women in the first person or third person. It was clear to me that I was to represent all my narratives in the first person only. I was aware that reading a story

told directly from the perspective of the co-researchers in their voice can have certain influence in the empathy felt by the reader, not the least of which is the marvelous sense of immediacy, credibility and psychological realism that storytelling always carries with it (Nikolajeva, 2014). However, my argument for using the first person differs. My argument is not only because this is a feminist study that wants to portray the experiences of women as real but also because I was conscious of a mistake had I made whilst completing my master's degree. At the time of writing up stories for my master's degree Saloojee (2009), I did not think it problematic to write up my male co-researchers' stories in the first person and my female co-researchers' stories in the third person. I had neglected to acknowledge that women's experiences were different from men's and highlighted the men's experiences in a positive light therefore silencing and marginalising the women's struggles. I will not forget my examiner's comment in her report of my dissertation:

> I would like to challenge the student to examine her own gendered story more deeply and interrogate the reason for the "ease" of writing in the first person for the men, and the third for women. (Examiner report, 17 February 2011)

With those words, I took up the challenge and assumed the role of the first person narrator for the stories of Lona, Prudence, Zandile and Thabile (Portraits 1–4).

4.2.2 Crisis of Representation

Writing up the stories

As a feminist researcher, I must admit that narrating the stories was tantalising as well as challenging. Initially, my story was not part of the study and my supervisor questioned the absence of the researcher's voice. I struggled with the option of being in the study. It was only when Zandile, one of the co-researchers remarked after being interviewed, "we are all the same, Indian and black. It's so great for us to tell our stories together," that I felt a lack of solidarity with my co-researchers. I decided then that if the co-researchers were taking risks to make a change, I too needed to do the same and place myself in the public domain. I gained the status of researcher and researched and my story being part of this study, refuelled my feminist conscience. I

learned that as a feminist researcher, my role was very important because one of the principles of feminist research is acknowledging that the beliefs of the researcher shape the research (Bartky, 1990).

I was finally able to conquer the challenge around the issue of my voice in the study but was then confronted with other challenges. Firstly, I struggled to write up the stories. I first used Polkinghorne's narrative approach as a tool to help me plot the stories because this approach assumes that people's realities are constructed or revealed through narrating their stories (Polkinghorne, 1988). However, I found this approach to be too universal for my study because I wanted to capture the lives of a particular group of people - African postgraduate women students. I then turned to a feminist narrative approach to help me write up the storied narrative. This approach has certain parameters as discussed in chapter three that made me conscious of an additional layer that Polkinghorne (1988) did not talk about, relating specifically to women's experiences.

Keeping within the parameters of feminist narrative approach to plot the story, I had to ensure that the women in the study had been oppressed in social research, and allow for the positive portrayal of women's subjectivity as fluid and in flux, rather than viewing the incoherent narratives of self-representation as problematic (Bartky, 1990). Taking these parameters into account helped me to include and exclude certain data as I constructed and reconstructed portrayals of the women's experiences from their perspective as African postgraduate students within UKZN.

Secondly, the process of construction and reconstruction of the women's stories revealed tensions and dilemmas that were very real and confrontational to my feminist ideologies. I feel compelled to come clean and reveal the reality of the story writing. I must acknowledge that, whilst interacting with my co-researchers I have to come to like some more than the others. Is this a crime? Sometimes, there were aspects of their data that resonated with my own. Similarly, I noticed that some co-researchers liked me more than did others which would definitely have affected the ways in which they voiced their experiences. My inner bias therefore played up whilst I was reconstructing their stories.

With respect to the co-researchers who I took a particular liking to, I was able to write up their stories in two days. There was a peaceful flow of writing that transpired onto paper. It was an amazing feeling. Another co-researcher's story, with whom I felt disgruntled at times, took me about three weeks to write up. I struggled to make a connection with her in the story. I felt I was writing her story in a boring manner and that it read in a bland and uninteresting way. This concerned me greatly. I expressed this concern to my supervisor who told me that no story is a boring story and in order to feel some connection, I needed to terminate all feelings of professional frustration. I eventually did that and really surprised myself at the end.

Using feminist narrative approach as a tool enabled me to capture the richness and nuances of the meaning of African postgraduate women students in their everyday human existence and to give insight into the complexity of their experiences and understandings. It helped advance knowledge about the nature and context of the women's experiences, to expose circumstances leading to social injustice and oppression and ultimately to contribute to the improvement of women's lives as postgraduate students at UKZN for that traditionally silenced, marginalised, or vulnerable population.

4.3 Section B: Reconstructed storied narratives as portraits

The four storied narratives presented in this section are the reconstructed stories that emanated from the data generated by the co-researchers in the study. All reconstructed stories are written in the first person. These differed considerably in both content and style from co-researcher to co-researcher. However, together they provide a series of events and scenarios in which many women might see themselves, myself included.

4.3 Lona

4.3.1 Portrait 1: Lona the myhna: Leaving home to find a voice

Figure 5: Locating her home from the setting for the study - South Africa

Early childhood experiences

My map (Figure 5) shows that I was born in South Africa. Raised in Durban, I grew up in an Indian area called Overport. Being a Muslim Indian girl growing up in this area had its pros and cons. I am the third-eldest of four sisters. My mum worked two jobs and my late dad owned a fleet of taxis. It does sounds like we were very rich - not so! My mum was a second wife and, as usual, she did not get the financial support she deserved. So, growing up was pretty tight for us, especially to clothe, feed, and pay school fees for four daughters. As I was growing up, I was taught to keep quiet and therefore had to watch all this hardship in silence. It became frustrating but I did

nothing. That is how Muslim Indian girls should behave in their home. Years passed until I could take it no longer. I would get so angry at my dad and question him about not taking care of some of the bills to help my mum. At one point, I asked my cousin to drive me to his house that he shared with his first wife, and threw the rent bill at him. As a Muslim girl you don't do these things, it was taboo to question him on any issue because it is as if you are undermining his authority. My dad got so angry with me and we didn't speak for a week. I could not help but try to fix an injustice. Home felt like a prison for me at times. I needed to fight on behalf of my mum. But I loved him dearly.

My mum is a remarkable woman and at times I wished she was more assertive with my dad. She held down two jobs: one in the day as a shop assistant, and one at night as the manageress of a restaurant. This helped to pay the bills. I remember when I was in Standard 6 - now Grade 8, things got financially tough at home so we four sisters got part-time jobs at a local shoe shop to fund our expenses and help mum. But even though we were in this situation, my mum always made sure that her girls were "dressed to a tea." People in the community referred to us as "Julie's girls" for the beautiful clothes we wore, especially on our celebration days like Eid. Many days, we were left in the care of our late domestic helper, Rebecca, because mum was working late - she was like our second mum. We called her Rebecca-ma. She did everything a mum would do for her children. She would even tell on us if we stayed out till late after school, or if my sister climbed the mango tree for the neighbours who wanted to make mango pickle. She was an amazing human being and I somehow felt honoured that her last days were spent with me in my home. When Rebecca-ma was not around, we girls would have to do the house chores. I remember that I was not particularly fond of this, and would find some excuse not to do the supper dishes. I would tell mum that I had to study. My mother would get so excited and happy because none of my sisters really liked school and here I was creating this illusion that I was really interested in school.

School experiences

When I was at high school, my mum said that I must be quiet at school and not embarrass her by making teachers call her to school. But her words didn't stop me and

I was nicknamed "the fighter." I would always take up fights for my friends when they were bullied or wrongfully accused of doing something. I belonged to the Muslim Student Association (MSA) that empowered Muslim students about their religion and their rights. This empowered me and made me look at life differently. One year, the principal decided not to allow the Muslim students access to a washing basin to make *wudhu* which is an obligatory act before performing their prayers, and when we asked the principal to allow us some place in an unused classroom to read our midday prayers, she refused, saying that this was not a mosque. Her words were like adding fuel to a fire and I decided that I was going to start protesting against this discrimination. I, together with all the members of MSA, signed a petition to stop the unfairness and also asked students to ask their parents to come to school and deal with the principal. We succeeded. When I decided to call for the protest, other learners thanked me and gave me their full support. It is here that I felt valued and good.

However, I will not forget my matric year when I nearly got expelled for organising a student protest in support of a number of teachers belonging to the union of South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) who were aggrieved about the then apartheid government's decision to not increase their salary notches after upgrading their qualification. The aggrieved SADTU teachers staged a sit-in and did not return to class. I then requested the head girl, who was a close friend of mine, to persuade the students not to go back for classes as well. The request was heeded but the outcome was disastrous for me. I had the guidance counsellor and the head of the department of English accompany me home to pay my mum a visit. These were all Indian teachers, and they told my mum that good Indian girls should not be behaving as I was, but should rather concentrate on working hard to get good marks: "She's disgracing us as Indians." Furthermore, they said, what I did called for immediate expulsion. My mum was not surprised but pleaded with them to allow me to complete my last year of school. She even told them that I had a big mouth at home, especially with my dad. So they agreed to give me a chance on condition I stay away from trouble. I agreed, but had there been an opportunity to do it again, I would have. I needed to pass my matric and sought the advice of the guidance counsellor. She became my pillar of strength and guided me through passing matric. She would photocopy past years' papers for me to practice; she said she saw a fighter, but also a winner, in me.

Although school was not my favourite, reading was my passion. I remember I would take the newspaper into the toilet and read aloud as if I was a news presenter, and give myself a mark out of 10. On weekdays, I would visit the library in Prince Edward Street after school, and take out many books of fairy tales. As a child, I lived in my imagination, as a Cinderella saved by a gorgeous prince. As I got older, the romantic teenager I was worsened as my favourite books became Sweet Dreams romance novels - I always took the popular, beautiful girl character as my role model. I hoped, someday, to become a popular student with excellent grades and with the perfect boyfriend and marriage.

But, in fact, I was more interested in becoming a fashion designer. I loved my clothes. I would mix and match my clothes like a celebrity posing for a photo shoot. I wished my mum would buy me a sewing machine. I would have run with the threads and made it big in the fashion industry. But my mum was adamant that she was not going to pay fees for me to become a fashion designer because she could not see that degree paying the bills; it was a job for a white woman. She said she would rather have me stay at home and learn how to cook and clean. This to her was a better investment because it could secure me a husband. But there was no way I was going to become a typical Indian girl sitting and waiting for a husband. Instead, after matric, I worked full-time as a manageress of a clothing store and studied part-time towards a teaching degree, something that my mum was proud of because deep down in her heart she wanted me to study. I realised how it affected her to see her nieces getting educated but she could not do the same for me. I made it my goal in life to become more than a teacher.

Teaching experiences

I work as a full-time educator in a primary school and study part-time. This means trying to fit my study into the spaces created by sick leave days that often vanished as I used them to attend to urgent home and school commitments. At school, I always voiced my dissatisfaction when protocol was not followed. I questioned decisions by management when there was a lack of transparency and when policies were not followed. I could not remain silent when management made decisions for the entire staff. In meetings, I questioned this and senior management team (SMT) would tell me not to overstep my mark. They called me a troublemaker. This did not frighten me,

and I decided not to pen my signature to those decisions. I stood my ground and, in the end, the SMT realised that they needed to consult with the teachers before making decisions. Being able to fight for and represent Level 1 teachers gave me a sense of worth, especially as a woman taking on my male colleagues.

On one occasion, I managed to stop the interview process for a deputy principal because correct procedures had been ignored. This made me unpopular with members of the SMT, especially the men, because one of them had been promised that position. They saw this Indian woman teacher as a troublemaker and rallied support from the other women teachers to stop interacting with me. They even set up parents to go the office and complain about me.

Emotionally, attending school was a nightmare, but I did not give in. Instead, I focused on being a great Indian teacher. In that year, I managed to secure Allan Gray scholarships for some of our students to attend prestige high schools, and organised a fun walk that raised R40,000 - an amount never before seen in the history of the school. I even offered remedial classes during breaks to learners with reading problems. I won over many parents and teachers! However, the following year I applied for a deputy principal post at the school, and then noticed that many of my female colleagues began alienating me again. My qualifications and studying towards a doctorate was seen as a threat because it could put me in line for the post.

To add to my stress, I was elected to serve on the Branch Executive Committee (BEC) of SADTU. I hold the gender portfolio. I was told that my active role as a union site steward and skill in resolving conflict at my school made me an asset to the organisation. Not many Indian women sit on the BEC, and I am currently the only Indian woman in my branch. I think this is either because it is too demanding (we are required to visit schools at any time of the day, have meetings twice a week after school) or that not many would like to be seen toyi-toying at marches. But I do not want to be like other women. Engaging with the BEC, I felt like an Indian woman teacher with a difference. I empowered myself with regulations and was able to resolve conflict and maintain labour peace amongst SADTU members and teachers. With attending meetings upon meetings and all this excitement and empowerment it felt that there was no time for a doctorate.

Life's pathways are not always straight. I married a wonderful, much older man whose interests lay in clothing and, as it turned out, was not looking for an academic wife. I begged him to allow me to register for my postgraduate studies. Studying has always been in my blood; I'm lost without it and it is my best place to be who I want to be - I need to do this for me because it is the only space where I feel good and proud. He resisted, saying it would take a lot of my time from the family and I would not be a good mum. For many months I felt lost, emotionally devoured, but continued to beg him to allow me to study. He finally agreed. My husband said I must make sure that he came first, above everything else, and must not let my studies interfere with his time. I was always made to feel guilty if I attended to my studies, and lost interest and passion for it even though I loved studying.

Consequently, I did not attend scheduled supervision meetings and failed to submit work to my supervisor. In later years, my husband retired and then my studies became important to him. I will decide what I want to do, but if this is an opportunity to complete my PhD in peace then I will go along with him. My supervisor and I were both happy that I returned although the guilt of not being a good mother overpowered my desire to continue with the doctorate. My daughter said I should focus more on her than on study, which stressed and depressed me. Although I didn't deregister, months went by when I did not attempt to look at my work or attend supervision meetings. I was always making excuses to my supervisor. I made sure I gave my daughter 100 per cent of my time, as a typical Indian mum would do. I had told my daughter that this study was to show her that learning and studing does not stop at a certain age. I wanted to be her role model and so I managed my studying time differently. I would only take out my books once they all were asleep, and study into the early hours of the morning.

Later in my marriage I decided to go for Hajj. After returning from Hajj, my spiritual journey to Saudi Arabia, I was forced to deal with issues around my anxieties about closed spaces (claustrophobia). It affected me to the extent that I was even scared to visit my supervisor's office because her room was small, and she would close the door. The thought of being in her room made me feel as if was I going to suffocate - I thought I was going mad. I was embarrassed by this illness and could not tell her. Later, I wished I had told her because it meant that my studies took a back seat because I stopped going to campus for supervision meetings. I lost contact with the study and

when I did return, I was too overwhelmed by the time I had lost. I had to start afresh after three years into my studies.

University experiences

Eleven years ago, I started my journey of pursuing my master's and now doctorate at UKZN in South Africa. I needed to do this make my mum proud. Although my mum could not afford to send me to that university, I was motivated to fulfil her dreams of having a daughter going to UKZN and becoming a doctor of education. I envied my friends studying at UKZN because they seemed so academically inclined, and decided that I too wanted to study at this university. I felt as if I was preparing myself for success. Before adding myself as a number on the UKZN student lists, I had spent many years at the University of South Africa (UNISA), completing a Bachelor of Arts degree, a diploma in teaching (PGCE), followed by an honours degree in education. Those years were very eventful because I was the only one of my friends studying through distance learning, and I was really all alone. The idea of bunking lessons to go to the movies was foreign to me because as I was able to do that all day.

Initially, I failed many of my modules or would just not write the exams, not because I didn't know my work but because there was no sense of urgency and direction in my life. Whilst it took my friends three years to complete their degrees, it took me nine years to complete mine. I was later told by my friends that this was foreign to them. However, it was the cum-laude that I had received in my honours degree that set the ball rolling. It gave me a sense of purpose in life and, while my friends were enjoying their jobs and families, I decided to pursue a master's degree, a level none of them had reached. After the experience of doing my other degrees at UNISA, I was marvelled at how the different location - historical, personal, professional, and culture of UKZN has shaped and reshaped the whole process of my learning. From being assigned a supervisor, attending supervision meetings, gaining access to the LAN, writing up a proposal, data collection, making meaning of the data collected, to writing the narratives of the teachers in my master's - all were spirally connected and reconnected to my self in the world.

However, I did not find any assistance when I first registered at UKZN from UNISA. I believe that I chose just to get admitted. But if I had been advised correctly by the university about the options I had in terms of course work before enrolling for my master's degree, I would have not struggled academically. If I had been told that doing the course work would mean writing a smaller dissertation, then I would have opted for this instead of a full dissertation which caused me grief. I was later told by friends that course work prepared them to write their dissertations, whereas I had to do it alone. When I went to change direction, I was told it was too late.

Little did I know what a journey of self-transformation this would be! When I registered for my master's I was privileged to become part of a project. But, as one of the women in that project referred to her journey as a roller-coaster, so it aptly described mine. I had many wonderful times but I don't think I was academically prepared for this journey. I could not comprehend what a theory was, or which one to use in my study. I lost count of the times I had to redo chapters because I failed to make a link and find the gap. I would spend hours downloading articles without reading the abstract to see if it pertained my study. I was all over the show and there were lots of tears, grey hairs, and lows. I felt like a failure and was at my weakest, which caught the attention of a senior male lecturer, Mr. X.

In my second year, I was encouraged by my supervisor to enter a poster competition which is where I met the charming Mr. X. He praised my work on the poster. I was overwhelmed to be complimented by such a person of the UKZN, especially when I thought I did not know what I was doing. He said that if I needed any help I should call him. This was the beginning of a money relationship that left me bankrupted and feeling abused by this male lecturer. I had decided to call him to read over some work I needed to submit to my supervisor. At that point, I did not feel very intelligent and I wanted to impress my supervisor. After reading over it he said that it needed a lot of work and that he helped many students, but at a price. I was so eager to get this done that I agreed to pay him to read and edit my work, and soon I was paying in the thousands. At one meeting that took place in his office, he asked for R4000 to read three chapters of my master's thesis. I was so bewitched at the thought that my work would be edited to a high standard that I used my overdraft facility to make payment - money I didn't have. After reading his edited version of my work I saw no difference

in the work; sometimes, just a few words were changed. I had the feeling that I was being exploited, which was confirmed when I received his strange phone call. He said that he needed R3,000 urgently to pay his electricity and water bills which were in arrears and about to be cut off. He said that if I helped him, he would take a few days off to give me "a completed and polished" work because, from his reading, my work was only worth a 45%–50 % pass. I felt ill at hearing this and cut the call. But it was the end of a money relationship that left me bankrupted and feeling very uneasy around male lecturers. Prior to that call, recent visits to his office had left me feeling unsafe and devalued and I could not believe that had I allowed him to take advantage of me and poison me with his lies.

I felt he abused me financially and took advantage of a vulnerable woman. Being a fighter, I should have seen through him. I felt like a loser, like a victim of a crime, and conceded to the fact that as a woman I had showed some weakness and was taken for a ride. At my graduation, Mr. X was seated on the stage. As I walked passed him I wanted to shout my mark, "73%," and for which I was placed in the top 15% in my faculty and inducted into the Golden Key Honour Society, an organisation that recognises top achievers. Yes, I lost some sense of who I was, and a lot of money, to Mr. X but I was rewarded with such achievement and all credit to my supervisor who never lost hope in me.

I was indeed privileged to have the supervisor that I had. She has become my pillar of strength and although this relationship was often negotiated and renegotiated, she was the fuel that kept me moving because I knew she always believed in me. She made herself available, even at home, to discuss my work. Besides supervision of my research, and the fact she was also Indian like me, she was very supportive and understanding of the many other issues in my life, which often took priority. I give credit to my supervisor for making the journey bearable. I believe that had it not been for her extensive support and sometimes the tough love, I would have never reached and met the tight deadlines that enabled me to produce work of a higher standard than I believed I was capable of reaching. Hence, soon after my master's, I added another number to the enrolment list of doctoral students at the same university.

As a local part-time student I related well with all students on campus. However, my interactions with some of the locals were not always pleasant and it sometimes felt hard to continue with my studies. There were moments in the lecture room and social spaces when I was left feeling intimated and unwanted. Although all the lectures were conducted in English, students disregarded my presence by conversing in a language I clearly did not understand. As I sat in between them, they talked in isiZulu across me. It did not happen just once, but on many occasions. It made me feel so small. It is amazing that although I am born and brought up in South Africa, these experiences of being disregarded can make a person feel so far from home. I am a very friendly and sociable person and it weighed me down when I could not communicate with other students, so I began to use to "Kitchen Zulu" or broken isiZulu to greet them and feel part of them. I started small conversations and eventually we ended up conversing in English.

However, honestly, it was the students from outside South Africa who attracted me the most. I marvelled at their dedication and how much time they put into their studies. Whenever I went to the common room I was surrounded mostly by Nigerians, Zimbabweans, Kenyans, and Basotho. This room became a cosmopolitan space and the hub of learning for me. The foreign students were so sincere and passionate about being postgraduate students that I sometimes felt intimated by them in a good way.

When I felt a sense of disconnection from my studies, and the guilt of not being a good Indian wife and mum overpowered me, I would confide in my close friend from Zimbabwe who would rally around me with words of encouragement and support. She would tell me that I was given the opportunity to get a doctoral degree but I was opting for a housewife degree. She was dumbfounded because, where she came from, women grabbed an opportunity to study for a doctorate. With this friend, I learned how to become a tough woman unlike my "Indian personality," which was always trying not to miss my husband's calls during our meetings, or was always worried about getting home on time for supper with the family. There is a policy at home that all family members must eat supper together, and if I was late, I would be met with sullen faces. My friend sat me down and told me to have a heart-to-heart chat with my husband and explain to him how important this was to me. I could not at first, but soon it became imperative. I sat the family down and explained the importance of this study to me and

set down some terms, something an Indian wife would have never done. I managed to negotiate with them to help me with chores, respect my studying time, and support me doing this doctorate. I wished my mum could have done this with my dad. It really worked. I did not feel trapped anymore, but more like a liberated woman. I felt touched by her support, and drew inspiration from this to work harder.

However, I cannot say the same about the cohort meetings that I had to attend once every three months. Every time I left these meetings I felt demotivated. Firstly because I would present my work to my supervisor before the cohort meeting, a discussion would follow and feedback given. I would edit accordingly and present this at the cohort meeting where it was then further dissected with requests to rethink and rework it.

I would also often attend sessions only to find a supervisor from another department chairing the session and speaking on a different methodology than mine. Those three hours was wasted for me. I believe that the makeup of cohorts should be according to the methodology used by students, and a supervisor specialising in that field should be appointed. These challenges made it very difficult for me to feel part of the cohort at UKZN. I therefore stopped attending.

My supervisor noticed my extreme disconnection with my studies and advised me to either get a grip on myself and seek professional help or suspend my studies for six months. I knew that whatever decision I took I could rely on her for moral support, time out, and a shoulder to cry on should it be needed. I also knew that she often showed her support by leaving me alone to get on with it, patiently waiting to hear when I was available. And so, it took a while for me to refocus and become re-motivated. It was indeed a challenge to regain momentum. My motivation was taken to a higher level, and I really felt privileged, when my supervisor asked me to present my work in progress at a local conference. I felt so proud to be associated with, and presenting to, academics like doctors and professors. I enjoyed it most, after the conference, when I was able to mingle and establish my own pool of academic friends. This is where I felt like an achiever without having to deal with other issues. It boosted my confidence and gave me the motivation to want to complete this degree. My biggest

achievement came when I was asked to write up a paper with my supervisor. I felt elevated as a postgraduate student.

My collage (figure 6) below tells of my story engaging with the doctorate. I often look back at what I learned whilst doing master's, which was that I had to commit and then recommit to it over and over; I am determined to see it to the end. UKZN has given me the opportunity to be part of its dynamic intellectual postgraduate community. It has given me a chance to publish an article, a chance to reach my dreams and to walk on stage with my red gown and be capped doctor of education. This would be a dream come true for me and my mum.
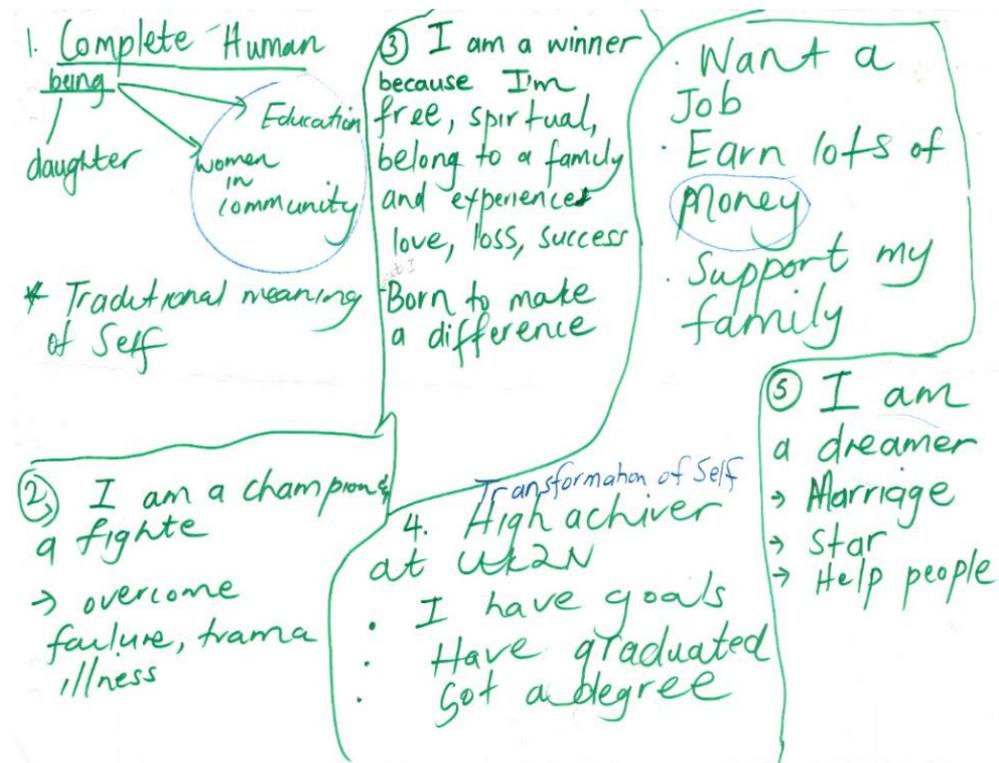
Figure 6: Lona's collage

4.4 Prudence

4.4.1 Portrait 2: Prudence the eagle: Leaving home to fulfil a dream

Moroi

(It means "hello" in Zimbabwe)

I am Prudence

Figure 7: Locating her home from the setting for the study - Zimbabwe to South Africa

It was a sad day for me to kiss my kids good-bye

And have no husband to wave good-bye to.

We were meant to become doctors together

But God had other plans for him.

And so I made the journey alone

Asking God to guide me

As I travel to South Africa

To get a PhD

Early childhood days

This map (Figure 7) shows the country in which I was born. I was born in Zimbabwe from the Zezuru tribe and was brought up in a town called Masvingo. I come from a family of five daughters. This resulted in my father been looked down upon in the community. In our community, having sons earns you wealth and status but having daughters makes the family poor because it is custom when a woman gets married she takes the family's resources to another family. The community would say to my parents that they were educating daughters to go and work for other people. My dad and mum did not get a proper education because it was very difficult for them to go against the culture, and I was grateful when my dad sent me to a school away from home. My parents would remind us that education is what earns you wealth and success and that we should always shine in school. In this way, we would be able to beat the boys in the other families. We sure did! My sisters qualified as nurses and I as a teacher. I was the first to obtain a master's degree followed by a doctorate. When my sisters and I began working we would visit my parents in our new cars. If you listened attentively you could hear the elders mumbling to each other, "Oh, so it pays to educate girls."

Schooling experiences

I was not going to be a house girl attending to household chores for the rest of my life and depending on a man to take care of me. I wanted to be an independent woman. I was therefore so grateful when my dad sent me away to a boarding school. This was something done for boys only. I attended a Catholic school for both my primary and secondary schooling.

I remember my English teacher who treated me and the other girls very unfairly. This teacher had her son in the same class as us and, even though I and other girls would do better than him and I was placed in the top three, this teacher would praise him and the other boys differently from us. She would praise the boys by saying, "Boys you have done it, I am proud of you. Always remember you are the boss in the class and don't fail me."

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Two terms passed by and I didn't say anything because if a teacher does this daily you then begin to feel that maybe, as a girl, you are not supposed to be good. At one point my marks started dropping. I became an obliging learner because I decided that if this is how high school should be for girls then nothing could change. But I was confronted with conflicting views when I related this to my dad, who reminded me he did not want this trend to be followed by his daughters. He said girls must be educated like the boys because education is what earns you wealth and success. He said that we must always beat the boys and shine in school, shine not only with our marks but with our personality too. I then formed a club to assist other girls who were not doing well, especially in English. When we wrote our tests there was a big difference because more girls were doing better than the boys. When the boys saw this, they came to me and asked me to help them. At this point, I felt excited and valued as a girl. However, the teacher was not pleased because she felt I was doing her job and asked me to stop. When I refused, she said she could get me expelled which, of course, did not materialise. In the end, the boys and girls thanked me and I was happy that I was able to make them feel good about themselves. I decided that I was not going to give in to her remarks and never allow my marks to drop ever again.

Married life experiences

While at home, I met the love of my life and we got married. It was the most beautiful time of my life. My husband was not a typical Shona man. He didn't expect me to kneel down to him whilst serving his food. He didn't subject me to societal norms I was not accustomed to whilst living with my parents. He made me feel an equal in the marriage.

I believed that mutual respect and communication made it easy for me to love him and be an obliging wife. It gave me hope as I witnessed a lot of my friends being oppressed and subjugated in their marriages. I didn't want this slavery. I wanted to be free in my marriage. I don't think I would have stayed in a marriage that took away my independence and freedom.

Although my husband made it possible for me to become an independent woman, I was at the same time dependent on him to run the house and see to me and the children

financially. Soon after marrying, another amazing thing happened. I gave birth to my son. *Munotipa ngoni dzenyu* [God is compassionate]**.** When my firstborn was two years old, my husband pleaded with me to start studying again. He was very supportive of me studying even though this was not favoured by the elders in the community. My husband was my inspiration. He encouraged me to further my studies and always said that we should not be too far apart in terms of our professional lives and academic studies. He said his dream was for the two of us to become doctors and be good role models to our children, so I didn't hesitate to complete an application form and was finally accepted at college and enrolled to become a teacher like my husband.

Working experiences

I enjoyed teaching but the environment was very tense for women. Working in a male-dominated work place is not all pleasant. After completing a teaching degree, my hunger for knowledge increased. With the blessing of my husband I pursued my honours degree followed by a master's at a university in Zimbabwe. By this time my husband was already in the second year of his doctorate. I was rolling in happiness, but my happiness was quickly taken away when my dearest husband passed away. I was forced to leave my comfort zone because life had new roles for me. I had to take care of my children, run the house, and become a doctor all on my own! I felt I didn't have time to grieve properly. Being a widow was not easy because I had to take on different roles so suddenly. Taking care of my family financially became my priority.

I had to do something else because there was no other source of income apart from what I was earning as a teacher, which had to be shared between me and my children. I was desperate and took up a part-time lecturing post at a university in Zimbabwe. I even applied for the Presidential Scholarship, which would give me access to more cash but I was rejected even though I met the criteria in terms of the number of articles I had published. This shattered me because I had put so much of my time into publishing and I could not reap the rewards financially. I believe that when they checked my records at head office they found no political records, just that I was a widow, which certainly was not in my favour because they believed I should be at home looking after my kids. Not being a political activist, and being a woman who did not side with the ruling party, cost me this scholarship. I was just not into politics

because it did nothing for me as a widow and a woman but this is the history of Zimbabwe!

I knew I had the strength to overcome this difficulty and as a widow and a woman I needed to find other ways to help me so I turned to my writing. I knew that if I published many articles, I could be invited to conferences where I would be given spending money, which was sometimes in foreign currencies. Soon, I was getting invitations with spending money for my food. However, I didn't use it for that. I remember I would not buy supper but have only the coffee provided in the room to satisfy my hunger. I did this in order to save the money to pay for my daughter's school fees at a private institution. As a lecturer, it empowered me knowing that I was able to do this on my own.

When everything became overwhelming I would recall my husband's words *umuntu akasoze a hamba engaka ghaq* [take one step at a time in whatever you do so that you do not get overwhelmed]. I made promises to my dad and late husband that still motivate me today. I promised my dad that I would study hard to make education my life. My late husband's wish was for both of us to qualify as doctors in education, and I was committed to keeping this promise. However, universities in Zimbabwe were not offering doctorates, so I began the registration process to become a doctoral student at UKZN in South Africa. I felt empowered because I was fulfilling my husband's wish. Even though I mourn for him, I feel his presence with me and this makes me feels good. I also needed to get a doctorate because, as a lecturer, I only had my master's degree and was teaching students doing their master's degrees. This also motivated me to further my studies. I needed to keep this a secret for a while because I did not want the community to know of developments in my life.

It is not easy to be a woman in Zimbabwe, let alone a widow. In most cases, widows are forced to give their children to the husband's family and, in my case, knowing that I was going to leave them behind to study in another country would have made it easier for them to take my kids. But I told my kids that they should not worry as I would never give them up. I fought hard against the community and family members and stamped my authority as the kids' mum by telling them about my plans. Luckily for me, I had my sisters and nieces who were prepared to take my kids in.

My community was not very pleased with me going to work because I was a widow. Many did not want to talk to me and that's not good because you and your family are then isolated. I tried hard not to fit the description of the many widows in Zimbabwe; I wanted to be a different widow, someone who took care of her family financially and did not have to rely on anyone else. When I was at university, I felt less stressed about my problems at home knowing that, in this place, I could achieve more for myself and my kids.

University experiences

I applied to several universities in Zimbabwe. My applications were always accepted on the condition that I paid an amount of money for registration fees that I could not raise because I did not have spare cash. There was no other source of funding apart from what I was earning, which had to be shared between me and my children. I had opportunities to study abroad while my husband was still alive, and I knew this would still be good for me. I knew I could make it big there but I had no one to look after my kids except for my young niece and this place was far away. The closest place to go was South Africa. I forced myself to like it here but, honestly, I was constantly afraid thinking that my kids were far away. This affected my studies because they were constantly on my mind. I could not give my studies my 100% and I struggled to concentrate. Although I had a niece to look after them, the fear was still there. One day I got a call from a community member to say that my kids were refusing to go to school and many days they were just staying at home. She blamed this on me because of my studies. This is not me! I felt that I was not being a good mother, and decided to halt my studies and return home.

When I returned home, the community isolated me and my kids. I knew that I was the pull that kept the family together and if I let go I could lose them. Then I opened my husband's letter and the words, "Let's be doctors together," were a strong reminder of what my husband and I wanted for each other before his passing away. Then and there I decided that I needed to leave my children in God's hand and return to South Africa to complete my studies. I was determined to graduate as a doctor! I thank God that I got encouragement from my sisters who said they would take care of my kids. They were the pillar of strength that I had missed at UKZN. I left my kids with my sisters

and came back to South Africa. I wanted to be a powerful widow who didn't need the community to look after my family when I could try and do it on my own!

I knew that I had to keep believing in God for something good to happen. And it did! I was chosen to attend an international conference and was given some spending money in foreign currency. This money was to pay for meals and transport to and from the venue. I think it amounted to 400 US dollars. To a widow this was precious money and instead of spending it on food, I saved it. I remember, I did not eat supper, I would eat lunch at the conference and when I got back to the hotel room, I would just have coffee and go to sleep. I used the money I saved to pay school fees for my eldest child.

I felt the strain of not having my kids with me, and thought maybe I should drop this doctorate and return to them, but I stayed strong to the fact that as a widow there was nobody else to look after my kids financially and so it was up to me. Leaving them behind was a torture but I had it all planned. Prior to accepting admission to UKZN, I read up on what the doctorate entailed and so I worked out that I would find a topic that needed me to collect data in Zimbabwe. This meant that I could be closer to my kids.

As I travelled to South Africa, I recalled the 55-minute interview with a panel of eight UKZN members that changed my life forever. I remembered that when they said that they were going to inform me within 2 days, I just put the receiver down and started sweating and crying thinking it would never happen. It was very early in the morning when I arrived at UKZN so I waited outside for the administrator to open her office. I had been in constant contact with her whilst in Zimbabwe and was very happy and eager to meet her in person. When I had encountered problems with my visas back home, she directed me how to go about solving the issue and gave me contact details of people I could consult on the matter. It was her helpfulness and kindness that gave me some hope that all would go well for me at university. She was a lovely lady just as imagined, and I got settled into my new space at university.

My first interaction with members of the university was during a planned orientation which was led by the dean herself. I was very disappointed with the coordination of this function. Firstly, because they were not many lecturers from the faculty present to

outline the requirements and secondly, the lecturers present just handed out PhD manuals and told us they were self-explanatory. Thirdly, the major shock for me was when I noticed that, mostly, students from other African countries attended this orientation. It did not feel good that the university separated us from the local students. As a student from another country, I feel the university should have given us maps or guides on how to find shops or even hospitals. We had to find out all this on our own.

As the months passed I found that studying in South Africa was a lot different to what I expected, and very different than in Zimbabwe. Although the fees in South Africa were less expensive, I felt that the education in terms of the curriculum and the content of the courses offered in Zimbabwe was definitely of a higher standard than in South Africa. When I started attending my lectures at UKZN I expected to read more on African literature and expected diversity in the curriculum to accommodate all students attending this university. Even the way it was taught to us became a challenge for me. I expected to be taken through the modules, have discussions around how to come up with a topic, and how to develop objectives - something that I had experienced in my earlier degrees in Zimbabwe, but this was not the case at UKZN. The material that the department distributed to us in the lectures consisted mainly of international case studies; there were no African case studies and approaches. This to me, defied the purpose because in 2010 there was only one South African student in the entire class of eight students. The rest of the students were from other African countries. It was overwhelming to soon realise that my thinking about learning at UKZN was a misconception.

The lecture theatre became a frightened space for me. More like a nightmare. Besides failing to comprehend the contents of my lectures because I could not understand English very well, the local women students added to my disorientation. As they entered, they greeted each other loudly in isiZulu. Once, when I asked an African lecturer a question, a local woman student sitting in front of me, turned around and asked why I don't speak in isiZulu. At that point I felt intimidated and helpless. They really make you feel like the other - not one of them. At times I felt fearful and wondered if I should just return home. At least there, I was guaranteed to feel part of something. I needed to feel valued, and decided to overcome my feelings of disorientation by taking control of the situation by heeding my sister's supportive

words. She told me to be a brave warrior to gain complete entry in this room, and erase my foreigner status, in different ways. I then swayed from feeling intimidated by the language to feeling liberated. From that day on, I think I may have become the loudest during the lectures. I began making contributions just like the locals although in English and within the limits of not being overbearing. Soon, the local students realised that I knew my stuff. They would come to me and discuss their challenges surrounding their work and consult me if they were on the right track. My confidence was given a boost! *Ndiri kufara wena* [I was so very happy]! I soon began to enjoy attending lectures as the pressure and learning brought me so much pleasure. There was no stopping for me.

Living at the residence was déjà vu of the lecture room and reliving feelings of being the other. The locals made me feel that I should not be there and that my place should rather be for another local student. I felt unsafe having heard stories about women being sexually harassed, theft and xenophobic attacks on the residences. I feared for my physical safety because I felt that being a woman from outside South Africa, the local men looked at me differently (as if they were undressing me) and that was frightening. Besides the fear, I had to deal with theft - some of my clothes were stolen. And the loud music became unbearable. I did not have the option to seek other accommodation because my financial situation did not allow it, so I just kept to myself and silently endured all this with a fearful heart.

When I was in the company of my friends, especially Dominique from Malawi, I felt less intimidated. We would study together and meet up with other friends on church days. We attended a small church across the university. The congregation was mixed with some South Africans but mainly Nigerians, Zimbabweans and Kenyans. We, as foreigners, came to support each other and I felt the most secure at UKZN when in their company. It felt like being home again.

Being a female student studying at UKZN has been challenging for me. Towards the end of my first year when we were preparing to defend our proposals, I sensed that some male students saw me as a threat because of the speed at which I was going. I was far ahead of them and had told my supervisor I needed to defend that year as justification of having spent the whole year in South Africa. Only four of us defended

successfully. I was not going to be apologetic for all the hard work I put in, the extra determination, and burning of the midnight oil that helped me to defend my proposal with success.

Even though learning at UKZN became stressful at times, I found some solace attending the cohort meetings. These offered me a platform to present my work and receive feedback. It was also an opportunity to meet and liaise with other students. However, it was not always pleasant. One incident tore me apart. A woman from Ghana was presenting her work. Minutes into the presentation, the lecturer stopped her and, in a loud harsh voice, told her that her work was substandard and her topic not worthy of a doctorate. I was tempted to intervene but, before I could, she stormed out the room. The lecturer then told us we needed to develop a thick skin if we wished see the doctorate to the end. I never saw that woman again! It frustrated me that in the cohort's sessions, different supervisors would chair the session and speak on different methodologies than mine. When one supervisor told me to review my sections, I said that my supervisor had encouraged me to do it in that way. I was told to question everything my supervisor said because I was getting feedback from more people here. I stopped asking questions. This was wasted time for me because I could learn more from my own supervisor. These challenges made it very difficult for me to feel part of the cohort at UKZN. I therefore stopped attending because I could no longer learn in that space. Perhaps this is why I was delayed in meeting deadlines. I was used to engagement with other students and supervisors. There was something unique about the lecturers in the cohorts. They wanted to outdo our supervisors. Their behaviour left me confused. Confusion I can take, but supervision threw me over a lake.

A week before our meetings, I would e-mail my supervisor, who was local, the chapter that I had completed. I failed to get any feedback from her until we met for supervision. When I did see her she would sometimes only open my work then, and only go over certain sections with me, failing to take me step-by-step to see where I went wrong. I was expected to find all the answers by myself. When I was doing my master's in Zimbabwe, I never experienced this kind of supervision. Our supervisor went through our work thoroughly to ensure we were on the right track. I don't think she gave me 100% of her time in supervision. All trust was lost with her, and I approached her and told her that time was against me and I was losing more time waiting for her feedback.

I asked her if I could be appointed with a co-supervisor if she was too busy to supervise me. She said no, but our relationship did improve.

Regardless of the many painful and stressful periods I experienced whilst completing my doctorate, I felt honoured when some senior lecturers noticed my work and potential and asked me to present at a conference. I remembered how the academics in the audience showed interest in what I was saying and posed good and relevant questions. My lecturers were very happy. My confidence levels shot up and, from that day onwards, I grew into postgraduate study and it felt like home. UKZN gave me hope. I sound like an advert for university!

However, not too long into my studies, I began to experience financial problems. This became a stress for me because I could not meet my expenses living here and being financially responsible for my kids back home. There were days when I did not know how I was going to survive. It was an unbearable pressure and a constant source of stress. If my husband had been alive I would not have had to worry about my finances. At times this insecurity killed my motivation to continue my studies. I needed to help myself get out of that position so I applied for a tutoring job. The salary was not great but it helped a lot. Having a job came with its own burdens too, because I had to juggle time for my tutoring load and my study load. I had to say "no" to movies with my friends. I also said "no" to extra tutoring hours because, as I kept reminding myself, I was investing time in my doctorate and the pay-off would be when it was completed. And I would accomplish my husband's dream too.

The day finally arrived to hand in my work for marking. On that day, I kicked off my shoes and took a long snooze. Months passed, graduation was near, but my results were in no way near. Fear, disappointment and loneliness made me tear at not knowing the reason for the delay. Upon enquiring, it was discovered that the external examiner was the reason for the wait. She had not even started the process of marking. My world was crumbling! So the dean intervened and a new examiner was appointed. But time was running out. To graduate or not! I was beside myself. The anxiety of knowing that I might not graduate was consuming me to the point of anger directed at UKZN. I felt this was unprofessional and negligent of my department heads who should have followed up timeously when the delay became noticeable. Instead I had to beg them

to keep me updated. The thought of having to pay fees for another year, just to graduate, made me approach the dean and three weeks before graduation my work was returned with minor changes. My faith was sealed with an excellent examiner's report! My collage (figure 8) below reflects my story of my life's journey on becoming a postgradate student.

Figure 8: Prudence's collage

4.5 Zandile

4.5.1 Portrait 3: Zandile the butterfly: Leaving home to fly with the 'big designers'

I am Zandile

Figure 9: Locating her home from the setting for the study - Nigeria to South Africa

I come from a working-class family
So I was privileged not only to cook
But engage more with my books!

Early childhood days

My map (figure 9) pinpoints my place of birth which is in Nigeria. My dad was not your typical Nigerian man. He did not use his male power to suppress us and did not force us into things we did not want to do. But he did insist we study and made sure we got a good education so we did not have to fall in the cultural trap where women must only be homemakers. He supported my mum all the way to complete her studies. When my father passed on, my mother was faced with full responsibility of taking over the business and running a home of eight children. With the knowledge she learned from studying business administration up to a master's level, she took the business to greater levels. Growing up in Nigeria, we were unconsciously taught that woman should take control of the house, clean the house and look after kids. My mum did not keep up to this image totally and became the envy of the community women because she was educated and powerful enough to run a business - a man's job. She was my true inspiration and role model.

Schooling experiences

As I moved through the many years of compulsory schooling, I never questioned the value of education or school. However, in many ways, I never really enjoyed it even though I attended private schools. For instance, in primary school (Grade 4) I had an awful teacher, Miss Ladybird. She would constantly compare me to my brothers who had passed through her class. She would say that I was not doing as well as they had. Once, someone in the class "let off" and she called me out to smell the bums of everybody in the class. I told her I would not do it. This refusal caused such drama that my parents were called in because it was termed disobedience. My father came to the school and although I don't know how it was settled, I was pulled out of her class and placed in another. I think schooling should be free and exciting, however, I made schooling a little more exciting than perhaps my parents and teachers might have imagined as I often managed a show of resistance.

I don't think I was ever really prepared for what lay ahead for me in secondary school. When I began junior secondary school I was excited because it was a new lease on life and I had to leave home to go into the boarding house. At the same time, there were a

lot of expectations and fears. I had my two brothers with me in the same school. While my friends were working and studying, my interest was to have fun. My priorities were misplaced and when I wrote the junior secondary exit examination, I did not make a good pass and my parents were advised that I should repeat the grade. Unimpressed, they agreed. With shock and disbelief I begged them to let me move to the next grade, and I promised to improve my grades. They refused and so I had to face my fears. The first of my fears was what people were thinking and saying about me. At that time, it seemed like I lost everything - my self-esteem, my confidence and my friends. My friend from crèche days didn't want to identify with a failure and she cut all ties with me. Instead of progressing to Grade 10 with her, I was now repeating Grade 9 with my youngest brother. I felt like an outsider, but I will not forget Mr. William, my English teacher. He was so kind with his words. He would say that I had so much potential and needed to just believe in myself. I had never felt such a deep sense of being cared for from an outsider, and that advice pushed me to work hard to become a successful student. In 1998 I completed my matric examination, obtaining six distinctions. I felt that I owed that to my parents. It was indeed a proud moment for me despite all the hiccups.

In secondary school, I had many expectations of what I wanted to do after school; I wanted to study law but besides being a lawyer I wanted to own a school to teach in. I also realised that there was an expectation was that I would marry someday and raise a family. After graduating with a psychology degree, I got married and we moved to South Africa where I found it difficult to get a job. Therefore it was easier to go back to school to study, which my husband supported me in. He was always 100% supportive of me working and studying.

University experiences

In South Africa, my husband persuaded me to apply for an honours degree. He supported me financially and so I applied to many universities but my applications were always rejected. I felt their excuses of me not meeting the requirements were lame.

My husband, as a last resort, googled the "top 200 universities in the world" and UKZN popped up. After sending in my application I was finally accepted. What motivated me to study at UKZN was not only the fee remission, but the possibility of increasing my chances of getting a job by having a South African degree. Before I registered, I had listened to my friends from other African countries. They spoke so highly about UKZN that I felt everything was going to go well. UKZN initially became my umbrella of hope because I felt it shielded and accommodated me as a foreigner. It felt safe, and I began to equate UKZN to designers like Gucci and Armani who trained young designers and took them under their umbrella. For me, UKZN opened its doors to us young people of diverse backgrounds, trained us, and offered us a future. In my country, this was not possible for all because of the financial implications. Firstly, the chances of us women furthering our education are slim and, secondly, there is so much corruption that there is no future for the young people, especially women. In Nigeria, it would have taken much longer to obtain this degree, besides which, there are very old male professors who refuse to retire and allow the young to learn and develop.

The years in which I completed my honours degree were very eventful for me. Beginning to study in a different context was somewhat overwhelming, and I began to question myself about being a successful student at this university because attending lectures became overwhelming. In West Africa, we pronounce our words differently from SADC countries, which delayed my progress. I did not feel part of this home. The final straw was when I received feedback on one of my assignments. The lecturer indicated that I was not making progress. It was discouraging. It created a lot of tension in me because I became afraid to submit more work and dreaded feedback time.

I cried to my husband to allow me to deregister and defer the admission to the next year. He refused, reasoning that quitters never win - but you face the situation head-on. Confusion, uncertainty, fear, distrust, and disharmony were soon embedded with the anxiety to learn and pass my honours, and created a world that I had never experienced before university.

I met my Grade 9 teacher by chance in the library. I walked up to him and said, "I know you!" I was excited that he remembered me. I was even more delighted to hear that he was a lecturer on campus and a doctoral student. As we talked, he could not

help notice that something was amiss with my studying. I confided in him and, interestingly, our conversations became deeper and more illuminating as time went on. He was my helpline, offering to help me improve my writing skills, and has become my pillar of strength and motivation to continue. Hence, soon after my completing my honours degree, I enrolled as a master's student at UKZN.

I had to undergo the institutional formalities for a master's degree, which were different from the honours. I often heard stories about the administration staff being difficult towards the foreign students, and was fortunate to not experience that treatment. In fact, I have only praise for them because my application process went smoothly. I was a focussed student, trying hard to juggle my studies with my personal life - keeping my hubby and children happy. I consider myself a good mother because I gave all my attention to my family when I was not on campus. Sometimes it was hard and tiring, so I made sure I planned ahead by diarising all important social events for my children. During weekends, I made my children and husband the priority. I gave up some of sleep time to spend quality time with my children. Some of my friends from Nigeria marvelled at how I managed to study with my family around. They said it was too much of a disturbance and responsibility. I didn't see it that way. In fact, it just gave me more skills for coping with my studies.

On campus, there was a sense that the local students couldn't face the fact that we were completing our degrees in the time allocated, and that we were given jobs as tutors - many foreign students were indeed tutoring. They thought we were "rising up too fast" but they failed to understand that we had to work hard, and that failure was not an option because we were economically dependent on the fee remission, and had to find jobs whether here in South Africa or back home. Again, language was a big barrier because I found myself in a class with other students, especially during my master's coursework, whose first language was not English. They constantly used their mother tongue so I just went along with this, trying to act uninterested in order to be accepted and complete my studies. It's amazing how a person could feel so alone in a room full of people. This is what the local students unconsciously did to us. I feel UKZN just got too full of people and they forgot to notice us and feel our experience.

The beginning of my master's studies was very exciting as I looked forward to engaging in a more practical situation. At some point in the coursework I didn't enjoy engaging with it as I did in my honours. I felt it was a waste of time because the lecturers would just read through the same readings they had told us the week before to read without bringing life into the lecture times. It was too much time wasted and I decided to switch over to full dissertation. I was appointed a supervisor with whom I had a lot in common. At our first meeting she assured me that all would go well with hard work. I was very comfortable with her. If I gave her a piece of work on Monday to supervise, she would read it and comment no later than Wednesday. I felt it was a good move because I worked at a faster pace allowing me to complete my dissertation in less than 12 months. Due to my supervisor's support and encouragement I was able to push on with my studies more than I might have, and was able to submit in record time the following year. It was a very motivating space. In her, I found a kindred spirit. I felt success at the tips of my hands.

At the time of handing in my master's dissertation, my supervisor had left UKZN for better prospects at another university. I wasn't really concerned about this because all my hard work was completed and my dissertation was submitted for marking. It was just a matter of waiting for my results. When I did receive my results I was ecstatic because one examiner awarded me a 74%. But in a second, this excitement turned to horror when I read that the other examiner awarded me a 44%. I was devastated, horrified to be precise. I remember my husband trying to console and comfort me with the words "My love, a 44% does not define you," as I sobbed profusely. He was indeed my pillar of strength when I was faced with a situation beyond my control.

A little more comfort was that, when there is such a discrepancy, a third examiner is appointed. The third examiner awarded me a pass mark but I still needed to know why I had received such a low mark. I had no supervisor to back me up or help me understand what went wrong or direct me on how to approach the matter. To make things worse, I was dumbfounded, after reading the final report by one of the first two examiners, as I realised that the only two things that gave me ownership of my dissertation was my name and my student number - the contents of the report did not match my dissertation. For instance, the report spoke of identity theory when I used

Vygotsky theories; it spoke of surveys when I conducted interviews. I could only scream, "This is not my work!"

I approached the research office who asked me to write a letter supporting my claim. I was told that an investigation would be held and it was my decision to pursue it or not. Being a foreign student placed me in a predicament. If I pursued it, it meant I had to wait longer to graduate, which time we foreign students don't have because of the fee remission. Also the examiner could be in hot waters. So I decided to let it go.

Thinking back, I wish I hadn't because, regardless of that, I was still not allowed to graduate. I initially believed that UKZN was very transparent with its treatment towards us foreigners but along the way I felt differently. Although I graduated with a final mark of 52%, I was not entirely satisfied. As an African woman student I thus made my own conclusions as to why there was such discrepancy. I felt I could have been a victim of internal academic politics where the local examiner probably had taken a disliking to my supervisor and therefore punished me to get to her. It could also have been that the local examiner saw me, a women excelling and producing work of such high standards as a master's student, creating competition for her as a lecturer. All the conclusions I came up with made me stronger and strengthened my belief that, indeed, I was worth more than the 52% I received.

I now equate UKZN with a country like the USA. I once listened to a CNN reporter, Fareed Zakaria, who said that China is going to overtake the world, including the USA, in all fields. So the USA is now making use of their immigration powers - keeping their doors open to all foreigners, giving them resources to, in turn, develop the country. UKZN is doing the very same - increasing the number of foreigners making it an "international university" on paper, only! Although UKZN may pave our way for a brighter future, I believe it is all about the choices we make. I made a choice to study here and become successful, and at the beginning I felt like many foreign students felt - restricted. I am not prepared to go that route again. As depicted in my collage (figure 10), I am ready to fly with the 'big designers' and continue to develop.

Figure 10: Zandile's collage

4.6 Thabile

4.6.1 Portrait 4: Thabile the nestling: Leaving home to make history

Figure 11: Locating her home from the setting for the study—Lesotho to South Africa

It's me, Thabile

How far is our journey from Lesotho to the

Beloved land of South Africa.

By taxis and buses we come in numbers

Eager to get make our parents proud.

We leave behind the smell of burning cow dung,

a reminder of families cooking their meals

a reminder of the poverty I come from

but an inspiration to reach the skies.

Early childhood experiences

My map (figure 11) shows my bith country Lesotho. My name is Thabile. I am 25 years old. I hail from Rothe, a small rural village in Maseru, Lesotho. It is a poor village that has no running water or electricity. I belong to the Bataung clan so it is the women's responsibly to make sure there is water for the family. My friend and I would walk a distance every morning to collect clean water from the village pump. It was tiring but I loved every moment of this. Being poor did not stop me from dreaming. I wanted to get an education so I could help my community out of its poverty and to one day be a role model to the girls in my clan. I may look tiny but the boys in our clan dared not interfere with me because they knew I was not a vulnerable girl to serve them. Living in this poor community has shaped who I am today.

In my culture, the entire village is responsible for your well-being. They rescue us in difficulties and always encourage us. There is a well-known saying for this practice: "It takes a village to raise a child." My dad is not like other Bataung men. He became a teacher and allowed my mum to go and study and become a nurse. They both got their degrees in their 40s, and I was the first to get my master's in my 20s. I saw pride and joy on their faces when I graduated. My dad always said, "Child, you found the best possible husband, called education. He will not let you down! Education, will give you the ability not to depend on a man for finances." My dad believes real marriages do not exist anymore. My family has always been my greatest fan. In Sesotho, politeness, good manners, and willingness to serve are values very strongly encouraged in children. I live by the words, *Lefura la ngwana ke ho rungwa* [Children benefit from serving their elders]. They have cheered me on to keep studying further. My dad did force us to study and made sure we got a good education so we do not have to fall in the cultural trap where women must only be homemakers.

Schooling experiences

I attended a primary school in a village an hour and a half from my home. I remember being one of the kids who did not get a lot of hidings from the teachers. I was not the lunatic in class! I was one of the quiet ones. I loved my primary schooling and, especially, my Grade 7 teacher, Miss Truso. She was caring and would engage with

her pupils at a personal level because she knew our backgrounds. I still go to the school to visit her. She once mentioned that she would remember me for my humility. After I completed primary school, my father was in a dilemma. He decided to send me to a boarding school in the Free State, South Africa to complete my schooling because there was no good high school in our district. He believed that I would get a good education there. I was very excited but this angered the elders in the community because it was not in our culture to send girls away on their own to study. This caused a rift between them and my dad. It was painful to see this happening so I offered to not go.

This new school, which I attended from 2001 to 2005, turned out to be a home of horror for me. Being a girl from Lesotho, in an Afrikaans school with mostly white learners, isolated me because the white learners treated me as a foreigner. I was bullied and even called an alien because of my hair and the way I spoke. I feared them and could not learn properly. At lunch breaks, they excluded me from their social groups and because of this rejection I wanted to just get away back home. I feared them but I had to stay there because I couldn't go back to collecting water all day long. When I was feeling down I remembered what my dad went through with the community to send me here to get a good education.

There were some teachers who made it worthwhile to stay. Mrs. Burke and Miss Apple are teachers I will never forget. Although Mrs. Burke was Afrikaans-speaking, she understood where I came from and what the white learners were doing to me. She sensed my longing for home and family and always made me feel at home. She was like a mentor and mother to me. Some Saturdays she would take me out for an ice-cream. I began to study very hard. Some holidays I did not go home because I needed to revise. My marks improved and soon I topped the class. Then the white learners wanted to be my friends and high school was never the same, only better. Miss Apple was the one who made me realise that I was born a leader. It gave me strength to manage the bullies at school. I just stared back at them until they felt intimidated. This new strength redefined me, and I went on to become a prefect. Being at boarding school and away from home has taught me to be independent, unlike at primary school which was just fun and innocence without having to make my own decisions.

For Grades 10 to 12, I had to choose subjects I wished to specialise in. I knew that I wanted to stay far away from mathematics, sciences and accounting because, in primary school, I struggled with mathematics and my teacher had neglected to help me. He would say that these subjects are very difficult for girls and I felt I was not intelligent enough. My mum, however, insisted that I do mathematics and accounting, which I eventually did, but at a lower grade. If I had had the choice, I would have definitely done economics.

University experiences

After completing my undergraduate degree, I was very disappointed when I was unable to find a job, even after looking for six months. It is very hard when you are from a different country and no one wants to employ you. It reminded me of my school days at boarding school. People in this country believe we are job takers, yet we put money into South Africa by paying our own university fees. I feel like an invisible student. I have so much to give this country but I now I believe that it will be better to use what I know in my own country.

I decided then to further my education at UKZN, on the Pietermaritzburg campus. A friend who was studying at UKZN convinced my dad and me about it being popular and that I would not go wrong studying there. So I enrolled. I had a romantic idea of what studying might be like in South Africa. I had dreams and set goals on what I wanted to achieve at UKZN. I was convinced that embarking on this journey would enable me to acquire the knowledge needed to overcome the forces challenging me back home. I am determined to get a postgraduate education at UKZN. I need it to get a good job here so I can help my family back home, and it will empower me as a female to be financially independent. If you go to the home page of UKZN, it reads, "Why choose UKZN . . . we make history, we care for our students," and the words, make history, have stuck with me.

Not to sound very feminist, I have always had this dream that I wanted to be the first black woman to qualify with an honours and master's degree in my community. It would give me independence given that my dad believes real marriages do not exist anymore. Therefore education, especially postgraduate, will give me the ability to

secure a well-paid job, which can help me to help my poor community. I will then be able to do research for my own county instead of South Africa. It will empower me as a woman to be financially independent. I had registered for a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in psychology, and had excelled.

I then decided to pursue my master's. UKZN boasts that they are caring about students' needs. I found this to be true in the beginning, but it was too good to remain true! When I registered for my master's, I found my supervisor to be a bully. She was a local woman and I sensed her frustrations with me being a foreigner because I was not very good in understanding English. In Lesotho, this language thing would never have been an issue. When she gave me feedback, I was sometimes unable to understand certain things, and would voice my lack of understanding by asking her to clarify. She once asked me why it took me so long to understand certain things. These words made me feel deficient and I started to believe that I had a learning problem. It caused me stress. I couldn't learn in this tense environment that made me feel like an outsider inside her office. I loved the faculty that I had registered with but, after several meetings, the stress of her supervision became too much and I changed my faculty. Was it as punishment that my parents sent me to UKZN? It was déjà vu - first the boarding school and now UKZN.

Living in the residence was a big challenge for me as I became a victim of sexual harassment and theft. One night, someone tried to break into my room. I screamed for help. I was terrified that I was going to be raped. From that night on, I slept with the lights on in fear of being sexually violated. I wished I had my dad around. I think the local men looked at us as easy targets. The theft was uncontrollable. I had two laptops stolen. All my hard work gone down the drain because as I had my memory sticks inside the bag as well. I couldn't learn properly for a week. I think that because I was a woman, they felt it easy to invade my privacy and steal my belongings. Was it because I could not fight them back? Growing up in Lesotho I came with a different set of rules and living in residence with people who did not live by rules made my time there unbearable. The locals did not treat us women fairly. At times, I wanted to give it all up and leave because I felt useless in this painful environment. But I endured this hardship hoping that the situation would get better. The experience was a harrowing one, but I got control of myself, thinking how important this degree was,

and calmed down listening to my favourite gospel music. I have since moved out of res and found accommodation outside of campus.

Learning to share space with other women postgraduate students from different cultures create animosity between me and them. I remember relaxing in the common lounge in the residence with the locals to speak in isiZulu, knowing fully that I could not understand. They did not make me feel at home and, instead, their expressions alienated me and revealed that they were saying mean things about me. I was never a suspicious person but living with the locals made me one. They also made me very conscious of my accent because it marked me as someone who was inferior to them. When a person comes to my house they show respect and I, as the host, will go out of my way to accommodate them. I certainly won't speak Sotho when their language is English. Why do the locals do this? Why doesn't the university have a policy on how the locals should treat us? I pay my fees so why should I be the other? I won't give into them. I prepare myself mentally to be brave so I can overlook this and concentrate on my studies.

The lecture room was another space where I felt an outsider. As a woman from another country, I felt powerless in front of the local men because they intimidated me and made us feel uneducated by not giving us a chance to talk in the lectures, thinking that we foreigners were stupid. This made me fearful to ask questions or give feedback. I felt that if I was a local woman this would not have happened. I knew they mocked us foreigners because of the way we talked and because we could not speak isiZulu but I decided not to verbally show my disgust at their behaviour because I knew I would get back at them with my marks. I would achieve excellent results in my assessments and I knew this would kill them silently. I concluded that they felt threatened by us because more and more foreign women were completing our degrees in the given time period and many of us were being employed as tutors.

I am an African but many of our African lectures saw us more as threats rather than as colleagues or students. I felt most of the time that instead of some lecturers gathering the knowledge from our different minds and experiences, we were "stoned" for not citing American experiences learned from the book. The African curriculum would have been far more interesting if they used our African experiences because it would

include things read from newspapers and from sources from home. The curriculum that we were forced to engage with, consisted of American case studies that required us to watch BBC and other international TV stations that most of us could not afford. Most of us had no access even to a TV! And so, learning became too difficult. I would skip lectures because it was frustrating not being able to recognise and learn anything from the curriculum. I do not blame the lecturers for teaching this because it must be a directive of the university, but I do blame them for the way they taught it to us. My lecturer was so boring because he just read from our text books. It gave me the impression that they too did not enjoy what they had to teach us.

In the common room on campus, I felt at home because my accent and the way I spoke did not matter because most of us were from different African countries. This group of students inspired me because of their dedication to complete their postgraduate studies and I began working harder and smarter to reach my goals. I made wonderful friends and they appreciated me for my worth. They came to me for assistance when they did not understand certain things and I did the same. Instead of sitting and talking about how bad we were feeling studying here, we used this room to go over our work and try and fully understand it. This made me feel that I can do this, unlike in the lecture theatre when I did not have the courage to speak in front of the locals and not much learning took place. When I was with my friends in this room I was relaxed and learnt better and gave it my best to finish.

That's why it was very traumatic for me to put my master's on hold and return to Lesotho because I could no longer afford the fees and could not find a job to take me out of this financial problem. Unlike a fully funded student, I had to pay for my fees and living expenses. I was devastated and felt like a loser. I saw many of my friends go through this and it was normal for many not to return to complete their degrees. But I was determined not to be like them. I had to go and reinvent myself. I am committed on becoming that black educated Bataung women equipped with a master's degree. I wanted to work here as a lecturer so I could help my community and family financially back home. On my return to Lesotho, I found a job as a government clerk while simultaneously working on my thesis. This was obviously a challenge, but the experience I obtained was invaluable. My father always said that the greatest factor to success is not financial but good old-fashioned determination. With his words of

encouragement and the will to succeed, I saved enough money to return to South Africa to resume my studies so he could be proud of me.

But I returned with a heavy heart, knowing that I was investing my money and knowledge in a country other than mine; I felt like a betrayer, betraying my country. I wanted to hold my country's flag high. I would love to do research in my country for my country. As I stepped back onto campus, I sensed gloom in the air. There were many changes and many scandals. The dean of our school was changed because there were serious allegations of misconduct against him. A new postgraduate department was established. However, it felt nothing like postgraduate. There was no computer LAN or offices of our own and we had to use the main library, along with the noisy first-year students, which was very challenging because we had different workloads. Learning became extremely difficult and unpleasant.

Working hard, studying hard, and paying fees on time became depressing but I was committed to get this degree now! Even though our department was fairly newly established and swimming in resources, there was no clear and fair system of how things worked. The material that the department distributed to us in the lectures consisted mainly of international case studies - there were no African case studies and approaches.

Studying at a global university like UKZN created social opportunities and many spiritual memories. I have developed friendships with a number of inspiring students from other African countries like Uganda and Zimbabwe. My friends outside academia also supported me in other ways. I look forward to Sundays to meet them at church. I feel at home with them because our accents and manners are never an issue. There were times I made an effort to get to know the local women on and off campus. There was one woman in particular. We got along but the strain of constantly speaking in English wore her down and she soon drifted away. I felt sad but could not hold her back.

I think being a woman is a challenge. Being a woman studying and coming from another country is a double challenge. At UKZN there is this "pull her down (PHD) syndrome" whereby women from South Africa and other African countries are

constantly made to feel inferior to the men. We need to break down this barrier. I think if the universities held more cultural and sporting activities and created forums where we voiced our feelings, it would make us women feel part of this learning community. I think women from outside of South Africa are really determined to succeed quickly and return home to improve their lives. For me, I wanted to get a good job with my master's so I can help my family financially.

It was a tough process for a woman like me to study. Where I come from, women are expected to harvest crops. Studying has already caused tension in my community. One of the elderly women, about 70 years old, says she does not want me as a daughter-in-law because I would disrespect her son and be more educated than her son.

So it is more about my personal choice and decisions to be an educated woman and being able to live with my choices. But it comes with a price! My male friends on campus salute me for doing my master's degree but my female friends at home see me as a threat and many will no longer communicate with me. It saddens me because these were my childhood friends and we loved collecting water together. When I returned home to find a job, they were excited because they believed that I would not go back to complete my studies - also the PHD syndrome. I think it is jealousy and have learned to turn uncertainties into opportunities and ignore irrelevant events and relationships that don't contribute to improving my life!

Although I have graduated from UKZN with a master's degree, I don't think I want to return to enroll for my doctorate. As depicted in my collage (figure 12) which is a picture story of my life, I first came to this university and I recommended people to come and study here, because I was proud of UKZN. However, things declined every year. The political situation breaks my heart and shames me. It is honestly not what it used to be. I compare it to government services! Cheap, shady and unreliable!

1.UNDER-DEVELOPMENT   2.MARRIAGE   6. FRIENDS

The friendships I made
while studing will shape
my present and future -
I met wonderful people.

6.

3.ACADEMIC FRUSTRATION

7. FAMILY

4. "SPACE"

8. SMOKE

9. DREAMS

Communal life with people
from different cultures was
a main challenge.

10. GRADUATION

Figure 12: Thabile's collage

4.7 Section C: Conclusion: Learning from the restory process

Representing all the four storied narratives in the first person mode gave authenticity to the women's voices. It allowed me as the researcher to see the co-researchers as human beings and not as faceless someones. Representing the stories in the first person allowed two levels of analysis. Firstly, the stories involved *what* was told through the lived experiences. Secondly, the stories involved *how* the lived experiences were told. Writing the stories kept the researcher and the researched as co-constructors of multiple meanings that were negotiated because of the continuous interaction during field work and member checks. Writing the stories involved dilemmas where I experienced joy, trauma and sadness. The four reconstructed storied narratives presented in this section did not come out of smooth linear lives and perhaps, all the women readers will be able to relate to these stories. As the researcher it was interesting as well as important to learn how I interpreted the memories of all the co-researchers differently. Narrating the stories enabled me to change how I felt and perceived the women and the worlds they live in. It also allowed me to view each woman as a different person and to learn from these differences. These stories served as a powerful tool for constructing and deconstructing both the self and the world.

The storied narratives gave me insight to important issues such as the women's complex multiple identities, their meanings, their practices and the knowledge they brought with them from their specific geographical, historical and political spaces. Telling their stories showed who they are in these various spaces. Their storied narratives reveal their childhood experiences, their schooling experience, experiences within their communities and also their personal, social, and academic experiences of studying at UKZN. Through their reconstructed stories, it is apparent that the women were constantly negotiating their multiple identities in relation to the dominant categories of race, culture and ethnicity that shaped the ways in which they perceived the world within which they live. It thus signifies the fluidity of the women's identity within their homelands and when at UKZN.

As a researcher, I chose the data to represent the reconstructed story but acknowledged my subjectivity and bias in the filtering and selection of the data. The storied narratives

are certainly not about a phoenix emerging from the ashes, or tales of sadness or struggle. Nor are they intended as heroic examples of good prevailing over bad. The reconstructed storied narratives are not an attempt to suggest that embarking on postgraduate studies is a cure for all ills. On the contrary, it tells us about just who these African postgraduate women are and of their daily lived experiences as postgraduate students at UKZN. When I present the reconstructed stories, I am in no way saying that women should get a master's or doctorate in order to change themselves or change others in what Leonard referred to as the "women's magazine" mould (2001, p. 6). Rather, I wish for the stories to reflect the personal accounts, experiences and struggles of individual women. They are contextualised within current contexts that help to construct and inform them. As with all personal experiences, it is for individual readers to bring their own experiences to the retelling of the stories. These stories of the co-researchers do not come to an end because the stories are ongoing and changes are still happening in our lives. The stories we tell today may not be the ones we would tell tomorrow because we continually struggle to make sense of our assumptions, experiences and lives. In striving to do this, I have drawn on feminist approaches, such as feminist narrative inquiry to illuminate some of these assumptions. As Bartky (1990, p. 21) wrote:

> Coming to have a feminist principals is the experience of coming to see things around oneself and one's general public that were up until now covered up. . . . The scales tumble from our eyes. We start to comprehend why we have such devalued pictures of ourselves. . . . Seeing, notwithstanding starting to comprehend this, makes it possible to change. Coming to see things in an unexpected way, we are able to make possibilities for freeing collective action and for extraordinary society which is so prominent an element of feminist experience might be a counter balanced by a new distinguishing proof with all things considered and a developing feeling of solidarity with other feminist.

Yet while I have found placing my and the co-researchers' own personal struggles into the public domain challenging, it was also enabling for it confirmed in me the importance of uncertainty, of not knowing but instead searching for - and the need for humility in the process. If, as Bartky noted above, as a result of doing this research, I as the researcher and you as the readers come to see any part of our lives differently, then I believe this study would have been a success. Finally, in offering these reconstructed storied narratives of Lona, Prudence, Zandile and Thabile, this study aims to open the possibility of constructing "a different relationship between the

researchers and participants" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 74). The stories are about how African postgraduate women's lives can be and have been changed through postgraduate studies. But they are also about how past and present social and political changes influenced their lives. It is about complexity, contradictions, and tensions; the opening up and closing down of aspirations, opportunities, and experiences - some taken, some achieved and some missed. It is about the creation of opportunities by others in the past for their daughters' daughters in the future. It is also about how we are creating possibilities for our own daughters in the future. As Falconer Al-Hindi et al (2002, p. 114) put it,

> Composing the story directed in the reflexive mode…requires that the researcher recognize and find herself not just in the study but as well as in the writing. She should wire thus relieving discomforting encounters, to look unbalanced and feel jumpy. She should resolve to paper and in this manner to the scrutiny of associates and others that which she may like to overlook.

This study may encourage other women to explore how their own postgraduate experience is shaped by social, cultural and gendered factors. Very few women speak of their postgraduate study as a singular heroic path of achievement. Rather, they speak of messy interconnected lives, of stops and starts, panics and pleasures. Through this study, I hope that more women are able to story and re-story their experience as an African postgraduate woman student in a way that is empowering and enabling.

The next chapter presents the analysis for the second research question.

CHAPTER FIVE: NOT TO BE AT HOME IN ONE'S HOME

5.1 Introduction

> Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible . . . it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home (Adorno as cited in Said, 1994, p. 57)

In the previous chapter, the act of representing the women's stories offered the setting for the African postgraduate women students' insights into their lives and the meanings in and through which they constituted themselves as unique beings. By using the metaphor of home, Said (1994), I have sub-titled this chapter "Not to be at home in one's home." I refer to *home* either as a disoriented state of being or a complaisant state of being. When home is referred to as a complaisant state of being, it tells of the women being comfortable and accepting the dominant oppressive discourses that they are socialised into, thus, making them feel at home. When home is referred to as a disoriented state of being it tells of moments in the women's lives when they start disrupting and resisting the dominant oppressive discourses that they took for granted and normalised. This therefore gives them the feeling of not being at home.

In the previous chapter, I took on the interpretative stance to represent the women's stories because the agenda was subdued. In this chapter, I play a more dominant role by taking a critical stance to answer Research Question 2, "What meanings of self inform the African woman postgraduate student identity?" In this way, my role as the researcher is made visible. This shift is important for my own learning because it opens up my thinking to explain the data. Taking a critical stance allows me to choose the critical moments of the women's narratives to understand the dominant discourses that the women try to negotiate in order to free themselves and do African women differently. Taking the critical stance allows me to unravel and make sense of the complex discourses which they negotiate to make particular meanings of self in the critical moments of their lives.

The critical moments of Lona, Prudence, Zandile and Thabile are extracted from their storied narratives and presented in the form of storied vignettes. Unlike the stories

produced by the co-researchers, these storied vignettes are produced by me as the researcher. In this chapter, as stated above, I take on a more powerful role. I put on a theoretical lens to read behind what is informing the self and the choices they make in their everyday situations. Although in this chapter, there will be what seems to be repetition of the stories by large sections of the narratives, (storied vignettes) my intention is however not to repeat the stories, but to select data to foreground and analyse what informs the positions and meanings of the co-researchers. In this way reading in between the folds of the data of their critical moments allows me to capture not what is being said but what is behind what has been said.

Vignettes take the form of a "snapshot scenario or a story that unfolds through a series of stages" (Jenkins, Bloor, & Fischer, 2010, p. 176). In keeping in line with Jenkins et al.'s (2010) description of vignettes, I chose to foreground snapshot scenarios of the women's particular critical moments; the moments that I chose are of different times and points in the women's lives, referred to as stages. Pillay (2003, p. 81) advised that "the storied vignette offers a space for researchers to adopt a critical perspective in the interpretation of the vignettes." Analysing storied vignettes from a critical stance allows me to understand the womens' critical moments against the dominant discourses, revealing the tension created over the stages in the negotiation process.

Choosing to write the storied vignettes in the first person voice, concurs with Coulter and Smith's (2009, p. 580) explanation that, "in general, a first-person construction lends closeness to the telling: The reader sees the story through the perspective of the character as narrator." Although the storied vignettes give me power as the researcher, they are however the theoretical lens that helps me to explain the selection that I am making and to read through the data, not only in a trustworthy way but also a theoretical way.

I drew on intersectionality theory to argue that when dominant discourses against which the women negotiate and intersect, they reveal the multiple positions of the women (Crenshaw, 1995). This theory helps me explain what these multiple positions are and how they when taken up by the women help them in negotiating against the dominant discourses to become the African women they want to be. Intersectionality theory, in this manner, provided for me the lens to make the choices of the critical

moments with the goal that I could form snapshot scenarios unfurling themselves in the chosen critical moments. In every one of the storied vignettes that unfurls itself is a storyline. I comprehend that considering these critical moments through a storied vignette lens expects me to give close regard for their narrative features, for example, characters, storylines and settings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Barone 2008; Coulter & Smith, 2009). The storylines that are re-presented here are based on the women's own words, but are re-constructed into the storied vignettes that portray their stories of experience through snapshot scenarios or a story that unfolds through a series of stages (Jenkins et al., 2010).

In this chapter there are two sections. Section A presents the four storied vignettes: Lona: Doing Muslim Indian girl differently, Prudence: Doing widowhood differently, Thabile: Doing Bataung girl differently, Zandile: Doing Igbo Girl differently.

Section B presents the conclusion. I have represented the storied vignettes in this chapter as comparing "alternative" in contrast to more "traditional representation where facts are piled on facts, interview quotes are stacked on interview quotes to form a short story (Caulley, 2008, p. 429). Together with the lengthy quotes I also include short inserts of the interview quotes in each women's storied vignette to recreate that lived critical moment or experience of the their lives (Richardson, 2000).

5.2 Section A: Storied vignettes

The four storied vignettes are presented as snapshot scenarios, describing the spaces the women inhabited as they negotiated and disrupted their dominant discourses as follows:

1. Storied Vignette 1, Lona: Doing Muslim Indian girl differently - Home as a gendered space.

   o Scenario 1: From conservative Muslim Indian girl to rebellious learner.
   o Scenario 2: From activist teacher to postgraduate student.

2. Storied Vignette 2, Prudence: Doing widowhood differently - Home as a space for cultural resistance.

   o Scenario 1: From non-traditional girl to obliging learner.
   o Scenario 2: From empowered lecturer to postgraduate student.

3. Storied Vignette 3, Thabile: Doing Bataung girl differently - Home as a space for resisting racism.

   o Scenario 1: From passive Bataung girl to active boarding school learner.
   o Scenario 2: From unemployed undergraduate to postgraduate student.

4. Storied Vignette 4, Zandile: Doing Igbo girl differently - Home as a comfortable space.

   o Scenario 1: From resisting Igbo girl to failing learner.
   o Scenario 2: From successful learner to postgraduate student.

5.3 Storied Vignette 1, Lona: Doing Muslim Indian Girl Differently - Home as a Gendered Space

5.3.1 Scenario 1: From conservative Muslim Indian girl to rebellious learner

Growing up in Overport, an area where Indian people resided, was a place where Lona underwent immense frustration and powerlessness. Her remark, "Being a Muslim Indian girl growing up in this area had its pros and cons," assisted her in making sense of what it means to be an Indian in this space. According to Kabeer (1999) one of the most important institutions in the lives of people is the household, which is a primary place where individuals confront and reproduce societal norms, values, power and privilege.

Like many Muslim Indian girls, Lona grew up in a home dominated by her dad who had two wives, her mum being the second wife. She says: "My mum was a second wife and as usual, she did not get the financial support she deserved." According to Moosa (2009) Muslim men are allowed take more than one wife which is called polygamy. While polygamy is legal amongst the Muslim communities in South Africa it does, however, maintain the patriarchal practices that legitimate the idea of women as property - and not all women enjoy the same financial benefits from the marriage. Lona therefore experienced and understood the significance of cultural and gender inequality from a young age at home. From an early age, acts of patriarchy were witnessed in Lona's home. Lona said:

> My dad was a very strict person. He ruled with an iron fist. We were not allowed to make a noise on the supper table nor were we allowed to play in front of the building.

It is visible that the use of autocracy and dictatorship were used when her dad was at home, to maintain male domination. According to Govender (2001), Natrajan (2012) and Vlassoff (2013) male domination in Indian homes has not disappeared and the majority of Indian women live a life of dependency on their spouses that robs them of their self-identity and fixes their identity as homemakers, the keepers of the family, responsible for the well-being of their children and husbands. When Lona says, "My mum is a remarkable woman . . . and at times I wished she was more assertive with my dad," she is on one hand portraying her mum in a positive light but cannot help feel a sense of despondency because her mum to her represents women who succumbed to the profile and internalised the gender stereotyping of how Indian woman should behave. Her mother's behaviour is in line with the perception that culture dictates that Indian women should be subordinated to their men.

In Lona's storied vignette we see the complexities surrounding culture and gender in her life growing up as an Indian girl in a family home. At the onset, even though it was frustrating, she accepted her situation because she believed it was normal. She mimicked the behaviour of her mum, believing that as a Muslim Indian girl you must do nothing. She indicated in her narrative:

> As I was growing up, I was taught to keep quiet and therefore had to watch all this hardship in silence. It became frustrating but I did nothing. That is how Muslim Indian girls should behave in their home.

Lona's expressions highlighted being at the bottom of social hierarchies along gender and cultural categories (Mama, 1995). It was only when her mum was admitted to hospital for a brain operation and her dad neglected to pay the house bills that Lona sought the opportunity to actively find an alternative identity to that of her mum and questioned her dad, as when she emphasised:

> I got so angry at my dad and questioned him about not taking care of the bills. As a Muslim girl you don't do these things, it was taboo to question him on any issue because it is as if you are undermining his authority. My dad got so angry with me and we didn't speak for a week. I could not help but try to fix an injustice.

According to Shaikh (1997), Jeenah (2001), and Esack (2003) Muslim culture portrays the identity of South African Muslim women as dependent and submissive to men. As a reformist, gender justice activist, Shamima Shaikh (1997) fought to free women to live a life as a full, dignified being alongside men in contemporary South African society and globally. The response of Muslim men is that when Muslim women challenge and question patriarchal definitions of culture and introduce gender equity, they are accused of ruining culture (Shaikh, 1997). This suggests that many Muslim men consider it culturally improper for women to question culture. From her above words, Lona was well aware that certain actions of questioning are not allowed in her culture but she found the courage to redefine this space and challenge her father - resisting the cultural practices placed on her. Adopting this culture of questioning signifies her agency to reimagine herself and therefore to redefine and reconstruct herself beyond the clutches of the culture-invoked home which she called prison.

Using the metaphor of home and revealing her feelings about her home: "Home felt like a prison for me at times," reveals the disoriented state of being she experienced in her own home. She therefore created a different sense of feeling of home by disrupting the gendered and cultured norms that trapped her in her family home. Home, became a site where Lona's desire to change her state of being was initiated and she succeeded in reworking an alternative identity as a rebellious learner at school. She says, "My mum said that I must be quiet at school. I must not embarrass her by making teachers

call her to school," but when an incident happened at school involving the principal and Muslim learners, she forwent her mother's warning. Instead, she took up the rebellious position:

> When we asked the principal to allow us some place in an unused classroom to read our midday prayers, she refused, saying that this was not a mosque. Her words were like adding fuel to a fire and I decided that I was going to start protesting against this discrimination.

This incident that gave rise to a rebellious position and was something her mother warned her against. When the principal refused to allow the Muslim learners a place to read their prayers at school she incited Muslim learners to tell their parents to come to school and deal with the principal against this form of discrimination. Her mum was then summoned to the office but could not go because she was still recovering from her brain operation. Therefore, Lona had two departmental officials from school accompany her home:

> I had the guidance counsellor and the head of the department of English accompany me home to pay my mum a visit. These were all Indian teachers, and they told my mum that good Indian girls should not be behaving as I was, but should rather concentrate on working hard to get good marks: "She's disgracing us as Indians."

This behaviour that Lona displayed went against the dominant view that positioned Indian girls as quiet and obedient (Chen, 2001). Chen (2001) also showed how rigid constructs of femininity in schools are typically gendered, with girls often being expected to be subordinate, obedient and quiet, and boys to be tough and unemotional. A girl who does not conform to dominant social, cultural, and religious norms, including norms of femininity, can be declared an outcast in her community. When her teachers said: "She's disgracing us as Indians," it was clear that they viewed her as the outcast who disrupted the normalcy about how Indian girls should behave in school. Lona's resistance to these cultural stereotypes was enabled when she challenged her dad by questioning him thereby giving her the agency to do Muslim Indian girls differently as a learner. As indicated in her narrative:

> When I decided to call for the protest, other learners thanked me and gave me their full support. It is here that I felt valued and good.

Schooling therefore became an educational space where Lona felt a sense of activism to make a difference to overcome patriarchy at home, the discrimination of the principal and the Indian teachers' attitudes.

5.3.2 Scenario 2: From activist teacher to postgraduate student

Lona was convinced that after school she would become a fashion designer. However her mother's resistance to such positioning provides a lens through which her image as a Muslim Indian woman in a cultural context is understood. "But my mum was adamant that she was not going to pay fees for me to become a fashion designer because she could not see this degree paying the bills. It was a job for a white woman." This clearly indicates that for her mum certain careers, like fashion design, have a secure and reserved meaning for a particular racial group of women. Her mum's negative attitude to her career choice arose from being subordinated to cultural norms that dictated what Muslim Indian woman should become.

Lona expresses her interest of being a fashion designer but her race and gender are not seen of value by her mum. To her this contests with her sense of self. What matters to her is integral to her identity and not being allowed to do fashion designing undermines it. She compromises herself in order to "fit" and to succeed when she says:

> My mum would rather have me stay at home and learn how to cook and clean. This to her was a better investment because it could secure me a husband.

Lona realised from her experiences at home and at school how Indian girls and women have been positioned, she consciously decided not to succumb to her mum's choices and decided to become a teacher. She argues:

> There was no way I was going to become a typical Indian girl sitting and waiting for a husband. Instead, after matric, I worked full-time as a manageress of a clothing store and studied part-time towards a teaching degree, something that my mum (and family) were proud of because deep down in her heart she wanted me to study.

According to Desai and Vahed (2007) there appeared to be at least two patterns that prevailed with respect to young girl's education in South Africa among people of

Indian origin. One of them was becoming a teacher. Indian parents saw teaching as a prestigious profession in South Africa. The state salary and benefits were at the time incentive to creating a nascent middle class within the Indian population. Such a profession almost spontaneously accorded respect to such families and their children were expected to supersede their parents, usually their father's level of education and profession (Vangarajaloo, 2011). Lona knew that she could not become a fashion designer because becoming a teacher was a more secure and pleasing option to her mum.

She suppressed her desire of becoming a fashion designer and became a teacher. As a teacher she took up several positions such as a head of department and member of a union branch executive committee for teachers. As a member of the school management team (SMT) dominated by males, she made enemies with many male colleagues. As she indicated in her narrative:

> I could not remain silent when management made decisions for the entire staff. In meetings, I questioned this and senior management team (SMT) would tell me not to overstep my mark. They called me a troublemaker. This did not frighten me, and I decided not to pen my signature to those decisions. I stood my ground and, in the end, the SMT realised that they needed to consult with the teachers before making decisions. Being able to fight for, and represent, Level 1 teachers gave me a sense of worth, especially as a woman taking on my male colleagues.

As a member of the SMT, the questioning position she adopted as a young girl at home constructed her as a troublemaker by her male colleagues at school - a construction that is not in keeping with the norms of being an Indian women. But she was not deterred. She stood up to them until they finally gave in. Being in this educational space certainly gave her a sense of worth and feeling of satisfaction about helping other teachers. This is in contrast to how she had felt at home with her dad.

This construction of being a troublemaker however marked Lona as an outsider and threat to the homogenous Indian woman teacher identity and she began to suffer alienation from other female staff and retaliation from parents. As indicated in her narrative:

> The male colleagues rallied support from the other female teachers to stop interacting with me. They even set up parents to go the office and complain about me.

But Lona did not give up, instead, as she says:

> In that year, I managed to secure Allan Gray scholarships for some of our students to attend prestige high schools, and organised a fun walk that raised R40,000—an amount never before seen in the history of the school. I even offered remedial classes during breaks to learners with reading problems. I won over many parents and teachers!

She used the setback as a way to become a great Indian teacher. Her positions of leadership has indeed marked her as a threat in school. It was unheard for a Muslim woman to be voted in as the gender convener for the union. Her position as a member of the branch executive committee (BEC) affirmed herself when she says: "I do not want to be like these other women. Engaging with the BEC I felt like an Indian woman teacher with a difference!" Those powerful remarks signify a victory of human agency. Exploring her cultural norms as an Indian woman within her teacher position allowed her to make sense of her role as a woman. Belonging to a union was another educational space where Lona was able to make a difference as a young Muslim Indian female teacher.

While Lona succeeded in resisting dominant discourse at home, at school and as a teacher, her ability to resist was halted when she got married. According to Govender (2001), Natrajan (2012) and Vlassoff (2013) culture affects women differently at different points in their lives. In Lona's life, her cultural expectations and responsibilities as an Indian woman changed when she married. Lona had always desired to further her studies. She wanted to make her mum proud because: "I realised how it affected her to see her nieces getting educated and she could not do the same for me. I made it my goal in life to become more than a teacher." However when living with her mum it was not feasible financially and her desire did not translate into reality. The opportunities, ironically, did happen when she agreed to marry because it was then financially feasible. But she did not realise that wanting to further her studies would cause another tension. Married to a conservative older man created another layer of complexities to her life. She argues:

> I married a wonderful, much older man whose interests lay in clothing and, as it turned out, was not looking for an academic wife. I begged him to allow me to register for my postgraduate studies. He resisted, saying it would take a lot of my time from the family and I would not be a good mum. For many months I felt lost, emotionally devoured, but continued to beg him to allow me to study. He finally agreed, but said it would be on his terms. I said, yes.

The word "begged" tells us about the inconsistencies and tensions in Lona's identity as the anti-traditional Indian woman that she assigned to herself as a young girl. In the home she shared with her husband, she created a position contradictory to the fighter status she earned as a young girl at school and at the same time internalised gender norms. Adopting the position of beggar as an alternative position, was a sign of subordination and being controlled, instead of being free and in control as she had always wanted when growing up in her parents' home.

Subordination means, "something else is less important than the other thing" (Cobuild, 2010: 1559). According to Advanced Learners Dictionary, "subordination means having less power or authority than somebody else in a group or an organization" (Hornby, 2003: 1296). The majority and the most painful aspects of women's marginalisation are experienced in the socio-cultural domain.

Many have hidden behind the saying that: 'a man's culture is his identity' to perpetuate acts of injustice on women in the name of identifying with their culture (Cobuild, 2010). This has even become so serious that some of these victims of injustices (the women) have accepted their fate and see such oppressive culture into which they were born as immutable and sacrosanct. It is therefore not surprising to see female advocates of gender equity being attacked or minimised by their own fellow women for attempting to "tamper" with the culture of the land.

In Lona we see how she makes sacrifices, at the level of self and identity. Aspects of self are surrendered in response to the tensions and conflicts experienced if she did not. Her position in her marriage demanded that certain parts of herself be changed or moulded in order for her to navigate the space successfully to achieve that of being a postgraduate student.

5.3.3 Synthesis

Lona's vignette highlights a number of important intersectionality considerations. As the researcher if I were to explore her vignette with a simple, single-axis conceptualisation, the first challenge would be deciding which contextual position is the primary source oppression or privilege from which to understand Lona's identity.

As a Muslim Indian girl living at home, she was compelled to conform to the norms that she was socialised into. Ethnicity and gender are identities that shaped her experiences and become a site for her struggles. I have selected to foreground those two positions to show that her struggles are fluid and open to change. The dominant discourses of patriarchy and oppression in which Lona negotiated became the site of struggle when she took up activist and managerial positions at school - in a male dominated arena.

Two spaces became key to her freedom. The domestic space was where fixedness and struggles bred and where she remained passive and docile. It was in the educational space (school) that the rumblings began and signalled possibilities for change. Although her domestic space was constraining, her mother became her role model. Her mum worked and valued education and stood as a symbol of a different life. Even though her dad was a traditional dad, he was not always at home. She was able to live both worlds - a typical good Muslim girl and a free Muslim girl. There are critical moments where Lona slipped out of the fix categories of good Muslim girl and woman to take up alternative homes that she inhabits as spaces for voice and urgency. These alternative homes become the educational spaces where her identity as Muslim girl and woman are redefined as activist and as manager. It is in these educational spaces where she felt a sense of worth and of being visible as a woman; these alternative homes became the space for her freedom and voice, where power and knowledge were gained. Taking up postgraduate studies was an extension of this.

Her experiences of conformity in her domestic space served to develop Lona's sense of mission in her life and when she became manager and activist, she used these positions as a platform for change against discourses she was taught when growing up.

Her mission as a change agent reflected a constant struggle when she felt constrained because of her gender and ethnicity identities. By taking the stance of resisting and dismantling the dominant discourses that caused her tension, she was able to reimagine herself and feel comfortable in homes for herself. Lona's storied vignette shows that when the discourses of gendered self and ethnic self intersected, it was in the educational spaces (such as being in learner in school, a teacher, and a member of the union) where she was enabled to feel good emotionally, psychologically and intellectually. This shaped her Muslim Indian girl identity differently. It fuelled her passion and desire of becoming a postgraduate student at UKZN.

5.4 Storied Vignette 2, Prudence: Doing widowhood differently - Home as a space for cultural resistance

5.4.1 Scenario 1: From non-traditional daughter to obliging learner

Prudence was born in Zimbabwe. She comes from a family of five daughters and belongs to the Zezuru tribe, a tribe that looks down upon the female child (Humans Right Watch, 1998, Mawere and Mawere, 2010 and Makama, 2013). This resulted in her father being looked down upon in the community. She says: "In our community having sons earns you wealth and status but having daughters makes the family poor because it is custom that when a woman gets married she takes the family's resources to another family." According to Humans Right Watch (1998) and Makama (2013) the male child in the Shona family is preferred to the female child where males rule females by right of birth, and even if the male child is not the first born in a family. The female child is discriminated against due to the fact that eventually she marries out and joins another family whilst the male child ensures the survival of the family name through bringing additional members into the family. This attitude has seen some parents preferring to educate boys to girls. Prudence's dad did not practise these norms. Prudence recalls:

> The community would say to my parents that they are educating daughters to go and work for other people. My dad and mum did not get a proper education because it was very difficult for them to go against the culture, and I was grateful when my dad sent me to a school away from home.

Her experiences at this school were not pleasant. In telling her story of being a learner at this high school, Prudence remembered her English teacher who treated her and other girls very unfairly. This teacher had her son in the same class and, even though she and other girls did better than him, the teacher praised him and the other boys unfairly: "Boys you have done it, I am proud of you. Always remember you are the boss in the class and don't fail me." This teacher, even though a woman, behaved as if girls did not exist in her class. In her community space there was a certain understanding of what it meant to be a girl or boy. By not acknowledging Prudence and the other girls' worth in the classroom, the teacher was seen to be giving in to the patriarchal system at school. Although feminist authors such as Gordon (2004) and Kwinjeh (2007) have voiced concerns about the marginalisation of girls in the schooling spheres in Zimbabwe, and their views have resulted in some positive strides in girls' fight for equal recognition to their male counterparts in classrooms unfair practices still exist. This teacher seemed uninterested in Prudence's plight and can be accused of maintaining the patriarchal system (Dorsey 1996; Gaidzanwa 1997; Nhundu 2007). At first Prudence failed to assert herself, resulting in her being subjected to this treatment for two terms:

> Two terms passed by and I didn't say anything because if a teacher does this daily you then begin to feel that maybe, as a girl, you are not supposed to be good. At one point my marks started dropping. I became an obliging learner because I decided that if this is how high school should be for girls then nothing could change. But I was confronted with conflicting views when I related this to my dad.

It becomes clear how the treatment by her female teacher had an enormous impact in subordinating her to the patriarchal ideologies and values embedded in their social structure making Prudence believe that this treatment against girls was normal. When she related this treatment to her dad, she was confronted with his conflicting views:

> I related this to my dad, who reminded me he did not want this trend to be followed by his daughters. He said girls must be educated like the boys because education is what earns you wealth and success. He said that we must always beat the boys and shine in school, shine not only with our marks but with our personality too.

It was her father's stance towards education that made Prudence take a bold decision against her treatment by the teacher. She rebelled against this teacher who wanted her and other girls to conform to socially-constructed gendered roles:

> I then formed a club to assist other girls who were not doing well, especially in English. When we wrote our tests there was a big difference because more girls were doing better than the boys. When the boys saw this, they came to me and asked me to help them. At this point, I felt excited and valued as a girl. However, the teacher was not pleased because she felt I was doing her job and asked me to stop. When I refused, she said she could get me expelled which, of course, did not materialise. In the end, the boys and girls thanked me and I was happy that I was able to make them feel good about themselves. I decided that I was not going to give in to her remarks and never allow my marks to drop ever again.

Her teacher, who saw her and other girls as non-entities in relation to the boys in the class, represented people whose actions diminished the value of being an African Shona girl (Dorsey 1996; Gaidzanwa 1997; Nhundu 2007). They conformed to conservative, socially-constructed roles. Prudence was becoming a person who did not buy into the meanings that society prescribed for a girl. By taking up a leadership position to help other girls and boys, she was aspiring to unpack and redefine these meanings, so that her life as an African Shona woman would be more meaningful. In the end, it is her dad's value of education, and her being able to remove the patriarchal ideologies of her teacher, that made her feel good, excited, and valued as a girl.

5.4.2 Scenario 2: From empowered lecturer to postgraduate student

After high school there was very limited career choice for Prudence as a woman in Zimbabwe - either you become a teacher or a nurse (Jansen, 2008). Prudence's first choice was to become a nurse but she could not secure a place at college and decided to stay at home until she got a place: "I wanted to do nursing and not teaching because I admired the lovely uniforms nurses wore. Although my family wanted me to do teaching I refused and waited at home." Prudence took on the traditional roles ascribed to girls (being a teacher or nurse) that made her remain marginalised in her career choice. The fact that she was willing to remain at home signalled her desire to be locked in traditional occupational roles such as homemaker. While at home, she meets the love of her life and they got married:

> While at home, I met the love of my life and we got married. It was the most beautiful time of my life. My husband was not a typical Shona man. He didn't expect me to kneel down to him whilst serving his food. He didn't subject me to societal norms I was not accustomed to whilst living with my parents. He made me feel an equal in the marriage.

Her marriage was underpinned by issues of equity, respect, and trust and created spaces for each to help the other in what they required to do. Prudence's husband did not submit to the patriarchal practices of his culture where the women are seen as an unequal partner to her husband. From the onset, Prudence was seen as a woman who did not believe in the patriarchal system. The act of kneeling when serving a man food is symbolic of respect in the Shona culture but she symbolised it as putting a woman down. She linked this practice to the subjection of women and counted herself fortunate, unlike most of her friends, in having a husband who did not practice this.

According to Hudson-Weems (2000) in modern Shona societies, the gender roles of men and women are becoming complementary and interdependent because men are acknowledging women as of equal value in the family set-up where both men and women have distinct but important roles to play. Once married, Prudence enrolled for a teaching degree, which she completed. It was then when her husband told her to further her studies. He was instrumental for her wanting to study: "My husband was my inspiration. He encouraged me to further my studies and always said that we should not be too far apart in terms of our professional lives and academic studies." She took this as an opportunity to her complete her honours degree. Whilst completing her master's degree her husband passed away.

Prudence's husband's sudden death marked a powerful chapter in her life. We see a happy wife who did not have to fight for a position in her marriage, take up a new identity that of a widow: "My happiness was quickly taken away. Being a widow was not easy as I had to now to take on different roles so suddenly. Taking care of my family financially became my priority." Prudence who had never had to work to provide for her family was tasked with these new roles as a widow.

According to Benokraitis (2005) and Nyathi (2012) the passing of a husband or life partner regularly implies the end of an entire lifestyle where unfamiliar tasks such as managing finances, suddenly fall onto the surviving spouse. Tasked with her new role

to provide for her family, Prudence took up a lecturing position at a university in Zimbabwe, but her community was not very pleased:

> My community was not very pleased with me going to work because I was a widow. Many did not want to talk to me and that's not good because you and your family are then isolated. I tried hard not to fit the description of the many widows in Zimbabwe; I wanted to be a different widow - someone who took care of her family financially, and did not have to rely on anyone else.

Her community was not pleased because they were against widows going out to work. They maintained that the women must remain at home to look after their children. As indicated by Isherwood and McEwan (1993, p. 103) and Nyathi (2012) widows are disparaged both as women and as people. Social practice firmly bolsters the woman remaining a widow after the passing of her significant other with a specific end goal to take care of the kids. Prudence, however, fought back by going to work as a lecturer. Prudence can be seen as a woman wanting to do widowhood on her terms and resisting the meanings ascribed to widows by her community. Although this attitude isolated her in the community it did not discourage her from wanting to take care of her family financially as usually done by the men in the family. She was able to develop her own preferred practices and meanings surrounding widowhood and the challenge of being looked down on by her community did not bring any element of despondency for Prudence. She needed to do what she believed was best for her and her family.

However at some point, in her work place she encountered yet another tension of being a woman. As a lecturer, she was very interested in publishing and published many papers for a university in Zimbabwe. But the pay was not good and she needed more to take care of herself and her children. She then applied for the Presidential Scholarship which she desperately needed:

> I had to do something else as there was no other source of income apart from what I was earning which had to be shared between me and my children. I was desperate and applied for the Presidential Scholarship which would give me access to more cash but I was rejected even though I met the criteria in terms of the number of articles I had published. This shattered me because I had put so much of my time into publishing and I could not reap the rewards financially. I believe that when they checked my records at head office they found no political records, just that I was a widow - and this certainly was not in my favour because they believed I should be at home looking after my kids. Not being a political activist, and being a woman who did not side with the ruling party, cost me this scholarship. I was just not into politics because it

did nothing for me as a widow and a woman but this is the history of Zimbabwe!

It became clear that being a woman was against her as the laws and policies seem not to work in her favour. Basing his argument of this unfair treatment of women on historical underpinnings, Mashiri (2013) asserted that women who belong or submit to the ruling party will be protected and those who did not submit may suffer humiliation. This treatment of women who did not submit is rooted in the history of Zimbabwe and Prudence feels the brutal effect of this treatment when she is rejected for the scholarship.

According to Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2013) the National Gender Policy (2013) was formulated in order to affirm protection of women from discrimination. However, it is clear that even gender policies in Zimbabwe have not made any direct mention of widows, thereby not recognising Prudence's precarious and vulnerable position in a patriarchal society (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2013). Prudence who is a woman is already marginalised by her gender and being a widow she is marginalised further, both as a woman and as a human being. What is surprising is that although Prudence knew the consequences of not submitting to the ruling party and working as a widow, she did not conform to norms and stereotypes that surrounded being a woman. Instead she makes meaning of self by taking up certain meanings that are assigned to this space by using her rejection as a strength to deconstruct the boundaries set by dominant discourses such as the patriarchal dominance which discriminates her for being a woman and a widow:

> I knew I had the strength to overcome this difficulty and as a widow and a woman I needed to find other ways to help me so I turned to my writing. I knew that if I published many articles, I could be invited to conferences where I would be given spending money, which was sometimes in foreign currencies. Soon I was getting invitations with spending money for my food. However I didn't use it for that. I remember I would not buy supper but have only the coffee provided in the room to satisfy my hunger. I did this in order to save the money to pay for my daughter's school fees at a private institution. It empowered me knowing that I was able to do this on my own.

From the above words, Prudence creates an alternative measure to assist her cope with her financial experiences. Instead of using the money to purchase her supper, as a widow she saw more use by saving it rather than satisfying her hunger. Kondrat (2010,

p. 39) who defined strength as "The ability to adapt to challenges, to continue functioning even with stress, to bob back in the face of major trauma, to utilize external difficulties as a boost for development, and to utilize social backings as a wellspring of resilience."

Prudence's strength is in keeping with Kondrat's (2010) definition of strength because it denotes her ambitions, abilities and self-confidence when she takes up available opportunities like the spending money to assist her to deal with her challenges. When she expresses that she feels empowered it concurs with Saleeby's (2009, p. 11) definition of empowerment, which refers "to the processes of discovering and expending the resources and tools within and around them." This is because Prudence is able to take the money and use it to her advantage, allowing her to overcome her financial problem. The strength and feeling of empowerment that Prudence displayed as a widow are moments that are often not told in most literature. When Prudence foregoes supper to save money to educate her daughter and to further her studies it reveals a very powerful identity and shows her positive attitude towards education. She is still therefore committed to keeping her promise to her dad and late husband:

> I made promises to my dad and late husband that still motivate me today. I promised my dad that I would study hard to make education my life. My late husband's wish was for both of us to qualify as doctors in education, and I was committed to keeping this promise. However, universities in Zimbabwe were not offering doctorates, so I began the registration process to become a doctoral student at UKZN in South Africa. I felt empowered because I was fulfilling my husband's wish. Even though I mourn for him, I feel his presence with me and this makes me feels good. I also needed to get a doctorate because, as a lecturer, I only had my master's degree and was teaching students doing their master's degrees. This also motivated me to further my studies. I needed to keep this a secret for a while because I did not want the community to know of developments in my life.

Education motivates and empowers Prudence to discover new ways of authoring her life as a woman and widow through furthering her studies and redefine herself. Though she mourned for her husband, this experience did not discourage her from fulfilling his wish that she pursue a doctoral degree. However, to continue she had to address certain cultural discourses and social practices that promoted injustice for her as a woman and a widow and needed to deconstruct them:

It isn't easy to be a woman in Zimbabwe, let alone a widow. In most cases, widows are forced to give their children to the husband's family and, in my case, knowing that I was going to leave them behind to study in another country would have made it easier for them to take my kids. But I told my kids that they should not worry as I would never give them up. I fought hard against the community and family members and stamped my authority as the kids' mum by telling them about my plans. Luckily for me, I had my sisters and nieces who were prepared to take my kids in.

Prudence defied all the cultural traditions and endured all the family rifts by keeping her commitment to her dad and late husband. Instead of taking the role of a widow that was prescribed by her community, Prudence invested in her ability to resist those definitions. Her resistance was enabled when she decided to be her own pillar of strength and leave her kids and travel to South Africa to take up the postgraduate student identity at UKZN.

5.4.3 Synthesis

As a widow, Prudence was propelled to conform to certain norms that were prescribed for widows in Zimbabwe. Culture and gender are identities that shaped her experiences and became a site for her struggles. There were critical moments where she slipped out of the category of widowhood to take up alternative homes such as a leader in school and lecturer which she inhabited as spaces for voice and agency. These alternative homes became the educational homes where her identity as a widow was redefined. This professional space where she takes up a lecturer position in a male dominated university is where her voice and knowledge is counted. As much as this position was unfair in terms of gender inequalities it provided a platform for her to access resources to educate herself and her daughter when giving her the opportunities to write articles and attend conferences.

Research by Bazeley et al. (1996) showed that students who wanted to purse careers as scholastic researchers in Australia expressed that being able to present at conferences and associating with other researchers propelled them to finish their doctoral studies. Ramsay (2000) and Chesterman (2001) refered to in Brown and Watson (2010) feature the significance of forthcoming researchers introducing their work at conferences since this awards them a chance to coordinate with researchers in

the fields they have selected. In this way, her position as lecturer being granted an opportunity to present at conferences, was the impetus that has motivated her to further her studies. She knew that in this academic world, furthering her studies could mean a better salary.

In the context of the cultural, family expectations of a woman's role, Prudence who wants to be an educated woman is seen to be rebelling. Her assertiveness and ability to transcend these roles is met with disdain. It is expected that she diminish her resourcefulness and conform to these expectations but Prudence was able to overcome constraints that she experienced as a widow when she found a way to be educated in the academic world as means of escape. The professional space then becomes a site where widowhood does not become a constraint. Her storied vignette shows that when gender and culture tensions intersect in different ways it shaped her widowhood identity differently and in her negotiation between these two positions she is able to create a pathway for herself that is to fulfill her desire of becoming a postgraduate student at UKZN.

5.5 Storied Vignette 3, Thabile: Doing Bataung Girl Differently - Home as a Space for Resisting Racism

5.5.1 Scenario 1: From passive Bataung girl to active boarding school learner

Being a member of the Bataung clan meant that Thabile's way of life as a girl was prescribed for her. She knew the behaviours were associated with masculinity and femininity and with how people saw their roles as male or female (Kauffman, 1997 Makama, 2013). Women in her clan were expected to hoe, plant, weed, harvest the crops and make sure there was water supplied for the family, which meant walking great distances every day. She says: "My friend and I would walk a distance every morning to collect clean water from the village pump. It was tiring. But I loved every moment of this." We see issues of gender inequalities played out from an early age in Thabile's daily life within the Bataung community in which she lived. According to Giddens (1993) and Nhundu (2007) gender socialisation is a more intentional and

direct form of socialisation, and it is how children are orientated and socialised into their gender roles. One is instructed on what it means to be male or female (Giddens, 1993 and Nhundu, 2007). According to the Lesotho (1996) girls begin life-role training as soon they are able to carry a sibling on their backs and a pail of water on their head as water must be carried from the village pump for cooking, drinking, washing, and laundry. The fact that Thabile enjoyed her role of getting the water supply indicates her conformity to the norms ascribed to girls of her age. However, Thabile grew up in a non-traditional African family where her dad did not believe women should be subordinate to men and with no right to education. Her father is a teacher and gave his wife the opportunity to become a nurse, something that went against tradition. He stressed the importance of having an education. She says that her parents were the few who were educated in the community. His words to her: "Child you will find the best possible husband called 'education.' He will not let you down! Education will give you the ability not to depend on a man for finances."

Parents are viewed as having the principal impact on gender role development in the early periods of an individual's life (Giddens, 1993; Leaper 2014). For Thabile, that parent was her dad: "My dad believes real marriages do not exist anymore." Her dad's practice of non-traditional roles in his family allowed Thabile vast educational opportunities and a space to resist the constructed identity that her society placed on girls and women. When her dad decided to send her to boarding school away from home, she was excited:

> He decided to send me to a boarding school in the Free State, South Africa to complete my schooling because there was no good high school in our district. He believed that I would get a good education there. I was very excited but this angered the elders in the community because it was not in our culture to send girls away on their own to study. This caused a rift between them and my dad. It was painful to see this happening so I offered to not go. (Thabile)

Thabile's dad did what Pandor (2004, p. 14) called black parents searching for "quality education," when they send their children to the South African education system, migrating from their under-resourced and underdeveloped rural schools to affluent and well-resourced neighbouring suburban white schools. However, when Thabile turned down the option it is clear that she did not intentionally conform to her community demands but was pressurised because of the rift and pain it was causing her dad.

According to Atkinson, Agere, and Mambo (2003) and Lindsey (2015) young women are associated with being the managers of homes, caring for parents and children and placing less value on their educational attainment. Instead of resisting these dominant discourses, her action was in keeping with this conformity, although a noble act, it signified her complacency in submitting into caring and nurturing roles prescribed to females by society instead of taking up the opportunity to be educated. At this point, Thabile can be seen as someone who was passive and not willing to improve herself as a female. Her dad however forced her to go which she did reluctantly. In the first year at the boarding school she found herself part of a home that was not welcoming. The all-girls boarding school was a place of fear and isolation for Thabile:

> This new school, which I attended from 2001 to 2005, turned out to be a home of horror for me. Being a girl from Lesotho, in an Afrikaans school with mostly white learners, isolated me because the white learners treated me as a foreigner. I was bullied and even called an alien because of my hair and the way I spoke. I feared them and could not learn properly. At lunch breaks, they excluded me from their social groups and because of this rejection I wanted to just get away back home.

To better understand Thabile's moments, I draw on Soldatova's (2007) analysis of xenophobia as a psychological phenomenon. While xenophobia is usually comprehended as a dread of foreigners with foreigner signalling individuals who originate from somewhere else or country, Soldatova depicted xenophobia as "the dread and hatred of a specific group of individuals" (p. 113) that can be founded on variety of perceived contrasts, including racial, ethnic, religious, social, or physical difference. Similarly, in the South African setting, Neocosmas (2006, p. 129) contended, "Women, poor people, and ethnic minorities can be routinely subject to such xenophobia (they turn into the 'other' in the circumstance). It does not appear that Thabile experienced physical xenophobic attack on her by the white learners, however, her words, "I feared them" reveal that she was afraid of them. Shabangu's (2011) and Nieftagodien's (2012) study demonstrated how the fear and threat of xenophobic harassment is a constant feature in the lives of foreign students.

Similarly, feminist psychologist Maria Root (1989, 1992) described how an ever-present fear of violence can result in what she termed *insidious trauma*. As Brown and Watson (2010, p. 107) explained, this term refers to the traumatogenic effects of

oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit. The boarding school for Thabile, therefore, was a highly cultured school environment that constrained the learning opportunities for her and encouraged race segregation and stereotypical race behaviour. Her experience of being a black girl from Lesotho in a white Afrikaner school in South Africa tells of her experiences of xenophobia and racism that led to marginalisation and exclusion. Given that the white learners constructed Thabile as an alien because of her appearance, the schooling can be seen as structured in a way that reproduced xenophobia and inequalities that were highly racialised.

Thabile was placed in a powerless position by the stereotypical view of her. Having a particular hairstyle informed the fellow student of what kind of girl she is. This perception from her experience illuminates African student's experiences of racist discourses (Shabangu, 2011). As the stereotype of an African girl being a foreigner in a white school is asserted, so is her position in general social hierarchies reiterated. Through this it can be seen how colonial (or apartheid) forms of oppression are infused through the oppressed groups.

How then did Thabile negotiate spaces for herself in that hostile learning environment to deal with the tension? Did she resist the xenophobic and racist insults or be passive and endure the situation? When Thabile said she wanted to just get away back home, we are given the impression that she could not deal with the marginalisation, exclusion, and rejection by the white learners. Then Thabile recalls:

> I had to stay there because I couldn't go back to collecting water all day long. When I was feeling down, I remembered what my dad went through with the community to send me here to get a good education. But there were some teachers who made it worthwhile to stay. Mrs. Burke and Miss Apple are teachers I will never forget. Although Mrs. Burke was Afrikaans-speaking, she understood where I came from and what the white learners were doing to me. She sensed my longing for home and family and always made me feel at home. She was like a mentor and mother to me. Some Saturdays she would take me out for an ice-cream. I began to study very hard. Some holidays I did not go home because I needed to revise. My marks improved and soon I topped the class. Then the white learners wanted to be my friends and high school was never the same, only better.

Thabile took the decision to continue with her schooling. While she realised that her high school was linked to racism and unpleasantness, it created opportunities for her to rework her meanings about other individuals such as her teachers. Although the racial segregation of students was evident in the white learners not wanting to associate with Thabile, interestingly this pattern of race segregation was not evident among her teachers. Her everyday school context presented limited opportunities for social exchanges between learners but there was access to social interaction between the white female teachers and Thabile that gave her hope and belief. Her teachers, who were all white, showed her care, support, love and one even told her that she was born a leader (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). It was her relationship with her teachers that formed particular meanings for Thabile. Thabile's teachers were the catalysts for her to remain strong, providing her with emotional support and with an educational experience of good quality as she says: "Miss Apple was the one who made me realise that I was born a leader." This helped her to remain focused, to excel, and not give up. Education became a focal point through which she contested the racism. Constructing herself as a leader allowed her to recognise herself as powerful person. Her teachers' sense of care and respect had a profound influence that was a significant and critical moment in Thabile's life.

As indicated by Focault (1980) and Conn (2014) being an educator and teaching influences capacity to hold great and actuates delight and incorporation, shapes new information, and produces an alternate talk and life for students. For Thabile, feeling like an outsider in school was not something to be afraid of but, rather, a self to be worked on. Through relationships with her teachers, Thabile's power as learner claimed for her the identity of a student born to be a leader. Britzman (1992, p. 23) argued that identities are constituted by "how the self is created and duplicated through social connections, day by day arrangements, and inside specific settings that are now overburdened with the implications of others. In Thabile's case, her position as one who does not give up became another space for her resistance. When she went to Grade 10 this resistance was, however, tested:

> For Grades 10 to 12, I had to choose subjects I wished to specialise in. I knew that I wanted to stay far away from mathematics, sciences and accounting because, in primary school, I struggled with mathematics and my teacher had neglected to help me. He would say that these subjects are very difficult for

girls, and I felt I was not intelligent enough. My mum, however, insisted that I do mathematics and accounting, which I eventually did but at a lower grade. If I had had the choice, I would have definitely done economics.

According to Coffey and Delamont (2000), Mavhunga (2009) and Simmonds (2013) schools facilitate gender stereotypes through the curriculum in that they are often gendered. For instance, in Lesotho, the gender role of a young woman was reprimanded for her poor execution in mathematics. What is more visible among high school students is that boys have a tendency to select mathematics as a subject since it is viewed as "challenging," and hence a "male" subject. The shame accompanied to mathematics execution is a result of the setting or social moulding (Nenty, 2000). Mathematics is marked as challenging and is related with boys, while simple subjects are seen reasonable for females (Skolnick, 2011). When Thabile chose not to take mathematics because it was difficult, she gave in to the expectations of subject trajectories girls should follow, constructing an identity given by her teacher. Instead of deconstructing the stigma attached to mathematics as being difficult and challenging so only boys can handle it, Thabile reinforced the perception that girls can only handle subjects like economics that are easy, and revealed her complacency in subscribing to those gender role stereotypes, ideologies and values (Skolnick, 2011).

Gender has developed as the greatest indicator of Thabile's choice of subjects. This is contradictory to the Thabile who was topping her class and feeling like a leader. Her claim that she was not intelligent enough to take mathematics is an example of her conformity to prescribed traditional notions in which girls are defined in relation to male standards and needs: the male is seen as strong and intelligent, woman weak and less intelligent (Nenty, 2000; Skolnick, 2011).

5.5.2 Scenario 2: From unemployed undergraduate to postgraduate student

After Thabile completed her schooling career at boarding school she returned home where her father encouraged her to again venture outside of Lesotho to study. Once again, she had to overcome obstacles before she could realise her right to tertiary education. As indicated in her narrative:

> It was a tough process for a woman like me to study. Where I come from, women are expected to harvest crops. Studying has already caused tension in my community. One of the elderly women, about 70 years old, says she does not want me as a daughter-in-law because I would disrespect her son and be more educated than her son.

A contradiction is seen here as the attaining of social mobility changes Thabile's class position. Being educated and moving forward in life, divorces her from the African identity. However, Thabile's data shows that socially, women are restricted to the home as family managers, reliable with their social position of being unequal to men Letuka, Matashane, & Morolong (1997), Atkinson, Agere, & Mambo (2003) and Lindsey (2015) and the misguided judgments that femininity is equivalent to mediocrity and manliness is equivalent to superiority (Goduka, 1999).

In accordance with this, customary Basotho teachings urges women to exceed expectations in household roles and not to aspire to education from university (Goduka, 1999). Thabile was unperturbed by the comments of the elderly woman and did not compromise her chance of going to university as she had for boarding school. She left Lesotho to travel to South Africa to study at university, enrolling for a Bachelors of Arts degree, majoring in psychology.

Engaging with the subjects like psychology became a disciplinary home, which was another space for her to reflect and think about self. However, on completion of her degree she was disappointed:

> I was so disappointed when I was unable to find a job after looking for six months. It is very hard when you are from a different country and no one wants to employ you. It reminds me of my school days at boarding school….. People in this country believe we are job takers, yet we put money into South Africa by paying our own university fees. I feel like an invisible student. I have so much to give this country but I now believe that it will be better to use what I know in my own country.

As indicated by Timberg (2005), Shabangu (2011) and Nieftagodien (2012) a conviction held by numerous South Africans, is that individuals from outside of the nation's fringes are taking South Africans' jobs. Thabile felt that South Africa did not appreciate what she had to give the country. In the complexity of not being able to find a job and feeling like an invisible student, she is reminded of her dad's words as when

she says: "My dad believes real marriages do not exist anymore and education is your best husband who will make you financially independent." This was indeed a powerful statement, and her dad can be viewed as an agent of change within a fix culture that oppresses women from studying (Chaka-Makhooane et al., 2000). Not being able to find a job, and taking her dad's words and her relationships with her teachers to heart, she then decided to pursue her postgraduate education at UKZN:

> Not to sound very feminist, I have always had this dream that I wanted to be the first black woman to qualify with an honours and master's degree in my community. It would give me independence given that my dad believes real marriages do not exist anymore. Therefore education, especially postgraduate, will give me the ability to secure a well-paid job, which can help me to help my poor community. I will then be able to do research for my own county instead of South Africa. It will empower me as a woman to be financially independent.

As per Abbott, Haerpfer, and Wallace (2008) and Lindsey (2015) girls receiving an education is extraordinary compared to the stereotypical roles of the family and culture. It is further stated that when girls are educated at university levels in particular, this can be the kick-start to a virtuous circle of development where they earn money to invest back into their families and communities and play more active roles in leading their communities and countries. Thabile was motivated by her dad's powerful words and her relationships with her teachers to make education especially, becoming a postgraduate student, means of empowering herself. What is surprising is that the same community and country that restricts girls from being educated, is the same community and country that Thabile wants to help through her education.

Literature does not speak of this double standard of countries and communities that are instruments for propagating gender inequality and the underlying drivers of the gender gap in education, receiving the benefits of girls battling to be instructed. Nonetheless, in the expressions of Urvashi Sahni, an Indian girls' education activist who said that even without the greater part of the 'formative and financial treats' that originated from girls instruction, we should think about teaching girls since it is naturally important to them and is their right" (Sahni, 2014, individual correspondence).

5.5.3 Synthesis

As a Bataung girl growing up in a rural area, Thabile was propelled to conform to the norms she was socialised into. Gender and race are identities that shaped her experiences and became the site for her struggles. There are critical moments where she slips out of the fix category of Bataung girl to take up alternative homes that which she inhabited as spaces for voice and agency. These alternative homes, such as her high school where she becomes the exotic other because she looks and speaks differently, are a space where she develops new relationships with teachers who inspire her. This movement and shift out of the domestic space into the space at Free State opened up another world for her but one with its own complexities because of it being historically a white Afrikaans school. Schooling thus became a space where she grew and developed because her life in the rural area was stereotyped and institutionalised girls to follow particular norm and practices. She would have ended up collecting water every day. Although Thabile experienced discrimination and racism at the school, it also paved her way to be educated.

After completing high school and taking up undergraduate studies, UKZN became an alternate home and majoring in Psychology became a disciplinary home, an alternate professional home to reflect and understand self. Her undergraduate degree and her desires of being the first woman in her community to get a master's degree paved the way for her academic scholarly development. This was the impetus for her becoming a postgraduate student at UKZN.

5.6 Storied Vignette 4, Zandile: doing Igbo girl differently - Home as a gendered space

5.6.1 Scenario 1: From failing Igbo girl to successful learner

Growing up as part of the Igbo tribe in Nigeria within a specific time and place made available to Zandile certain limited meanings of what it means to be a girl in Nigeria. She says: "Growing up in the Igbo tribe in Nigeria, we were taught that girls must clean the house."

According to Friedan (1963), Atkinson, Agere, and Mambo (2003) and Lindsey (2015) it was normal for girls in the Igbo tribe to take charge of the household. However, Zandile was able to resist these beliefs in her household because her parents were not compliant with these beliefs about women; "My dad was not your typical Igbo man. He did not use his male power to suppress us and did not force us into things we did not want to do. Instead he supported my mum all the way." The fact that as a woman, her mum chose to work and, better still, run the family business after her husband passed away, disrupted existing structures:

> When my father passed on, my mother was faced with full responsibility of taking over the business and running a home of eight children. With the knowledge she learned from studying business administration up to a master's level, she took the business to greater levels. Growing up in Nigeria, we were unconsciously taught that woman should take control of the house, clean the house, and look after kids. My mum did not keep up to this image totally and became the envy of the community women because she was educated and powerful enough to run a business - a man's job. She was my true inspiration and role model.

Her parents' behaviour threatened the norms that prevailed in the Nigerian culture around being female and working, and set them apart from other Nigerian households - thus, conferring the status of being a non-traditional Nigerian family. With the anti-traditional positions both her dad and mum took, it is here that we see how Zandile positioned herself as a non-traditional girl and how her experiences reflected a totally different picture of being a female growing up in the Igbo tribe. She felt privileged as a female in her home space, "So I was privileged not only to cook, but engage more with my books!" In this instance, her dad and mum succeeded in reworking an alternative anti-traditional position for their family.

Zandile's schooling experiences were significant in the process of her identity formation as an Igbo girl learner. Looking at her school as a key site for gender construction enabled her to identify the power relationships that defined and redefined

her as a girl student (Makama, 2013). It is these schooling experiences that allowed Zandile the space to challenge agencies of power that marginalised her as a girl learner. At junior secondary school, Zandile failed to pass the exit examination and had to repeat the year. In a working class family, where both parents defied the cultural practices of what it meant to be a woman in their tribe, repeating the year was not seen in a favourable light. This makes her feel like a failure. Failure thus becomes a mark of exclusion when she indicates:

> When I began junior secondary school, I was excited because it was a new lease on life and I had to leave home to go into the boarding house. At the same time, there were a lot of expectations and fears. I had my two brothers with me in the same school. While my friends were working and studying, my interest was to have fun. My priorities were misplaced and when I wrote the junior secondary exit examination, I did not make a good pass and my parents were advised that I should repeat the grade...My friend from crèche days didn't want to identify with a failure and she cut all ties with me. Instead of progressing to Grade 10 with her, I was now repeating Grade 9 with my youngest brother. I felt like an outsider.

As indicated by studies done in Nigerian primary schools (Anderson-Levitt, Bloch, and Soumaré, 1998; Skelton, 2005; Simmonds, 2013) boys normally learned exercises well, gave great reactions, and showed aspiration, while girls were viewed as bashful and not as persevering as boys. One finding was that guardians and educators trust boys to be "normally intelligent" than girl students and there is an inclination for girls students to lose enthusiasm for school and fit into this representation (Skelton, 2005; Simmonds, 2013). In Zandile's case, we see how she preferred to have fun instead of taking her work seriously. Instead of disengaging herself from the gendered stereotype of boys being better at school she maintained and conformed to it, which led to much anxiety, as she recalls:

> With shock and disbelief I begged them to let me move to the next grade, and I promised to improve my grades. They refused and so I had to face my fears. The first of my fears was what people were thinking and saying about me.

According to Fried (2002) stereotypes have repercussions, one being the anxiety about conforming to the stereotype (i.e., acting to fulfill the stereotype). When Zandile experienced this anxiety, her self-concept was affected negatively: "I lost everything, my self-esteem, my confidence and my friends." We see the contradictions and complexities that had to be negotiated in Zandile's life. Her dad wanted her to be

educated: "He did force us to study and made sure we got an education so we do not have to fall in the cultural trap where women must only be homemakers." According to feminist scholars' studies like Okeke, Nzewi, and Njoku (2008) and Lindsey (2015), girls in Nigeria were not encouraged to attend school but to engage as house helpers. Zandile succumbed to this norm of the Igbo identification of girl when she negated her studies and repeated the year in the same grade as her brother. Although she did not want to be portrayed in the image of being the "not hard working" girl student (Skelton, 2005) that was prevalent in the Nigerian schools, she did just that. When she was given the opportunity to be educated in private schools, she negated this intention by having fun. She says: "My interest was to have fun. My priorities were misplaced."

We see how school becomes a key site for gender construction for Zandile. When her brother caught up with her because she failed, she policed and maintained the gender stereotypes about girls in Nigerian schools, and succumbed to the notion that girls are not as hard-working and clever as boys (Anderson-Levitt et al., 1998; Skelton, 2005). We see how school constructs girl students in a particular way. However, her identity as an outsider and failure provided Zandile with what Hooks (1990), following Freire (1974) has described as a "site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (p. 151). At school, although she was complaisant with some gender stereotypes, she also used this space to resist the very same meanings she had internalised, and was able to rework an alternative identity, one of successful student in which she excelled. This made her parents proud:

> After that, I worked very hard to become a successful student. In 1998 I completed my matric examination, obtaining six distinctions. I felt that I owed it to my parents. It was indeed a proud moment for me.

However, it had not been easy to accomplish this. In Zandile's story, the space of schooling can be both progressive and oppressive for a girl. As indicated by Tajfel (1984) and Rutland (1999), stereotypes picked up in early childhood through typical socialisation rather than coordinated learning or experience. At school, Zandile is able to identify stereotypes in relationships with teachers that defined and redefined her as a girl student and reworked her meanings about them. In telling her story, Zandile remembers her Grade 4 woman teacher for her degrading attitude towards her when she says:

> She would constantly compare me to my brothers who had passed through her class. She would say that I was not doing as well as they had. Once, someone in the class "let off" and she called me out to smell the bums of everybody in the class. I told her I would not do it.

A study done by Mungai (2002) in schools in developing countries, reads that the majority of time at school is spent with teachers, so they are influential role models. It goes on to say that teachers' attitudes send multiple gendered messages through the curriculum and organisational decisions and actions, and construct girl students as the less favoured students in school. We see that although this Grade 4 teacher was a woman, her behaviour fostered discrimination towards Zandile. This teacher who saw her as inferior to her brothers and had a "smell the bum" attitude, represented people whose behaviour diminished the value of being a woman. She conformed to traditional norms and socially-constructed roles towards the value of woman. However, Zandile's refusal to act on her demand saw her as person who did not buy into the meanings that society prescribed for a woman. Rather, she was aspiring to unpack and redefine these meanings so that her life as a woman would be more meaningful.

Whist her female teacher reacted in that way, it was Zandile's male English teacher who offered her some sense of worth and the platform for her to believe in herself. He showed her care and support and, thus, the relationship was one of care, support, love, and understanding (Gilligan, 1982; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Nieto, 2003). The practices enacted by this teacher gave form to particular meanings and practices:

> I will not forget Mr. William, my English teacher. He was so kind with his words. He would say that I had so much potential and needed to just believe in myself. I had never felt such a deep sense of being cared for.

In the above extract, Zandile imparts to us cases of where she held expectation and faith. At high school she perceived herself as being approached with deference and a profound feeling of caring. The teachers's care offered Zandile to look past the circumstances.

The educator's responsibility to her is a noteworthy and significant moment in Zandile's life. Through specific connections, Zandile could see herself not as a

disallowing and denying power, but rather profitably including new routes for her to be known and comprehended (Lawler, 2008). She therefore appreciated her English male teacher for being supportive and encouraging her, a female learner - something that her female Grade 4 teacher neglected to display. Here, we understand the complex and multiple dimensions of Zandile's life as negotiated daily within a range of forces and factors.

The ways in which Zandile's world was actively constructed as a learner enabled me to understand the different meanings it represented (Hargreaves, 1994). It was her father's value for education and her relationship with her teacher that enabled her to do Igbo girl differently.

5.6.2 Scenario 2: From successful learner to postgraduate student

As a girl student, Zandile resisted meanings that oppress women in Nigeria by not seeing herself as cooking only, but as someone who wanted to engage with her books. Inside her community that propagated specific inclinations for being women and part of the community, Zandile could keep her identity in a place outside the onerous and customary connections. Through various social developments inside the school, she could reclassify herself as one with power and information to support herself, and to develop new implications of the world and the kind of person she wanted to be. Zandile acknowledged that becoming a wife gave a different meaning for herself as a Nigerian woman and she was able to take on the postgraduate student identity.

As indicated by Owolabi and Olatunde (2005) there is a well known saying in Nigeria that expresses "women's education terminates in the kitchen," suggesting that education is not helpful to them - as it were, education is not intended for them. This is additionally exacerbated when women marry, and soon thereafter the odds of then pursing an education are extremely unlikely. Women, particularly wedded women are consigned to the kitchen and their significant part is bearing and taking care of kids (Abe, 1987; Okeke, 2001). As indicated by Falola (2001) and Ngudu (2014) it is to a great extent that once African women are married and live in their spouse's home, they have no requirement for education and their spouses will accommodate their needs.

But we see how relationships with her dad and husband's value for education made it easy for Zandile not to succumb to the stereotypical gendered role of women and be pressured to conform to traditional practices and roles. These men rendered her a life boat in that they were anti-traditional and believed that women should study and work. She says in interview segments:

> After graduating with a psychology degree, I got married and we moved to South Africa where I found it difficult to get a job. Therefore, it was easier to go back to school to study, which my husband supported me in. He was always 100% supportive of me working and studying...My dad was not your typical Nigerian man. He did not use his male power to suppress us and did not force us into things we did not want to do. But he did insist we study and made sure we got a good education so we did not have to fall in the cultural trap where women must only be homemakers.

From the above data segments, it is clear that the motivation to pursue her studies were because of the men in her life who were making new cultures and traditional values for her future, where previously, men created a culture and set of traditional values that did not include women. It is because of their progressiveness, believing that education was important, that Zandile created an alternative identity that disrupted the established gender meanings, traditional roles and identity of wife and mother allocated to her by society. She created new meanings for herself when she opted to become a postgraduate student, enrolling to study for a master's degree, thereby going against the norm for the women of the Igbo tribe and redefined the role and expectations of being female. This stance of hers went against what Breder (2003) said about married Nigerian women: that they made no or little attempt to enroll in higher education.

In terms of motivation, Zandile embarked on postgraduate education at UKZN to improve her chances of getting a job:

> My husband, as a last resort, googled the "top 200 universities in the world" and UKZN popped up. After sending in my application I was finally accepted. What motivated me to study at UKZN was not only the fee remission, but the possibility of increasing my chances of getting a job by having a South African degree. Before I registered, I had listened to my friends from other African countries. They spoke highly about UKZN.

This finding is similar to what Hughes (2002) and Martinez, Aleman, and Renn (2002) noted in terms of higher education providing opportunities for women for economic development. It is apparent that Zandile believed she had a chance of better economic prospects through postgraduate study at UKZN, and she was thereby also unconsciously resisting the stereotypes prevalent for women in Nigeria by taking up the anti-traditional role and identity of wife and mother that was allocated to her by society. According to Jude (1993) times have changed and it is therefore difficult if not impossible to force any Igbo woman down against her will to serve as a full-time housewife. Thus, Zandile growing up in a household where her mother resisted the socially-constructed feminine roles, she took the same stance. This actively shaped her own life and redefined the meanings and practices that the category woman signified. She redefined the role and expectations of being female by using her family and home as the space to disrupt the established gender meanings, creating new meanings for herself, opting to become a postgraduate student and, thereby going against the norm for the women of the Igbo tribe.

5.6.3 Synthesis

As an Igbo girl at home, Zandile was surrounded by significant people like her dad who did not follow traditional norms. At school, she was stifled because her version of girl when growing up in her parents' home was different to what her female teacher's version of girl was. She found school oppressive when she was told to smell the bums of other learners to see who let off, and refused. This critical moment where she resisted the definition of girl fixed by her teacher gave her space for voice and agency to do schooling differently. At school she was belittled and undermined by her teacher (who was reproducing stereotypes) because she did not fit into the category of typical girl as per cultural societal definitions. From Figure 16 above, gender and culture are identities that shaped her experiences and became a site for her struggles. In school, she experienced exploitation and subversion from her teacher, which became the site of struggle. However, when she studied psychology at university it became an alternative professional home where her identity as Igbo girl was redefined. Her values of non-traditional practices that prevailed in the home she shared with her parents shaped her choice of husband. She married a man who encouraged her to

further her studies. Through particular relationships with her dad, high school teacher, and husband, Zandile was able to see herself as not being in a forbidding and denying force, but in a productive way involving new ways for her to be known and understood (Lawler, 2008).

5.7 Section B: Conclusion

5.7.1 Conclusion

Intersectionality describes how race, culture, ethnicity and gender interacted with each other to create a specific experience for the women. This was particularly evident in the behaviours and interactions from the women within specific contexts. Although they were all women and they all suffered a specific oppression, it was evident that at times there were stronger, elevated voices and weaker, stifled voices. More importantly what was very visible in the analysis is that gender was the common site for struggle and it opened up other positions that the women took up to resist traditional norms. As gender overlapped with the other positions, it enabled the women to construct different meaning of self which they negotiated against and within those other positions - being culture, race and ethnicity.

While Sokoloff and Pratt (2005) and Lockhart and Danis (2010) used intersectionality theory to explain the diverse experiences of abused women, this study has adopted the theoretical proposition to understand what meanings of African women's self, informs their postgraduate student identity. The theory argues that race, culture, gender and ethnicity are socially and historically constructed Crenshaw (1994) and further states that when these discourses intersect, the complexity surrounding those making choices is exposed. This theoretical approach empowered me to perceive that while gender imbalance was a significant aspect in the lives of Lona, Prudence, Thabile and Zandile, it was nevertheless changed by its convergence with other critical moments and could provide a theoretical clarification for the different spheres, as racial discrimination and social and ethnicity supremacy that appeared to exist along-side being a woman. It may appear glaringly evident that a women's lived experience must make noticeable all the multifaceted truths which exist together and cooperate, along these lines

deciding her general experiences, yet persecution against women cannot be perused through the lens of gender alone (Lipsitz-Bem, 1993).

Although perceived in the analysis that oppression against women cannot be perused through the lens of gender alone, the analysis also showed women in the study became collaborators in their own oppression (Hook, 2012). According to Becker (2010) internalisation was a possible explanation. Internalisation is the process of adopting social norms and values into one's own identity (Becker, 2010). Although women's experiences of oppression were different and diverse, mediated by discourses of gender, race, ethnicity and culture, at critical moments in their lives some women became submissive to their fathers, teachers, spouses and tradition and thus became responsible in the maintenance and upholding the oppression placed on women.

So, the question then becomes, why do some women partake in the maintenance of upholding these oppressions? It is possible that women adopt these actions unknowingly and these lowered expectations act as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Ramphele, 1990). Fanon (2008) explains it eloquently in relation to oppression; however, it can easily be translated to gender inequality. It was likewise essential to consider the converging factors that formed the living truths of the African women affected; reality, for example, race, ethnicity and culture figured out what implications of self they built for themselves (Lockhart & Danis, 2010). Intersectionality theory therefore presented a new way of understanding lives of African postgraduate women students.

The analysis further revealed that when negotiation took place, it gave us a glimpse of educational spaces where there was emotional, psychological and intellectual fulfilment where the women felt a sense of worth. It was these educational spaces that became a site of struggle to do African women differently. In the end, we come to a common conclusion as to what made them want to take up the identity of postgraduate students at UKZN. The impetus for them becoming postgraduate students stemmed from their parents' value for education that was passed on to the women and from their relationships with significant others such as teachers and husbands. Education provided the space for the women to feel a sense of worth and to challenge certain identity roles in either a subtle or loud voice.

The analysis also deepened for me in the alternate homes the women took up in resisting what home traditionally meant to them. When the African postgraduate women students moved beyond the confines of their traditional homes they constantly sought out new understandings and insight, forging new ways of coping with problems and challenges that confronted them in the various new spaces they called home. The analysis shows that there are different ways in which these women managed those challenges for change and transformation.

There were, in other words, different ways of dismantling and setting up homes. We see in the storied vignettes of Lona, Prudence, Thabile and Zandile, the unique positions in which they engage to make meanings of the self and to overturn the paralysing circumstances in which they found themselves. These circumstances in the women's battles were significant. To decline alterity, in the same way as other women do, is nearly to be buried, yet, numerous select this line of minimum obstruction. Each circumstance, as indicated by Said (2004) is a challenge between a ground-breaking system of interests from one perspective and, on alternate, less intense interests debilitated with dissatisfaction, quietness, consolidation, or termination by the powerful. The test is to turn around this situation. The analysis shows that women challenged dominant discourses like patriarchy, xenophobia, and widowhood narrated what women they should be - in oppressive, traditional, and conservative ways.

Therefore, not only does a multiplicity of identities arise but that also in order to integrate them with the cultural, race and ethnicity positions attained into one's self-concept, sacrifices and compromises were made in identity. The women negotiate the various discourses within the different contexts they reside in that inform their positions; adhering to the requirements of each in order to find a sense of belonging. The women then use techniques of the self, in their identity construction process, to understand their positions and allow for the integration of this into their identity (Atkins, 2005). Using Intersectionality theory therefore revealed how women's identities intersected and collided to foreground their educational identity, "who am I", in terms of the postgraduate student.

The following chapter 6 thus provides an analysis of what shapes "the way I am" when responding to Research Question 3: **"What are African women's experiences of postgraduate study at a South African university."**

CHAPTER SIX: ACADEMIA AS A SITE FOR EXPERIENCING WOMAN'S INTELLECTUAL SELF

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the analysis of Research Question 2. The analysis revealed how the APWSs negotiated dominant discourses such as gender, culture, race, and ethnicity, which contributed to the women's educational identity that of the postgraduate student.

In this chapter, responding to Research Question 3 ("What are African women's experiences of postgraduate study at a South African university?") provides an analysis of what shapes the postgraduate student identity in terms of their educational experiences at university. I draw on Sen's (1993) capabilities approach and Edward Said's (1994) Notion of the Intellectual to analyse APWSs' experiences.

Sen (1999, p. 502) indicated that "development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom." This infers that the removal of freedom is an aftereffect of imposing governance. He contended that, with the end goal for women to discover freedom, they should first evacuate their source of unfreedom to reach a sense of well being. Sen (1993) utilised centre ideas, for example, functionings, which allude to the condition of a person, especially the being and doings that prompt an esteemed life. These functionings can be dispensed into three categories: personal (e.g., metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skill, intelligence), social (e.g., public policies, social norms, gender roles, power relations, societal hierarchies), and environmental (e.g., climate, geographical location). These categories will be utilised to build up the themes in this study keeping in mind the end goal which is to translate the African women's postgraduate learning experiences. These categories will be used to develop the themes in this study in order to interpret the African women's postgraduate learning experiences.

In addition, I want to analyse the women's postgraduate experiences in order to make sense of the personal and social contexts of the women and how they removed the

sources of their unfreedom that constrained them in the challenging and complex environment of pursuing their journeys as intellectuals. To assist me in understanding who the African women intellectual is, I draw on Edward Said. Using Edward Said's (1994) Notion of the Intellectual will allow me to read the APWSs' professional experience from an intellectual lens to show how these women developed their scholarly identity in ways that break stereotypes, disturb the status quo, and take risk in order to go beyond the easy certainties provided by the complex and challenging environment (UKZN).

Sen (1993) expressed that keeping in mind the end goal to acquire to achieve your coveted objectives, there must be opportunities and freedoms to select, which are subject to individual personal experiences, the institutional environment experiences, and the social experiences of the students. Thus, it is not adequate to know about the good that an individual has or could use to accomplish certain wants - it is basic in the Capabilities Approach to discover considerably more about the individual's experience and the conditions in which she is living and experiences that impact her being and doings (Robeyns, 2005). People must be capable or be empowered to carry on with the existence they have chosen to select. According to Robeyns (2005) and Crocker and Robeyns (2010) the realisation of their desires is influenced by three groups of conversion factors, namely personal, social and environmental practices which will be discussed in the next three sections.

6.2 Section A: Personal Practices

This section relates to the women's personal practices that shaped their ability to cope with their postgraduate studies and their personal experiences of studying at UKZN are foregrounded. I will use Sen's (1993) personal category to highlight the women's feelings and experiences and the ways they chose to act on those feelings in order to determine their well-being. Walker (2005, p. 104) explained that the Capabilities Approach is based on "reason to value," which means it is essential for people to make an informed decision on living the life they value. As such, this section emphasises the choices (freedoms) that the women made in choosing to be what they valued, taking into consideration how they negotiated tensions in their domestic and academic homes

that fostered or hindered their well-being and learning at UKZN. The themes that emerged regarding womens' personal experiences are listed below and will be discussed further.

- Theme 1: Negotiating the tensions of motherhood
- Theme 2: Negotiating and maintaining relationships
- Theme 3: Managing the men in their lives
- Theme 4: Managing health issues

These have been categorised under the theme of personal experiences because the women have identified them as key personal issues that were reasons for them not coping with their postgraduate studies.

6.2.1 Theme 1: Negotiating the tensions of motherhood

According to Carter, Blumenstein, and Cook (2013, p. 341) "the longing to enact a personality of a 'good mother' administers women's choices about the fitting allotment of time and exertion, which thus impacts upon stress. The three African women who had children, declared that it was difficult to be a mum and study at the same time:

> The guilt of not being a good mother overpowered my desire to continue with the doctorate. My daughter said I should focus more on her than on study, which stressed and depressed me.

For Lona being a mum was extremely challenging because of the cultural expectations and responsibilities for an Indian mum. According to Golde and Dore (2001) mental distress that involves feelings of guilt, stress, exhaustion, and anxiety have a negative impact, and often lead to a lack of interest in the study, as happened to Lona.

According to Sen (1993) well-being is defined in terms of functionings or states of a person which make it possible to distinguish between different categories (mental and physical states). When Lona's mental state of feeling guilty and depressed paved the way for her to put her studies aside and concentrate on giving her daughter more of her time, shes gives into her emotional well-being to feel good as a mother, instead of

the intelluctual well-being that she craved for. Lona gives into the formula of what it means to be women and how in the comfort of being the traditional mother is what makes her feel at home. In this state of emotional wellbeing and feeling comfortable to play out her duties of a good mother, it revealed that Lona believes that progressing with her postgraduate studies (intellectual wellbeing) was incongruous to the Indian way of being a mum. However when she utters the following words, a redefined Lona is made visible:

> I would only take out my books once they all were asleep and study into the early hours of the morning. My supervisor and I were happy that I returned.

Although Lona was able to redefine herself and negotiate the complexities of being a mum and studying at UKZN by creating alternate studying plans to resume her studies, psychologically she was not happy and was feeling overwhelmed with competing forces of studying and being a good mother (Young & Campbell 2014).

For another co-researcher, Prudence, being postgraduate mum and studying at UKZN was traumatic to her as an African widow studying away from home.

> I had opportunities to study abroad while my husband was still alive….the closest was South Africa…. I was constantly afraid thinking that my kids were far away. This affected my studies because they were constantly on my mind. I could not give my studies my 100% and I struggled to concentrate. This is not me! I felt that I was not being a good mother, and decided to halt my studies and return home...I knew that I was the pull that kept the family together and if I let go I could lose them.

Sen (1992) explicitly recognises a diverse range of complex social and mental functionings such as being happy, relaxing, having friends and an active social life, achieving self respect, being fashionable and possessing status make a phenomenal contribution to a good lifestyle. For Prudence, being a mum and studying was traumatic because of her cultural expectations and responsibilities as an African widow and when she displayed feelings of fear, it becomes clear that her state of wellbeing and lifestyle was negatively affected. Having to worry about the kids put strain on her studies and she was unable to concentrate and give her best. Her choice of giving up her studies then, reinforces her complicity in maintaining womens' status in society in that women should be good mothers only and education should not be a priority.

For Prudence, the need to be a good mother is reinforced when she lost her husband which contributed to her not able to reach her dreams. Unable to study, due to her husbands's death brought conflict between her kids and her studies. According to Benokraitis (2005) and Nyathi (2012) the death of a spouse often means not just the loss of a life companion but also the end of a whole way of life where unfamiliar task which suddenly falls on the surviving spouse. The strain of feelings responsible for her children's safety and her guilt at leaving them behind made her decide to put her studies on hold and return home to try and be a good mother. Being a postgraduate mum and studying was painful for Prudence. We see in her, the fractured, conflicting representation of herself as she exclaims, "This is not me!" Being a widow was not easy, especially knowing that she was the strength that kept her children together; she knew that the children might fall apart in her absence. These tensions contributed to stress and disintegration between her domestic responsibilities and academic responsibilities (Young & Campbell 2014).

Prudence is acting on what was traditionally happening to women, focusing more on the emotional well-being that of a nurturing, loving and caring mother and forgetting about the other dominant discourses of women being thinkers and feeling psychologically well. According to Sen (2008) it is natural to take pleasure in our success in achieving what we are trying to achieve. Similarly, on the negative side, our failure to get what we value can be a source of disappointment. Similarly, Prudence's failure to continue her studies affects her state of wellbeing negatively as she chooses to be stressed by worrying about her kids. By stating that her husband's death gave rise to a whole new way of life with unfamiliar tasks such as managing finances only reinforces giving into the formula that women are dependent on men and in their absence one cannot cope.

Prudence returned to her studies after opening a box of letters from her late husband, of which she indicates,

> I opened my husband's letter and the words, "Let's be doctors together," were a strong reminder of what my husband and I wanted for each other before his

> passing away. Then and there I decided that I needed to leave my children in God's hand and return to South Africa to complete my studies.

Her state of well-being is justified intrinsically by her late husband's wishes and she was then only able to make choices about her preferred way of living - leaving her kids behind to succeed in completing her studies.

For another co-researcher, Zandile, her experiences of being a mum and the desire to balance her studying as a postgraduate student emerged through conversations in the interviews about her. She emphasised:

> I was a focussed student, trying hard to juggle my studies with my personal life - keeping my hubby and children happy. I consider myself a good mother because I gave all my attention to my family when I was not on campus. Sometimes it was hard and tiring.

It is evident that Zandile being a mum having to meet institutional responsibilities was tiring her emotionally and causing her stress. The word "hard" further reveals the strain she was under. In these circumstances, according to literature, women often drop out of their studies because it becomes too hard and emotional to cope (Reay, 2003). For Zandile, part of the routine of knowing the self is to be a good mother and it is what gives her comfort as it has always been like this. It is therefore not the well-being within the self for Zandile but it is being comfortable with the routine rather than comfortable with the self.

Coming from an African country where women are in the kitchen after marriage, one might have expected Zandile to throw in the towel. However, she says the following:

> I made sure I planned ahead by diarising all important social events for my children. During weekends, I made my children and husband the priority. I gave up some of sleep time to spend quality time with my children. Some of my friends from Nigeria marvelled at how I managed to study with my family around. They said it was too much of a disturbance and responsibility. I didn't see it that way. In fact, it just gave me more skills for coping with my studies.

Zandile is someone who is capable of developing a resistant pressure to change things. We can see how Zandile planned to actively construct her mum role in order to make sure she was able to be a good mother and a good student. Planning ahead gave her

additional skills that enhanced her abilities as a postgraduate student. She also displayed determination and perseverance as she coped with the demands of both her mother and student roles and trying to keep her family happy while she continued with her postgraduate studies. Adapting is the way toward endeavoring to deal with the requests made by distressing circumstances that are judged as burdening or surpassing a person's resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). She used these moments in her life to free herself from the traditional notion and role of what it means to be a Nigerian mother. Her perseverance and determination to cultivate meanings of success and determination as a woman show her agency to create a home without having to feel stressed. This helped to keep her children happy and forced her to set aside time for her study. Resisting her challenge made it possible for her to enjoy her study.

Another co-researcher, Thabile says: "Thank God I am single with no family-children responsibilities. It would get too hard to concentrate. I need to complete my studies first before I even think about planning a family." Thabile had made the decision to not have children early in her studies and, as a result, had more disposable time on hand. This helped her to keep organised. She also believed herself to be fortunate not to have the added stress. Thabile, who was not married and had no children, emphasised the need to finish one's studies before it got too hard to concentrate. Human development is achieved when people have greater freedoms (capabilities). These substantive freedoms, according to Sen (2000, p. 56) are "seen in the form of individual capabilities to do things that a person has reason to value." In Thabile we see a woman who had the freedom to choose her studies over motherhood, something that she valued. Strauss (2001) attributed this attrition to the fact that many postgraduates have multiple responsibilities alongside studying, which put a strain on their academic progress and which could discourage them. For Thabile, choosing not to have a husband and children disrupts the notion of being women.

In summary, the experiences of being a mum and studying caused much tension for the women. Having the capability to study but unable to enjoy the freedom to study was caused by certain emotions which played out in these women's lives when they chose to start studying at UKZN. Feelings of aloneness, guilt, fear and stress foregrounded themselves, and the women had to make choices on how to deal with this. They chose to either delay their studies, set them aside, or manage them better.

For each of these women it was a struggle to juggle domestic responsibilities with home responsibilities and from the analysis it is clear that academic responsibilities had to take a back seat.

But what is most interesting in the finding of the analysis is that although these women were able to negotiate the complexities between being a mum and studying to find a way to balance the tensions, they themselves were also responsible for continuing and enforcing female subjugation. One of the most prominent examples of female subjugation is the expectations that women must be good mothers and that motherhood must take priority over everything in their lives. When Lona terminates her studies to give into her daughters craving for her attention and when Prudence gives up her studies and returns home, they became complicit in continuing the cycle of subjugation. One would expect them to be role models that empower their daughters and sons about women or girls studying. But when they give up their freedom to be intellectual thinkers at the expense of wanting to be good mothers, this decision sets into motion the cycle where "the abused become the abusers", or in this case, the suppressor becomes the supressed.

In the case of Thabile, where she feels good that she is not a mother yet and there is no disturbance from children, she dismisses the importance of and positive role motherhood can and does play in women's lives. In contrast, the Capability Approach often advocates participation, democratic deliberation and collective action. Sen's (1993) remarks that the quality of life of one person can hardly be traced in isolation. Therefore being a women can also mean that one can have the capability to manage dual roles and still manage caring responsibilities. As in the case of Zandile, she serves to subvert the use motherhood as means of keeping women subjected specifically by using motherhood to her own advantage and was able to redefine the concept of motherhood to her advantage.

The Capability Approach views human beings as active agents, directing their own lives and acting as agents that further larger social goals and objectives. I believe that the women in this study still need to free themselves from some of the limitations placed on them, specifically being defined by motherhood in order to reach a sense of value and wellbeing as promoted in Sen's Capability Approach.

6.2.2 Theme 2: Negotiating and maintaining relationships

For this theme, the women speak of their relationships with individuals. Some women expressed their views on the experience of emotional and psychological trauma brought about by the relationships, and which compromised their studies, while one woman spoke about how a relationship motivated her to continue her postgraduate studies.

For Lona, her relationship with her husband became a constant struggle throughout her scholarly experience. She was required by her husband to make sure that the he always came first in her life:

> My husband said I must make sure that he came first, above everything else, and must not let my studies interfere with his time. I was always made to feel guilty if I attended to my studies, and lost interest and passion for it even though I loved studying.

These words reveal the patriarchal dominance that Lona was suppressed by in her home and her state of wellbeing comes into question. According to Govender (2001) and Barroso (2015) culture affects women differently at different points in their lives. We see how Lona re-imagined herself in the previous chapter from someone who fought against her cultural dominance to someone who was suppressed to fit in with the cultural norms of an Indian wife. Lona represented the person who does not make an effort to break down stereotypes. Although she wanted to study, she succumbed to the norm identifying Indian women when she opted to put her studies on hold. Although she did not want to be portrayed by the image of woman that was prevalent in the Indian society space, she did just that. She acted in a spirit of accommodation rather than in opposition (Said, 1994).

Maher, Ford, and Thompson (2004) argued that marital problems during the pursuit of doctoral degrees cause additional stress because emotional support from spouses and family members is often critical to doctoral students. When she did not get the support of her husband, Lona began to lose her commitment and passion for her doctorate. Her

choice made it apparent that she feared opening herself up to other identities and other perspectives that threatened her Indian wife identity. She therefore made a calculated decision to give power to the traditional (and restrictive) Indian wife identity instead of pursuing her postgraduate education, which is a means to increase the social status of women. Making the conscious decision to give less time to her studies, and fixing the Indian wife identity, was a way of self-imprisoning herself in this home. According to (Said, 1994) home should be place of discomfort but Lona found comfort in fitting into the mould or the formula of being women.

However, the situation at home changed when her husband decided to retire early from his well-paid job. It was then that his attitude towards her studying changed, as she says:

> In later years, my husband retired and then my studies became important to him……, but if this is an opportunity to complete my PhD in peace then I will go along with him.

Those words spoken by her husband reveal shifting of gender identities in Lona's home (Kabeer, 1999). When her husband was working, he wanted to be Lona's priority not her studies. However, when he was no longer working, her studies became important to him because a doctorate could lead to Lona getting a post that would pay better than her teaching job. His support of her studies at this particular point in their marriage reinforced his dominance, dictating to her what to do, knowing that her getting a better job would be his gain too. It is as if he used Lona for his financial gain. Writing by Kabeer (1999) on male predominance in the home related the entrenched nature of men's ways of life as providers and decision makers even as these roles are undermined and dissolved by changing social and financial situations. These socially characterised roles of people are not just unattainable, they in some cases remain in obvious inconsistency with the real world.

One might assume that Lona, being angry, would give up her studies despite her husband's change of attitude as a way of getting back at him. But she used this incident to her advantage when she says: "I will decide what I want to do, but if this is an opportunity to complete my PhD in peace then I will go along with him." This is not a disempowering experience for Lona but an empowering moment as she took back control of her studies. This action was in keeping with what Said (1994) referred to as

the intellectual being the outsider because Lona gave up accommodating her husband's confirmations. We see in Lona the need to escape the hardships of her oppressive relationship as she made a choice that was important and valued by herself.

For Prudence, being a widow and leaving home for postgraduate study at UKZN caused tensions that contributed stress and disintegration to her relationship with her community. When Prudence was summoned home by members in the community, she believed her time for completing her PhD was over as she sadly explains:

> I got a call from a community member to say that my kids were refusing to go to school and many days they were just staying at home. She blamed this on me because of my studies…When I returned home, the community isolated me and my kids.

Cultural practices in Zimbabwe strongly support the woman remaining at home as a widow after the death of her husband in order to take care of the children. From the start of her studies, her community had been against it and had warned her of the dangers of neglecting her children, which had now come to haunt her. Putting a halt to her studies meant she missed out on valuable study time and engagement with her supervisors. At home, she realised how bad the situation was when the community isolated her and the kids.

Even though she experienced resistance, Prudence managed to claim and confirm new power as a widow and firmly states: "I wanted to be a powerful widow who didn't need the community to look after my family when I could try and do it on my own!" Prudence's actions concur with Said (1994) when he said that an intellectual is someone who confronts the orthodox and dogma practices that hold them back.

For Zandile, it was her relationship with a high school teacher that became her helpline in a challenging situation:

> I met my Grade 9 teacher by chance in the library. I confided in him and, interestingly, our conversations became deeper and more illuminating as time went on. He was my helpline, offering to help me improve my writing skills, and has become my pillar of strength and motivation to continue.

Despite the challenge of not been able to write academically, she found help and motivation in her relationship with a lecturer she had known in her home country. Kurtz-Costes, et al (2006) confirmed as indicated by psychological theories, individuals admire other people who are like them with respect to identity attributes, personalities, race and gender. This lecturer was the helpline who exhibited credible and proficient help. Research has shown that quality connections affect individuals as for inspiration, social capability, and well-being (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). When Zandile took support from the lecturer to improve her writing skills she revealed her relationship with him to be supportive and motivating. Maher et al. (2004) argued that postgraduate students view the support from friends and colleagues to be significant in continuing their studies.

Zandile was able to withstand the negative factor of not being able to write academically that could have hindered her progress but the relationship formed help her continue her with her studies. Thabile, on the other hand, faced a challenge with her relationship with female friends:

> So it is more about my personal choice and decisions to be an educated woman and being able to live with my choices. But it comes with a price! My male friends on campus salute me for doing my master's degree but my female friends at home see me as a threat and many will no longer communicate with me…the PHD syndrome. I think it is jealousy and have learned to turn uncertainties into opportunities and ignore irrelevant events and relationships that don't contribute to improving my life!

Being a woman and a postgraduate student is a double achievement for Thabile but when she felt rejected by her childhood female friends, she was saddened by their jealousy of her studying towards a master's degree. According to Guerrero and Andersen (1998) jealousy is a negative feeling and may be prompted because a significant other infringes upon a valued relationship, thus reducing the relationship's reward experiences. In addition, jealousy may arise because there is an implied unfavourable social comparison and inferred rejection of the individual experiencing jealousy. The affective experience of jealousy is often described as a blend of emotions that include anger, fear, anxiety and sadness (Bringle & Buunk, 1985; Harris & Darby, 2010). Relationships like these hinder and hamper students' studies (see Asher, Hymel, & Renshaw, 1984; Parker & Asher, 1987; Coie & Dodge, 1998). But in Thabile, we

see a postgraduate student who valued education, as a means of improving herself, above the influence of her friends. She did not allow their actions to sideline what she wanted to achieve. The positive outcome of her experience of jealousy is that it allowed her to make choices that made her feel valued. It is surprising that her male friends were happy for her but her female friends wanted to pull her down.

To summarise, the findings of the analysis reveals that relationships can hinder or support a woman through her academic journey. When they posed a hindrance, none of the women decided to give up their studies completely, and they were able to negotiate the tensions and continue with their studies. Thus the analysis also revealed that studying was important to the women and quitting would have, as Sen's Capability Approach suggests, put them at a considerable disadvantage from acquiring the basic capability to be educated, even in their sometimes disenabling relationships. Within the space of capabilities, even though the women chose to go with what the husband or community dictated, it was on their terms the way they chose their freedom to acquire the basic and fundamental capability to be educated, which was a crucial part of their well-being.

The findings further revealed that women's relationship with men, other women and community can either reinforce patriarchy and female subjugation or produce new forms of freedom for women. When Zandile was given help from a male lecturer to improve her writing skills, this relationship which would have been considered subservient to male domination, opened up new freedoms. The willingness of the male lecturer to help her, challenges existing understandings of how patriarchy can be challenged internally by men. Finally, when Thabile's female friends did not appreciate her advancement in studying, the cycle of female subjugation that women themselves often perpetuate on other women still exists.

6.2.3 Theme 3: Managing the Men in their lives

Historically, men have had no incentive to promote education among women given the patriarchal systems where decision-making powers are in the hands of males with male-dominated attitudes and behaviours (Wolf, 2000; Lorber, 2012). Men were to be

the bread-winners, heads of households and have the right to be educated. Many women who are part of this system are finding it difficult to diverge from this culture and tradition. They find it hard to escape these barriers and believe they will be ostracised if they pursue an education especially, so they accept their role as homemaker (Wolf, 2000). But some of the women in this study told a different version of the role of men in their lives. Thabile narrates:

> My dad did force us to study and made sure we got a good education so we do not have to fall in the cultural trap where women must only be homemakers. My dad always said, "Child, you found the best possible husband, called education. He will not let you down! Education, will give you the ability not to depend on a man for finances."

Prudence narrates:

> He was very supportive of me studying even though this was not favoured by the elders in the community. He said that his dream was for both of us to become doctors and be good role models to our children so I didn't hesitate in completing an application form.

Zandile narrates:

> Once in South Africa, my husband persuaded me to apply for my honours degree. My husband supported me financially and so I applied to many universities.

The words spoken by Thabile, Zandile and Prudence indicate that the role of the men in their lives were in contradiction to the role of men historically. For the three co-researchers, the men in their lives played an important role in successfully allowing them to diverge from traditional, making it easy for them to transcend cultural barriers in order to complete their postgraduate studies. These three women described the unconditional support from their dad or husband that did not require any form of compromise or negotiation. These men were important in giving them expressive and instrumental help.

For instance, Zandile's significant other upheld her fiscally and gave her enthusiastic support. He had urged her to apply for a seat at university in any case. Prudence's late husband and Zandile's father were both educated and came from communities that did

not value girls' education; nonetheless, the women felt that they gave them their utmost support. They went on to say:

> He was very supportive of me studying even though this was not favoured by the elders in the community. (Prudence)

> It was risky for my dad to send me away to get a decent education; the community looked down upon him. (Zandile)

It is evident that not all women could rely on, or expect the men in their lives to support their decision to pursue postgraduate education. At the onset of Lona's story we saw her husband as not supportive and, as the narrative developed, it became clear that he was against her studying. Lona explains her husband's lack of support: "It turned out, he was not looking for an academic wife." The support Lona received from her husband was conditional and required continual monitoring and negotiation, and posed a significant obstacle to her educational journey, which had the potential to end her postgraduate education.

To summarise, although there are still women like Lona who face resistance from the men in their lives to pursue postgraduate education and internalise male domination, the study also highlights the importance of men's supporting attitudes in assisting women to study and complete their studies. This collaboration, negotiation and compromise from male figures challenges the conception of gender induced unfreedoms. Therefore, the confinement of Thabile, Prudence, Zandile and Lona's identities to the domestic sphere is one of the barriers the men in their lives helped them overcome which produced new freedoms for the women. It is important to note that the men in this study, who grow up in theses discourses of unfreedoms are also in these times finding ways to disrupt it.

6.2.4 Theme 4: Managing health issues

According to Head and Lindsey (1983) and MacIntyre (1995) and Bigdeli (2010), a student's learning potential is influenced by anxiety. As anxiety increases, learning capacity decreases. Anxiety combined with higher task complexity leads to diminished

production. One of the women, Lona, experienced high levels of anxiety that left her feeling claustrophobic:

> I was forced to deal with issues around my anxieties about closed spaces (claustrophobia). It affected me to the extent that I was even scared to visit my supervisor's office because her room was small, and she would close the door. The thought of been in her room made me feel as if was I going to suffocate - I thought I was going mad. I was embarrassed by this illness and could not tell her. Later, I wished I had told her because it meant that my studies took a back seat because I stopped going to campus for supervision meetings. I lost contact with the study and when I did return, I was too overwhelmed by the time I had lost; I had to start afresh after three years into my studies.

Garcia-Palacios, Hoffman, Richards, Seibel, and Sharar (2007) characterised claustrophobia as the dread of encased spaces, for example, little rooms, passages, lifts, and cellars. The manifestations a person with claustrophobia may encounter are both physiological and mental. Lona referred to the presence of her anxieties as a factor that contributed to her well-being and studies being compromised. A number of researchers and theorists have applied the Capability Approach to the mental health arena, with the Capability Approach being highlighted as a way of facilitating people with a lived experience of mental health difficulties to engage with their values and priorities (Lewis, 2002). However for Lona, this illness prevented her from her carrying out her academic responsibilities as a postgraduate student through her fear of being suffocated in the supervisor's small office. According to Sen (1993) if a person is not psychologically well then she is unable to make choices to be in a state of wellbeing and human well-being must be comprehended as being socially and psychologically co-constituted. Claustrophobic fear can be traumatic; Lona was affected psychologically when she thought she was going mad. According to Head and Lindsey (1983) females tended to display more anxiety issues than males. They further stated that anxiety can become extreme; in Lona's case, feelings of madness overcame her.

Lona's non-disclosure of her anxieties to her supervisor could have contributed to the mismanagement of her studies. Her non-disclosure obstructed her ability to negotiate with her supervisor on making substitute measures for a meeting place. If her supervisor had been aware of her condition, she could have accommodated Lona and help ease her anxiety by using another room or leaving the door opened during their

meetings. Not disclosing her condition kept Lona in a state that she could have resolved through disclosure and acceptance, leading to the support that she was entitled to as a postgraduate student at UKZN.

To summarise, as a framework for human development, the Capability Approach places emphasis on promoting well-being through enabling people to realise their capabilities and engage in behaviours that they subjectively value. It also provides a framework for endorsing processes that enable a person to be free to do the things that he or she may value doing or being. This can include accessing medical treatment, but also forms of social, educational, economic and political support that can help individuals to flourish. It would have been to Lona's benefit to disclose her condition to her supervisor and reduce the negative impact it had on her state of wellbeing in order to feel free to continue with her studies that she values doing. Lona attributed her failure to the non-disclosure of her condition; feeling claustrophobic led to her missing supervision meetings and not handing in work. Lona's data revealed that her condition played itself out in two distinct ways in affecting her academic responsibilities: non-disclosure, and trying to balance her claustrophobic needs and academic needs.

6.3 Section B: Social Practices

This section speaks to the women's social experiences of interacting everyday with others within spaces in the academic environment. Moving from the comfortable limits of wherever you call home to an odd new condition, with new individuals and another culture, is no simple errand (Oberg, 1954). In fact, it rates high on the ladder of the most stressful things we do in our lives. It heightens your awareness of your own culture because, at home, you knew exactly how to behave and function. You are effectively like a fish out of water (Oberg, 1954). One of the many challenges facing new students is to adjust to the culture of the higher education institution. Culture was defined by Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley (2005) as institutional norms, values, and beliefs, while institutional culture was perceived as the glue binding together those who work and learn at the same institution. It is institutional culture that fosters a sense

of oneness with, or belonging to, an institution or a university. The challenges experienced by the co-researchers will be discussed under the following themes:

- Theme 1:Victimised through language and accent
- Theme 2: Exploitation inside the lecturer's office
- Theme 3: Learning through cohorts
- Theme 4: Learning through the curriculum
- Theme 5: Learning in supervision meetings
- Theme 6: Socialising in the church

6.3.1 Theme 1: Victimised through Language and accent

In the South African context one of the challenges students are face is language and accent (CHE, 2010; Moodley, 2013). Accent is considered a site through which racialised power relations are negotiated (Creese & Kambere, 2003). Language is seen as an issue that causes grief to students who are unable to speak the local language. This alienates them from the local population and may result in stigmatisation (Moodley, 2013). This stigmatisation and the lack of opportunities to speak their indigenous language may result in their culture being stifled (Mnyaka, 2003). Women students feel victimised and unsettled because they do not speak a local African language and are the recipients of the unfriendliness of the locals (McLellan, 2009).

This study found that although three of the four co-researchers resided in countries outside of South Africa (and one in South Africa), they all identified language and accent as a problem studying at UKZN. Thabile, from Lesotho, expressed her feelings of alienation at not being able to understand the local language. She narrates:

> I remember relaxing in the common lounge with the locals who spoke in isiZulu, knowing fully that I could not understand. They did not make me feel at home and, instead, their expressions alienated me and revealed that they saying mean things about me. I was never a suspicious person but living with the locals made me one. They also made me very conscious of my accent because it marked me as someone who was inferior to them.

Prudence, from Zimbabwe, expressed her feelings of disorientation and alienation at not understanding English and the local language when she says*:*

> I could not understand English very well, the local women students added to my disorientation. As they entered, they greeted each other loudly in isiZulu. Once, when I asked an African lecturer a question, a local woman student sitting in front of me, turned around and asked why I don't speak in isiZulu. At that point I felt intimidated and helpless. At times I felt fearful and wondered if I should just return home. At least there, I was guaranteed to feel part of something.

Zandile, from Nigeria, expressed her feelings of dissonance and alienation when she says:

> Attending lectures became overwhelming. In West Africa, we pronounce our words differently from SADC countries, which delayed my progress. I did not feel part of this home. The final straw was when I received feedback on one of my assignments. The lecturer indicated that I was not making progress. It was discouraging. It created a lot of tension in me because I became afraid to submit more work and dreaded feedback time.

Lona, from South Africa, expressed her feelings of alienation when she indicates:

> Although all the lectures were conducted in English, students disregarded my presence by conversing in a language I clearly did not understand - as I sat in between them, they talked in isiZulu across me. It didn't happen just once, but on many occasions. It made me feel so small. It's amazing that, although I am born and brought up in South Africa, these experiences of being disregarded can make a person feel so far from home.

Thabile, Prudence, Zandile and Lona experienced language and accent as cause of grief and discomfort learning at UKZN. Even for South African students like Lona, the language challenge was not absent, especially for Indian students whose home language is English and not isiZulu.

Soudien (2010) spoke of feelings of discomfort such as disorientation, dissonance, and alienation and these feelings were manifested by all four co-researchers. According to Said (1993) these feeling of discomfort or to be be in a state of discomfort is the spaces to remove the source of unfreedom and to rid oneself of feelings that are negatively affecting the well-being of a person (Sen, 1992).

It is therefore encouraging to see in the narratives, small but distinct attempts by these co-researchers to redefine how they felt abouth themselves. These attempts occurred in moments when the co-researchers were able to forge alternative ways of being. In these moments of creative agency, the women were brave enough to give expression to their true selves, in spite of institutional demands that pointed them in another direction; the women took up opportunity and freedoms to enable them to develop optimally within the various postgraduate communities at UKZN to achieve what they valued. Consequently, it is not only about having opportunity and freedom, but about the lengths to which the women would go to achieve that which they valued. For Prudence to feel valued, she overcame her feelings of disorientation when she took control of the situation by heeding her sister's supportive words ("She told me to be a brave warrior") to gain entry into the room and erase her foreigner status. She recalls:

> I then swayed from feeling intimidated by the language to feeling liberated. From that day on, I think I may have become the loudest during the lectures. I began making contributions just like the locals although in English and within the limits of not being overbearing. Soon, the local students realised that I knew my stuff. They would come to me and discuss their challenges surrounding their work and consult me if they were on the right track. My confidence was given a boost! *Ndiri kufara wena* [I was so very happy]! I soon began to enjoy attending lectures as the pressure and learning brought me so much pleasure. There was no stopping for me.

Prudence showed the quality of an organic intellectual by rocking the boat Said (1994) as she displays the force of her quest to overcome her feelings, created a new home and possibilities for better ways. Prudence used the language constraint as a place for activism. These gendered experiences served to develop a sense of mission in Prudence's life, which she used as a platform for change so that she is able to learn in a more pleasant space.

For Zandile to feel valued, she overcame her feelings of dissonance with the language constraint by using a different tactic. She decided not to resist but to conform to certain practices in the lecture theatre when she says: "I just went along with this, trying to act uninterested in order to be accepted and complete my studies." Whilst she conformed to certain collegial and supportive practices to gain entry and negotiate the tension caused by not understanding the language, her intention to be part of this postgraduate community on her own terms means that she was still in control. This is contrary what

literature says about women students who drop out in difficult times, and signifies her potential to change and succeed in her academic environment.

Lona overcame her feelings of alienation by turning the space where she experienced language as a constraint into a space of nurturing to resist and imbue positive meaning to her learning. She remembers:

> I am a very friendly and sociable person and it weighed me down when I couldn't communicate with other students, so I began to use to "Kitchen Zulu" or broken isiZulu to greet them and feel part of them. I started small conversations and eventually we ended up conversing in English.

Lona was able to overcome her feelings of alienation through creating nurturing activities, which added positive meanings for her in this academic space. She was able to make this space a place of engagement which produced pleasurable interactions between her and the other students. According to Said (1994) it takes an intellectual leader to disrupt prevailing norms. In Lona we see a leader who was able to confront the dogma practices and then humanise the space to create opportunity for her to experience some pleasurable experiences, by trying to understand and communicate a language that was foreign to her.

Thabile handled her situation differently and did not feel that she was the one to give in to the other students in order to feel at home. She argues:

> When a person comes to my house they show respect and I, as the host, will go out of my way to accommodate them. I certainly won't speak Sotho when their language is English. Why do the locals do this? Why doesn't the university have a policy on how the locals should treat us? I pay my fees so why should I be the other? I won't give into them. I prepare myself mentally to be brave so I can overlook this and concentrate on my studies.

Thabile claimed the right to question the structures and practices of the university and local students. She refused the conventional identity of an African woman student from an outsider country and therefore adopts an identity. By refusing to be the other, she claimed a brave identity and thus created a new home in order to feel valued in the way she preferred. When the women saw the possibilities of rearranging and renegotiating their academic environment, they became free agents. In the continual search for new homes, the women revealed extraordinary and remarkable persistence. Refusing to give up but to survive, these APWSs showed a restless spirit.

In summary, the women's exclusion from the social community because of their inability to converse in a local language became a constraint to socialising, and resulted in hostility towards them by the locals. Foreigners who speak their own language are not welcomed by the local population, and if they attempt to converse in the local language it exacerbates the hostility towards them (Mnyaka, 2003). In spaces where language became a disjuncture between them and the local students, the women felt discomfort such as disorientation, dissonance, and alienation, which made them feel devalued and became a barrier to their learning. The findings confirm what was observed by Kamwendo, Hlongwa, and Mkhize (2013) who noted that students from African countries who are unable to communicate in the local language face multiple academic difficulties in higher education. The language barrier made it difficult for the women to adapt to and socialise in the academic environment.

While the Capability Approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000, 2006) has paid scarce attention to individuals trying to overcome language barriers, which has nonetheless been identified in other domains as a potentially productive approach toward a richer and a more holistic intercultural education (Crosbie, 2014) affirming their voice in ways they value, these co-researchers contribute to the women's struggle for social justice and for liberation in education. They do so in English and isiZulu, the language of South Africa that is complicit in silencing their presence and, therefore, their identity. They need to master the foreign language in order to affirm their right to exist in and outside the lecture rooms. In English, they articulate their desired well-being which, unfortunately, is besieged. Additionally, although the constraints they face prevent them from fully living the life they value, overcoming language barrier envisioned through the lenses of the Capability Approach opens up a space for taking the women's well-being into account. At the same time it challenges the unfreedoms that limit the achievement of women's functionings.

6.3.2 Theme 2: Exploitation inside the lecturer's office

Three of the four co-researchers spoke about the professional way they were treated by lectures other than their supervisors. Prudence: "They were always willing to help

at anytime"; Thabile: "I found them helpful and caring"; Zandile: "The one lecturer whom I knew from my country was a mentor to me." Three of the women had positive experiences of other lecturers on campus, and which caused no hindrance to their studies. Lona, however, told of a different experience with a male lecturer. Her narrative illustrates that she experienced one of the faces of oppression discussed earlier, a sense of powerlessness, in being exploited financially by a male lecturer, someone meant to protect the interests of students. The intellectual exploitation of young women students by older, male lecturers is so common in movies and books that it's become a cliché but, for Lona, there was a dark side to this cliché in real-life academia and which left her feeling very unsafe and devalued in his office. She says:

> It was the end of a money relationship that left me bankrupted and feeling very uneasy around male lecturers. Prior to that call, recent visits to his office had left me feeling unsafe and devalued and I could not believe that had I allowed him to take advantage of me and poison me with his lies.

Morley (2004) noticed that gendered control relations develop and manage women's encounters of higher education. Like Adusah-Karikari's (2008) sentiments, there was need to consider students' gendered power relations in order to explain the ideological basis of women's continuing exploitation. For Lona, the exploitation began from fear of being seen as less intelligent, and wanting to impress her female supervisor. The male lecturer promised to help her edit her work but at a price. She narrates: "At this point the only thing I wanted to do was to impress my supervisor. After reading over it he said that it needed a lot of editing and that he helped many students but at a price." Lona believed that this lecturer would provide a higher standard of edited work and did not hesitate to pay him with money she didn't have. "I was so bewitched at the thought that my work would be edited to a high standard that I used my overdraft to make payment - money I didn't have."

In this space where Lona felt she was to gain free knowledge and feel safe, we see how she unconsciously was paying for her education when this male lecturer took advantage of her weakness to impress her supervisor by manipulating her to give him large sums of money to supposedly read her work.

> I was so eager to get this done that I agreed to pay him to read and edit my work, and soon I was paying in the thousands. At one meeting that took place

in his office, he asked for R4,000 to read three chapters of my master's thesis. …After reading his edited version of my work I saw no difference in the work; sometimes, just a few words were changed. I had the feeling that I was being exploited…I felt he abused me financially and took advantage of a vulnerable woman.

However, Lona must take some responsibility for succumbing to some form of gender stereotyping. When she considered herself less intelligent and that the male lecturer could edit her work to a high standard, tells us she bought into the notion that female students are weak. Instead of being a beneficiary of this relationship she succumbed to the victim status. She says: "Being a fighter, I should have seen through him. I felt like a loser, like a victim of a crime, and conceded to the fact that as a woman I had showed some weakness and was taken for a ride." The male lecturer was selling knowledge and Lona was paying for it.

In summary, Lona's experience is in keeping with Van Dijk's (1996) view that men in positions of power (superiors) use the power to control women, thus influencing their minds and actions through persuasion, manipulation and everyday talk (van Dijk, 1996). Instead of offering his office as a space where she could feel safe and valued (which was crucial for her daily operation at UKZN) and as a space where production of knowledge was facilitated, this lecturer failed to provide a safe and friendly academic environment for Lona. Feminist scholars Walby (1990) and Karlberg (2005) asserted that academic spaces (such as health, catering, lecture, and residence halls and offices, libraries, and laboratories) tend to preserve patriarchal ideologies by controlling, oppressing and exploiting women.

Patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development (Sultana, 2012), but it is that patriarchy that is being reinforced by Lona. Although Lona finds herself as a victim, she unconsciously allowed the male lecturer to take control over and exploite her, allowing him to benefit materially from patriarchy, in which they derive concrete economic gains from the subordination of women.

Lona's non-disclosure of her treatment by her male lecturer to the university or supervisor makes her complicit in continuing the cycle of subjugation of women. In the process, she reinforced gendered stereotypes that describe women as incapable and incompetent which was further used to devalue and mis-recognise women students'

educational accomplishments. Thus, we can conclude that while the opportunities to approach male lecturers for professional advice, her freedoms to effectively learn, develop and achieve as African women were constrained by her own doing.

6.3.3 Theme 3: Learning through cohorts

In an attempt to maximise learning support for its students, the Education Faculty of UKZN has adopted both traditional, one-to-one master-apprentice supervision and cohort seminar sessions, running concurrently (Haworth & Conrad, 1997; Samuel, 2008; Fearon, 2012). The cohort sessions supplement the help offered to students by coordinated supervision and draw on the skill of experienced and fledgling supervisors from inside the personnel who go about as cohorts supervisor. Likewise, students benefit with the guidance from cohort peers as they explore the different stages in their studies. According to The Graduate Institute (2006) the cohort model is supposed to engender flexibility in its programme structure and create a supportive and cooperative and interactive learning platform giving voice to each candidate. Being part of a cohort, exposes students to a pool of supervisors who will enrich their learning experiences and allow for individual and group development (Haworth & Conrad, 1997; Samuel, 2008).

According to Fearon (2012) belonging to a group and having emotional ties with the group boost one's self-concept. It is therefore understandable that students who find it difficult to fit into academic groups such as chohorts perform poorly because of the assumed low self-concept. This factor plays a role in whether the students feel welcome or unwelcoming. This can act as a barrier for African postgraduate women students when relating their experiences of attending the cohorts.

Initially, Prudence felt part of the cohorts. She felt a sense of belonging and connection with her other students when she reveals:

> Even though learning at UKZN became stressful at times, I found some solace attending the cohorts. It offered me a platform to present my work. It was also an opportunity to meet and liaise with other students.

However, not being given a voice in the cohort sessions disrupted her solace and left her frustrated, which lead to her quitting the sessions. She states:

> It frustrated me that in the cohort's sessions…I was told to question everything my supervisor said because I was getting feedback from more people here. I stopped asking questions. These challenges made it very difficult for me to feel part of the cohort at UKZN. I therefore stopped attending.

An interactive learning community such as the cohort fosters success through students' willingness to freely exchange ideas, feelings, questions, and dispute with comfort, listen carefully to others, and evaluate with freedom (Samuel, 2008). Prudence's experience revealed that when her learning environment became hostile, it impacted adversely on her welbeing which led to her not asking questions (Fearon, 2012). This complexity is further attributed when she says: "I didn't attend anymore as I could no longer learn in this space." Her learning was thus interrupted to a point in which she was missing deadlines. She later reveals: "Perhaps this is why I was delayed in meeting deadlines…I was used to the engagement with other students and supervisors." Prudence was often left very confused in the sessions. She believed that her cohort supervisors who were supposed to assist and guide her, spent the sessions showcasing their own knowledge: "There was also something unique about the lecturers in the cohorts. They wanted to outdo our supervisors. Their behaviour left me confused."

Membership in a cohort exposes one to a pool of professionals, which enriches and expands the learning experiences of each candidate as she or he develops in the programme (Haworth & Conrad, 1997). From the beginning, Lona admitted that attending the cohorts was a challenge for her. She left, demotivated, because she experienced conflicting feedback from cohort supervisors as problematic rather than beneficial. She says: "I would edit accordingly and present this at the cohort meeting where it was then further dissected with requests to rethink and rework it. I was so overwhelmed with this conflicting feedback." The constant changes she made to her work made it hard for her to focus. Lona further reveals:

> I would also often attend sessions only to find a supervisor from another department chairing the session and speaking on a different methodology than

mine. Those three hours was wasted for me. I believe that the makeup of cohorts should be according to the methodology used by students and a supervisor specialising in that field should be appointed. These challenges made it very difficult for me to feel part of the cohort at UKZN. I therefore stopped attending.

To summarise, time is of essence to any postgraduate student and given that UKZN boasts about the positive productivity of the cohort sessions, Lona and Prudence attended. They were disappointed to find that some of the sessions were counterproductive because they lacked relevance for their studies. Many studies have suggested that students should be exposed to many different methodologies and grouped diversely to get a sense of different research approaches (Haworth & Conrad, 1997). However, Lona and Prudence felt this caused their waning interest in the cohort sessions, they believed supervision with their own supervisors would be more beneficial. Communities of practice such as the cohorts should provide rich opportunities for collaborative research learning, but are contingent on successful collaboration and collegiality, the absence of which generates potential for conflict and sometimes frustration. For Prudence and Lona, the cohorts were an unproductive space that left them feeling frustrated. However, the reaction of the APWSs shows evidence of weakness in that they failed to negotiate the multiple and sometimes contradictory voices of cohort supervisors; they did not find and affirm their own voices. Instead of using these sessions as platforms to empower themselves and accept critique on their work, they responded by keeping silent, and stopped attending. Instead of undoing the unfreedom, they reinforced it which led to them feeling devalued.

6.3.4 Theme 4: Learning through the curriculum

According to Heleta (2016), there is new perspectives which are aimed at revisioning and enlarging the discourse on the curriculum by putting the transformation of teaching and learning at the centre of the curriculum, but there is still a need to decolonise the curriculum in higher education in South African universities. Mbembe (2016) further states that decolonising knowledge does not mean eliminating all knowledge that is Western but it means complementing it with, and acknowledging African knowledge.For co-researchers, Thabile and Prudence, UKZN disregarded and

patronised African views while reinforcing Western views (Heleta 2016) by not accommodating the African perspective on the transformation of curriculum, which made learning a challenge for them. They narrate:

> I felt most of the time that instead of some lecturers gathering the knowledge from our different minds and experiences, we were "stoned" for not citing American experiences learned from the book. The African curriculum would have been far more interesting if they used our African experiences because it would include things read from newspapers and from sources from home. The curriculum that we were forced to engage with, consisted of American case studies that required us to watch BBC and other international TV stations that most of us could not afford. Most of us had no access even to a TV! (Thabile)

> I felt that the education in terms of the curriculum and the content of the courses offered in Zimbabwe was definitely of a higher standard than in South Africa. When I started attending my lectures at UKZN I expected to read more on African literature and expected diversity in the curriculum to accommodate all students attending this university. Even the way it was taught to us became a challenge for me. I expected to be taken through the modules, have discussions around how to come up with a topic, and how to develop objectives - something that I had experienced in my earlier degrees in Zimbabwe, but was not the case at UKZN. The material that the department distributed to us in the lectures consisted mainly of international case studies; there were no African case studies and approaches. This to me, defied the purpose because in 2010 there was only one South African student in the entire class of eight students, the rest of the students were from other African countries. (Prudence)

From Thabile's and Prudence's experiences with the curriculum at UKZN, it is evident that they were not congruent with the ideas pronounced by University of KwaZulu-Natal Media Statement (March 2015) when Albert van Jaarsveld (2015), vice-chancellor of UKZN, who spoke of success in achieving the transformation agenda and that UKZN was venturing into a new phase - Africanising the institution. He went on to say:

> I need a university that is unequivocally African. I need to leave a foundation that is known globally for cutting edge research. I need it to be known as the African organization in the event that you are interested in studying in Africa. I likewise need a situation that gives the best teaching and learning knowledge to students, and is genuinely seen by everyone to be the establishment of decision for staff and students. (p. 7)

In the South African higher education context, a key issue in the demand for increasing openness concerns different approaches to the Africanisation of the curriculum.

Dowling and Seepe (2003, p. 52) presented an interesting perspective on the challenge of Africanisation:

> South African universities should be sympathetic to the formative motivation of government and make a commitment to meeting the social and monetary desires of the African individuals specifically. Yet, there is a whole other world to the issue than this. We have seen that it is likewise important to look at the idea of a university inside a South African setting. Universities need to find themselves immovably inside African culture and esteem frameworks… they have to guarantee that the African experience is at the center of the educational curricula.

To summarise, Thabile and Prudence expressed opinions about the curriculum at UKZN as shared by Dowling and Seepe (2003). As African postgradaute women students, they felt disempowered and psychologically frustrated by the lack of diversity in the curriculum offered at UKZN and the reliance on Western knowledge. UKZN failed to give these APWSs the African experience as promised, and has created an institutional culture that alienated those who chose to study within it.

6.3.5 Theme 5: Learning in supervision meetings

Studying for a postgraduate degree can be a lonely, dispiriting experience. For women it can be even more daunting. The women in this study felt there were too many obstacles and not enough support in this long, solitary academic journey, and craved support, encouragement and guidance from their supervisors to help deal with their moments of tremendous self-doubt. Supervision was of paramount importance to the co-researchers' growth of their research abilities. According to Bizumic et al. (2009) perceptions of an unwelcoming institutional culture like supervision may affect the well-being of students.

Feminist scholars place an emphasis on building a positive supervisory relationship because it is the foundation of feminist teaching and learning (Avis, 1986; Wheeler, Avis, Miller, & Chaney 1986). The relationship amongst supervisors and supervisee is the establishment for the work that will happen in supervision. Supervision is an educative procedure, and the supervisee is learning particular information and abilities. In any case, for ideal learning to happen, a strong functioning connection amongst supervisors and supervisee is fundamental (Szymanski, 2003).

In this study, all the co-researchers were supervised by women (same-sex supervision). There has been research focusing on some of the difficulties experienced by women supervising other women (Kathleen, 1995). She spoke of the relationship of mentoring and power, and of breaking the silences that cover this relationship of power. The co-researchers indicated negative experiences within the supervisory relationship, indicative of the complexity of interactions between human beings. Thabile reflects her experience in her supervisory relationship:

> When I registered for my master's, I found my supervisor to be a bully. She was a local woman and I sensed her frustrations with me being a foreigner because I was not very good in understanding English. In Lesotho, this language thing would never have been an issue. When she gave me feedback, I was sometimes unable to understand certain things, and would voice my lack of understanding by asking her to clarify. She once asked me why it took me so long to understand certain things. These words made me feel deficient and I started to believe that I had a learning problem. It caused me stress. I couldn't learn in this tense environment that made me feel like an outsider inside her office. I loved the faculty that I had registered with but, after several meetings, the stress of her supervision became too much and I changed my faculty.

For Thabile this negativity was because she was unable to understand English. As indicated by Wadee, et al (2010) a region of concern is the insufficient scholarly education levels of postgraduate students whose primary language is not English since they are relied upon to compose and verbalise their thoughts at the level at which they are working and considering. For Thabile, working in another language slows her thinking and expression. Negativity arose when she challenged her supervisor, being vociferous in stating her concern of not understanding the feedback. This was devastating because she was belittled and made to feel devalued, which made her leave the faculty for another supervisor. As an intellectual adopting the position to change her faculty, she negotiated a choice that would make her feel good and valued. She did not quit her studies but quit supervisor to continue her studies. Prudence also reflects her negative experience in her supervisory relationship:

> A week before our meetings, I would e-mail my supervisor, who was local, the chapter that I had completed. I failed to get any feedback from her until we met for supervision. When I did see her she would sometimes only open my work then, and only go over certain sections with me, failing to take me step-by-step to see where I went wrong - I was expected to find all the answers by myself. When I was doing my master's in Zimbabwe, I never experienced this kind of supervision. Our supervisors there went through our work

thoroughly to ensure we were on the right track. I don't think she gave me 100% of her time in supervision All trust was lost with her, and I approached her and told her that time was against me and I was losing more time waiting for her feedback. I asked her if I could be appointed with a co-supervisor if she was too busy to supervise me. She said no, but our relationship did improve.

For Prudence, negativity was attributed to the conflicting expectations between her and her supervisor, due to the changing mode of learning in supervision that was different to what she experienced in her home country. A student may come from a background where the notion of teaching and learning is characterised by paternalism, where the student is passive in decision-making (Mackinnon, 2004; Malfroy, 2005; Ryan & Zuber-Skerritt, 1999). Prudence felt unimportant in this relationship and mistrusted it. Kaiser (1997) contended that the perspectives between the supervisor and supervisee are influenced by social and gender factors, in that the students who have been generally persecuted in light of their race, sex, class, as well as gender, see supervision with doubt of those directing them. Prudence experience is in line with Kumar and Stracke's (2007) view that a supervisor-supervisee relationship can show a power and gendered relationship, one in which Prudence viewed supervision with mistrust. Instead of being passive to what was happening to her, she found an alternative space where she confronted her supervisor, which showed her agency to be achieve.

To summarise, from these reflections of Thabile who came from Lesotho, and Prudence from Zimbabwe, it is clear that they both experienced challenges and tension in their relationships with their local female supervisors because of their different cultures. According to Manathunga (2007a, 2011) the interaction that occurs between cultures when supervisors and students from different countries work together is known as intercultural supervision. She further said that it is within this cultural space that the supervisors and students must meet and negotiate their scholarly identities together. But in the case of Thabile and Prudence, this space disempowered them as APWSs, and made them feel like outsiders which resulted in an asymmetrical relationship of domination and subordination (Pratt, 2008). This asymmetrical relationship also highlighted a lack of cultural respect from the supervisors towards the women postgraduate student who was viewed as frivolous. Furthermore, the fact that these co-researchers were engaged in a same-gendered pair supervision and did

not enjoy a successful relationship is not consistent with previous studies that have shown that matched gender pairs in supervision resulted in the greatest satisfaction with supervision (Behling, Curtis, & Foster, 1988; Worthington & Stern, 1985).

These reflections thus illustrate how the use of humiliating comments and don't care attitude that target women students not only affects their personal, social and professional development, but also their educational process as a whole. Bizumic et al. (2009) explains that the way students perceive the institutional culture like supervision, will affect their psychological well-being. In this study, supervision was significantly linked to them feeling devalued and stressed and could have led to the withdrawal of their studies. Furthermore, these accounts illustrate how the female supervisors keep gender relations in place instead of disrupting them. Capability Approach allows individuals to make choices that lead to their well-being but it certainly does not tackle the issue when their choices impact negatively on others wellbeing. In this female on female subjugation, while one can speculate that the intention of these female supervisors was to instill professional etiquette and conduct, humiliating and showing a negative attitude to individual women students is unacceptable as it puts them at an educational disadvantage and it maintains the oppression against women.

6.3.6 Theme 6: Socialising in the Church

The advantage of going to church could provide particular subjective resources that are valuable in the critical thinking or regulating emotions adapting to pressure (Ellison, Boardman, Williams, & Jackson, 2001). The church seems to be a cultural safe space for Prudence and Thabile to deal with their stresses and feel good about themselves. This is what Prudence and Thabile say about attending church:

> Studying at a global university like UKZN created social opportunities and many spiritual memories. I have developed friendships with a number of inspiring students from other African countries like Uganda and Zimbabwe. My friends outside academia also supported me in other ways. I look forward to Sundays to meet them at church. I feel at home with them because our accents and manners are never an issue. (Thabile)

> When I was in the company of my friends, especially Dominique from Malawi, I felt less intimidated. We would study together and meet up with

other friends on church days. We attended a small church across the university. The congregation was mixed with some South Africans but mainly Nigerians, Zimbabweans, and Kenyans. We, as foreigners, came to support each other and I felt the most secure at UKZN when in their company - it felt like being home again. (Prudence)

The benefits of attending church are related to reduction of psychological distress and increased psychological status in many ways (Odera, 2006). For Thabile and Prudence it was at church where they felt secure and in a space were they dealt with the stresses of being a foreigner at UKZN. The church provided a sense of belonging that came from having friends who shared their differences and frustrations in this foreign country and feeling at home in this space. In this alternative home, the women found tremendous emotional and spiritual support, which had a positive effect on them. This is in keeping with a study among African immigrants in the US that identified that participation in church had a positive influence upon stress coping ability (Kamya, 1997).

Thaver (2006) worked with the metaphor, at home, that captured the degree to which students felt at home in certain contexts, even when away from home. Church made both women feel secure and as if they were at home, a place where there is no exclusion, alienation, and hostility. At church they felt relaxed, valued, and far away from being isolated and discriminated; church represented, for them, a home away from home. It was where many of their friends from the same countries convened on Sundays to socialise. Sloan, Newhouse, and Thompson (2013, p. 347) alluded to "the rule of homophily," which they defind as "the well-being of individuals to frame associations with individuals who are like themselves". This contributed to them feeling good, and women experienced improved learning in this space where they were part of a minority. In all of this complexity, the women were able to emerge from their struggles by drawing on their reserves to resist the barriers that limited possibilities by creating alternative homes to manage the tension.

As indicated by Sen (1999, p. 502) "improvement requires the evacuation of real sources of unfreedom." People must be capable or be empowered to carry on with the existence they have motivation to select. These women were able to remove the unfreedom, which then offered them the space to challenge, change and create new meanings as possibilities for freedom for themselves.

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6.4 Section C: Experiences in the academic environment

The academic environment, in this case UKZN, is a crucial category that impacts on students' progress (Schunk, 2008; Weiner, 1985, 2000). In these spaces, everything conceivable is done to guarantee that none of the students (or staff) encounters any type of what Young (2000, p. 100) termed the five faces of abuse, which she recognised as "marginalisation, exploitation, violence, cultural imperialism and powerlessness." Young argued that these are the characteristic features of any form of human injustice such as racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and that one or more of these faces are present in any oppressive environment. All four APWSs' narratives illustrate that as women they experienced at least one of these faces of oppression while studying on campus. These faces of oppression will be discussed under the following themes.

- Theme 1: Managing Funding
- Theme 2: Living in the residence
- Theme 3: Managing Bureaucratic challenges

6.4.1 Theme 1: Managing Funding

Osborne and Williams (2002), AAUW (2003), Moss (2004) and Magano (2011; 2013) are some of the researchers who described the financial problems and lack of access to resources experienced by women postgraduate students. The findings of studies by Magano (2011; 2013), Leonard et al. (2005) and Brown and Watson (2010) show that lack of funds is the most common factor for women postgraduate. The two co-researchers who were not impacted financially were Lona and Zandile, who were financially supported by their husbands. For the other two co-researchers, who support the literature that specifies money as a central obstacle (Brown & Watson, 2010) postgraduate education resulted in financial hardship and their sense of wellbeing was negatively affected.

In particular, it was argued that paying attention to educational outcomes alone potentially creates new forms of injustice because it is assumed that once equal resources are provided (such as a place at university or financial support) that all students are equally able to convert these resources to capabilities and functionings. Instead, specific attention should be given to understanding the complex personal, social and environmental conversion factors that impact on the opportunity freedoms (capabilities) of individual students.

They revealed that money was a considerable concern, and was not enough to cover the expenses they incurred studying full-time. The following quotes from Thabile and Prudence reveal how difficult it was for them:

> It was very traumatic for me to put my master's on hold and return to Lesotho because I could no longer afford the fees and could not find a job to take me out of this financial problem. Unlike a fully funded student, I had to pay for my fees and living expenses. I was devastated and felt like a loser. I saw many of my friends go through this and it was normal for many not return to complete their degrees. But I was determined not to be like them…I wanted to work here as a lecturer so I could help my community and family financially back home. On my return to Lesotho, I found a job as a government clerk while simultaneously working on my thesis...I saved enough money to return to South Africa to resume my studies. (Thabile)

Thabile's motivation to come to South Africa was to complete her studies in a shorter time as opposed to studying in her country, and to find a job to help her parents financially. Thabile's desire reinforces the findings of Guilfoyle (2006) that some postgraduate students enter the host country with certain expectations of the kind of assistance that they will receive. Some of these are the availability of paid work, accommodation, and funding during their studies. But we see how Thabile gets emotionally demotivated because of her financial constraints. The issue of finance was something that stressed her at university.

Thabile expresses her feelings of being a loser, contributing to what Buzzanell et al. (2005) concluded that female postgraduate students who are not living in the same country as home, have a number of challenges that characterise their journey of studying. Thabile soon worked out what she needed to do to repress that which constrained her from obtaining her goal, a master's degree. She does not want to be

like her friends who did not return to complete their studies and decides to leave to reinvent herself.

The desire to reinvent oneself is not necessarily negative. Clearly, Thabile did not perceive it as such. The fact that Thabile felt the urge to reinvent herself because of her financial experience by re-establishing herself in her home country gave her a resource that would help her in the future. In other words, the capacity to reinvent oneself must be viewed as an asset rather than a compromise. This is in keeping with Said (1994) view that the intellectual's spirit as an amateur can enter and transform the merely normal routine which in this space relates to giving up when you hit rock bottom (which most of us go through) into something much more lively and radical instead of doing what one is supposed to do. At this critical moment, she was able to come out of her struggles by drawing on herself. Within the contextual constraints and adversities of studying at this university, she found an opportunity to turn her situation around.

The findings of studies (Magano, 2011, 2013; Carter et al., 2013) in which funding issues demotivate women postgraduate students and is a critical factor behind the stresses of these students was also felt by Prudence when she narrates:

> However not too long into my studies, I began to experience financial problems. This became a stress for me because I could not meet my expenses living here and being financially responsible for kids back home. There were days when I did not know how I was going to survive. It was an unbearable pressure and a constant source of stress. If my husband had been alive, I would not have had to worry about my finances. At times, this insecurity killed my motivation to continue my studies.

The death of Prudence's husband heralded a period of uncertainty and stress. His passing away impacted on her financially and she was forced to manage alone, which left her overwhelmed and stressed. The trauma of death was compounded by not being able to take care of herself financially, and in this disempowered state there were signs of giving up. But Prudence looked for a remedy to overcome her situation so she could complete her doctorate, and did not hesitate to take up a job offer when it presented itself, even though it would be stressful. We see the resilience in Prudence when she says:

> I needed to help myself get out of that position so I applied for a tutoring job. The salary was not great but it helped a lot. Having a job came with its own burdens too, because I had to juggle time for my tutoring load and my study load. I had to say "no" to movies with my friends. I also said "no" to extra tutoring hours because, as I kept reminding myself, I was investing time in my doctorate and the pay-off would be when it was completed. And I would accomplish my husband's dream too.

Prudence was met with challenges that forced her to give up her social life. Although funding was a negative factor in her journey she showed great resilience and did not give up on her studies. Prudence used agency to overcome the financial obstacles she encountered while studying at UKZN, and was ultimately empowered by engaging in this experience.

Funding affected Prudence and Thabile uniquely as women because it did not only affect them personally but also their families back home which hindered the completion of their postgraduate studies. Maher et al. (2004, p. 387) proposed that "the accessibility of budgetary assets has been more than once refered to as a basic factor affecting the completion of degrees". In particular, it must be argued that paying attention to educational outcomes alone potentially creates new forms of injustice. This is because it is assumed that once equal resources are provided (such as a place at university) that all students are equally able to convert these resources to capabilities and functionings. Instead, specific attention should be given to understanding the complex personal conversion factors in this case, the absence of funding, that impact on the opportunity freedoms (capabilities) of Prudence and Thabile.

Prudence and Thabile had the financial responsibility in the domestic home to provide for their children or parents. Deficient or no financing puts a strain on students, which affects their performace. This affirms what Richards and Schmiege (1993) expressed as the fundamental issue for women who are students and parents. Attributable to an absence of subsidising, the student stress over themselves as well as about their obligations to their families resulting in incredible pressure that negatively affects their studies. Thus, material support was critical in the realisation of their capability to be educated and to achieve their educational aspirations.

6.4.2 Theme 2: Living in the residence

In 2010 the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) published a report on "Access to South African Higher Education" with three universities chosen as case studies. Among the issues discussed relating to student persistence and success was university residence life: the residence culture and resultant degree of social integration of students being seen as important factors either promoting or hindering academic success (CHE, 2010, p. 108). Vilella (2011) suggested that universities must create spaces to allow students to learn about each other's cultures and practices. This involves creating less-threatening spaces where students can interact with and learn about each other. This is said to assist in disconfirming some of the assumptions about other races that contribute to alienation (Vilella, 2011).

In their narratives, two women described their experiences of feeling unsafe and devalued in the residencial space, as shown in the following excerpts:

> One night, someone tried to break into my room. I screamed for help. I was terrified that I was going to be raped. From that night on, I slept with the lights on in fear of being sexually violated...I think the local men looked at us as easy targets. (Thabile)

> I felt unsafe having heard stories about women being sexually harassed, theft, and xenophobic attacks on the residences. I feared for my physical safety because I felt that, being a woman from outside South Africa, the local men looked at me differently (as if they were undressing me) and that was frightening. (Prudence)

Gender obviously interceded the feelings of fear felt by Thabile and Prudence, that living in the residence represented a danger to their well-being given that they were particularly on edge and anxious about being casualties of rape. Viciousness against women is a genuine concern on all South African university grounds and especially in the living spaces such as the residence (MacKay and Magwaza, 2008) and as the narratives appear, it is of specific concern at UKZN. A comparative fear of gender based brutality was likewise communicated by female students in a study directed at another South African university (Gordon and Collins, 2013) and fear of being sexually harassed evoked anxiety in both Prudence and Thabile. It forced them to be constantly aware of their space, anticipating danger from the local men. Living in a

constant state of anxiety and fear as a result of potential danger makes one constantly feel unsafe. This was detrimental to Thabile's and Prudence's way of living and how they performed academically, as they say:

> At times, I wanted to give it all up and leave because I felt useless in this painful environment. But I … [had to think] how important this degree was... The experience was a harrowing one. (Thabile)

> I just kept to myself and silently endured all this with a fearful heart. (Prudence)

In addition to these experiences of fearing for their physical safety, the women gave accounts of how they had been victims of crime such as theft in this space. Thabile says:

> Living in the residence was a big challenge for me...The theft was uncontrollable. I had two laptops stolen. All my hard work gone down the drain because as I had my memory sticks inside the bag as well...I think that because I was a woman, they felt it easy to invade my privacy and steal my belongings. Was it because I could not fight them back? Growing up in Lesotho I came with a different set of rules and living in residence with people who did not live by rules made my time there unbearable.

Prudence says:

> Besides the fear, I had to deal with theft - some of my clothes were stolen. And the loud music became unbearable. I did not have the option to seek other accommodation because my financial situation did not allow it.

Living arrangements on the campus of South Africa are not excluded from corruption and wrong doing which is evident from the UCT crime report for September 2007 to June 2008. As per the Campus Protection Services (CPS) report, burglary in the residence was the most striking amid this period with laptops being the most wanted thing. The vast majority of these crimes are an aftereffect of students' carelessness, for instance, not securing their room and in their living arrangements. However, Thabile and Prudence suggest that the theft was more than their negligence and they revealed that the residence was not a personal safe space within which they could live and study.

Feminist psychologist, Maria Root (1989, 1992) described how an ever-present fear of violence can result in what she termed, *insidious trauma*. Thabile's and Prudence's feelings of vulnerability indicated that life at the residence was one of fear and constant vigilance. This corresponds to the findings of Moja (2006) that most students experience negative treatment and hostility while living at the university accommodation. Living in the residence was not the safe, nurturing space that they would have liked; yet these very negative encounters were the means of making them resilient, of making them create alternative homes by engaging with different coping strategies whilst living on residence. Thabile says: "But soon I got control of myself, thought of how important this degree is and calmed down listening to my favourite gospel music." Prudence says: "So I just kept to myself and silently endured this."

Living in the residences posed a serious learning challenge for these women. In this space, they felt devalued and unsafe. Thabile says, "I couldn't learn properly for a week," and Prudence, "I couldn't concentrate on my studies." This indicates that it had an adverse effect on their ability to study.

Thus, living on the residence instilled fear of physical safety and psychological violence on women students, and consequently limited their freedom to move and interact freely around campus spaces. From this perspective, we can argue that while access to campus facilities such as the library was open to all students, worries of sexual harassment and theft might have limited this access for most women students. In the long-run, this was likely to limit their full participation in campus activities and thus their development as African postgraduate students.

6.4.3 Theme 3: Dealing with the bureaucratic challenges

According to Fearon (2012), universities must be welcoming and inviting for students from different backgrounds and cultures. UKZN should ask questions such as the following: where in this university can an African women postgraduate student from an African country be comfortable to feel at home?

The women in the study felt that UKZN was an academic environment that did not make them feel at home nor did it value, assist, and prepare them adequately when

they took up the postgraduate student identity. Some declared that the orientation process was an uninviting space whilst others spoke of the registration process being a nightmare. Lack of resources for one made being at UKZN very unpleasant, while not being allowed to graduate due to an examiner's report was devastating for the fourth woman.

> My first interaction with members of the university was during a planned orientation which was led by the dean herself. I was very disappointed with the coordination of this function. Firstly, because they were not many lecturers from the faculty present to outline the requirements and, secondly, the lecturers present just handed out PhD manuals and told us they were self-explanatory. Thirdly, the major shock for me was when I noticed that, mostly, students from other African countries attended this orientation. It did not feel good that the university separated us from the local students. As a student from another country, I feel the university should have given us maps or guides on how to find shops or even hospitals. We had to find out all this on our own. (Prudence)

Prudence's experiences coincide with the findings of Forland (2006) that the responsibility for adjustment to the new university environment seems to be placed totally on the student. Prudence believed that there is a need for the university to have resources to help orientate them to the university's policies and procedures to help students feel part of this environment. Prudence's experience seems to resonate with the input of Forland (2006) and was further fuelled when she saw that the orientation was mostly attended by students from other countries. The university failed to bring together all the students as one, which is in contrast to the UKZN Strategic Plan that states that "the university will guarantee that, regardless of their circumstances, all students admitted to the university have the right to responsive and emotionally supportive networks, and learning situations that empower them to finish their studies effectively" (UKZN, Strategic Plan 2007–2016, p. 12).

> As I stepped back onto campus, I sensed gloom in the air. There were many changes and many scandals. The dean of our school was changed because there were serious allegations of misconduct against him. A new postgraduate department was established. However, it felt nothing like postgraduate. There was no computer LAN or offices of our own and we had to use the main library, along with the noisy first-year students, which was very challenging because we had different workloads. Learning became extremely difficult and unpleasant. (Thabile)

Thabile expressed her frustration at not having suitable operational structures like an office or LAN faculty, which made her postgraduate study at UKZN difficult. The operational structures are relevant to how students do justice to their postgraduate degrees, which correlates with Davies, Osborne, and Williams (2002) who reported that lack of resources are a barrier for women students.

> I did not find any type of assistance when I was first registering at UKZN from UNISA. I believe that I chose just to get admitted. But if I was advised correctly by the university about the options I had in terms of course work before enrolling for my Master's degree I would have not struggled academically. If I was told that doing coursework will lead to writing a smaller dissertation then I would have opted for this instead of a full dissertation which caused me grief. I was told by my friends that these courses helped prepared them to write their dissertation. In my case I had to do it on my own and when I went to change over I was told I was late. I struggled at it. (Lona)

According to Maringe (2006) opting for a career for the sake of being admitted to university usually has negative impacts on interest and attitude which may adversely affect academic performance. Nevertheless, Lona believes that due to a lack of consultation and advice before registration, doing a full dissertation caused her grief because she was unable to cope academically. Warren (1998) maintained that early engagement could include support services to the students to create a conductive learning environment. This implies that provision of career guidance at institutions will prevent academic challenges during the studies. Lona identified this as one of the reasons for not adapting to her postgraduate studies. When she chose to make a change, it was past the point of no return as she neglected to watch and hold fast to the due dates, for example, due dates for change of modules. As much as the university places notices on their sites, students regularly do not read the information and they miss the chance to remedy their enrollment mistakes (Maringe, 2006). Lona's choice in making the erroneous modules choice was a contributing factor that traded off her execution while at university.

> At the time of handing in my master's dissertation, my supervisor had left UKZN for better prospects at another university. I wasn't really concerned about this because all my hard work was completed and my dissertation was submitted for marking. It was just a matter of waiting for my results. When I did receive my results, I was ecstatic because one examiner awarded me a 74%. But in a second, this excitement turned to horror when I read that the other examiner awarded had me a 44%. I was devastated, horrified to be precise…A little more comfort was that, when there is such a discrepancy, a third examiner is appointed. The third examiner awarded me a pass mark but

I still needed to know why I had received such a low mark. I had no supervisor to back me up or help me understand what went wrong or direct me on how to approach the matter...Being a foreign student placed me in a predicament. If I pursued it, it meant I had to wait longer to graduate, which time we foreign students don't have because of the fee remission...Regardless of that, I was still not allowed to graduate...I initially believed that UKZN was very transparent with its treatment towards us foreigners but along the way, I felt differently.

A low point for Zandile was her examiners' feedback. This is an important issue that literature has not raised, and one that I think universities should take seriously. A lack of confidence in the process of how theses are examined could have far-reaching consequences for student submission and completion rates. Zandile, who was unable to fight the examiner's incorrect report because of her supervisor's unavailability and her fear of not graduating on time made her lose faith in UKZN.

6.4.4 Concluding moments

My study found that many of the women did not have pleasant experiences in the academic environment of UKZN. These women left a space within which they enjoyed a sense of familiarity, to venture into the unknown spaces of UKZN. Many of them moved beyond their cultural roles and the constraints regarding their gender roles to enhance their lives through education. However, the academic environment proved to be other than enabling. They were left on their own, to sink or swim with respect to funding, the bureaucratic challenges, and living in the residence. Funding affected both Thabile and Prudence as women. To release the financial burden of mothers in postgraduate education, the university could provide additional support to women by providing facilities for students who have children. The university should have a shifting demographic that moves away from a one-size-fits-all policy when it comes to women students who want to study but have families to support. It should have support structures to meet women's specific needs and treat them as individuals.

Living in the residence at UKZN was identified as an unsafe space that contributed to the women's fear. This study found that living in the residence did not concur with studies by Rojo-Perez et al. (2001) and Prieto-Flores et al. (2011) that stated that residences build unity, a commonness of purpose, and that students find support and

encouragement that accrue from loyalty to the residence, whilst foreign students find residences a crucial bridge to the complexities and uncertainties of a large research university.

The residence was supposed to be a place that offered them a safe space in the academic environment, and which was imperative in facilitating their learning and wellbeing. Thabile and Prudence had to live at the residence, which brought to light how the women's foreigner identity and language differences contributed to their insecurities and to the constant threat of being sexually harassed. As women they did not enjoy the residence as being a safe and valued space on university because of theft and fear of sexual harassment, which led to stress (Bunz, 1997). Bennett, Bexley, and Warnock (1995) stated that when there is less cultural conflict and discord, the possibility of learning taking place is increased.

The women in the study felt that UKZN was an academic environment that did not assist and prepare them adequately to feel valued when they took up the postgraduate student identity. Some declared that the orientation process was an uninviting space whilst another spoke of not being advised adequately on subject choice, which resulted in her struggling with the option she made. The lack of resources, for one woman, made being at UKZN very unpleasant; not being allowed to graduate due to examiners' reports was devastating for another woman. Lona alluded to lack of adequate module advice as a contributing factor to her struggling with her studies. The study also found that UKZN did not seem to be competent in assisting or orientating students to the new academic environment which created a tension between local and foreign students.

Yet, the women still managed and continued with their studies. The crux of Edward Said's (2004) point is directed to the women in my study as they are all professionals who took risks and went beyond easy certainty by venturing out of their comfort zones and leaving home to become postgraduate students to attain postgraduate degrees. This is breaking barriers because African women seldom pursue postgraduate education due to cultural, race, and gender practices (Moyer, Salovey, & Casey-Cannon, 1999).

Studying postgraduate education can be lonely. These women did not lack the spirit to oppose whatever oppressed them therefore, not accommodating the status quo when

challenges knocked at their doors. As indicated by Said (1994) the scholarly remains amongst isolation and alignment and is a person with a particular role in the public arena that cannot be diminished basically to being a faceless expert, a capable individual from a class simply continuing on ahead. These postgraduate women, as intellectual selves had the flexibility to participate in postgraduate studies that prompts the improvement and extension of different abilities (Sen, 1999). Furthermore, postgraduate instruction can go past individual accomplishment to render a more extensive commitment to society (Calhoun, 2006).

Once the women are educated, they can have a positive impact on their families, societies, countries, and the world as a whole because they have more freedom to make choices and to make their voices heard. Postgraduate education has prepared the women in my study with capabilities in the area of postgraduate research, as will be discussed in the next section.

6.5 Section D: Spaces for freeing selves

In Sections A, B, and C, the APWSs struggled with many issues like being mothers, dealing with relationships with spouses and community, and financial constraints, to name a few. There was constant tension and negotiation between the domestic home and academic home in trying to free themselves. The focus in this section is to reveal spaces where the women developed certain freedoms, opportunities and capabilities in order to become the kinds of postgraduate women that they wanted to be (Sen, 1993).

Unlike in above sections that showed spaces in which the women had to deal with their personal, social, and environmental challenges that were complex and required constant negotiation, the spaces in this section are where they felt a sense of wellbeing which, according to Said (1994) is working outside of the formula as an organic intellectual. From the analysis Lona, Zandile, Thabile and Prudence found common and unique spaces where they felt valued to develop to be the kind of woman academic that they wanted to be. The capabilities that helped to sustain them as intellectuals in the spaces they found are discussed under the following themes:

- Theme 1: Trusting and caring relationships as spaces for wellbeing
- Theme 2: Network spaces for wellbeing
- Theme 3: Collaborative spaces for wellbeing

6.5.1 Theme 1: Trusting and caring relationships as spaces for wellbeing

Zandile says:

> I was appointed a supervisor with whom I had a lot in common. At our first meeting she assured me that all would go well with hard work. I was very comfortable with her. If I gave her a piece of work on Monday to supervise, she would read it and comment no later than Wednesday. I felt it was a good move because I worked at a faster pace allowing me to complete my dissertation in less than 12 months. Due to my supervisor's support and encouragement I was able to push on with my studies more than I might have, and was able to submit in record time the following year. It was a very motivating space. In her, I found a kindred spirit. I felt success at the tips of my hands.

Zandile experienced supervision as space where she felt good about herself, and that allowed her to feel cared, valued, and with a sense of wellbeing where she could be herself. Zandile's sense of wellbeing is attributed to her female lecturer who showed support beyond academic aspects. In this relationship, there was no tension and negotiation which fuelled her desire to complete her postgraduate studies. Nelson (1991) stated that female supervisors were regarded as more caring in nature and were more forthcoming in supervision meetings.

Wolf (2000), Kurtz-Costes et al. (2006), Bitzer (2007) and Magano (2011) confirmed the importance of good supervision, and highlighted that it is essential that supervisors are not restricted to being mentors in the academic work, but also care about students as human beings. Zandile attested to this by saying that she found her lecturer to be a kindred spirit. She was allowed to work at a faster pace to complete her studies before her prescribed time, which meant that her supervisor accommodated her. This, in turn, encouraged her to feel motivated and safe in this space. Zandile's experience is in line with Borders and Brown's (2005, p. 25) comments: "A strong and positive working relationship will enhance the supervision experience and serve as a buffer for those challenging moments that inevitably will occur." This is also consistent with previous

studies that have shown that matched gender pairs in supervision resulted in the greatest satisfaction with supervision (Behling et al., 1988; Worthington & Stern, 1985).

6.5.2 Theme 2: Network spaces for well-being

For Lona and Prudence attending conferences, being part of projects, and writing articles were a new space to feel a sense of well-being:

> I really felt privileged when my supervisor asked me to present my work in progress at a local conference. I felt so proud to be associated with, and presenting to, academics like doctors and professors. I enjoyed it most, after the conference, when I was able to mingle and establish my own pool of academic friends. This is where I felt like an achiever without having to deal with other issues. It boosted my confidence and gave me the motivation to want to complete this degree. My biggest achievement came when I was asked to write up a paper with my supervisor. I felt elevated as a postgraduate student. (Lona)
>
> Regardless of the many painful and stressful periods I experienced whilst completing my doctorate, I felt honoured when some senior lecturers noticed my work and potential and asked me to present at a conference. I remembered how the academics in the audience showed interest in what I was saying and posed good and relevant questions. My lecturers were very happy. My confidence levels shot up and, from that day onwards, I grew into postgraduate study and it felt like home. UKZN gave me hope. I sound like an advert for university! (Prudence)

It is evident that Lona and Prudence felt at home in these spaces. Attending conferences allowed them to disconnect from the tensions they experienced (Sections A, B, and C) and to connect with conference delegates, project participants, and experts where they felt elevated and confident. These feelings differed to the feelings experienced in their domestic homes. Lona's exposure to presenting at conferences, publishing papers and working in a project helped build her freedom to create an academic identity. Prudence's confidence was boosted when academics in the audience listened and contributed constructively to her work. This exposure created a sense of belonging to the academic world and contributed to them becoming independent researchers. Ramsay (2000) and Chesterman (2001) cited in Brown and Watson (2010, p. 398) argued that "an important part of academic life is attending conferences as it offers opportunity both to present their work and to network with

experts." Lona stated that the elevating experience of mingling and interacting with other academics, gave her the motivation to complete her degree.

Prudence's success at the conference allowed her to own her studies and feel at home, which she hoped would increase her chance of better career prospects. Putting their work out in the academic domain, networking with other students and experts, and writing articles, provided Lona and Prudence with an intellectual space to feel emotionally and psychologically good about themselves, a feeling that they lacked in other spaces. The freedoms and opportunities gained in this space sustained them as intellectual beings and created a sense of belonging to the academic world.

6.5.3 Theme 3: Collaborative spaces for well-being

For another co-researcher, Thabile, it was the commons room that became a space where she felt most valued.

> In the commons room, I felt at home because my accent and the way I spoke did not matter because most of us were from different African countries. This group of students inspired me because of their dedication to complete their postgraduate studies and I began working harder and smarter to reach my goals. I made wonderful friends and they appreciated me for my worth. They came to me for assistance when they did not understand certain things and I did the same. Instead of sitting and talking about how bad we were feeling studying here, we used this room to go over our work and try and fully understand it. This made me feel that I can do this, unlike in the lecture theatre when I did not have the courage to speak in front of the locals and not much learning took place. When I was with my friends in this room I was relaxed and learnt better and gave it my best to finish.

Thabile found the commons room a productive space in terms of her learning. As indicated by NMSA (1998) students' commons rooms are not any more just congregational spaces for students with time staring them in the face. They are necessary for providing an inviting situation and compelling learning. For Thabile, this space (unlike the spaces that hindered her learning) inspired her and made her feel valued as a postgraduate student. She transformed the space into an environment where she was in control of the way she wanted to learn with her friends. The academic and social well-being of students is enhanced when the learning environment provides

spaces where they feel safe and valued and can learn in different ways and at different speeds (NMSA, 1996). Unlike the lecture theatre, this space became a domain of learning where formal and informal teaching and learning took place and where she felt safe because she did not fear how she spoke and how she looked. The commons room provided freeing space where she found the courage to continue with her studies, which enhanced the way she worked to reach her goals. Finding this alternate home provided Thabile with a space to feel emotionally and psychologically well about herself; the freedoms and opportunities (capabilities) gained in the space sustained her as intellectual being and created in her a sense of belonging to the academic world.

6.6 Conclusion

As indicated by Sen (1999, p. 502) "improvement requires the evacuation of real wellsprings of unfreedom" and individuals must be capable or be empowered to carry on with the existence they have motivation to select. According to Said (1994) an organic intellectual is an individual who does not surrender to agreeable, static, and sedimented mindsets, being, and acting, nor do they participate in a talk of fault. Rather than adjusting and accommodating to hegemonic frameworks, the scholarly will continually build up a safe awareness and take part in techniques of contestation; organic intellectuals centre their brain and body imaginatively and valuably in the settings in which they find themselves.

As the researcher, it was crucial for me to understand the experiences of APWSs through the capabilities and intellectual lenses. The Capabilities Approach is unique in its focus on individuals' roles in striving for what makes them feel valued and how they choose to live the life chosen. In this case (APWSs in postgraduate study at UKZN), the Notion of the intellectual complements the Capabilities Approach in that both focus on them becoming agents of change, finding a voice, and developing emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually.

Using the Capabilities Approach of Amartya Sen, and Edward Said's Notion of the intellectual to analyse women's educational experiences, this study revealed that women became agents of change as they were able to remove the sources oppressing

them in the different spaces and create new meanings as possibilities for feeling a sense of well-being. But at the same time, they were through their choices, responsible for reinforcing and maintaining the oppression in a way that forces them to preserve traditional *forms of domination* or use it as an opportunity. The analysis further revealed that whilst the university structures, discourses and practices were producing harmful forms of unfreedoms, there were structures and relationships inside and outside of academia that allowed for new forms of freedom to form.

The four women in this study were very different women who many a times lived according to their traditions and cultures. Kavita Ramdas (2009) director of the Global Fund for Women, once asked: "Why is it that women are, on the one hand, viciously downtrodden by cultural practices, and yet, at the same time, are the preservers of culture in most societies? This analysis concludes that exploring their lived experiences reveal how they were able to have turn their own traditions into opposition and opportunity, managing to reject practices of domination. They did not expect to break tradition as in the case of Lona, living her life as a conservative Muslim wife and mother, Prudence a widow and a mother, Zandile a Nigerian mother married to an educated man and Thabile an umarried women, but to embrace it in such a way that it became opportunities for them to complete their scholarly journey of postgraduate studies. In this space, even though they were immersed in their traditional ways, they were able to use it to their advantage allowing for development and transformation to occur. In this way as Sen (1999) posited that when access to opportunities and freedoms were available to the women, they made choices to give them a sense of well-being and find a voice.

The women in this study were both disadvantaged and marginalised, particularly due to their gender and patriarchy. Nussbaum and Glover (1995) articulated that women, have always been subordinate to men, be it within families, the work place, or communities. It was, thus, not unexpected that most of the women reported that gender socialisation affected their intellectual performance in their studies. In this regard, scholars such as Pillay (2009) and Magano (2011, 2013) stated that female students deregister or drop out due to challenges they face. For co-researchers Prudence and Thabile, their relationships with their community hampered their learning because the community was against them studying. Lona's husband did not feel that her studying

was important and demanded that his family time must not be comprised, which put a strain on the relationship. While their husband or communities produced pernicious forms of unfreedoms for the women, the presence of significant male figures like Zandile's husband who encouraged her to pursue her studies and a male lecturer friend who helped her with her English, challenged conceptions of gender induced unfreedom and challenged existing understanding of partichary. This form of domination challenged internally by men gave space for new freedoms to develop.

The analysis further revealed what it meant to be valued or ignored as postgraduate students within various spaces on university, and how the women's learning was affected by the challenges and opportunities. Their experiences of safe and unsafe spaces on campus raised issues about the intersection of gender, nationality and race. When these categories of gender, nationality and race played out here, they captured historical and current aspects of gendered relationships among students. All the co-researchers saw certain spaces at UKZN as gendered and as having a direct effect on their learning.

Despite official reports that described the university spaces as "positive" and "accepting" (Vaccaro, 2010, p. 205) this study showed alarming amounts of racism and sexism against the co-researchers who reported feeling excluded, devalued, and unsafe in many spaces in UKZN. Most of the women felt excluded in the lecture theatre the residence or learning the curriculum; they thought they had a right to contribute in these spaces but were denied that chance by the local students especially the men which led to domination, control and exclusion.

As the researcher, I was curious about issues related to feelings of domination, control, and exclusion whether in supervision meetings, the lecture theatre, attending cohorts or engaging with the curriculum. Almost all the women had stories of insensitive comments made to them by supervisors, lecturers in the cohort programme, or local students. However, these comments did not deter them, in fact, they seemed to make them more resolute in their decision to stay in the course and choose to complete their studies. Perhaps what was most surprising for me throughout this process was that the women were not deterred by any kind of roadblock or feelings of unfairness that they experienced. They showed great determination to get to the finishing line.

The analysis also revealed that certain educational spaces are complex spaces, and some spaces are more productive than others for African postgraduate women students. In the productive spaces, they felt a sense of well-being that offered the women a range of practices and relationships that sustained and nourished their desire for intellectual, emotional and psychological well-being. In these spaces, the love for embodied connectedness with self and others in different learning communities opened up new ideas and discourses that enhanced their development as women researchers contributing to knowledge production.

What these findings demonstrate is that women can aspire to better standards of living, but their circumstances (personal, social or environmental) might diminish or enhance their different capacities to navigate their aspirations gap to be where they desire to be. Thus, while it is crucial to encourage African women to aspire to higher levels of education and better life outcomes, it is equally important to expand their freedoms and opportunities to use their agency to sustain, pursue and effectively achieve their aspirations and life goals.

There are a few studies of women's postgraduate experiences at university, but none of them has applied the Capabilities Approach and intellectual lenses as my study has done. Using the Capabilities Approach and intellectual lenses to explore African women's experience could bring us closer to tackling the problem of women feeling devalued in certain spaces, and also bring to the fore that African women find spaces that nourish and sustain them through their postgraduate studies.

CHAPTER SEVEN: EMERGING UNDERSTANDINGS FROM MY STUDY

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter summarises, interprets and concludes my study. It provides an overview of the new knowledge produced, demonstrating the ways in which the current study has contributed to the body of knowledge on African women pursing postgraduate studies and previously held beliefs about this group of students.

Based on assumptions derived from the existing literature (that combining women's domestic and professional responsibilities with postgraduate studies often ended in conflict and ultimately led to tension in the women's lives), this study has shown African postgraduate women students who were working alongside their domestic and professional responsibilities to craft lives for themselves outside of their domestic keeper identities (Hooks, 1994). This positive message that emerged from my study, offers an alternative snapshot of an African postgraduate woman student's lived life to that portrayed in literature.

7.2 Personal unearthing

As a feminist narrative researcher-scholar, my journey has been intermingled with crossroads and many turns and bends. Detailing my personal experiences and thoughts on this journey, and the desire to understand myself a little better, have all contributed to rich, revealing, and meaningful conversations with myself in community with other women. When I began this study, little did I realise the space it offered me to understand, differently, my status as an African postgraduate woman student. My relationship with the co-researchers in my role as the researcher and researched (insider position) has afforded me a particular sensitivity to, and acknowledgement of, my biases and limitations that I would not have acquired if I was an outsider to this study.

Engaging with the study assisted me to rethink my attitude towards other African postgraduate students and the way that I respond to the world around me, especially to the women from other African countries. I recognise and acknowledge how one's family background, socioeconomic status, religion, and level of education shape and structure a person's life. I have learned that, for African women, agency to revise cultural beliefs, attitudes, actions, and habits that they have been subjected to, is possible. Living in different sociocontextual realities (Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and South Africa) are a condition of and for who we are and how we make sense of who we are in the world.

7.3. Methodological reflection

The methodology section was an important space for me to get to grips with the nuanced and textured lives of African postgraduate women students. In Chapter 1, I described universities as homogenising because they accepted women students as numbers on their records and databases, and not as who they are, nor relative to their experiences in this setting and context. Using narrative inquiry as my methodological approach enabled me to respond in storied ways to particular questions and to get a deeper, more complex understanding about African postgraduate women students who choose to take up study at a South African university.

The methods of long unstructured interviews and visual inquiry complemented the methodology and allowed the co-researchers different opportunities to tell their stories. The long unstructured interviews were the main research method that I relied on. Using long unstructured interviews as a data generating tool allowed me through probing, to get a glimpse of the lived experiences of the co-researchers, as told. Life as told is a deliberate act of constructing oneself. Affording the APWSs a space to experience and voice their stories through collage inquiry and artefact retrieval made possible a visual stimulation for the recollection of memories. It also opened up opportunities for me to move beyond the confines of the spoken word.

From the outset of this research, I had to ensure that, at every step of the study, the co-researchers were the owners of their stories and that their stories remained intact. At

the same time, I had an obligation as a doctoral student researcher to make sense of the storied data provided. I also had an opportunity to build knowledge in the area of postgraduate education for the benefit of all women wishing to pursue postgraduate studies in the future.

Most qualitative methods are extremely time-consuming, and narrative inquiry is no exception. While it was possible and easier for me to supply numbers (such as that 90% of the women reported feeling demotivated because of lack of finances while completing their studies), as a woman I felt compelled to tell what such challenges look and feel like from their point of view, in their words. It is this level of engagement with, and immersion in the data that led me to understand, in a unique way, the storied narratives that I reconstructed.

7.4 Narrative inquiry helped me understand my role as a researcher

Narrative inquiry played an important role in helping me understand my role as a researcher. As the researcher, I did not anticipate that using this methodology would mean a life changing experience for me. It ultimately gave me courage to tell and share my story as part of the study. At the beginning of this study, I hesitated to reveal my story for fear of being recognised. When I decided it was important for me to also put my life in the public domain, this became a trigger for my mental distress and deep-rooted psychological issues that came to the fore, and which forced me to seek medical help. It pushed me into spaces that I was uncomfortable in because putting the stories together (mine and theirs) revealed painful and suppressed memories. For the first time I was able to reveal suppressed issues that, when they came to the fore, liberated me in an empowering way. I learned about the possibility of freeing myself.

The other women's stories showed me that the hardships and pain of not having family members physically present fuelled their desire and commitment to persevere and complete their postgraduate studies. Engaging in such a study assisted me to change my taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs about the "other African women" who live outside of South Africa, and how narrowly I responded to the world around me - especially when aspiring to reach my goals. I recognise and acknowledge that although

one may have the support of family, and be financially stable, these are not necessarily markers for doing women differently - but can become constraints that reproduce self-closure and tools of surveillance in unproductive ways.

Studying women's lives assisted me in genuinely listening to the stories the co-researchers offered and shared with me. From a young age, I was told by my parents and teachers to do more listening than talking. My mum would constantly say, "You don't have two ears and one mouth for nothing." Looking back to when I was a student engaging with my master's studies, I remember that when transcribing my recordings of my supervision meetings, I would clench my hand into a fist and scream aloud, "Shut up, Sheeren!" They were just me talking and constantly interrupting my supervisor; it was awful to listen to.

Through adopting narrative inquiry, I became critically aware of my capacity to listen rather than talk, which enhanced my ability to get good stories. When listening to my co-researchers, I restrained myself from interrupting or even completing their sentences; I just made head and eye gestures as reassurance that I was listening and completely interested in what was being said. It was an interesting learning experience for me because it enabled me to communicate better with others while enabling the co-researchers to blaze their own trails, breaking away from stereotypical expectations that women must not be heard, or that someone else can tell her story better.

Listening to the accounts of the co-researchers who had succeeded against odds, who remained hardworking and consistent and persevered in remaining positive, compelled me to re-image myself and revisit issues that were holding me back from completing my doctorate. I hope that just as their stories inspired me, my story can create hope for other women who are struggling with the demons of self-surveillance.

Retelling the women's stories has also helped me to understand that our experiences as women are complex and different. Prior literature written on African women's lives assumed that there is a homogenous and singular experience to share. In this study, narrative inquiry from an African feminist stance assisted me in affirming women's differences in all the complexity and contradictions that characterise the women's lives. In taking this stance, I was pushed as a feminist researcher to acknowledge that

representing other women is no objective, benign process; rather, it was about understanding and deeply questioning how to represent women, who has the power to represent others, and the implications of my representations of others - that was imperative to this feminist research study.

7.5 My interpretive portrayals

In the following sections, I offer my interpretive portrayals that were driven by my research questions:

1. What are the stories of postgraduate African women students at a South African university?

2. What meanings of self inform the African woman postgraduate student identity?

3. What are the postgraduate African women's experiences of studying in a South African university?

7.5.1 Offering the stories

What are the stories of African women students choosing to engage in postgraduate studies at a South African university? In offering the reconstructed storied narratives of Thabile, Lona, Prudence, and Zandile, this study opened up the complexity of the women's lived experiences. Positioning from African feminist standpoint theory, and using narrative inquiry allowed me to zoom into particular marginalised spaces to understand African postgraduate women as complex, multiple and agentic beings. Positioning my story alongside theirs, as an insider, enabled me to uncover multiple stories of marginalisation and oppression, patriarchy and different forms of cultural surveillance inside and outside their homes. The self as discourse was intricately woven with desires, anxieties, interests, practices and hope.

7.6 Doing domestic keeper differently

In this section, I offer an interpretation to the research question, "What meanings of self inform the African postgraduate woman student identity?" Understanding from the stories that African women's lived experiences are complex, opened up opportunities for me to get glimpses of the effects of being coerced to conform to the domestic keeper identity. Drawing on intersectionality theory allowed me to understand African women's capacity to work through intersections of the dominant social identity categories of race, gender, culture, and ethnicity that were the holders of the domestic keeper identity for the women in this study. Although the gendered space was the common identity category, oppression of women could not be read through the lens of gender alone. As much as gender is important, it cannot account for the complexity of identities as they are lived (Howard and Renfrow, 2014, p. 7).

Wanting to transform self and open up the domestic keeper identity created possibilities for re-identifying self as African woman. The ways in which each woman negotiated the various dominant discourses fluctuated. In the next four paragraphs, I describe how this renegotiation to be African woman differently was constituted.

7.6 1 Lona: Muslim activist

Lona negotiated the dominant discourses of ethnicity and gender by adopting educational spaces as alternative homes to do Muslim conservative girl differently. In her position as a girl learner and later as a teacher, the different educational spaces offered her the platform for activism and voice. In these spaces, the rumblings signalled change for her to make public Muslim women differently.

As a professional, she used the position of teacher and union member to exercise forms of resistance to the cultural surveillances and patriarchal ways placed on her by her dad, her male colleagues, and later, by her husband. As an African postgraduate women, dismantling the dominant discourses of gender and ethnicity with and through education, opened up a pathway for renewal and love for different knowledges and

communities in and through which she could free and make public her voice and do married Muslim woman differently.

7.6.2 Zandile: Privileged Igbo woman

Zandile negotiated the dominant discourses of culture and gender by adopting educational spaces as alternative homes to do Igbo girl differently. In the marginalised educational spaces of school, she found it empowering to resist the exploitation and subversion from her female teacher by not being passive in the face of abuse and traditional forms of authority.

Marriage offered her the space to invert and revise her meanings of what it means to be and do Igbo woman differently. Being married gave her the economic stability and social status from which she was able to create a relationship with her husband that did not come with pre-established roles and expectations. In this trusted and respectful space, she was able to exercise privilege and choice. In this privileged and flexible space of the marriage, many other opportunities opened up for reenergising self. Engaging in postgraduate studies at UKZN offered her the opportunity to negotiate and blur the boundaries of domestic keeper and postgraduate student identities.

7.6.3 Prudence: Productive widow

Prudence negotiated the dominant and intersecting discourses of culture and gender by adopting educational spaces as alternative homes to do Shona girl differently. As a girl learner, she experienced alienation and was made to feel inferior and less intelligent than the boys in the class. Defying and resisting these dominant and oppressive hierarchies reproduced by her teachers propelled her to take up different leadership positions where she was able to be known differently as girl learner.

Embracing her widowhood identity after her husband died was complex and constraining for Prudence. The Shona community imposed their own forms of surveillance on widowhood that worked against Prudence and her need to support her

family financially. Resistance from this marginalised space of widowhood as a devoted and supportive mother served as an impetus to take up a position as a lecturer. In this alternative home, she was able to renew self in productive ways. She was able fulfil her husband's wish of becoming a postgraduate student while simultaneously disrupting the essentialised identity of widowhood.

7.6.4 Thabile: Exotic Bataung girl

Thabile grew up conforming to norms that she was socialised into by her Bataung community. Education for girls was largely determined by the elders in the community and schooling for girls was limited to primary schooling. Her desire to work outside of this normalising practice as a traditional Bataung girl happened in educational spaces away from her home and community. A move to an all-girls white Afrikaans boarding school opened up a complex world for her to negotiate. Being cast as the exotic other, and the fear of xenophobic attacks and insults by the white learners in the school, developed in her a capacity for self-discipline and determination to work around the insidious forms of violence, discrimination, and inequality by forming relationships with particular teachers in the school.

Education became a focal point for her through which she contested the racism through the support of teachers. Thabile's teachers were indeed the catalysts for encouraging her to remain strong and providing her with emotional support. Thabile, in silent and embodied ways, began to value herself differently and transform during her stay at the white high school and later, when absorbed by the world as an undergraduate student. Engaging with the subjects like psychology became a disciplinary home and different space for her to reflect and think about self beyond the limits of oppressive and alienating practices and violence within different cultural communinties that institutionalise the African domestic keeper identity. In educational spaces, she was able to choose how she wants to be known and how she wants others to know her; taking up the position of African woman postgraduate student was a potent space for her rehabilitation and resistance as an independent, visible, woman.

The agency to re-image self as African women was made available in and through different educational spaces. Postgraduate studies indeed offered the African women a rehabilitative space where it taught them to be resilient and organic in pursing freedom. Seen as a rehabilitative space, it opened up opportunities to disrupt oppressions, prejudices, hierarchies, and habits that surveil the domestic keeper self Resisting harmful and dangerous forms of surveillance and oppressive practices as African women happened in jagged ways and through much struggle as learners, teachers, widows and wives. Negotiating the in-between, intersecting spaces of patriarchy and wifehood, cultural homogeneity and widowhood, ethnic surveillance and exotic self-hood, provided the opportunities for African women to question and make sense of "who they are" as potent spaces for "who they want to be/become" (Pillay, 2003). Doing African woman differently is possible in a scholarly and ethically responsible way.

7.7 The productive spaces for sense of well-being

In this section, I offer an interpretation of African women's experiences of postgraduate study in a South African university. Postgraduate educational spaces are complex spaces and some spaces are more productive than others for African women. Seeking out particular productive spaces, I learned, offers women a range of practices and relationships that sustain and nourish their desire for intellectual, emotional, and psychological well-being. In these spaces, the love for embodied connectedness with self and others in different learning communities opens up new ideas and discourses that enhance their development as women researchers contributing to knowledge production.

7.7.1 Networking spaces

Within particular educational spaces, networking with others enhanced women as individuals with capacity and knowledge to question and challenge dominant perspectives and narrow understandings in alternate ways. Attending and presenting at conferences, for Lona and Prudence, offered them moments to be known as

intellectuals and, in dialogue with others, they were able to develop research knowledge and skills essential for their development as independent, creative thinkers. The love for new ideas gave them access to network with experts in their fields and find voice. As postgraduate student researchers, these asymmetrical relationships had a transformative effect on the women where they could experience intellectual, emotional, and psychological well-being. Free to communicate their ideas and knowledge without fear or shame created a sense of well-being that nourished them as scholarly beings.

7.7.2 Collaborative spaces

Within particular collaborative spaces, the educational experiences of postgraduate study enabled Thabile to move beyond one-dimensional thinking, and engage in dialogue with diverse ways of thinking. This collaboration with other foreign students inspired her and made her feel valued as one capable of self-transformation through learning with her critical friends. In this productive collaborative learning space, she found the courage to draw support and continue with her postgraduate studies to reach her goals. This sense of emotional and psychological well-being sustained her commitment to continue on her intellectual journey and fulfil her desire of belonging to the academic world. In these asymmetrical relationships, voice and agency moved freely and beyond the traditional hierarchial relationships that prevailed in the formal learning postgraduate communities.

7.7.3 Trusting and caring relationships

In the supportive, trusting, and respectful space of the supervision relationship, Zandile was able to exercise her voice and agency to be an enthusiastic and capable postgraduate woman student. In the supervision relationship, she experienced care and affirmation for who she is and what she wanted to be as a woman. Freed from the fear of embarrassment and disrespect, she experienced the emotional and psychological well-being that was necessary for her optimal learning as a postgraduate student. Supportive and caring learning spaces are necessary for women like Zandile to feel

recognised and valued as postgraduate students. Being an African postgraduate woman student worked in complementary ways to her family responsibilities as wife and mother.

African women's postgraduate educational experiences offered spaces to practise and express their love for intellectual, emotional, and psychological well-being. Using Standpoint theory and narrative inquiry allowed me to zoom into particular educational spaces to understand African postgraduate women as complex, multiple, and agentic beings. In postgraduate educational spaces, being and doing marginalised African women differently worked in negotiated and in complementary ways to their domestic keeper identity. Educational spaces for making public African women's intellectual, emotional, and psychological voices is possible and necessary for doing African women differently.

Combining Sen's (1993) Capabilities Approach and Edward Said's (1994) Notion of the intellectual in this study, I was able to zoom into how the rehabilitative power of thinking, writing, creating and caring work against the grain of the subversive trends in a variety of educational spaces within the university and how women cultivated a sense of well-being - a love for oneself, one's ideas and voice as a way to resist the formulaic notions of what it means to be an African woman and student.

7.8 Theoretical contributions: Educational spaces as a rehabilitative site for Intellectual embodiedness

Taking an African feminist standpoint perspective to understand African postgraduate women's educational experiences offered me the opportunity to think differently about marginality and the potential that offers for the enactment of productive resistance. African women postgraduate student's educational experiences made visible their desire to take up an alternate and marginal space from which to revise and rename self - outside the domestic keeper identity. Working as postgraduate women alongside their domestic responsibilities was an emergent, embodied, and entangled experience.

I took an African feminist standpoint perspective to frame African postgraduate women's educational experiences. Using Sen's (1993) Capabilities Approach and Edward Said's (1994) Notion of the intellectual and Crenshaw (1994) Intersectionality theory as the three analytical tools to respond to the research questions, enabled me to zoom into the sources of the rumblings where women's desire for intellectual well-being was cultivated, as well as interpret how those rumblings evolved and grew organically through selected postgraduate educational spaces to know, be and act differently.

Postgraduate studies indeed offered the African women a rehabilitative space as a prime avenue for healing themselves where healing is defined, in part, by a recovery of self. A rediscovery of self offered women moments to feel and know self as a positive site for exultant transformation. The feeling of intellectual, emotional, physical and social well-being experienced in these educational spaces contributed to their intellectual embodiedness which was practised in and through networked academic spaces, collaborative academic spaces, and caring academic relationships offered them a home where women's voices and ideas mattered.

Caring enough to love self as one with capacity and knowledge to do African woman differently through educational spaces, opened up the possibility to care for others in better and less dangerous ways. Revisiting past experiences and memories was necessary for me to interpret how "to free being African woman" from the oppressive and normalising practices that serve to reproduce essentialised meanings that tie one to the domestic keeper identity. Choosing to be marginal and not part of the dominant grouping of African women, was a complex and entangled experience of pain, alienation, fear, shame, struggle and joy, resistance and dialogue.

My theoretical contribution to the African standpoint theory that I used as the platform to propel myself for the study is extended by my deepened understanding of:

- How postgraduate educational experiences offer the conditions for intellectual, social, emotional well-being;

- Why postgraduate educational experiences offer the conditions for emotional, social and intellectual well-being.

Through this study, we are able to see through women's intellectual embodiedness.

7.9 Policy Implications and practices

This study proposes that UKZN policies and practices should take into account the different needs and challenges of diverse groups of African women students studying postgraduate education. African women students from different African countries should not be deprived of feeling welcome and safe on campus, whether living in the residence or working inside the lecture rooms. Their pleas in terms of access to an African curriculum and financial support are important for African women doing postgraduate education. Listening to the stories of these APWSs can help to inform future policy and practice, which would lead to institutions that are more equitable, diverse, and inclusive for students.

This study found that when the women felt unsafe or like outsiders, they isolated themselves from the others and took a stance to work alone and silently. This hindered their learning. Their reaction to such experiences needs to change. Such experiences can only change if women are engaged and become part of the highest structures of decision-making bodies at UKZN so that women's voices of such experiences can be heard. Maclean (2001) recommended that women in higher education work together with local and national bodies involved in defining the gender equity policies for the various sectors.

Universities should offer programmes that will promote leadership skills, management skills, and so forth, that will empower women to be vocal about experiences on universities that hinder their learning. Universities should take note of the recommendations made with the aim of improving the experiences of women, who form an important part of the academic community, and create "female-friendly university systems" (Glazer-Raymo, 1987, p. 70).

Through my work with these women, I have shown that there seems to be some anxiety that accompanies the women students' journey into postgraduate education, no matter what part of Africa they live in or what they are studying. What can we learn from this? I believe that the universities should be made aware of the fears and barriers that tend to hinder the learning of APWSs.

7.10 Possible limitation of the study

This was a study of African women students' experiences of postgraduate study at UKZN. I consider the findings from this small number of co-researchers to be adequate to ensure that the readers of this research will not suppose the findings to be generalised to all APWSs at institutions of higher education within South Africa. The intention here is not to make generalisations about the ways in which APWSs experience undertaking postgraduate education at UKZN, but rather to explore or illustrate the complexity of the selected women's experiences.

De Vault (1999, p. 243) noted that language is often inadequate for women, and that writing is not a transparent medium with which researchers simply convey "truth" discovered in the field. Thus, the process of analysis and interpretation is fraught with issues before we even start the research process. However, I have situated the analysis and interpretation within the understanding that it is my subjective interpretation and analysis, using language as a resource which is not without problems. This process has been carried out in the best way I know how, guided by those who have gone before me through their writings. This analysis must be viewed within this subjective framework and I am aware, as Mauthner and Doucet (1998, p. 51) indicated, that even as I write, "every reader will interpret the text again for themselves."

7.11 Considerations for future study

As I reviewed the scarce literature available pertaining to women's experiences of postgraduate education both from the international and national perspectives, I found that the repeated similarity of the women's challenges resonated across Africa. With this resonance, I gained the strength and confidence to state that there are some

significant ways that our universities can enhance the situations of APWSs. One of those ways might be that they give their attention to studies like mine that employ narrative inquiries, choose to give women voice, and allow them to tell their stories rather than silence them or have men or the universities tell them. Universities need to acknowledge that there is an increase in the number of African women pursuing postgraduate study, and need to find ways to best accommodate this diverse group of women students so they can adjust. Perhaps we should re-examine my second research question, "What meanings of self inform the African postgraduate woman student identity?" Maybe we should be exploring, "What can the African women students choosing to engage in postgraduate studies at UKZN look like?"

The assorted life backgrounds that these women brought to the fore when studying certainly informed them on their journeys through the academic world. Furthermore, the diverse childhood experiences, schooling experiences and family experiences that they brought added to the texture of their stories and enhanced their experiences of life as an APWS, as well as the lives of the people they met on the way. Although the co-researchers shared similar feelings on some issues, all their stories were unique. Surely, attention to this reality by the university might help APWSs to feel more welcomed as members of the university community. This would enhance their ability to stay on track with their studies, which generally, is a rigorous course to travel.

7.12 Concluding moments

This study concludes with an emphasis on the unique individual experiences of APWSs studying at UKZN. By adopting a feminist stance, I was able to give voice to the co-researchers whereby they were able to share their experiences and tell their stories from their standpoint. These experiences became the data for the study. After listening to each of the co-researcher's stories, it was clear that not all of them shared the same experiences: some were common whilst others were unique. However, the experiences that were commonly shared showed that studying towards postgraduate education was stressful, required lots of commitment and perseverance but, ultimately, was something that they wanted to complete.

This study was located within a critical feminist paradigm. For example, in undertaking research that was not on or about women, but rather for and with women, backs the feminist stance for this study. In addition, this study can be classified as feminist in terms of the findings acknowledging the different women's experiences. According to Beasley (1999) effective feminist theory needs to answer the question "Does the research reflect women's experience?" I can wholeheartedly state that this study started with me wanting to hear their experiences and ended with them telling their experiences.

This study has shown while the African women continued to have experiences of tensions and struggles throughout their postgraduate journey, which impacted their decisions about continuing this journey, all co-researchers successfully negotiated their personal, social, and academic challenges to their studies. They did acknowledge that it was not an easy road. An extract from Elizabeth Cady Stanton's speech "On Solitude to Self" as cited in Lemmer (1992, pg. 65) makes a suiting conclusion to this section:

> The strongest reason for giving woman all the opportunities for higher education, for the full development of her forces of mind and body…is the solitude and personal responsibility of her own individual life.

7.13 My Reflections: My story alongside theirs

As an APWS myself, I began this study wanting to contribute knowledge to women's experiences in all its facets and complexity. From an insider's perspective, I thought that their stories, along with mine, might inspire other women to find the strength and confidence to follow our paths. Little did I realise that the process of inviting women to tell their stories would be a lifeboat for me to rethink the person I wanted to be.

When I started the journey of obtaining a doctorate, there were no anxieties around whether I was intellectually ready because I had missed a cum laude by 4% for my master's degree and placed in the top 15% in my faculty when I qualified. I therefore believed I was the ideal student for a doctorate. I knew the study would involve diligence and commitment. But as I began, a set of new anxieties came to the fore.

Being an Indian wife, a mother, and a teacher, it became difficult to put my energies into something outside of my teaching life and my family life. So, my doctorate became a stress factor in my life and, many times, I contemplated giving it up and began doubting myself at almost every turn of this study.

I constantly asked the question, "How can I ask women to tell me their story to inform other women, if I can't give this study the commitment it deserves?" The women in this study deserved far more than what I was offering. I faded away and at some stage of the study, lost the commitment and lost who I was in the process of hanging on to my other identities instead of my postgraduate student identity.

A year later, I was asked by one of my co-researchers when I was finishing my study; I made an excuse. It was her subsequent words that changed everything for me, "As long as you don't give up…depending on you." My instinctual reply was, "I promise." At that moment, I remembered and understood the importance of why I started this study. It hit me hard that I could end this study that I cared so deeply about.

As I got back into my studies, I found that all the co-researchers shared the vision of wanting desperately to complete their studies. Telling their stories revealed how they negotiated the realm of being APWSs and having the ability to weather the challenges of life as APWSs. They managed to foster an inner strength and belief in themselves to persevere with their studies, despite many hardships and trials. In them, I saw a group of resilient, powerful, and compassionate women, who, unlike me, were not afraid to put themselves forward, and who had a burning desire to persevere. They taught me that ease and having it all is a greater threat to success than hardship.

Locating these women's voices in this study has been a voyage of discovery of who am I and who I want to be. It has also been a way for me to find my own voice. Their sense of commitment has helped to keep me afloat on the sometimes painful course that has become my doctoral years.

This doctorate has given me important time for not only self-reflection, but also, time for listening to others express themselves. And, in this way, my ability to express and give form to the women's narratives almost took on a life of its own. I take

immeasurable pride in sharing these stories. While I certainly don't own these stories, I can't help wonder - had I not embarked on generating the women's narratives, where would they be? Would their pain, their desires, concerns, and experiences of inspiration have remained untold? More importantly, where would I be without their stories?

> *I am 45 years old and I asked this question on my last birthday: "Why am I still doing this?" Studying, I meant. I started my life as a baby, grew into child, am the third sister of four daughters, learner, student, manageress of a clothing store, teacher, student, wife, student, mother, student, mother-in-law, student, grandmother, teacher, and student again and again. Can you the see the pattern? All I know is that I go through life but keep finding my way back to studying. I am hoping that I will shape a portrait that will create some kind of understanding. I want to try and help others create their own stories. Looking back at my life, it has dawned on me that since the age of five, I have almost always been in some sort of educational setting, whether it has been as a learner at school, a student at university, teacher at a primary school, or as a mother attending my children's parent meetings. Now, here I am - an African postgraduate student studying towards my doctorate. What is it that continually attracts me back and back again? I have come to feel a sense of loss without learning, and believe that there is always something more that needs to be learned. How did I find myself on this educational mission that never seems to want to end? That is the question I end with.*

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Professor

The Dean: School of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X54001

Durban

4000

9 August 2012

PERMISSION TO CODUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AMONGST STUDENTS OF YOUR FACULTY

My name is Sheeren Saloojee, an educator at Spearman Road Primary School. I am currently registered for a PhD at UKZN with the aim of exploring the experience of African postgraduate women students at UKZN. The working title of the research: "**Exploring the experience of African postgraduate women students in the context of Internationalisation: A Feminist Narrative Inquiry.**" The issue that I plan to explore is the understanding of African women's postgraduate experiences in their full spectrum and foster increased understanding of the postgraduate scholarship at UKZN in the context of internationalisation.

The analysis of this study is to form my thesis submission to the University of KwaZulu-Natal for the award of the Doctoral degree in Education. This study is supervised by Dr G. Pillay who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education, UKZN. Dr G. Pillay can be contacted telephonically at 031-260 7598.

In this study, data will be generated by using the following multiple data methods such as in-depth individual life oral unstructured interviews, visual inquiry, photo voice, memory inquiry, focus group, portfolio methods, personal narratives and artefacts retrieval. The sources of all information and opinions provided will remain anonymous to everyone barring myself. The co-researchers will be informed that there is

absolutely no binding commitment to continuing if at any stage they prefer to discontinue.

There may be no direct benefits to the co-researchers from participating in this study. However, if they are pursuing their postgraduate studies, participation in this study can provide a valuable opportunity to reflect on their experiences and be given the platform to "voice" themselves as African postgraduate women students at UKZN. The findings from this research could be useful and perhaps contribute to the growing body of research in Postgraduate Scholarship at UKZN.

The data generated will be used in my study and also in a larger project entitled: *Exploring Internationalisation of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the enhancement of Knowledge Interchange with Africa.* (HSS/0111/011). The data will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes.

Should the co-researchers have any queries about their participation in this study they may contact Ms Phume Ximba at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Yours in Education,
Sheeren Saloojee
(PhD: School of Education and Development)

PERMISSION

I hereby grant the researcher permission to conduct research as outlined in the School of Education.

---   ----------------------------------
Signature   **Date**

Dear ……….

The purpose of this letter is to introduce myself, explain the research I am undertaking and to invite you to participate in the study. My name is Sheeren Saloojee, an educator at Spearman Road Primary School. I have registered for a PhD at UKZN and the aim of the research is to explore the educational experience of African postgraduate women students at UKZN. The working title of the research is "**Exploring the experiences African postgraduate women students in the context of Internationalisation: A Feminist Narrative Inquiry.**" The issue that I plan to explore is the understanding of African women's postgraduate experiences in their full spectrum and foster increased understanding of the postgraduate scholarship at UKZN in the context of internationalisation.

The analysis of this study is to form my thesis submission to the University of KwaZulu-Natal for the award of the Doctoral Degree in Education. In raising awareness around the experience of African postgraduate women in postgraduate scholarship, the study will create a space for women postgraduate students to be heard. The study will also add to the growing body of research in Postgraduate Scholarship at UKZN. As I mentioned above, the purpose of this letter is to invite participation in the study. It is anticipated that the research will be undertaken by using multiple data methods such as in-depth individual life oral unstructured interview, visual inquiry, photo voice, memory inquiry, focus group, portfolio methods, personal narratives and artefacts retrieval. The sources of all information and opinions provided will remain anonymous to everyone barring myself. Please note that there is absolutely no binding commitment to continuing if at any stage you would prefer to discontinue. In replying to this e-mail, please feel free to ask any questions. I thank you for your time and look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely, **Sheeren Saloojee**

University of KwaZulu-Natal

I would like to thank you for wanting to be a part of a study into "**Exploring the educational experience of African postgraduate women students in the context of internationalisation: A feminist narrative inquiry."** Please see the attached introductory letter outlining the aims and methods of this research study.

CERTIFICATION BY CO-RESEARCHERS

I**,** _____ certify that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the research study entitled: "Exploring the educational experience of African postgraduate women students in the context of internationalisation: A Feminist Narrative Inquiry" being conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal by Mrs. Sheeren Saloojee, PhD Candidate.

I certify that the objectives of the research study, together with any risks to me associated with the research listed hereunder to be carried out in the research study, have been fully explained to me by Mrs. Sheeren Saloojee, and that I freely consent to participation involving the use on me of these methods.

In this study, I will use the following multiple methods to generate data from the co-researchers: In-depth individual life oral unstructured interview, visual inquiry, photo voice, memory inquiry, focus groups, portfolio methods, personal narratives and artefacts retrieval. The In-depth individual life oral unstructured interview and focus groups will take place at a venue outside the campus, convenient to all co-researchers.

If your consent is given, the data generated will be used in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. The research data will be confidentially stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes.

This study is supervised by Dr G. Pillay who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education, UKZN. Dr G. Pillay can be contacted telephonically at 031-260 7598.

The possible benefit to you is that you will have opportunity to reflect on your experience and allow you a voice as an African postgraduate women student. This would contribute to the growing body of research in Postgraduate Scholarship at UKZN.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardize me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: ....

Witness other than the researcher   **Date: ....**

...

Any queries about your participation in this study may be directed to the researcher (Name: Mrs. Sheeren Saloojee). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

APPENDIX D - Informed Consent Document for Co-Researchers

TITLE OF STUDY*: Exploring the educational experiences of African postgraduate women students in the context of internationalisation: A feminist narrative inquiry*

I, _____

Here-by confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study. I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardize me in any way. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential. I consent to the following data generating activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Interview		
Viewing and the use of photographs		
Viewing and audio recording of discussion on Artefacts retrieval		
Audio recording of discussions around focus groups		
Viewing and audio recording discussion around personal narrative descriptions		
Audio recording discussion around collages		
Viewing and audio recording discussion around documents in portfolio		

…………………………………………………………………………………

SIGNATURE OF CO- RESEARCHER   DATE

APPENDIX E - Life History Interview Schedule

Oral Interview Guide

Co–researcher's pseudonym: _____

Researcher _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Scheduled time: _____

Start time _____ End time _____

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. I want to assure you that the interviews and anything you share will remain confidential. Please note that you may withdraw at any time from the study. As I explained in the introductory letter, the study is about your experience of undertaking a postgraduate degree. The questions that I will be asking will need you to describe, in as much detail as possible, the story of your postgraduate experience at UKZN. In our interview I would like you to give particular attention to the critical events and challenges you have faced and the way in which these events have influenced your academic, personal and social development. This is quite a mouthful, and so I have some questions that will hopefully facilitate this process. Please feel free to ask me to clarify what I mean at any time.

Long Long unstructured interviewswill be conducted with all the co researchers to understand the complex and contradictory discourses adopted in constructing their lives, told and experienced. The main themes that informed these open unstructured interviews included:

1. BEGINNINGS….

- How would you describe your early life? Where were you born? / describe this area- How has this influence the person you have become?
- How would you describe your different relationships within your immediate family (family life).What are your parents and siblings occupation. How did

the issue of gender play itself out in your early growing up days? How does it shape you now?

2. UNIVERSITY

1. I would like to know what motivated you to undertake a postgraduate degree … why did you want to do the degree in the first place.
2. I'd like to know a little about your background ... how you came to be interested in your field of study.
3. Regarding your expectations of the postgraduate experience, if you think back to the days before you registered for the degree, can you describe what the degree represented to you then and what you thought the process would be like?
4. As you think back to experiences are there particular people, experiences or events that stand out in your mind as being significant?
5. What impact has your postgraduate experience had on your relationship with others in your life? (Eg. your family, partner, employer, colleagues, etc.)
6. Can you identify aspects of your postgraduate experience that might be described as your 'highest high' and your 'lowest low'?

The following are probes that will be employed as suggested by Bodgan and Biklen (2003):

What do you mean?
I'm not sure that I am following you.
Would you explain that?
What did you say then?
What were you thinking at the time?
Give me an example.
Tell me about it.

APPENDIX F - Life Story Release Form

I, _____, have read the life story recorded and written with Sheeren Saloojee. As well as I have read, understand, and agree to the following points.

1) I have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the life story as I see appropriate.

2) I acknowledge that the life story accurately reflects the content of my person interview with Sheeren Saloojee.

3) I authorize the release of the life story to Sheeren Saloojee to publish my story.

4) I have received a copy of the life story for my own records.

_____   _____
Date   Participant

_____   _____
Date   Researcher

APPENDIX G - Prompts for Talking About Artefacts

The following are suggested prompts for talking about the artefacts: (Adapted from Samaras, 2011, p. 105).

- Can you explain why you chose this object?

- Can you share what this particular artefact represents or symbolizes about your learning?

- Around what time period can you place this artefact?

- Would you say that culture/race /gender play a role in this artefact?

- Are there others involved in this artefact memory? If yes, what role do they play? What is their influence on your thinking? Do they see things the way you do?

- What metaphor would you choose to represent, symbolize, and reinforce the significance of this object to you?

- Could you express an emotion that this artefact brings forth for you? Describe where that emotion generates from and might extend to in your learning.

APPENDIX H - Member Checking

- Does this story represent what you thought you were telling me?
- Does it make sense in the way that I have reconstructed it?
- Do you feel like I have omitted significant facts? Please feel free to add any information.
- Do you feel there is a need to remove any comment?

APPENDIX I - Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

27 August 2012

Mrs Sheeran Saloojee 207525974
School of Education

Dear Mrs Saloojee

Protocol reference number: HSS/0788/012D
Project Title: Exploring educational experience of African postgraduate women students at UKZN in the context of internationalisation: A Feminist Narrative Inquiry.

EXPEDITED APPROVAL

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the 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 school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully
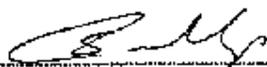
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr G Pillay
cc Academic leader: Dr MN Davids
cc School Admin: Mrs Sindhamoney Naicker

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