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Introducing Black Academic Voices

South Africa and Beyond

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This special issue is part of efforts by the Department of Leadership and
Transformation, at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria, to make
a contribution towards the building of the scholarship of transformation.
Again, this special issue builds on the work started in the 2019 award winning
edited volume *Black Academic Voices: The South African Experience,* which
shared the multiple stories of Black Academics in the higher education sector.
The only exception in this issue is that the experiences shared include those
from other parts of the world. From the multiple launch seminars hosted for
Black Academic Voices (2019) it became clear that there are multiple Black
academic voices in the university that require our ear, thus this special issue
provides the much-needed reflective space for the unpacking of the politics
of being black in the academy. In South Africa such reflective undertakings
are recent and timely as show in works by Mabokela and Magubane, 2004;
in Khunou, Canham, Khoza-Shangase, Phaswana, 2019; Magoqwana and by
Maqabuka, and Tshoaedi, 2019.

Transformation in the South African higher education sector has been an
issue of interest since 1994, and it has been articulated in policy, employment
equity measures including affirmative action and opening access for students
among other aspects. Most recently with the #FeesMustFall Movement
it began to take a particular turn towards epistemic justice (articulated as
decolonisation). Again, with the #FeesMustFall Movement important issues
like insourcing of workers in the sector saw a revival which addresses issues
of the capitalistic logic of profit before people. One of the currently emerging
transformation related topics of interest in the higher education sector is
what are the experiences of Black women leaders in the academy. We have
observed in the South African media the brutalization of the few Black women

leaders we have had thus far. This vilification of Black women is also seen in how they are not supported in their leadership, how they are compared to men who have come before them without looking at the dynamic context of their leadership (Khunou, Segalo and Phaswana, 2022). This vilification of Black women leaders is a natural outgrowth of how Black women's contribution is generally minimized and or completely erased (Magoqwana et.al 2019; Mabokela et.al 2004). One of the effects of the juniorisation and lack of support of Black women contributes to their early exit and low numbers in administrative and research leadership positions (Magoqwana, 2019; Rugunanan et.al, 2012).

This attempt to minimize or completely erase the contributions of Black women is not only a reality in the academy, but in society genrally. In the introductory article of the special issue the African idea of Africa, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ngqulunga (2022) lament the lack of contributions in the issue on African women leaders and their ideas on the African idea of Africa. They argue that this glaring omission in their special issue is not a true reflection of the existence and contribution of African women leaders to the making of Africa. The tendency to exclude Black women is a global phenomenon, and it is intended to mute the distinctive standpoints women's contributions make (Hill Collins, 1986; Mabokela et.al 2004). Notwithstanding these attempts to erase women's contributions; feminists and decolonial feminist scholars have been at work to unmute and reposition Black women as credible knowers, leaders, teachers, and knowledge creators (Khunou et.al 2019; Magoqwana et.al 2019). In this issue, this trend continues with several of the contributions focusing specifically on the experiences of Black women in the academy.

The work of unmuting the contribution of Black scholars is equally carried out by decolonial scholars throughout the diaspora. The intention of decolonial scholarship is not only to critically engage with existing knowledges but also to reclaim knowledges that have not historically featured as knowledge (Mignolo, 2009). Most importantly for this special issue is engagement with the questions of what it means to be Black[1] in the *Western Academy*[2] so as to excavate and archive the voices of Black academics, students and other communities that make up the academy.

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1   Black in this special issue is define as captured by Steve Biko (see Khunou, 2019 et.al, page 1).

2   In this issue, the university/academy is understood as defined in Mignolo 2009.

This special issue is also interested in continuing the debate and theorizing not only from the experiences of Black beings in the academy but also in affirming the importance of reflectivity and biography as decolonial methodologies. Given the histories of silencing and disbelief associated with Black Biography (Khunou et.al, 2019); it is the intention of this special issue to center this approach as fundamental for remembering the marginalized and their ways of knowing and doing.

The articles in this issue contribute from multiple geographical locations including South Africa, Canada, and the United States. Their focus is on the experiences of being Black in the higher education sector. The articles in this issue illustrate how knowledge by Black knowers remain a challenge in the current Western University model that is the reality for South African universities. The significance of these articles is that they help us navigate the terrain of recentering the Black body in thinking about what is wrong with the higher education sector and how we can find humanizing solutions. The articles expand the exploration of what it means to be Black in the Western Academy by providing nuances and similarities of experiences by Blacks in the Canadian, South African and US academy. The academy in this volume is understood as captured in Mignolo (2009).

The article by Mudavanhua, Adam, and Aduseic, titled, *Transferring while Black: Intersectional experiences of Black college-to-university transfer students in Canada,* provides a critical lens into how college to university transferring processes fail to adhere to policies of inclusion and equity. The article uses intersectionality as a theoretical lens to show us how the knowledge creation space in Canada problematises Black bodies.

The article by Mudavanhu and Batisai, address itself to questions of the hiring of Black women in universities in Canada and South Africa. The article is titled, *They Bring Standards of Academic Excellence Down": A Critical Analysis of Rebuttals by Social Media Users to Targeted Hiring of Black Women Faculty Members in South African and Canadian Universities.* This article builds on its title to critically engage with how Black women are viewed in ways that empty out their humanity and diminish their abilities. The article rightfully centres how racism and sexism negatively impact the mental health of Black women in the university sector.

Similarly, the study by Muthala and Pillay, titled *Experiences of work-life balance of Black female academics: Gauteng South Africa,* unpacks an important

aspect of how Black women academics experience the academy with regards to their well-being. The study illustrates that the well-being of Black female academics is out of balance as the context somewhat treats them like mules with unequal workloads, lack of recognition of the contributions they make, and no respect for their personhood. The paper illustrates how the socio-economic context of the society including patriarchy negatively impacts Black women's ability to be active knowledge production players.

Taking the discussion of how multiple isms impact Black women further, Hunt-Khabir discusses how intersectionality is made complex by the dynamic experiences of Black women. She shows in the article titled, *Is Intersectionality for Black Women Complicating Our Love for Intersectionality?* how access to higher education is just the beginning of challenges that Black women deal with. The article illustrates that barriers to qualification completion for Black women in the United States remains an important obstacle for their higher education success.

In the article by Motlhamme, we see how autobiography is an important archive for understanding the contribution of Black academics to African epistemology. The article, *Black Academics in Higher Education, Autobiography and Decolonisation 1940s-1990s*, provides an analysis of the autobiographies of ZK Matthews, Chabani Manganyi, Eskia Mphahlele, Bernard Magubane Mamphele Ramphele and Mabogo More. These scholars the author argues have been marginalised as knowers and their contributions is at danger of being buried lest we do the work of excavating via multiple methods of reclaiming including what the author does in this article.

In the article, *Wrestling to exist: Womanist struggles of junior scholars in Higher Education*, we see how the experiences of Black women in the South African higher education system are filled with daily struggles. Olivier, Shange and Ntsele illustrate how post-graduate studies especially Black women in a precarious position as both insider and outsider (teacher and student). This article provides an important lens into the transitory experience for Black women post-graduate student in an unchanging context where movements for change, advocacy and policy works evokes equality, but the actual experiences suggest rigidity and unshifting institutional cultures.

Through a phenomenological reflection of five African women leaders in South African universities, the article, *We are not fully Citizens of our Universities: African Women Leaders, Non-belonging and Construction of New*

Cultures and Citizenships in South African Higher Education, by Siphokazi Tau examines the ways in which citizenship and belonging are navigated through the mapping of their leadership trajectory. The article holds that African women leaders utilise their agency to determine what she called "humanizing institutional cultures".

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Transferring While Black

Intersectional Experiences of Black College-to-University Transfer Students in Canada

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Abstract

In the Canadian province of Ontario, higher education institutions have amplified their efforts to advance social equity and inclusion by establishing transfer programmes between colleges and universities. However, transitioning between these institutions continues to present challenges for the policy objectives assumed in transfer programmes. Few studies have analysed how students from historically marginalised backgrounds experience the transfer process, and how these experiences present a challenge for the ability of transfer pathways to function as a mechanism of equity and inclusion. Our study sheds light on the experiences of an important section of this population: Black college-to-university transfer students. Underpinned by the theory of intersectionality, our study critically explores the challenges that Black transfer students encounter in their transferring and settling into Canadian universities. Utilising in-depth interviews, our exploratory qualitative analysis shows that Black transfer students face a

host of challenges linked to their race, class, and gender. These experiences impact students' ability to transfer smoothly into their new school and pursue their academic goals in a timely fashion. Major issues include, but not limited to, the racism of low expectations, lack of representation within the transfer ecosystem, lack of support that considers the diversity within Black transfer students, and information asymmetry. Although we focus on the narratives of Black transfer students in the Canadian academy, this research advances the cause of equity by helping the higher education communities worldwide to reflect on how educational pathways can help higher education become a meaningful corrective of social disadvantage.

Keywords*: anti-Black racism, intersectionality, college-to-university transfer pathways, higher education, Canada

Introduction

It is never easy to describe what it means to be a racialised person in the western academy, a place that wraps itself in the virtues of humanism, which categorically rejects the suppression of human nature and human interests in favour of narrow interpretations of the world. Against such a backdrop, articulating individual and collective grievances becomes particularly difficult. This is because voicing such grievances causes sometimes a backlash that expresses itself in a spectrum of reactions. These are charges that sometimes take the form of diminishing the importance of the issues being raised and other times pathologizing those who raise those issues by casting their concerns as 'inability' to grasp the climate of opportunity and tolerance at hand. The political and cultural intricacies inherent to an organisational environment of this kind makes even the most genuine voices vulnerable to incredulity and/or patronising dismissal.

This dynamic underlies some of the challenges faced by Black academics and students who attempt to have their voices heard in the Canadian academy, a place that is not particularly noted in the international domain for anti-Black racism or other -isms that run counter to the principles of humanistic education. Part of the challenge arises from the fact that the collective imaginary in Canada is so conditioned to the Canadian academy being nice, civil, and non-Black. This attitude, in turn, makes it harder for Black Canada to make its stories and histories visible in "a place where the dominant national narratives tend to imagine it as belonging elsewhere" (Ibrahim et al. 2022:1).

Within a context framed by this ascribed deficit identity, many Black academics and scholars (e.g., Daniel, 2019; Dryden, 2022; Smith, 2022; Wright, 2022) have started to articulate their experiences of Blackness across the Canadian academy. The outcome of this collective endeavour was a cornucopia of narratives that celebrates their achievements, documents the status quo, and problematises the experiences that many are unwilling to accept the fact that they exist, mar the campus experience for many African Canadians, and, thus, weaken the ability of higher education to function as a meaningful corrective of social disadvantage.

Notwithstanding past experiences related to anti-Blackness, there is an opportunity for positive change. Sadly, the catalyst for the opportunity we see has been the growing violence against Black people as evidenced by the recent racist mass shooting in Buffalo, which claimed the lives of 10 people and injured three others. This incident raised public conscience in the United States and Canada to the dangerous implications of anti-Black racism. Higher education institutions are well-positioned to lead and accelerate the change. Colleges and universities are the chief mechanism of knowledge production and dissemination in any society, and by virtue of this unique position, these institutions are indeed anchors of change and growth within their communities (Adam, 2021). Therefore, unless these institutions exercise leadership in addressing the systemic barriers confronting racialised students and academics, policies and public statements on the social malaises of racism, inequality, and poverty will only ring hollow. The purpose of this article is to help Canadian academic institutions to assume this leadership role by texturing existing narratives by college-to-university Black transfer students who are often on the margins of student transfer discourse. Drawing on Kimberlé Crenshaw's (2017) concept of intersectionality, the analysis in this project suggests that Black transfer students face subtle forms of discrimination that are compounded at the interactions of Blackness, gender, age, class, and ability. While our research focuses on the experiences of Black students in Canada's postsecondary education, institutional leaders, higher education scholars as well as students from historically disadvantaged groups in other jurisdictions may find the analysis pertinent.

The paper is organised as follows: the next section highlights the literature review on educational pathways in Ontario's postsecondary education and the existing gaps in knowledge. In the third part, we contextualise our research to situate its contribution relative to other work in the filed. In the fourth part,

we outline the research method. In the final section, we report our findings, offering in the process critical commentary on each point.

Literature review

American education research has repeatedly touted the importance of improving the college-to-university transfer function for the social and economic mobility of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds (Chase, Dowd, Pazich and Bensimon, 2012; Crisp and Nuñez, 2014; Harper, Patton and Wooden, 2009). What is often regarded as an issue of outcome equity is believed to acquire more importance on the policy agenda of national authorities of higher education. One reason why educational pathways are gaining importance is demographics. Minorities are projected to represent half of resident U.S. population by 2050 (Jackson, 2013). Hence, successful vertical transfer for students of colour has implications that go beyond the contours of racial equity to include implications that arise from economic considerations such as whether a significant source of future labour force have the skillset and knowledge necessary to sustain the country's global competitiveness.

We posit that many of the aforementioned considerations hold true for Ontario, which provided the political impulse for the proliferation of college-to-university pathways and other credit articulation agreements. Currently, over 55,000 students transfer between postsecondary institutions in Ontario annually (Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer Annual Report [ONCAT] 2017:18). This includes college-to-college, university-to-college, and college-to-university transfers. While there are numerous studies on each of the above ways of transfer, the review that follows focuses on literature on college-to-university transfers in the Canadian context. In literature on transfers in the province of Ontario (Bell, 1998; Decock and Janzen, 2016; Decock et al, 2011; Kerr et al. 2010; Martinello and Stewart, 2015; Morrin, 2011), researchers have tended to examine student transfers from colleges to universities of a handful of institutions. Little is known about transfers happening from colleges to many universities in the province. This is surprising given that many institutions in Ontario have thriving transfer programmes for students coming from other universities as well as from colleges of applied arts and technology. This research contributes to filling this void in knowledge. In addition, this project

focuses specifically on the experiences of Black college-to-university students at Canadian universities who have been largely overlooked in the literature.

Existing scholarship on college-to-university transfer students has covered a range of topics. Recurring themes in research on transfers include transfer credit policies (Khaja, 2013), the transfer credit system (Constantineau, 2009; Munro, 2005), transfer pathways of students (Arnold, 2011; Lang and Lopes, 2014; McCloy and Henderson, 2017; Smith et al. 2016) and experiences of college-to-university transfer students (Andres, 2001; Andres et al. 1997; Cameron, 2005; Gerhardt and Ackerman, 2014; McCloy and Henderson, 2017; Usher and Jarvey, 2012). Researchers investigating experiences of transfer students have looked at the academic performance of college-to-university transfer students (Bell, 1998; Drewes et al. 2012). Some researchers have compared the learning approaches and performance of transfer students with students admitted directly from high schools (Acai & Newton, 2015). There is no consensus in the findings in terms of the success and performance of transfer students (Martinello and Stewart, 2015; ONCAT 2013; Shook et al. 2016). Many of the studies on students' experiences are qualitative, with focus groups and in-depth interviews being commonly used research methods.

Interestingly, literature on the experiences of transfer students tends to mostly mention the age and gender as demographic profiles of transfer students (Acai and Newton, 2015; Decock and Janzen, 2016; Gerhardt and Ackerman, 2014; Shook et al. 2016). With exceptions like the 2019 ONCAT funded project on experiences of Black university-to-college transfer students (ONCAT 2018-19), not much research has focused in any detailed manner on students' experiences of transfer specifically linked to their race and other intersecting identities. This is a huge oversight given the ways race, particularly that of Black students, informs how they experience postsecondary institutions in Canada. Many Black students – not necessarily transfer students – have narrated the racial aggressions they contend with in colleges and universities across the country (Martis, 2020; Price, 2020; Wong, 2020). For many Black people, racism is not aberrant or unusual, rather, it is something that is ordinary, endemic, and intricately intertwined and embedded in the fabric of society (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Given that there are few Black students in Canadian universities and Black youth in the country are unlikely to "have attended a higher educational institution and to have earned a postsecondary diploma" (Houle, 2020:5), it is important to prioritise research on how race and other intersecting identities impact student transfers and

settlement at their new institutions. It is increasingly evident that while access to postsecondary education matters, racial equity is not merely to put people through school. This is why understanding experiences of Black transfer students matters, which is the topic of our research. Thus, our research has the potential to improve both enrolment and graduation rates of Black youth in Canadian universities, and the benefit of these academic achievements for students' ability to transition to a successful future. After all, the attainment of postsecondary qualifications is found to yield important benefits in terms of the labor market outcomes, including more stable employment and higher earnings (Bank of Canada 2018; Turcotte, 2020).

Looking at mainstream conversations about student transfer, it is interesting to examine whose voices and experiences have been privileged. Similar to observations by Gaudry and Lorenz (2018), experiences of White, middle class, heterosexual, cismale students without disabilities have been largely normalised. This research textures existing narratives by drawing on voices of Black transfer students that are often on the margins of student transfer discourse. In doing so, our study aligns in important ways with critical race theorists whose work is quintessentially aimed at "disrupt[ing] dominant stories and perspectives of White hegemony and White privilege in the academy by providing counter-narratives or counter-stories from non-dominant social locations" (Abawi, 2018:86). In view of the above discussion, the overarching goal of our research is to understand more comprehensively Black college-to-university transfer students' experiences that intersect with their race and other identities. Through this study, we contribute to the literature on how universities can foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment for minoritised students who transition from colleges.

Contextual Background And Significance

In the Canadian province of Ontario, the introduction of transfer pathways between colleges and universities came as a reform policy. The objective pursued is this policy was, among other things, to expand access to university education by providing opportunities for otherwise excluded students to acquire higher-level qualifications and meet demands for higher-level skills in the labour market (Skolnik et al. 2018). The idea is by no means new. In fact, since the inception of the college sector in the late 1960s, the idea of alternative trajectories to undergraduate education loomed large, igniting

lively debates within the higher education community in Ontario (Dennison and Gallagher, 1986). Particular concerns were raised by students, scholars, academic institutions, and policymakers regarding the lack of many links between colleges and universities. In a binary higher education system like Ontario's, tenuous links between the two sectors may have only reinforced hierarchies, as students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds tended to cluster around colleges, thereby creating an informal hierarchy of status (Adam, 2017; Clark et al. 2009). Reform efforts in educational pathways culminated in the creation of the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) in 2011. ONCAT was mandated to improve student mobility by facilitating the development of learning pathways among Ontario's publicly funded colleges and universities to optimise postsecondary options for students looking to transfer among institutions (Trick, 2013).

Today, postsecondary education pathways are less linear. Fewer students are entering postsecondary education programmes directly from high school, benefiting from the various bilateral and multilateral credit transfer agreements supported by ONCAT (Davies and Pizarro Milian, 2020). However, while mobility after graduation within the same sector is becoming less problematic, transfer occurring between sectors, as in the case of the study discussed in this paper, continues to generate policy challenges. The research in this article draws attention to this critically important dimension by providing a specific take on the lived realities of Black students transitioning from a college to university, their social and academic adjustments. This is an important area that is yet to be thoroughly investigated, given the social, psychological, and financial challenges associated with transferring and settling into a new school, and the impact thereof on the experiences and success of transfer students. This said, the research shifts focus to micro factors of accessibility that received scant attention in previous research, which tends to focus on either macro factors such as policy shortcomings, or to technicalities such as credit recognition and duplication of coursework. By studying Black transfer students, this research advances the cause of equity by helping policymakers to identify how pathways improve access for underrepresented students. It also helps universities to build capacity by identifying where additional support is needed to offer a quality education to all qualified students seeking university education.

Intersectionality

In examining experiences of Black college-to-university transfer students, this research took an intersectional approach, something largely missing in existing literature on student transfer in Canada. An intersectional approach acknowledges the multiple barriers, systemic discriminations, and different forms of prejudice and sometimes privileges depending on the period and situation (Runyan 2018). Viewed through this prism, students may experience multiple barriers at the intersections of their race, class, national origin, accents, ability and so on in addition to their age and gender in transferring and settling into new postsecondary institutions. Critical legal/race theorist, Kimberlé Crenshaw—largely redited for coining the term 'intersectionality'—elaborates that: "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects." Crenshaw continues: "It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times, that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things" (Columbia Law School, 2017).

 While the initial work by Kimberlé Crenshaw focused on Black heterosexual migrant women, the concept is now utilised to examine how everyone holds "multiple, albeit constructed and provisional, identities" (Runyan, 2018). Runyan elaborates:

> The salience of such identities— based not only on race, normative gender, class, and nation but also on sexuality, nonnormative gender, physical (dis)ability, religion, and age—varies in different times and contexts, conferring either disadvantages or privileges on each of us, again in relation to time and context. This recognition has gone a long way toward disrupting hierarchies of oppression based, for example, on claims that class oppression trumps all other forms of oppression or that gender oppression is the [primary] oppression or that racial oppression must be primary to the exclusion of others. In this way, intersectional thinking has also opened the way to more inclusive and coalitional social movements and agendas.

Although the few studies conducted in the US foregrounding the concept of intersectionality in examining experiences of racialised transfer students (Castro and Cortez, 2017; Lui 2013) discuss how students' race intersects with categories like age and class to inform their realities, this project takes a different approach. This project moves away from conceptualising

oppression as occurring in hierarchies. In that regard, "multiple dimensions of identity" were considered "without necessarily prioritizing any one identity over another" because "intersectionality neither quantifies, compares, nor hierarchises identities and oppressions" (Myers, 2019:19). On the front end, the identity categories that intersect or interlock with race were not predetermined. As Busse, Krausch and Liao (2021:32) argue: "we live in complex social relationships where there is rarely any reality of homogenous groups of 'marginalised people' who are in institutions led exclusively by 'dominant people'." Given the heterogeneity in the group of Black college-to-university transfer students, averting specificity and precision in the abovementioned ways avoids inadvertently privileging certain types of subjugation while simultaneously silencing or marginalizing others. Further, it allows and opens the possibility for researchers to listen for and hear about different kinds of inequalities and privileges that they could not have predicted. Runyan (2018) contends that those who are "informed by intersectionality remain flexible and forward-looking, continuing to listen for and to the voicing of new or previously hidden inequities not addressed […] In this way, intersectional theory and practice is 'a work in progress' […]."

Methods, Data, And Analysis

In this project, the research question was as follows: What are the experiences of some Black college-to-university students in Canada? Implicit in this is a focus on Black transfers' experiences linked to their intersecting identities or race, class, gender, age, ability during the transfer and settling processes. The site of this research is the main campus of a major Canadian university. The methods for exploring the topic included a combination of individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview with Black students who transferred from different colleges to the university under study. Noteworthy, in abidance with the agreement we have reached with the Research Ethics Board in the case university, the names of the institutions involved in this study will be anonymised throughout the text. Hence, terms such as 'the case university' or the university under study' will be used to refer to the site of the study. By the same token, colleges from which students transferred will only be referenced as 'colleges'. We used purposive sampling (Bloor and Wood, 2006), because we sought specific information from a particular target sample. Following the research ethics guidelines, participating students were

contacted through offices of the Register in order to minimise pressure to participate. Additionally, to ensure anonymity, pseudonyms will henceforth be used to refer to interviewees.

Due COVID-19 restriction, we used Zoom video conferencing to interview the participating students. Two interviewing strategies were employed. The first was individual interviews, which took place between October 2021 and March 2022. We conducted eleven, one-to-one interviews at a major Canadian research university to a roughly equal share of female and male Black transfer students. Interviews consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions that asked students about several issues, including their expectations of the transfer process. Interviews were also aimed at discerning perceptions, challenges, barriers, and support, with a focus on how these aspects intersect with participating students' identities of race, class, gender, age, and ability.

The second was a focus group interview. Some students preferred to participate only in focus group interviews, which gave us an opportunity to accommodate more students. It is generally thought that this form of interviews is ideal for 4-12 participants (Greenbaum, 1998; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). One focus group interview of up to two hours was conducted with six students in April 2022. This interview sought mainly to afford an opportunity to be more inclusive of Black voices. But focus group interviews have other important epistemological grounds: they help obtain narratives that, in turn, enable researchers to qualify data collected and clarify and extend findings (Krueger, Casey and Casey, 2009; O.Nyumba et al., 2018). This said, our focus group interview offered an opportunity to triangulate analysis, allowing us to generate collective responses to help establish themes, patterns, and differences in participating accounts. Discussing racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression can be sensitive and triggering. Interviews provided the environment necessary to explore and expand upon open-ended questioning. Our understanding of the participants' experiences deepened based on their responses and our interaction during the interview sessions. To avoid repetition, the accounts of only seven students are reported in findings. The research team saw that these accounts are the most reflective of how Black transfer students' experiences.

Analysis of interview data drew on Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2020) first- second-cycle method of thematic analysis. The transcripts were initially read several times to familiarise ourselves with the data. Preliminary notes

and categories were made during these early iterations of familiarisation. This was followed by thematic analysis based on the intersectionality framework employed in this study. To enhance the trustworthiness of conclusions, two sets of themes were created by the research team and then compared and discussed to ensure inter-rater reliability (Cheung and Tai, 2021). Discussions among the research team continued throughout this stage to sharpen the analysis of transcripts. This approach helped capture the subtleties in Black students' experiences encapsulated in themes that will be discussed in the next section.

Findings

In their transfer and settling journey, Black college-to-university transfer students grapple with an interlocking system of racialised, classed, and gendered assumptions, extraneous to academic ability. These assumptions intersect with institutional and interpersonal factors that situate Black transfers in complex marginal positions, thereby impacting their academic engagement and progression toward desired academic trajectories.

Racism Of Low Expectations

Participant narratives revealed that Black transfer students grappled with racialised notions of academic performance that construct Blackness as synonymous with low academic ability. This biased outlook expresses itself most clearly in the low expectations of Black students. Several students reported that non-Black faculty and staff in particular had lower educational expectations for Black students. Ironically, these experiences are not peculiar to their study in college or university. In fact, they extend further back to their study at high school. For example, Jane, the daughter of immigrant Black parents who had some postsecondary education in their home country, explained her interactions with teachers and counsellors from high school:

> I had spoken to teachers from high school and stuff and you know, I even had an English scholarship because I was very versed in English … I was very studious and everything, but I remember one professor did say to me you know, if you're not sure, cause university is more theory and more intense … You should go to college first. Because college will give you the more hands-on work and university will give you more theory.

Jane believed that her teacher managed to lower her expectations, by making the idea of entering straight to university seem inconceivable: "It took that one person to give me that little, you know, voice in my head that said, oh, maybe you're not ready. And then I ended up going to college." When asked if she obtained the grades and coursework that would enable her to go to university. Jane's response was firmly 'yes'. Reflecting on her experience, Jane added: "I ended up going to college. I regret that now because I know that I definitely could have gone straight to university." A similar experience awaited Jane at college, which eroded her faith in receiving the right counsel. Desperate for information, Jane sought advice from acquaintances, friends, and her older brother who was in university at that time. With the information supplied from these sources, Jane became convinced to pursue a university degree, opting for the fast-track transfer pathway that enabled her to finish college in two years and enter university, where further drama awaited her.

Jane recalls that the transfer process was stressful, which was exacerbated by health issues that forced her out of school for more than two years. Upon recovery, Jane decided immediately to resume her university study. Jane chose the honours programme that would improve her chances of pursuing a graduate degree, an academic achievement to which she always aspired.

These efforts brought Jane in contact with an academic advisor that was assigned to her by the university to guide her through the process. Jane recalls that despite her excellent academic record, that advisor insisted that she might not be ready to join the honours programme:

> [I] was still trying to get my bearings as to which one which, which courses I should be in. Then she would tell me things like, well, this professor is very, very tough on her students. So, I don't know if you want to take her course ... I remember I would come to her with courses that I would be interested in, and she would tell me things like, okay, this course is tough. And lots of students complain about how much work it is and how much of a load that they have.

The advisor suggested that it is better for Jane to take extra courses before considering the honours programme. Because Jane was transferring from college, she assumed that she had no other choices available to her, only to realise later that she was not given the full range of options. Upon completing the courses that advisor suggested, Jane went to see the same advisor who

was surprised to see Jane complete her courses faster than she anticipated and with excellent academic record:

> [W]hen she saw my grades for the courses that I had taken and she looked, she opened the computer and she went like that [shocked facial expression]. And I was like, is everything okay? And then she's like, oh no, you're doing really well. I was like, oh, I was even shocked cause I didn't know that, you know, I didn't think she was going to be that shocked. She's like, you're doing very well.

Jane's situation illustrates the multiple challenges faced by Black transfers. The first is susceptibility to undergo a 'cooling-out process', defined by Burton Clark (1980) as redirecting community college students who experience academic failure to move out of transfer degree programmes through counselling rather than discipline. To avoid oversimplification, which could lead to simplistic prescriptions for educational equity, one point should be made entirely clear about the cooling-out process. In its original formulation, the cooling-out process embraces a meritocratic definition of fairness by proceeding from the premise – and as Clark (1960) himself posits – that academic ability and record are the only determinants of which students will or will not be cooled out. According to this outlook, the cooling-out process is only fair when "factors extraneous to academic ability do not significantly predict which students are cooled out" (Hellmich, 1993:17). We do not subscribe to this narrow definition of fairness, as it defines success by terms that apply only to socially privileged students. Nonetheless, even if we assessed the experiences of Jane and other participating Black students against the meritocratic measures entailed by the cooling-out process, they by no means stand the test of fairness. Why? Simply because although Jane and the other Black transfers had deviated from the expectation of failure by performing well academically, they nonetheless faced racialised and classed assumptions that permeate the idea of Blackness and hinder Black advancement.

Bourdieu (1986) explains the inherent unfairness of meritocratic measures of academic ability, which places a lot of emphasis on the cultural capital of the dominant group. In this light, students from racialised groups are more likely to be cooled out, as these students do not look, act, or speak like the majority group. Therefore, factors such as race, gender, class, and age are central to academic performance and who gets cooled out, which has been shown in previous research. In this respect, Rector (2017) shows that race, class, and

gender were significantly related to why Black students were in the cooling-out process. Hence, the cooling-out process like the one experienced by Jane denies (or at least aimed to deny) an equitable distribution of educational opportunity to disadvantaged students. Research has also shown how teachers' low expectations can abuse Black students of their high aspirations, thereby setting these students on the path of being cooled out, which, in turn, contributes to perpetuating socio-demographic gaps in educational attainment. According to Gershenson, Holt and Papageorge (2016), low expectations of some teachers could become self-fulfilling prophecies with students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are more vulnerable, especially those who lack access to role models who can counteract teachers' low expectations. The participating transfer students in this study are from immigrant families, or are themselves recent immigrant adult students, with no previous familiarity with the academic and organisational culture of Canadian colleges and universities. Therefore, as Jane's narrative illustrates, the availability of academic and support staff who can empathise with Black transfer students is an integral part of creating an inclusive transfer ecosystem within colleges and universities, which brings us to our next point.

Lack of Representation

Students also noted the continued underrepresentation of Black individuals in the transfer ecosystem, particularly in the university. Representation, or lack thereof, affects Black transfer students in multiple ways. For Elijah, an absence of Black role-models and mentors hinders the inclusion and academic performance of Black transfer students:

> I don't think there's any resources to support Black transfer students specifically … [name of university] still is predominantly a white school. Also, in terms of support specifically for Black students, I don't think there was really anything I sought out because I didn't really know the kind of support available … I think it was just a lack of those resources that are tailored for black students.

Rasheeda thought that the availability of support staff that reflects the demographics is one way to address the feeling of isolation that Black transfer experience on campus:

> I really fully believe that having black advisors would make a difference. Because I feel like black advisors would be more sensitive to a person of colour coming in and understanding that the reality might be different. And so they may have to, you know, let me not say certain things, let me not say and I'm not sure if this, this load would be for you. It's a lot of work. Yeah. Things like that.

Jamal concurred by highlighting the high potential of Black support staff and professors to establish rapport with like-minded students, which, in turn, could nurture a sense of belonging and community:

> I don't feel like I could have connected with a lot of my professors or, not just professors, but anyone that was offering support. So, like even when they talk about the counselors, I don't feel they would understand my experience because they wouldn't, once more, they work from… in my experience, they were from that colorblind perspective. So, I think that in itself caused me to just pull back in some areas because I'm just like, I don't know how beneficial this is for everyone.

These stories underscore the importance of Black representation as a motivational strategy. Universities, and colleges for that matter, have vested interests in creating an academic environment where students feel they belong. Although a full range is somewhat beyond the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that students who develop a sense of belonging are more academically engaged, which is found to have also a positive effect on motivation, retention, cognitive growth, and the cultivation of communicative and cross-cultural skills (Appleton et al. 2008; Gurin and UA 2002). Some participants suggested that their university should be more intentional about the issue of representation, citing how this structural factor intersects with societal factors as racialised, classed, gendered ideas and impact their persistence and learning.

The Intersectionality of Female Blackness and Transfer

Female Black transfer students face a combination of challenges that make transitioning and settling into university more challenging. Diane, an engineering student from a solidly middle-class background, remembers her experience in a White-male dominated environment:

> I feel like whenever I'm in a group project, I'm always delegated to the administrative side, like, okay, you can send the emails or you can take notes at the meeting or whatever, rather than being a part of the conversation.

Diane described her experience as anxiety-provoking, because she felt constantly required to prove herself as capable of handling her academic work independently. The absence of many Black students in Diane's department was another factor that contributed to her developing feelings of isolation and loneliness that impacts her perceptions of belonging:

> I don't feel well represented though. The engineering department, because there aren't a lot of black engineering students or materials that I can relate to.

Diane apparently faces a combination of sexism and racial biases that conflate race with class. This remark concurs with Anderson (2022) which observes that race, gender, and class impacts the ways that Black women experience interactions with White men in particular who tend to conflate race and class. Thus, middle-class Black women continue to encounter racialised and gendered images connected to class as Black people have been traditionally viewed as hailing from low-income and working-class backgrounds.

Some Black college-to-university transfer students encounter a daunting array of challenges. A case in point is Iman, a single first-generation immigrant from a Sub-Saharan African country. After slogging through menial jobs for several years, she decided to pursue the path of academia, assuming that higher education would be her gateway into a better life in Canada. Iman holds a bachelor's degree from her home country. She also holds what distinguishes all great learners: a passion for learning and knowledge:

> I have this incredible yearning to learn, to just know things, learn more things. Have a better understanding of things. And I have the ability to do it.

Quickly after enrolling in a college, Iman decided to use the credits she earned at college toward a university degree. When we asked her when and why she decided to transfer to university, she replied:

> The moment I enrolled in college. It was automatic …I didn't know the avenues to get into a university.

This narrative illustrates the first challenge that students like Iman have to struggle with: access to information.

Like most transfer students in this study, obtaining the right information in a large institution as the university under study is not easy. Sometimes, there is a large volume of information, which strikes transfer students as rather overwhelming. Noteworthy, this challenge is not specific to Iman, but for African immigrants navigating unfamiliar school systems, it is an important one. One way how information accessibility plays out for Iman is that it impacts ability to enjoy positive school involvement, which also impacts her ability to get the support that matters to her as a member of the LGBTQ community. Iman finds it difficult to locate the support she needs to complete her academic journey:

> I tend to see the world differently. Coming from where I am from with all intersections accounted for. Because I identify as non-binary and of course I'm apply to the LGBT2Q+ community. But I haven't even reached out because I've been hyper focused on just getting what needs to be done, done in terms of school work … So the amount of time that I spent like navigating these. Click on one link, takes you somewhere else and you know, the amount of time.

Hence, Iman tends to draw conjectural inferences about the organisational culture of her university and where to go in order to find support she needs to cope with health and economic challenges she continues to experience. This is quite similar to the experience of Jenna, who is also a first-generation African immigrant. Jenna believed that her biggest challenges she faced was finding support geared toward transfer students from Africa, not only African Canadians:

> African Society at [name of university] it's not super filled up with actual Africans. It has black Canadians, but no one who identified as African. It's kind of frustrating that I'm constantly having to explain to people, things that they should try to be more aware of. Whereas they might reference something here and I'm expected to know about it. … So, that's one of my biggest frustrations that people don't go out of their way to know about other things. Whereas transfers were expected to know all these things be caught up to date and all of that.

When asked if they would reach out for assistance from their institution, both Iman and Jenna felt uneasy about reaching out. Both exhibited a sense

of unease regarding 'opening up' about their concerns. Such an attitude is probably attributable to what empirical work observed about African immigrant students who tend to be less willing to use their schools' health and social well-being related services (Nyika, 2022; Stolp, Wilkin and Raine, 2015). The underlying reason, these studies indicate, is that students perceive these locations as 'not for them' due to poor representation of the Black people in the broader daily environments. A lack of meaningful response by universities for biased representations of Blackness would probably mean that many Black voices on campus remain silent.

Conclusion

The analysis presented here provides a clear picture that race, class, and gender influence the transfer experience that Black transfer students undergo at both college and university. Black transfer students encounter racialised notions compounded by factors, such as low expectations, which equates Blackness with low ability. Although transfer students represent academic success stories, they are often faced with racial biases in the transfer ecosystem that seek to dissuade them from aspiring high. These forms of discrimination sometimes take on distinct gendered forms when Black female students in a White-dominated field of study are viewed as inferior academically and thus assigned less challenging work. Lack of representation is another factor that resonated with the experiences of most participating students, exacerbating their sense of isolation. Moreover, the lack of support that considers the diversity within Black transfer students creates classed, raced, and gendered experiences for Black transfers. A subgroup of participants is first-generation immigrants with some postsecondary education in their home countries and thus need support that enables them to navigate an unfamiliar academic culture.

In general, our findings support the assumptions of Kimberlé Crenshaw's (2017) theory of intersectionality, which suggests that discrimination occurs at the intersection of race, gender, age, class, and ability. Our findings stress the need for properly directed support that considers how this intersectionality hinders or accelerates the academic success of Black transfer students. Considering the above-mentioned discussions, we hope that our findings bring forth ways that not only make the transfer process seamless, but also contributes to the larger policy debate on how universities can create an

inclusive environment for students from historically disadvantaged groups. Put differently, we hope that our research will help the Canadian academy to take a step forward along the path of humanism it reveres.

Acknowledgement

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"They Bring Standards of Academic Excellence Down"

A Critical Analysis of Responses by Social Media Users to Targeted Hiring of Black and Women Faculty Members in South African and Canadian Universities

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Abstract

Calls to hire more diverse faculty members in South African and Canadian universities have long standing histories. The pace of implementation of proposals to appoint more Black and women faculty members was slow. It was partly pressures from the #RhodesMustFall student movement in South Africa (2015) and renewed calls to address anti-Black racism in Canada post the murder of George Floyd in the United States (2020) that prompted post-secondary institutions in these countries to take concrete action towards instituting campus wide transformations to address questions of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Informed by the Othering theory and using thematic analysis, this paper critically examines social media users' rebuttals to the hiring of more Black and women faculty members at universities in South Africa and Canada. This paper argues that the racist and sexist framing of Black and women faculty as the inferior 'other' potentially has negative consequences on the mental health of the aforementioned groups. This

article also challenges ahistorical analyses that neglect critical examinations of racist and sexist systemic barriers that women and Black faculty contend with when applying for academic positions. Further, this paper exposes the limitations of the logic that assumes that merit-based hiring is necessarily inimical to sustaining standards of academic excellence.

Keywords: Black faculty members, Black cohort hiring, anti-Black racism, mental health and wellbeing, South Africa, Canada

Introduction

The call for diversity, equality and inclusion of Black and women faculty members has been a longstanding burning issue in South Africa and Canada (Albertus, 2019; Daly, 2016; D'Amato 2021; Joseph et al., 2021). Several studies that have examined the exclusions of Black and women faculty and the pressing need to transform and decolonise higher education in South Africa date back to the dawn of democracy (Batisai, 2019). These studies include *Black Academic Voices: The South African Experience* (Khunou, Phaswana, Khoza-Shangase and Canham, 2019) – a volume that documents the biographies of belonging and exclusion in the South African academy. An article by Rabe and Rugunanan (2012) also explores questions of gender and race amongst female sociologists who exit the academia in South Africa. Naicker (no date) maps the journey of South African women academics with a particular focus on women academics in theological education. *Hear Our Voices: Race, Gender and the Status of Black South African Women in the Academy* by Mabokela and Magubane (2004) exposes "institutional racism and sexism as experienced by black academics in South Africa" (Magubane, 2015) 10 years into flag democracy. In Magubane's words, the volume "contextualize[s] and historicize[s] these experiences – to show that they were not about isolated individuals but about deep systemic problems and to root those problems in history" (Magubane, 2015).

The realities of gender and racial exclusion in South Africa resonate with those observed in the Canadian context. For example, several universities in Canada, commit to equity, diversity and inclusion (Universities Canada, 2017). Institutions have "employment equity and affirmative action programmes were established to remove structural barriers, change institutional cultures, and uncover hidden biases that hinder the recruitment, hiring, tenure, and promotion of Indigenous, racialized, and other equity- seeking groups" (Henry

et al., 2017:11). It is against this backdrop that leading scholars debunk the equity myth based on empirical evidence that exposes racialised experiences of Black faculty and the shortcomings of equity programmes in Canadian universities (Henry and Tator 2012; Henry et al. 2017; Mensah 2010; Mohamed and Beagan 2019). Therefore, the fact that there are few Black and women faculty at Canadian universities (Grant, 2019; Joseph et al., 2021) and the reality that Black people make up just 2 percent of university faculty drives the need for racial transformation of faculty (Kozelj, 2020).

Partly in response to pressures from the #RhodesMustFall student movement in South Africa (2015) and renewed calls to address anti-Black racism in Canada post the murder of George Floyd in the United States (2020), universities in South Africa and Canada instituted campus wide transformations to address questions of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Among the reforms aimed at redressing systemic anti-Blackness in universities was the hiring of more Black faculty members (Jansen and Walters 2019; Joseph et al., 2021). Nonetheless, research on the inclusion of historically excluded groups reveals the slow racial transformation of the South African university system (Barnard, Cowan, Kirman and Müller, 2016). These scholars pose thought-provoking questions: "are qualified black people hired as faculty?" and "are there enough qualified black people who can be hired as faculty?" (Barnard, Cowan, Kirman and Müller, 2016:1). Various scholars who examined faculty diversification programmes at South African universities unearthed narratives such as 'we cannot find qualified blacks' (Mabokela, 2000). Attributing the shortage of black faculty to "a shortage of suitable candidates" was challenged by Black faculty arguing that the above position promotes white supremacy in the academy (Adjiwanou et al., 2014).

Although literature suggests that the South African case is an extreme one (Barnard, Cowan, Kirman and Müller, 2016), this article argues that the need for racial transformation of faculty is a reality that cuts across contexts. For instance, framing Canada as a progressive context that does not struggle with racism downplays the depth and pervasiveness of anti-Black racism in the country (DasGupta, Shandal, Shadd and Segal, 2020). This progressive depiction perpetuates the longstanding national myths that there is less racism in Canada compared to the United States (Satzewich, 1998; Mensah, 2010). The denial of anti-Black racism in any context perpetuates institutionalised or structural injustices and guarantees that institutionalised and systematic racism continues to thrive (Olson, 2003:211). Such institutionalisation creates

a conducive environment where anti-Black discourses that are contrary to equity, diversity and inclusion prosper and often, discourses such as 'they bring standards of academic excellence down' go unchallenged and become normalised or acceptable aspects of everyday reality in academic spaces.

The above discussions and studies about Black hires have largely been in the elite spaces of the academy with very little room for ordinary people to weigh in the debates. Moving beyond the ivory tower, this article focuses on comments by the general public on social media platforms. Building on the preceding empirical findings on the lived experiences of Black and women faculty who, in the Canadian context for example, have been framed as "strange faces in the academy" (Mohamed, Tameera and Beagan, 2019:338), this article critically analyses the responses by social media users to targeted hiring of Black and women faculty members in the two countries. Drawing on the Othering theory and using thematic analysis, this article critically explores counter-arguments by social media users to targeted hiring of more Black faculty members at universities in South Africa and Canada.

South Africa And Canada In The Same Paper?

Despite South Africa and Canada being geographically located in different continents, the sizes in square kilometres and the make-up and size of their populations being vastly dissimilar, the countries share interesting similarities. For example, Black people in the two countries share relatively similar experiences with prejudice. Statistics Canada (2022) reports that "in 2020, approximately 63% of Canada's Black population reported experiencing discrimination five years prior to the beginning of the pandemic or during the pandemic, nearly double the proportion of the White population (32%)." Noyoo (2021) argues that over two and a half decades after the transition to a democratic South Africa, Black people continue to contend with racism. The above is notwithstanding that Black people in South Africa constitute 81% of the population (Statistics South Africa, 2022) and in Canada, Black people are ethnocultural minorities; they make up 3.5% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2022). In terms of gender, despite having progressive legislations, women in both countries continue to face discrimination in the workplace (Nangia and Arora, 2021; Musetsho, Isac and Dobrin, 2021).

In addition to the above, South Africa and Canada share histories. In a 2017 speech delivered at the University of Cape Town's Law School, Honourable

Jody Wilson-Raybould, former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada averred that "Canada and South Africa share a long-standing and broad relationship, anchored in shared values, shared histories, and strong people-to-people ties" (Government of Canada, 2017). Both countries are former British colonies, and they are members of the Commonwealth of Nations. Further, Canada and South Africa share values around democracy, more equitable and inclusive societies (Van Niekerk, L'Heureux and Holtzhausen, 2022). In the 1980s, Canada campaigned against apartheid in the Commonwealth and supported the institution of a democratic South Africa. Former Canadian Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney played a steadfast role in backing the release of Nelson Mandela from prison (Government of Canada, 2017; Blanchfield and Bronskill, 2013). Mandela was later elected South Africa's first Black president post-1994. For his contribution, Mulroney was awarded the "highest honour South Africa bestows upon foreign nationals: the Supreme Companion of Oliver Reginald Tambo award" (Prime Minister of Canada 2015). Experts in the two countries collaborated in preparing the preliminary version of South Africa's initial democratic constitution (Government of Canada, 2022). In addition, "Canada bestowed Nelson Mandela with honorary citizenship in 2001 in recognition of his leadership in the fight against apartheid and his efforts to build a new united South Africa" (Government of Canada, 2022).

In 2022, Canada marked 155 years since its founding as a country. While for most Canadians, this is an occasion to celebrate, for many Indigenous people, remembering the past is challenging because of the histories of colonialism (Government of Canada, 2017). Similarly, for the majority of Black South Africans, reflecting on the past is traumatic due to their experiences of subjugation during Apartheid. Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould observed that both South Africa and Canada "have pursued reconciliation to right the wrongs of the past. Both established Truth and Reconciliation Commissions to discover the truth about our respective pasts and to record that truth so we do not forget. […]" (Government of Canada, 2017). Wilson-Raybould highlights that in Canada, the objective of reconciliation is to "empower Indigenous peoples, who make up approximately five per cent of the total population" (Government of Canada, 2017). In South Africa, the aim of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was "to promote re-conciliation and forgiveness among perpetrators and victims of apartheid" (The Apartheid Museum, 2022). The TRC was mandated to "discover the causes and nature of human rights violations in South Africa between 1960 and 1994; to identify victims

with a view to paying reparations; and to allow amnesty to those who fully disclosed their involvement in politically motivated human rights violations" (The Apartheid Museum 2022). Notwithstanding the TRCs, the everyday lives of many Indigenous people in Canada and majority of the Black population in South Africa, are pernicious reminders that the wrongs of the past still linger.

The Othering Theory

This paper uses the othering theory as a conceptual scaffold. Othering is the implicit concurrent binary constitution of an in-group (the self) and an out-group (the Other) in which the in-group is framed as superior to the Other while the out-group is constructed as inferior. The in-group possesses some attractive and unique traits that are absent in the out-group. Further, the out-group has unwanted characteristics that the in-group does not have (Brons, 2015). Ritzer and Stepnisky (2018:575) further explain that othering is "an internalized rejection of difference that can operate to make people devalue themselves, reject people from different groups, and create criteria within their own group for excluding, punishing, or marginalizing group members." Mudavanhu (2017, 15) argues that "othering those in the "out-group" manifests itself through, among other ways, stereotyping and stigmatising" with "those in the "in-group" almost insisting on presenting a group of people in parochial and simplistic ways in a manner that negates the multiplex nature of their identities." These polarised constructions expose the disrespect of scholarly expertise (Pittman, 2010), which insinuates that a Black and woman faculty member constantly carries the burden of proof as she has to provide evidence to white male students and colleagues that she is able to offer relevant knowledge (Farmer, 2021).

Resign Design

This article analyses responses to posts by Canadian and South Africa universities on social media. This is informed by the realisation that in research, social media platforms present new frontiers for both data collection and analysis that have been successfully used by several scholars (Felt, 2016; Mudavanhu, 2021; Batisai and Chipato, 2022). Although there are several social media platforms, this study specifically looks at Facebook. Franz et al. (2019:1) contends that "Facebook, in particular, is the most dominant player in the social media landscape […] As a significant portion of individuals' social

lives is conducted (and hence displayed and recorded) on Facebook, it is a potentially rich source of qualitative data for researchers."

This paper uses thematic analysis to critically examine pushbacks by some social media users to the idea of employing more Black and women faculty members in some South African and Canadian universities. Clarke and Braun (2017:297) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data." The practicalities of doing thematic analysis in this paper were informed by the six-step-by-step iterative guide that was proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and later used by other researchers (Nowell, Norris, White and Mouleset, 2017; Kiger and Varpio, 2020). The process began with the familiarisation with data (step one). In this article, this involved identifying posts on targeted hiring of Black and women faculty on Facebook pages of universities in South Africa and Canada. Posts that were considered were published between 2015 and 2021 when the #RhodesMustFall protests started in South Africa and after the George Floyd protests in the United States. Central to this process was reading, copying and pasting all comments linked to the posts, taking note of potential codes. The above step flowed into step two (initial generation of codes) in which notes were made on patterns that were emerging from the comments. Step three (looking for themes) entailed examining codes and determining which ones could be combined to form themes. Step 4 (appraising themes) was guided by the following questions: "Does each theme have adequate supporting data? Are the data included coherent in supporting that theme? Are some themes too large or diverse?" (Kiger and Varpio, 2020:6). Step five (delineating and naming themes) involved ascribing names to themes. Step 6 (the write-up) entailed authoring and presenting the analysis, occasionally re-visiting some of the previous steps.

Findings and Discussion

Despite South Africa and Canada having differences in histories and geographical locations, the targeted hiring of or propositions to hire more Black scholars and women scholars at universities in the two countries attracted similar kinds of spirited racist and sexist backlash from social media users. This is, despite the fact that diversifying of faculty at some universities in South Africa and Canada was long overdue (Daly, 2016; Albertus, 2019; D'Amato, 2021). This also, notwithstanding, that in Canada, "publicly funded

universities have a legal obligation through the Employment Equity Act to include statements that demonstrate their commitment to equitable hiring practices" (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2017:558). The section that follows discusses common interrelated responses by social media users to the idea of employing more Black and women faculty members in some South African and Canadian academies. All counter-arguments that will be discussed implicitly constituted Black and women faculty members as the inferior Other.

Us Versus Them: On Academic Excellence

Facebook users opposed to the targeted hiring of Black faculty and women faculty in South Africa and Canada critiqued the intervention insinuating that Black people and women were "not qualified," "undeserving," "not worthy," "not the best" and "incapable" of being appointed as instructors and lecturers. Social media users drew on racist and sexist discourses that othered Black people and women as inferior to White people and men respectively. Black faculty and women faculty were often juxtaposed with White male colleagues who were constructed as embodying what it means to be excellent academics. According to Aničić (2015), the above dualist logic is critical to the formation and sustaining relationships of domination. The fact that racist ideas emerged in this discussion demonstrates that racism is not rare, rather it is commonplace and intricately embedded in the fabric of society (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017).

Commenting on a post on a Facebook page of a South African university, one Facebook user said: "I'm just so sick and tired of hearing about quotas. How about [giving] the work to capable people." Another averred that: "things cannot just be handed to people who are not worthy of them: it makes them lazy and mediocre." "All I am saying is that individuals that possess the best qualifications should be employed. You want to build a better society then that's what you do. You want your company to do well then you hire the best you can," stated another social media user. Commenting on the Black cohort hiring process at universities in Canada, a Facebook user stated: "They [universities] should be only focusing on hiring the most qualified people," in a way that assumed that Black people would not be the most qualified. "[name of university removed] can have whatever colour professors they want as long as they are highly qualified [...] U cannot just place anyone in this position," declared a Facebook user.

Pushing back at presuppositions that hiring more women is a liability because they are intellectually inferior to male colleagues, a Facebook user asked: "Why do people automatically assume hiring more women means lowering the standard? It could mean [university name removed] is putting lots of effort [into] attracting qualified female candidates." Also speaking back to assumptions that whiteness is necessarily synonymous to academic excellence, a Facebook user writing on a Facebook page of a Canadian university contended: "It is much more patronizing to assume that the predominantly white status quo is somehow an example of excellence. It is not. It is an outdated system that does not adequately serve the students, who are much more racially and culturally diverse than the faculty and administration." Also commenting in the Canadian context, one social media user wrote: "For all the "HIRING SHOULD BE BASED ON EXCELLENCE AND SKILL!!" [capital letters in the original] … Black people can be hired based on excellence and skill too … Black people can be skilled [too]…[name of university removed] needs to do sooooo much more but I admit this is a good start. And as for other racial [minorities], I believe this should be done for them as well, especially Indigenous people." Responding to anti-Black racism in South Africa, Kambule (2018) argues:

> Black South Africans are tired of the smoke screen and silent reproving of racism. We are done condemning, we are now confronting. It is about time we remind each other of the importance of dignity for all human beings. For our country to rid itself of the chronicle of 'us' versus 'them' South Africa needs whites to join blacks in confronting racism and any prejudice on the black skin. The best place to start is calling out their peers who continue to belittle black workers in the workplace, the retail space, restaurants and helpers. After all, racism and Apartheid were created by white people. It is up to them to help bring its still-lasting effects down.

For new Black and women faculty hires, successfully landing tenure track and tenured positions is likely to be both exciting and anxiety provoking. Exhilarating because they finally have the jobs, they previously struggled to get due to several systemic barriers to entry in open hiring processes because of their race and gender and other intersecting identities. Fox Tree and Vaid (2022:1) explain:

> The university as an institution was founded by and largely for men and, in particular, for White men [...] Particularly in elite universities in Europe and the United States,

women (White or other), and racialized groups (of any gender) were not allowed to pursue higher education or be employed as faculty until fairly recently [...].

Considering the above observations, it is hardly surprising that new Black and women hires would feel perturbed. The anxiety is compounded by racist and sexist scripts such as the ones discussed above that are likely playing in their minds reminding them that they are not good enough. Andrews (2022) explains: "For racialized groups, such as Black people, the pressure becomes more pronounced where there is an unwritten but glaring expectation to excel even in areas where other fellow scholars may have failed." New Black faculty and women faculty carry what Farmer (2021) terms the burden of proof as they join traditionally white and male dominated domains. They carry the pressure to prove that they are qualified, deserving of the positions and capable of getting the job done. The burden to prove that they are excellent is not peculiar to Black faculty and women faculty. Writing about Black women in South Africa, Farmer (2021) argues that the burden of proof is a generational burden. A Black woman, similar to her mother and grandmother before her, carries either as "the servant who proves her honesty, the student who proves her academic worth or lecturer proving her knowledge" (Farmer, 2021:218). In academia, the burden follows her as she changes institutions. The onus is on her to show her skills in addition to her qualifications and previous experience each time her context shifts. The implications for Black faculty and women faculty of constantly trying to prove in different ways that they are good enough is tiresome. Andrews (2022) elaborates that "the pressure to "keep up with the good work" is real and exhausting." Gone unchecked, in the long term, the weariness from overworking can potentially cause burnout and mental health challenges.

Moving beyond the problems highlighted above, Andrews (2022) advises Black academics to shift their perspectives and realise that they "do not owe the university anything more than their White colleagues do." Further, Andrews (2022) recommends the following to Black scholars:

Collaborate with other colleagues you really like. Having true friends as research collaborators is probably the best support group we can have as Black academics, especially in a world where expectations around incessant productivity can lead us into crashing overdrive sometimes. Academia can be isolating and more so for Black people who face all kinds of systemic barriers that are ingrained into the very

architecture of the ivory tower. [...] We need to establish boundaries of work and happiness. Here, my slogan is work hard and be sure to party even harder! Besides academic work and required service, indulge in things that you truly enjoy.

Freeman (2020) also offers useful tips to Black faculty on thriving in predominantly white universities in the article, ''Professoring' While Black: Strategies for Thriving in the White Professoriate.' Some strategies include the centrality of establishing support structures and taking care of one's health.

Lowering Standards of Academic Excellence at Universities Dominated by White Men

Following the racist and sexist labelling of Black faculty and women faculty as inferior, social media users went further to argue that appointing these scholars will result in the standards of excellence at universities in South Africa and Canada being lowered. In the context of South Africa, one Facebook user wrote that the appointment of Black faculty and women applicants resulted in the "degeneration of all value systems in South Africa." Also in South Africa, one university was advised by a social media user to hire: "whatever colour professors they want as long as they are highly qualified and capable of maintaining high standards!!" Another Facebook user wrote: "A university is a place of learning and a meritocratic standard need to be employed when determining whether or not to hire a professor." Refuting sentiments such as the ones expressed above, Adjiwanou et al. (2014) argues:

> Raising the issue of standards when referring to black academics is a discourse that serves to undermine the competencies of black scholars and one that works to maintain the false notion that white scholarship and white scholars are superior. In many ways, such constructions [...] are part of a broader discourse of white superiority - a historical legacy we all share and have a responsibility to confront.

Interestingly, social media users talked about the idea of standards as if it was not a concept that needed problematising and deconstructing. In most white and male dominated universities, the standards and the rules are set by a very niche group of tenured, older, white males. This group presides over what sociologists term "boundary work" (Gieryn, 1983). Matias, Lewis and Hope (2021) explain that boundary work is "the practice of a group setting rules to determine who is good enough to join." Social media users did not also

problematise the uneven ways in which the standards and rules were applied depending on one's identity. Gasman (2016) observes:

> I have learned that faculty will bend rules, knock down walls, and build bridges to hire those they really want (often white colleagues) but when it comes to hiring faculty of color, they have to "play by the rules" and get angry when any exceptions are made. Let me tell you a secret – exceptions are made for white people constantly in the academy; exceptions are the rule in academia.

Partly in response to the assumptions that Blackness is not synonymous to academic excellence, the African Caribbean Faculty Association of McMaster University in Canada, for example, labelled the cohort hiring for Black faculty in 2021, "the McMaster University Black Excellence Cohort hiring initiative" (Joseph et al., 2021). Also in Canada, Wilfrid Laurier University termed their targeted hiring, the "Inclusive excellence cohort hiring initiative" (Vannelli and Morrison, 2021). Commenting on the use of the term 'Black excellence,' Andrews (2022) explains: "One may argue that Black excellence seems uncalled for, since there has never been the need to promote White excellence as a hashtag, but the fact is that the existence of #BlackExcellence underpins the need to celebrate the contributions of Black folks who are working in institutions that have historically underappreciated their efforts and contributions."

Social media users who assumed that hiring more women and Black faculty jeopardised standards of excellence did not go unchallenged. One Facebook user rebutted: "Why do people automatically assume hiring more women means lowering the standard? It could mean [name of university removed] is putting lots of effort [into] attracting qualified female candidates." Another countered: "The problem with this argument is that it assumes that the women who have been hired are not qualified … To assume that the woman [is] being hired are not qualified and are only chosen based on gender is sexist."

Some social media users failed to appreciate that appointing of Black and women faculty is actually not inimical to the attainment and upholding of standards of academic excellence at universities in South Africa and Canada. Paradoxically, diversifying the faculty increases academic excellence. According to the Scarborough Charter (2021:9) "inclusive excellence embodies the recognition that not only is post-secondary education enriched by equity, diversity and inclusion; equitable inclusion is critical to excellence." Further,

"a diverse faculty is more successful in recruiting and retaining students from varied backgrounds. In the United States, for example, research indicates that the success of undergraduate female students is directly related to the number of female faculty members. This effect is particularly pronounced among African Americans. [...] Students identify more with Professors who look like they do [...]" (Henry, Choi & Kobayashi, 2012:3). Leggon (2010:1015) adds that all students benefit when faculty members are diverse.

Merit Hires versus Diversity Hires

To prevent the alleged lowering of institutional standards of academic excellence, Facebook users commenting on targeted hiring of Black and women faculty in South Africa and Canada urged universities to hire on the basis of merit regardless of the identities of the hires. Most Facebook users who advocated for merit-based hiring dismissed histories of racist and sexist segregation that Black and women intellectuals have had to contend with in the broader society and in hiring processes (Fox Tree and Vaid, 2022).

Writing in the context of South Africa, one Facebook user could not believe that "Apartheid will still be blamed" for disparities that targeted hiring processes were attempting to address. Also trivialising the implications of race and gender-based marginalisation on Black people and women, another Facebook user commented: "we're not living in that time period [Apartheid period] anymore." Another added: "As we as a nation move forward the lives of those affected by Apartheid will eventually improve - after all we're no longer living under a government that supports such a system." Also in the South African context, a social media user averred: "Do not blame "apartheid" … 20 years has gone by in the "new SA" … more than enough time to get a few "other" PhD's, if they wanted to become professors!" Echoing similar sentiments, another Facebook user wrote: "Move on in life and stop blaming the "whites." Do you think Jan van Riebeeck landed in SA with a fridge, TV and internet on his back…No!!!…they worked the land and became educated….so please, do not re-invent the wheel…get on with your life!"

Although some Facebook users showed eagerness to move away from the enduring consequences of a racially segregated past in South Africa, Motswatswa (2021) argues that: "although Apartheid is over, its influence continues to intrude in virtually every waking moment of a Black person's life in South Africa." Motswatswa (2021) adds: "South Africa has come far but

the road ahead is still long, and until privilege and access to a quality of life are deracialised, I simply cannot get over Apartheid. The past is still present; we simply cannot move on – the system will not allow us." Mtose (2011:325) concurs: "racism is alive, active, pervasive and no less damaging." Arguing along similar lines, one Facebook user argued:

> 20 [years] can't make up for a lifetime of wrongdoing, and yes, we can still blame Apartheid because u white people still reap the fruit of it. Because of what your forefathers did to all people of colour for almost 400 [years] you want only 20 [years] to wipe it out, never, the pain is still there, you can't talk because u never lived your life like an inferior, u were never told piss of, you [are] on the pavement of a white beach, not on the beach itself. [You] were never told u can't get on the train because u made it to the white side of it and can't get on and have to wait women alone for another hour for the next train.

Asking Black people in South Africa to get over Apartheid or move on, given that "the past is still present" (Motswatswa, 2021) is callous and violent. Mtose (2011:325) elaborates: "Sadly, experiences of everyday racism remain a historical and current reality for black South Africans. This suggests that the legacy of apartheid racism continues to have a significant impact on black people in South Africa."

Similar to social media users in South Africa, it was interesting to note that Facebook users responding to Black cohort hiring in Canada also denied that racism was a factor that hindered the hiring of Black faculty. One social media user argued: "[Name of university removed] has been an equal opportunity venue in all respects for decades. Your implication that a white person would get hired over an equally qualified black person has no foundation whatsoever. None." Another Canadian Facebook user argued that allegations that a particular university discriminated against Black people and women had no basis in reality. The Facebook user averred that such claims: "didn't reflect the reality of my time at [name of university removed]" in the eighties and nineties. "Where is the proof?" asked another sceptical Facebook user. While the Facebook held these ideas, in Canada, Henry et al. (2017:3) argue that:

> Notwithstanding the promise of equity, the university is a racialized site that still excludes and marginalizes non-White people, in subtle, complex, sophisticated, and ironic ways, from everyday interactions with colleagues to institutional practices that at best are ineffective and at worst perpetuate structural racism. To deconstruct

the intricacy of race and racism in Canadian universities we assembled a group of some of the leading scholars in the field, who tell those stories using many types of evidence and comparative analysis. We have called our book *The Equity Myth* to signal that the goal of achieving social justice by creating equitable institutions has been consistently promised but persistently denied for racialized and Indigenous scholars. The subtitle, *Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities,* indicates the subjects of our research – racialized and Indigenous scholars whose lives are affected by their experiences of "race."

Though comments by South Africans at least acknowledged Apartheid (despite dismissing its consequences on Black people's lives today), social media users in Canada were conspicuously silent about histories of anti-Black racism in Canada. This is not surprising considering the denialism of anti-Black racism in Canada. Estrada (2020) explains:

> For Canadians who have likely never experienced systemic racism, it is easy to deny its existence. That makes it easy for them to make smug remarks about our neighbours to the south, like "that would never happen here" or "we're so much better than that," because they are personally so far removed from oppressive situations.

Facebook users who dismissed histories and present manifestations of racial injustice in South Africa and Canada advocated for the hiring of faculty members based on merit without taking into account their identities. In South Africa, one Facebook user commented: "I thought that positions were given to an individual based on their credentials and that the colour of someone's skin wasn't supposed to be an issue." Another said: "As long as we refer to the colour of one's skin as being a determining factor in anything, we will never progress to a situation where we are "a people", and in so doing, we are blowing on the burning coals of discrimination in perpetuity." Sounding irritated, two Facebook users affirmed: "I'm just so sick and tired of hearing about quotas. How about [giving] the work to capable people" and "I had no idea that we had a quota to fill. I thought that positions were given to an individual based on their credentials and that the colour of someone's skin wasn't supposed to be an issue." "But I see no reason to allow for the preferential treatment of one human over another," said another Facebook user.

  Similar to comments made by Facebook users in South Africa, one social media user in Canada commented: "Is [name of university removed] suggesting

these new hires couldn't get in on their own steam?" Arguing along similar lines, another commented: "Nothing quite like the "subtle racism of low expectations." Is the president [of a particular Canadian university] implying people of colour can't succeed under their own steam? Why else have a targeted hiring policy? A bit patronising. Give them the dignity of treating and judging them as individuals." Another questioned the place of merit in light of Black excellence cohort hires: "so basically it is no longer a meritocracy?" "Does it really matter what colour/race a lecturer/teacher is, as long as they are teaching the students correctly?" asked another social media user.

Instead of implementing initiatives that seek to address the low numbers of women and Black faculty in South Africa, one Facebook user suggested: "Why is this a concern that needs to be addressed? I'm sure that over time the numbers and colour profiles will balance themselves out." Another contended: "I see no reason to allow for the preferential treatment of one human over another." In the Canadian context, a Facebook user contended: "Here's a simple rule: No privilege for anyone. If you want it, earn it." Also writing in the context of Canada and commenting on affirmative action to hire more women, another social media user commented: "To me, it does not matter whether or not a company (or institution) makes it's faculty/staff 100% women-dominated. But you hire based on merit and NOT because of gender. You don't put in place these affirmative actions to hire women just for the sake of getting women in the field, that in itself, is actual sexism."

Also advocating against considering race and gender in hiring processes, another Canadian Facebook user argued: "I am saying that hiring should be based on [competency] and merit." They add that race and gender should not be taken into account when hiring. Also in Canada, and in agreement with the previous comment, another said: "My point is that among people who are all qualified, how well a person "fits" into the company/role should be based on soft skills or experiences or personality, not on race. Race should never be a factor in almost all cases. Isn't it ironic that the people who claim to hate racism so much are also the ones who think of race as such an important/ defining characteristic?" Another said: "[Name of university removed] didn't get to the top by indulging in racial preferences. It got there by hiring the best candidate regardless of race, sex, creed, etc. We [made] Martin Luther King proud by judging people on their individual merits. So now we're going to grant preference (and also penalize) people based on their skin colour?"

Some Facebook users contended that targeted hiring of Black and women faculty was synonymous with racist and sexist discrimination against people who were not raced as Black and gendered as women. A Canadian Facebook user argued: "How patronising is this? Not to mention reductionist…This is also the "subtle racism of low expectations". Another said: "Anything short of simply focusing on the person who's the best for the job is some sort of unfair discrimination. In this case, they are trying to do "accelerated hiring" of black faculty members …This is by definition, racist. The fact that it's an attempt to right previous wrongs doesn't make it less racist." Pushing back at the idea that targeted hiring was racist, a Facebook user writing from a Canadian perspective argued: "And for the people who think this is racist, this is a (long overdue) method of trying to EQUALIZE opportunities for all people because of systemic racism before you argue [please] read the Peel Region Education report findings and the Black Student Athletes Report that explain WHY this must be done."

It is interesting that many social media users regarded hiring based on merit and hiring for purposes of addressing historical injustices as mutually exclusive. The assumption was that appointing more Black people and women necessarily meant that they were not being hired on merit. As discussed earlier in the findings section, this assumption is both racist and sexist. Those who dismissed targeted hiring initiatives by universities in South Africa and Canada likely enjoy privileges based on their race and gender that shield them from experiencing prejudice. Pushing back the idea of solely hiring on merit, a Facebook user argued: "The harsh reality is recruitment without consideration of our internal biases is NOT merit based in itself. Hence, we use affirmative action as a means to correct some of our biases." Another social media user commented:

> On meritocracy … The problem with your argument is it doesn't consider the potential of inherent biases […] towards women. There are a number of sociological studies suggesting a heavily [ingrained] unconscious attitude towards women. As a result, affirmative action actually has the potential to LIMIT bias and can actually help achieve a MORE merit based recruitment process […] we NEED to use affirmative action so we can correct centuries of inequities and help bring these marginalized groups [an] equal shot.

In a lengthy comment worth quoting, a social media user writing from the Canadian perspective contended:

> For all those complaining that people should be hired on merit, you need to realize that people of colour do not have the privilege to be hired based on merit. All we want is to be given a fair shot. It would seem like the fair thing to do just to hire people based on merit but in reality that is not how it actually is. The lack of diversity you see in all these institutions is not because there are no people of colour qualified for the job, [it's] evidence of the different blocks placed on their path. Starting with the biases recruiters have towards ethnic sounding names…you won't believe how many resumes are excluded by just that criteria alone. Then there are racist policies that are hidden in requirements … "Canadian experience", "Canadian education". People of colour are more affected by these requirements disproportionately because chances are most visible minorities are immigrants so are automatically excluded by that criteria. Then if you manage to pass all those blocks and you make it to the interview, you have to pray and hope that the people interviewing have no biases of their own and give you a fair interview…sounds simple but [it's] not. So yes, in a perfect world you would hope people are hired by merit but don't for one second think that the lack of diversity is a reflection of the candidates who have applied for the job. The problem goes so deep that when people of colour are considering career options, they have to think about how well they will do in the said industry and some just don't even bother going into education or law because they know that there will be no opportunities. So if [name of university removed] is willing to look at where their policies discriminate against people of colour, [that's] a good thing. Not sure why it took so long but [it's] a welcome step in the right direction.

Facebook users in South Africa offered Black people and women the following unsolicited advice: "It is all about hard work and commitment. Why making it a racist or feminist issue?" "If you work hard enough, get the grades, use the multiple opportunities and apply for bursaries…the sky's the limit." In another comment, a different Facebook user argued: "It is about hard work, intelligence, passion and commitment to study: I did not get my post school education for free…stop your "apartheid" crap … learn, work hard, focus, and become a professor!!"

On the surface, it appears as though there is nothing inherently wrong with advising Black people and women to work hard to achieve their goals.

This argument is deeply problematic because it is devoid of histories and systems of oppression that have ensured that Black people and women remain disadvantaged. In the South African context, working hard alone has not necessarily served Black people well. These people work hard but that has not translated to better opportunities for them. Although South African comedian Trevor Noah was tweeting in response to a comment by Kim Kardashian in which she advised those desiring success in business to work hard, his comments sum up the realities of the majority of Black South Africans who have worked hard most of their lives, but their material realities remained unchanged. Noah tweeted, "A lot of people work hard and they are still broke. In fact, the broker you are, the harder you probably work" (@ TimesLive 2022). Beyond telling people to work hard, a textured analysis of systemic barriers that Black people and women contend with is needed.

Conclusion

Three interlinked themes emerged in this paper. The first is the Othering of Black and women faculty as inferior and unworthy of appointment. This discussion exposed the racism and sexism that characterised comments by Facebook users and the potential negative consequences for Black and women faculty. New hires potentially self-impose undue pressure on themselves to prove to detractors that they are qualified, deserving, worthy and capable academics. This often results in overworking, burnout, exhaustion, and mental health challenges in the long term. Depending on individuals, having scripts like this running in the backgrounds of their minds affects levels of confidence in negative ways. This paper highlighted ways Black and women faculty could survive and thrive in their jobs.

The second theme examined assumptions by social media users that hiring Black and women faculty members led to a drop in the standards of academic excellence. This discussion challenged the notion of standards pointing to their constructed nature and the ways these standards were impartially applied. Assuming that appointing Black and women faculty is a liability is racist, sexist and parochial. Proponents of this view failed to see that hiring diverse faculty enhances academic excellence at institutions dominated by white men.

The third theme discussed calls by social media users for post-secondary institutions in South Africa and Canada to hire based on merit without

considering the race or gender of applicants. These comments that were devoid of histories of systemic barriers Black and women faculty contend with to get academic appointments erroneously imagined that hiring the above academics necessarily meant the suspension of rigorous merit-based standards. This is further from the reality. Similar meticulous processes applied in the appointment of faculty members in open advertisements were also applied in targeted hiring processes. The only difference is that universities now recognise biases that have prevented Black and women faculty from getting employed and they consciously attempt to right some wrongs through cohort hiring.

Circling back to the Othering theory, in all three themes, Facebook users constituted Black and women faculty members as the inferior Other. As discussed by Brons (2015), the othering was implicit. Although the out-group is largely constituted as silent in the Othering theory, looking at comments by social media users, there were several strong pushbacks from the Other or Facebook users whose views were sympathetic to the position of the inferior Other. Those advocating for the Other took it upon themselves to educate those criticising targeted hiring of historical injustices that prevented Black people and women from being appointed as faculty. They also challenged assumptions that positioned targeted hiring as compromising academic standards of excellence.

Notwithstanding the fact that parts of the hiring process require that candidates sometimes give talks that are open to the university community, the majority of the time potential hires present their ideas to hiring committees in meetings that are understandably closed to the public. The committees make the final determinations of candidates to appoint. This means committee members end up being the only ones who have a detailed and granular appreciation of the value and the worth new hires are bringing to the institution. Beyond the spaces departments curate on their websites for new faculty to offer public information about their experiences and research agendas, it may be useful for new faculty to make public presentations broadcast on social media platforms of their work once they settle into their jobs. This might contribute to deflating and speaking back to some of the problematic stereotypes and problematic discourses that were discussed in the paper. This can be done in tandem with other strategies of addressing structural racism and sexism in universities.

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Work Life Balance (Myth or Fact) Black Female Academics

A Case of Gauteng, South Africa

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Abstract

Work-Life balance is a priority at many institutions of higher learning everywhere but especially for Black female academics from South Africa. Employers acknowledge the value employees who can straddle work and non-work domains but is it balance or integration and supportive workplaces that is required. This article authored by a male social worker seeks to explore the experiences of Black female academics at a university in Gauteng, regarding their work-life balance using the intersectionality framework. This qualitative exploratory case study included ten respondents, who were purposively sampled. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the necessary data. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The study revealed the following main findings: Firstly, Black female academics are confronted by both personal and professional challenges that hinder them from achieving a work-life balance. Identified personal challenges included family responsibilities, patriarchal and cultural practices. While work overload, lack of recognition and lack of respect by male senior colleagues were identified as work-related challenges.

Key words: Interpretative approach, Black Female academics; Challenges, Work life balance, Universities.

Introduction and Background

South Africa is a society in transition and institutions of higher learning should be spaces where these transformations should reflect an ideal society. Sadly, this is not true, as transformation and work-life balance of Black female academics is a matter of concern that has an impact on the workers' productivity and promotion (John, Anthony and Bakari, 2020; Department of Higher Education and Training 2019) Diverse scholastic views have emerged over the years pertaining this subject matter. However, few studies focused on the experiences of Black female academics regarding their work-life balance in South Africa (Sav, 2016; Naz, Fazal and Khan, 2017; Kohll, 2018). South African born Black female academics are an underrepresented group in South African higher education institutions. Black female academics are derogatory viewed as beneficiaries of gender equity schemes, and hence viewed with suspicious & skepticism generally (Khunou, Phaswana, Khosa-Shangase and Canham, 2019). Available knowledge on this subject was interrogated with the aim of establishing firstly, the emergence of the work-life concept, the reason for its emergence and what it was initially intended to achieve. Secondly, available international literature regarding women academics and the work-life concept was reviewed. Existing literature on women academics and work-life concept, focusing specifically on the South African context was also considered.

Many professional women continue to struggle to strike a balance between their work, unpaid labour and private lives (Mokhele, 2013). American female author, Slaughter (2012:89) notes that, "millions of working women face more difficult life circumstances. Some are single mothers; others support husbands who cannot find jobs. Many women cope with a work-life in which good day care is either unavailable or very expensive while school schedules do not match their work schedules." Black women academics are not exempted from these challenges with research findings showing that they are unrepresented, alienated and continue to face a cocktail of challenges within academia (Jansen, 2017; Pillay, 2009; Magano, 2011; Mokhele, 2013; Dominiguez-Whitehead and Moosa, 2014; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). Black female academics continue to be marginalised and underrepresented in academia. Available data further show that Black female academics do not have enough time for research, to publish and present papers as they struggle to balance their professional and family commitments while remaining mainly at the bottom of the organisational ladder (Pillay, 2009;

Magano, 2011). The above factors negatively affect their work-life balance. Qualitative research into the experiences of Black female academics support a better understanding, unpacking the myth of work life balance or offering suggestions to support the two aspects cohering in harmony (Potgieter and Maleko, 2004; Maodzwa-Taruvinga and Divala, 2014).

Although discussing experiences of Black female academics more than two decades into democracy might be considered a non-issue by some, "the historicity and contingence of Black women academics' personal experiences necessitate ongoing interrogation and understanding of the effects of the nexus of power and identity on academic progression and success" (Maodzwa-Taruvinga and Divala, 2014). While a number of Black female academics have succeeded within the country's Higher Education system documenting their experiences in trying to attain a work-life balance is essential to contribute to an Afro-centric feminist epistemology and to understand the daily struggles that Black women academics continue to face (Potgieter and Maleko 2004; Maodzwa-Taruvinga and Divala, 2014). Gaining a better understanding of the characteristics, constraints and social support systems of the University will therefore lead to the development to enhance work-life balance among Black female academics. In this regard, government has employed some empowerment schemes geared at empowering women academics such as new generation of academics programme(nGAP). This paper focused on exploring the home and work-related challenges that are faced by Black female Academics that threatens their capacity to strike a balance within the work-life balance context.

Theoretical Framework

The term, "intersectionality" is approximate as it considers the intersection of race and gender (Nash, 2008:10). Intersectionality theory is a significant mechanism used by both the feminist and anti-racist scholars to theorize identity and oppression (Nash, 2008) and has attracted the interest of many authors (Nash, 2008; Cole, 2009). Cole defines the intersectionality theory as "a paradigm for theory and research offering new ways of understanding the complex causality that characterizes social phenomena" (Cole, 2009). The term 'intersectionality' relates to the fact that certain people exist at the intersection (or 'intertwining') of mechanisms of inequality, such as gender (sexism and transphobia), race and ethnicity (racism), nationality (xenophobia),

status (capitalism), disability (validity) or sexual identity (homophobia) (Bauer, 2014). Intersectionality theory is suitable as black female academics across the globe continue to be confronted by a cocktail of challenges in their workplaces such as discrimination, racism, as well as oppression from male colleagues often fueled by patriarchal tendencies (Bauer, 2014:15). The existing literature reveals that Black female academics face more challenges when compared to their White counterparts who hold more doctoral degrees and are overrepresented (Bauer, 2014:15; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019.). Consequently, intersectionality theory offers a framework to understand the complex causality that characterizes the work-life balance phenomena as experienced by Black female academics within the South African context. Intersectionality theory offers an understanding of the complex web of factors such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, and other structural arrangements (Rugunanan, 2019)

Literature Review

The South African Higher Education Context

To achieve work-life balance for South African black female academics there is a need for radical accelerated transformation of the workplace. Transformation is a complex, emotional and contested process with a host of challenges such as massification, the lack of movement of white staff out of senior positions, lack of funding, lack of preparedness for research, exclusion by language, discriminatory policies and uncompetitive salaries to name a few challenges. There is a need for targeted support of Black female academics who are entering academia, working on their PhD qualification, and are middle career academics. At a broader societal level South Africa remains a patriarchal space where activities of child rearing, family care giving and domestic chores are the realm of mainly women but workplaces give little regard to these competing roles played by females. (Rugunanan 2019; Department of Higher Education and Training 2019)

Work-life balance

The work-life balance concept has been a focus for many employers across the world for the past few decades and during the emergence of the Covid

19 pandemic it was again raised (John, Anthony and Bakari 2020). Employers realised the important role that work-life balance played in ensuring that employees performed at their optimum levels. Currently increasing workloads, globalisation and scientifically improvements have contributed better understanding of how work and life feed into each other for all professionals working across all levels and all industries across the world (Yadav and Rani, 2015). The concept received much attention after a significant increase in the number of women joining the workforce across the world. This led to countries such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) endorsing legislations aimed at regulating the number of hours that people, particularly women, could work per week (Yadav and Rani 2015). Such legislature forced employers to explore ways of balancing women's work and non-work domains (Yadav and Rani, 2015). Furthermore, Delina and Raya (2013, 276) argued that "achieving work-life balance is a necessity for working women to have a good quality of life".

This quality of life seems to elude black women academics who continue to experience a cocktail of challenges in their workplaces (Muberekwa and Nkomo, 2016; Whaley and Krane, 2012). One challenge is a lack of support from the high echelons of many tertiary institutions (Segal 2010). The challenge of a lack of support was highlighted in a report by the Department of Education (2008) which noted that most universities failed to consider women's role in the family and had no systems in place to help them cope with specific circumstances confronting them daily. This lack of support could be as a result of a long-held and damaging perception held by mostly White academics who often label Black female academics as the 'underclass' and 'underperformers' who cannot succeed in academia, let alone become academic leaders (Monnapula-Mapesela, 2017). The consequence of this negative perception is that most of these women remain concentrated in lower-level positions with minimal opportunities for career growth (Department of Education 2008). This situation is often exacerbated by the fact that Black female academics continue to be undermined, mostly by male counterparts (Maodzwa-Taruvinga and Divala, 2014). The afore-mentioned are some of the intersections of factors that plague Black female academics.

Moreover, Muberekwa and Nkomo (2016:215) add that the patriarchal nature of the working climate and the conservative nature of the larger society in which they reside makes Black female academics struggle with work life balance. In addition, Whaley and Krane (2012:70) found that female

intellectuals appear to be overburdened by heavier teaching loads and extra university service work Garnett and Mohamed (2012, 85) espoused that service work which is placed on the shoulders of women is less glamorous than research.

Work-life Balance and Women Academics: A South African's Perspective

South Africa has seen an increase in the number of female academics entering the academia field as in 2012 there were about 24704 women academics working in the country's Universities (Garnett and Faza, 2012). This increase in the number of Black female academics also culminated into some women being appointed into a few senior positions previously reserved for male academics such as Dr. Maphela Ramphele and Prof. Mamokgethi Phakeng as Vice-Chancellors of the University of Cape Town.

It is interesting to note that Segal (2014, 88) found that women reported that work on academia was both rewarding and that they enjoyed the flexibility the workplace afforded them. However there have been studies that found female academics have an unequally higher unpaid workload within the family and resulted in them not publishing as much as they male colleagues during the Covid 19 period (Augustus, 2021).

However, flexibility is a double-edged sword as Beninger (2010, 78) adds that academics were not confined to a 9am – 5pm job settings and technology allows them be always available and unable to create boundaries between work and non-work domains. Moreover, a lack of support, increased workload and the need to publish have been identified as the main causes of these imbalances (Beninger, 2010).

Methodology

The primary aim of this study was to explore personal experiences of Black female academics with a focus on the challenges they face. A qualitative research approach using an exploratory case study approach was adopted. The population comprised of black female academics currently working at a University in Gauteng. Purposive sampling was used to select ten participants with the following inclusion criteria. All participants were black female academics currently working at a University for a minimum of three years in

the position of a lecturer or occupying a senior position within the academic division. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect the necessary data needed for analysis. All ethical considerations were upheld, and the interviews were recorded using an audio recorder. The collected data was transcribed using microsoft word and the transcribed data was analysed using thematic framework analysis using ATLAS ti. Pseudonyms have been used when reporting using verbatim quotes.

Results

Responsibilities

Home and family responsibilities, Financial constraints Patriarchal and Cultural practices are covered in this section.

Home and Family Responsibilities

Many South African women are expected to execute duties as dictated to them by societal and cultural expectations. Family responsibilities have been identified as the main challenge confronting Black female academics. Majority (9) of participants have indicated that one of the main challenges confronting them as Black female academics are the family duties they are expected to carry out as wives and mothers in their families placed an additional burden on them as Sibongile explains next

> The academic world is a very difficult for the black female academics because after work we [respondents] are expected to perform motherly and wife duties at home such as looking after the children, cooking and doing house chores. They [Respondents] should also cook for their husbands and that is a big challenge [Sibongile, aged 45, Senior Lecturer]

Sibongile's views were shared by majority (6) of respondents who noted that having to perform their house duties over and above their work responsibilities had a negative impact on their work performance. This view was based on the fact that they had to undertake their academic work such as marking of scripts, preparing for lectures and writing articles for publications when they were not at work. In addition family responsibilities such as cooking and helping the children with their homework were still tasks they undertook which are

consistent with findings of earlier studies (Ntsele 2014). These findings are supported by Mahasha (2016, 86) who found that apart from their demanding work, Black African professional women are expected to take care of their family responsibilities such as childcare and taking care of the house. The Department of Higher Education and Training attribute these findings to a patriarchal society wherein family responsibilities such as caregiving and homemaking continue to be done mostly by women (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019).

Financial constraints

Further findings of this study suggest that financial constraints contributed to some of the challenges confronting Black female academics. Majority (7) of the participants revealed that after work, they are forced to perform household duties and to look after the extended family members. The following excerpt from an interview with Ruth put this issue into perspective:

> As black academics, we do not have the luxury of being wealthy and we have to look after the extended family with the available limited income. This in turn affects our disposable income as we have more people to feed [Ruth, aged 48, Senior Lecturer].

Ruth's quote is a representative of what many Black African professional experience in different institutions of higher education. The obligation that many women have of caring for their extended families often places strain on their monthly earnings and leaves them with limited disposable income. In South Africa, there is a growing mismatch between financial income and spending in most families. The situation is worse in Black communities with extended families. Also, referred to as "Black Tax" (Mangoma and Wilson-Prangley 2019, 450) which is a form of family support where financial transfers are substantive to members of the extend family to cater for general expenditure including in education. Ordinarily, this form of burden affects both men and women. The findings of this study reveal some of the participants were expected to provide not only for their immediate family members, but also for their extended family members as well. While it is considered noble to take care of one's extended family, particularly in the African culture, such caring often places a huge financial burden on black female in general and academics as evidenced by findings of the study. Extended financial sacrifices in assistance of family members erode their disposable income as well as the

saving ability. A typical example of the pressure that Black female academics find themselves in could be seen in the following quote by Julia

> My in-laws think I am very rich and as a result, everyone always wants money from me, which I do not have. What they do not know is that I always use credit cards and they do not believe that I do not have money [Julia, aged 53, Lecturer]

Patriarchal and Cultural Practices

Most of these participants noted that existing cultural practices require them to carry out certain household duties. Some of the participants indicated that they continue to perform some duties such as cooking for their husbands (Mangolothi 2019). The following quote provides a clear picture on how cultural beliefs and practices have impact on Black African academics and their quest for work life balance as Lyn says next.

> In our African culture, I am still expected to perform all my wifely duties whilst I have a helper to assist me. This (the household duty)is the challenge that compromises my work as academic. For example, I am struggling to finish my PhD because of the family responsibilities [Lyn, aged 45, Lecturer].

The above quote clearly demonstrates how some cultural practices negatively affect Black African academics' work performance and completion of studies required in the academy. These practices continue to influence how women act mainly because of how Black women's socialisation and upbringing which taught them to perform these duties (Muberekwa and Nkomo 2016). In exploring the perceptions of Wits academic women about women empowerment and the changing roles of women in 21st-Century South Africa, Muberekwa and Nkomo (2016) found that Black women felt obliged to execute certain household duties mainly because of the existing belief that such roles are their social duty. However, such beliefs often result in Black female academics sacrificing their own academic development. The extent to which some women are willing to sacrifice their own professional development for the sake of their families could be seen from the following quote by Cindy,

> Some of the professional development programmes are conducted in the evenings but because we [the respondents] have to cook, as we do not believe that helpers

should be cooking for our husbands, I do not attend those programmes [Cindy, aged 31, Lecturer]

The above quote clearly demonstrates how some cultural practices continue to have a negative impact on women's professional development. Cultural practices mean the Black female academics are often forced to abandon their own goals and aspirations in order to carry out their wifely and motherly duties as expected by both their culture and the society. However, such socially influenced duties often lead to a conflict between Black female academics' professional work and family roles. The extent of such conflicts could be seen in the following extract by Julia who says,

My workload means I am unable to attend some of the family gatherings. As a result, some of my in-laws think I am arrogant and I do not attend family gatherings because I am filthy rich since I am a doctor and this hurts me a lot [Julia, aged 53, Lecturer].

In the above quote, Julia laments about how her work pressures prevent her to attend family functions. The issue of conflicts within the family system is consistent with findings by Ampah (2013). Black female academics from the working class found themselves torn between meeting their cultural obligations (i.e. performing household duties) and fitting into the world of academia. Such conflicts often lead to these women forsaking some aspects of self and compromising their independent desires and choices to accommodate their cultural obligations (Hunt 2006). However, such sacrifices often are career limiting.

The findings of this study further outline the patriarchal and cultural practices that continued to influence how women are viewed within the household setup (Mudau and Obadire 2017). Most of the participants noted that their families have expectations regarding them performing certain duties as dictated by their respective cultures. In most Black cultures, women are expected to play an active role in functions such as funerals and family ceremonies. Findings of this study reveal that these activities are mostly conducted over weekends and they are unable to engage in any academic work. Majority of participants revealed that they often used the weekends to do the work they could not do during the week such as marking, assessments and writing their articles. However, this often becomes difficult to execute as

they are sometimes expected to perform their family's cultural duties. The dynamics of being Black female academic in South Africa as articulated above could be the reason why Black female academics continue to constitute a small fraction of active scientists. A recent study by Joubert and Guenther (2017, 2) reveals that Black women constituted only 17 % of the country's academics who are classified as active scientists as compared to 78% of White academics. Additional family and cultural obligations that Black female academics are expected to execute means they have limited time in which to carry out research studies necessary for them to publish articles.

Work-Related Challenges Confronting Black Female Academics.

This section presents the findings on the work-related challenges confronting Black female academics as experienced by participants. The challenges include the lack of support from supervisors; patriarchy (lack of respect from male colleagues); lack of recognition from the institution and high workload.

Lack of support from supervisors

Lack of support from supervisors has been identified as the main challenge confronting Black female academics. Seven (7) participants have identified lack of support by supervisors as one of the work-related problems they face. These participants stated that lack of support from their predominantly male supervisors made their work difficult. The picture that emerged from the findings is that male supervisors are not always willing to offer their female junior colleagues the necessary support they need to develop their career. This is how Ruth describes the situation.

> At work, line managers do not offer us the necessary support we need. They do not understand that when you get home you need to attend to our family matters. They always put women under pressure to deliver without considering that the fact that were have families to take care of. The consequence of working under severe pressure is often poor results. My view is that line managers should be compassionate and be supportive to female academics, particularly Black female academics (Ruth, aged 48, Senior Lecturer)

In the above quote, Ruth shows her frustrations with the lack of support that Black female academics often experience at the hands of their supervisors. Ruth's views are consistent with those of other participants with many indicating that they were not receiving adequate support from the supervisors, particularly male supervisors. There was a consensus amongst majority of the participants that their male supervisors were not sympathetic to Black female academics in terms to work-load management. These findings seem to validate the findings of earlier studies which noted that workplaces give little regard to competing roles played by female academics (Department of Education and Training 2019). Segal (2010, 87) also found that women often lacked support from their institutions in managing their workload. This in turn made it difficult to maintain boundaries between work and non-work domains. On the other hand, the department noted that most universities failed to consider women's role in the family institution with no systems in place to help them cope with specific circumstances confronting them on a daily basis (Department of Education, 2008).

Participants in this study further noted that lack of support from their male supervisors often compromise the quality of work that they produce. This is mainly because lack of support from their institutions in managing their workload often makes it difficult for female academics to maintain boundaries between work and non-work domains. As Ruth noted, supervisors do not seem to comprehend the fact that in addition to being academics, Black female academics have families to take care off when they knock off from work. Lack of support could be as a consequence of a long-held perception held by mostly White academics who often label them as the 'underclass' and 'underperformers' who cannot succeed in academia, let alone become academic leaders (Monnapula-Mapesela 2017).

Patriarchal tendencies

Patriarchal tendencies were also identified as another problem confronting Black female academics. Five (5) participants indicated that they felt belittled and looked down upon by their male colleagues solely because of their gender. Participant's experiences show that black female academics' professionalism and ability to do work is subjected to high scrutiny and criticism in higher education unlike for men academics. The following quote from Cindy provides

an example of what Black female academics go through in the hands of their senior male colleagues:

> At work its difficult working with Black males because they do not respect you. You are primarily seen as a person who should be at home taking care of the family. So, as a female you must work extra hard to be recognized. For example, a Black female who has a PhD and publishes a lot will not be promoted very fast as compared to a male who can be promoted to be a professor without enough or many publications challenge [Cindy, aged 31, Lecturer]

Through the above quote, Cindy describes the experiences that Black female academics go through in their engagements with their male accounts. It is clear through this quote that Black female academics are not accorded the same respect given to their male counterparts. There is low numbers of Black South African born female academics at a level of full professorship or at a level of associate professorship. These low numbers contribute to a lack of mentoring and the lack of progression of black female academics (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019; (Khunou, Phaswana, Khosa-Shangase and Canham, 2019)

Movement from junior lecturer to associate and full professor requires attention as there are different policies and gate keepers that make it difficult for Black female academics to be promoted (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019; Khunou, Phaswana, Khosa-Shangase and Canham, 2019). Furthermore, women are forced to work twice as much as their male counterparts to receive the same recognition. The fact that patriarchal practices have been identified as one of the main challenges confronting Black female academics is hardly surprising. South Africa remains largely a patriarchal society where women continue to experience inequalities. Available literature shows that patriarchal practices are not only limited to communities and that patriarchy is still much alive in the workplace as well, including those in academia (Muberekwa and Nkomo, 2016). Muberekwa and Nkomo (2016) stated that these challenges and experiences are a consequence of the patriarchal nature of the workplace environment and the slow transformation at universities. Black female academics working within the country's higher education system continue to fall victim of patriarchal institutional policies that continue to exist in many of the country's universities (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019). The challenge with many of these

policies is that they neglect to consider the broader social inequalities relating to gender identity and gender roles that still prevail in South African society (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019).

Maria's observation further confirms the position of the intersectional theory which posits that the undermining and oppression of women in a society today remains deeply race and gender based. This could be caused by the dominant widely held patriarchal societal norms in the society making their way into the workplace as observed by Dominguez-Whitehead and Moeniera (2014, 280). Traditionally, women are presumed to be fragile and incapable of performing their duties like their male counterparts or better. Despite their serious commitment to work, women remain vulnerable to both men and other women for their career growth. The challenge with patriarchal culture in higher education often marginalizes black women and other women of colour, resulting in the feeling of invisibleness (Mokhele 2013). The existence of a patriarchal culture could also explain the reason for Black female academics' lack of recognition.

Lack of recognition

The findings of this study reveal that more than half (6) of the respondents identified lack of recognition by the university as one of the challenges confronting Black female academics. During an interview with Sibongile (45) she made the following statement:

> The society looks down on Black female academics. As a female academic you need to work twice as hard to get the same recognition that male academics receive (Sibongile,45, Senior Lecturer).

The above quote provides a picture in respect of the difficulties that Black female academics face to receive recognitions due to them. Women are required to work twice as much as their colleagues to earn the same recognition. It is however important to state that the marginalization of Black women this situation is not confined to South African universities only. Available literature shows that women of colour continue to receive a raw deal even in universities based in developed countries. For instance, Maodzwa-Taruvinga, and Joseph and Joseph (2014) revealed that women of colour in academia felt they had to work harder to prove their worth, were less likely to apply for promotion, and were less likely to succeed even in cases where they submit applications

for promotion. It is therefore, not surprising that other participants infer that patriarchal culture in the higher education system continues to hamper the academic development of Black female academics.

Work overload

The participants further identified work overload as another challenge confronting Black female academics. About 4 respondents have reported having heavier workloads. These findings are consistent with those of Naicker (2014). In a study titled, "The journey of South African women academics with a particular focus on women academics in theological education", Naicker reported that participants reported heavier teaching loads than their other colleagues, with some junior faculty having a double teaching schedule every day (Naicker 2014). Increased workloads often leave women with limited time and energy to participate in academic development programmes such as article publications and attending seminars. The following quote from Lindiwe (52) gives a clear picture of what Black female academics go through during the course of their working day:

> I am expected to do a lot of things at work and I often do not have time to complete everything. As a result, I normally finish my daily work at 6pm or even 8pm. Like I said I want to be promoted so I have to work overtime for me to publish articles. I am forced to work overtime because it's difficult to do it during the normal working hours because of my busy working schedule. For instance, three weeks ago I received comments from reviewers, but I haven't had time to work on them. This is in turn affecting my prospects of being promoted [Lindiwe, 52, Senior Lecturer]

The above quote from Lindiwe clearly demonstrate how an increased workload often affects Black female academics' professional development aspirations. The struggle of juggling between fulfilling their work obligations and professional development is complex and dauting. An increased workload means that these women do not have time to participate in career development initiatives such as article publications. Therefore, the balancing act of trying struggle have also identified work overload as also show that academics. The challenge is that as Lindiwe noted, article publications is a key requirement for promotion. This phenomenon is called publish or perish. Publish or perish is defined as the pressure that academics have to publish articles in order to progress in their academic career such as securing a promotion (Rawat and

Meena, 2014). This is mainly because academia article publication and student research supervision are seen as two most powerful methods that academics have to demonstrate academic acumen to peers (Rawat and Meena 2014). Consequently, scholars who do not frequently publish may lose out on promotional positions (Rawat and Meena, 2014). Increased workloads means Black female academics will always struggle to publish articles on a regular basis as compared to their male counterparts. These findings resonate with earlier findings showing that Black female academics have less discretionary time to conduct research, publish and present papers as they struggle to balance their professional and family commitments (Pillay, 2009; Magano, 2011). Others might argue that male academics also have the same workloads as Black female academics, but they still published on a regular basis. While this might be true, it is important to note that in addition to their workloads, women are also expected to fulfill their household duties as shown earlier. This leaves them with limited time in which to dedicate for article publication. These dynamics mean Black female academics will always lag behind their male counterparts in terms of article publication. This means that Black female academics will always miss out on promotional positions. There is therefore, a great need for support programmes geared at assisting Black female academics manage their workloads and article publications. Such initiatives will level the playing field and ensure that Black female academics have equal opportunities as their White female and male counterparts for promotion.

Conclusion

In this article findings show that Black female academics are confronted by both personal and professional challenges that hinder them from achieving a work-life balance. Identified personal challenges included family responsibilities, patriarchal and cultural practices. While work overload, lack of recognition and lack of respect by male senior colleagues were identified as work-related challenges. Guidelines for developing work-life balance by institutions are offered next.

The paper thus offers the following suggestions on how to genuinely support women Black academics in higher education:

1. Development of workplace support whereby employer can sponsor family events;
2. Creation of peer support networks whereby women may reach out to their colleagues for support when they need assistance;

3. Development of mentorship programmes that consider their unique needs;

4. Creation of recognition systems tailored for Black female academics;

5. Holding of workshops to discuss sharing of responsibilities with a partner that goes beyond the cultural perception of gendered roles;

6. Creation of small psychoeducational support groups for Black female academics;

7. Encourage black female academics to make use of external help for research and personal development; and

8. Support the use of flexible schedules and time management techniques.

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Not MY Intersectionality

Examining Epistemic Violence for Black Women in Higher Education

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Abstract

Although Black women's college participation rates have increased, it has not led to corresponding increases in graduation rates. Through the evolution of intersectionality as a methodology, theory, and framework, this paper examines the epistemological socialization of Black women in historically white institutions (HWIs), examining what this can tell us about Black women's higher education experiences. Additionally, analyzing how Black women's intersections affect the legitimacy and illegitimacy of knowledge production in an evolving system of neoliberal globalization. Its objective is to go beyond superficial understandings of the systemic oppression of Black women to uncover the epistemological implications of intersectionality, which renders some invisible intellectually and socially while cultivating others. Thus, this paper builds on current scholarship on how Black women have contextualized their unique higher education experiences through an analysis of Afro-Pessimism, sociology of absences and emergences, and critiques of intersectionality to locate Black women's experiences with epistemic violence and imagine beyond. In the end, seeking to explore how Black women can embrace a new epistemic resistance by rejecting intersectionality.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Afro-Pessimism, Black Feminist Thought, Black women, Higher Education

Introduction

On 20 January 2021, Kamala Harris became the first Black woman to become Vice President of the United States of America. Amid a global pandemic that disproportionately impacted the Black community and the turning over

from one fascist leader to another, many found a glimmer of optimism in her symbolic representation, epitomizing hope or promise in the supposed undoing of whiteness (Ahmed, 2009). To be Black and a woman and reach the heights of the White House was seen as the fundamental gesture of intersectionality and, ultimately, equity. Black women continued to show up in the political terrain in remarkable ways, with political leaders like Stacey Abrams making headlines in the fight to protect voting rights in Georgia and Black women distinguishably showing up to the polls (Fair Fight, 2022). While Black women made political history, they also became posited as the key to saving America, a sentiment that resounded loud as exemplified through Mexican American politician Jorge Guajardo's highly contested August 2020 tweet, "Black women will save the United States" (Nikki, 2020). However, Nikki (2020) asserts that despite society's desire that Black women turn states blue, Black women are expected to serve as America's foot soldiers and stand up for a country that has not stood up for them and wouldn't even call the same Black women for a job interview (Nikki,2020).

While Kamala Harris was transitioning into becoming the first Black woman Vice President of the United States, Black women in higher education became their own symbolic representatives of intersectionality. Since the official coining of the term intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and the mainstream academic and societal interest in intersectionality, Black women have been at war. On the surface, the war boils down to who created intersectionality, whom it belongs to, who should be using it, and if intersectionality is only for Black women (Nash, 2019). Even with such inquiries, these questions do not capture the severity of epistemic violence surrounding intersectionality and what that means for the vitality of Black women intellectuals in the academy. This paper aims to understand the question: what does it mean for Black women to reject intersectionality and seek a theory that cannot be stolen? The question is of utmost importance as higher education post Covid-19 is witnessing a mass exodus of scholars of color, specifically Black women, leaving the academy (Gayles, 2022). The sustenance of Black women academics relies heavily on moving away from the conventional defense status and locating a space that allows free movement from merely surviving to thriving. To do so, there is a need to critically and intentionally interrogate the epistemologies and pedagogies that may be causing more harm than repair.

According to Marshall et al. (2021), Black women and Black men are overrepresented among those with some college and no degree. Just over 26 percent of Black women have some college and no degree compared to 21% of white women. This disparity persists when taking a close look at educational attainment by gender. Slightly more than half of white women (51.4%) have a college degree, compared to 36.1% of Black women (Marshall et al., 2021). The aforementioned statistics magnify clear barriers to degree completion among Black women and pose a call for a more targeted inquiry into what is going on inside and outside the classroom.

For centuries, Black women have relied on the ancestral pathways of freedom activists like Harriet Tubman to enact an emancipatory imagination. To some, there has been a spiritual-like, instinctual call to transgress on behalf of other Black women and ultimately toward the liberation of Black folks. Even in the fight for liberation, there is an ongoing battle to be seen, heard, and, ultimately, acknowledged for their contributions (Khabir, 2017). Often, this fight can be amplified through their educational journey at historically white institutions (HWIs), which are characterized as modern-day plantations, serving as a site of labor and knowledge extraction for Black students (Squire et al., 2018). Upon arrival to higher education institutions, many Black students face institutional barriers, social isolation/hyper-visibility, lack of representation, tokenization, microaggressions, and so forth (Patton,2016). It is evident that Black existence, thoughts, and voices are not wanted or welcomed inside or outside the classroom. Institutions have tried to combat the lack of inclusion with outward commitments to diversity, implementations of inclusive frameworks, and the promise to strive toward "equality" (Ahmed, 2012). Most of which has shown to be hallow words and empty guarantees, with campus climates proving to still be violent for Black students (Ahmed, 2012).

Although there has been an increase in Black students' access to education through Brown v. Board of Education and affirmative action, Black students have continuously reported HWI campuses as unwelcoming (Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014). Black women, in particular, carry the double burden of being Black and women, navigating HWIs campus environments with hyper-visibility/invisibility, isolation, and marginalization (King, 1988). This mistreatment is transferable both inside and outside the classroom, as some women report having inadequate social lives (Harper & Hurtado, 2007); having less than satisfactory relationships with faculty members (Allen et al., 1991); feeling left

out of the curriculum (Rovai et al., 2005); and dealing with racial issues that permeate the campus climate (Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014).

Even with these crippling environments, Black women continue to increase their yearly enrollment at HWIs. According to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics, Black women's enrollment in post-secondary institutions increased from 35% in 2000 to 41% in 2018, with only roughly 9% of Black women students attending historically Black colleges or Universities (NCES, 2020) Although Black women's college participation rates have increased (Bennett & Lutz, 2009), corresponding increases in graduation rates have yet to materialize. According to Marshall Anthony Jr et al, Black women and Black men are overrepresented among those with some college and no degree. Just over 26% of Black women have some college and no degree compared to 21% of White women (Marshall Anthony Jr et al., 2021). This disparity persists when taking a close look at educational attainment by gender. Slightly more than half of White women (51.4%) have a college degree, compared to 36.1% of Black women ((Marshall Anthony Jr et al., 2021). The aforementioned statistics magnify clear barriers to degree completion among Black women and pose a call for more targeted support inside and outside of the classroom.

Black women are socialized in higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate student levels, which has shown to be detrimental to their mental, physical, and spiritual well-being (Walkington, 2017). Findings of a scan of sociological studies of Black women's college success asserts that Black students experience significant negotiations related to their identity, specifically at PWIs, sometimes resulting in the sense of loss of self or taking an emotional toll on students (L. R. Jackson, 1998; Settles, 2006; Stewart, 2008; Watt, 2003; Winkle-Wagner, 2009b, Walkington, 2017) Further, very little literature details specific socialization and identity development models for Black women in higher education to explain this phenomenon. The evident gap between participation and completion signifies a need to examine the unique experiences Black women have in higher education to create innovative strategies to promote holistic college success (Winkle-Wagner, 2015).

This paper is interested in the epistemological socialization of Black women at HWIs through the evolution of intersectionality as a theory, framework, and methodology and what this can tell us about Black women's experiences in higher education. Epistemological socialization finds its roots in social

epistemology, which according to Goldman (2010), is a branch of traditional epistemology that studies the epistemic properties of individuals that arise from their relations to others, as well as epistemic properties of groups or social systems (Goldman, 2010). To that point, I seek to understand how under a system of evolving neoliberal globalization, the intersections of Black and woman impact the legitimacy and illegitimacy of knowledge production, relegating Black women to the peripheries where they are not seen or heard unless it benefits the institution. This exploration intends to go beyond the surface understanding of systemic oppression for Black women to uncover the epistemological implications of intersectionality that deem some invisible intellectually and socially while cultivating others—ultimately seeking to explore how rejecting intersectionality can move Black women to a new form of epistemic resistance. Through an analysis of Afro-Pessimism, the sociology of absences and emergences, and critiques of intersectionality, I hope to build upon my work on how Black women have historically contextualized their distinct higher education experiences. Ultimately, to locate Black women's experience with epistemic violence into the discourse and ultimately imagine beyond. Further, this paper will locate Black women in the theory of social death to further understand epistemic erasure. I will then analyze the contemporary conversations around the evolution of intersectionality and the ways it exemplifies epistemic violence in action for Black women in the academy. Next, there will be an introduction to the sociology of absences and its ties to epistemic oppression to provide a framework to better understand epistemological socialization. Further, I analyze the potential implications of rejecting intersectionality and what this means for Black women. Lastly, the paper introduces the sociology of emergences as a framework to actualize an emancipatory imagination for Black women in higher education.

The Slave and its Plantation

Traditional explorations of Black women's experiences in higher education often begin with an exploration of intersectionality and, thus, Black feminist thought. Collins (1990) defines Black feminist thought as a specialized knowledge created by Black women that clarifies a standpoint of and for Black women (Collins, 1990). Collins continues, stating that Black feminist thought encompasses theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it. She argues that Black women occupy a unique standpoint of

oppression composed of two interlocking components. First, Black women's political and economic status provides them with a distinctive set of experiences that offers a different view of material reality than that available to other groups (Collins, 1990). Second, these experiences stimulate a distinctive Black feminist consciousness concerning that material reality (Collins, 1990) For this analysis and to exemplify the iterative process of reframing; it is imperative to lay the foundation through an Afro-Pessimist theoretical framework to challenge the current understanding of Blackness in higher education being that Afro-Pessimism fundamentally engages with anti-Blackness at its roots and current higher education diversity, equity, and inclusion performances have made a spectacle of the reality of anti-Blackness. This will be done by examining Afro-Pessimism: An Introduction by Frank B. Wilderson III, Saidiya Hartman, Steve Martinot, Jared Sexton, and Hortenese J. Spillers. At its core, Afro-Pessimism analyzes the totality of anti-Blackness through an analysis of slavery and race, with concerns of power at the political and libidinal levels (Wilderson III et al., 2017). The libidinal economy is an organisation of signs and symbols at the level of the metaphysical that originate from a sexualized need for control. Further, the libidinal economy should be understood as an intersection between sexual desire and domination (Barlow, 2016). Moreover, Afro-Pessimism offers the tenant of social death to understand the positionality of Black people in the United States, which will foreground the epistemic violence illustrated through intersectionality and the possibilities of epistemic resistance in the academy.

Historical performances of slavery have created vivid imagery of enslaved Africans being forced into labor through whips and chains, recounting the Atlantic slave trade as a horrible moment in time that has left behind systemic oppression. In his work Slavery and Social Death, Orlando Patterson further details the composition of slavery from a relationship of forced labor to a relationship of forced property (Wilderson III et al., 2017). This shift requires an analysis that moves the enslaved person from a human being to an object that can be used and exchanged without regard (Wilderson III et al., 2017). To that point, Patterson (2018) explains that the commodification of Black people was not just about labor but a commodification of the being, the whole existence of personhood. He details that slaves were

"not recognized as social subjects and are thus precluded from the category of human- inclusion in humanity being predicated on social recognition, volition, subjecthood and the valuation of life" (Wilderson III et al., 2017, 8).

Patterson underscores that the event of slavery excluded slaves and thus Blackness from social subjectivity because being human requires social recognition, and the slave, as an object, is socially dead. The legacy of this exclusion from personal, social, and spiritual recognition implies that not only the physical work but the intellectual and social contributions of Black people belong to the system of white supremacy. The point of ownership of the Black physical and intellectual is also highlighted by Douglass' (2018) who states that "Black visibility is not without its violent anchors "(Douglass, 2018, p.108).

Confronted with the reality of slaves' nonexistence, Afro-Pessimism offers three components of social death; 1) Slaves are subjected to gratuitous violence, devoid of actual or perceived transgression; 2) slaves are natally alienated, ties of birth are not recognized, and familial structures are intentionally broken apart; 3) slaves are generally dishonored or disgraced before any thought or action is considered (Wilderson III et al., 2017). As explained earlier, the social death of the slave goes beyond the means of production and into the mere essence and being of the slave. Defining the slave's ontology through social death means that the slave is not just an oppressed subject but a being for the captor (Wilderson III et al., 2017). This being does experience exploitation and alienation but is an object of accumulation and exchange. This objectification positions the slave as a morphing object that shapeshifts to the captor's ultimate desires. The stealthy nature of this shifting is the belief that it stopped when physical exploitation ended when in reality, the physicality was only the beginning.

A defining characteristic in Afro-Pessimist thought construction is moving away from the Black/ white binary and reframing it as Black/non-Black to decenter whiteness and hone in on anti-Black foundations of race and society (Wilderson III et al., 2017). By doing so, we more accurately uncover the systemic and social implications of Black existence in the United States and thus can truthfully challenge the system as it currently stands. According to Wilderson, alternative discourses fail to understand the fundamental relationship between Black suffering and the social order (Wilderson III, 2020). He notes that in the condition of social death, Blackness is rooted in "a condition of suffering for which there is no imaginable strategy for redress-

no narrative of social, political, or national redemption" (Wilderson III, 2020, p.15). This ongoing social death means Blackness necessitates enslavement rather than whiteness granting freedom (Wilderson III, 2020). Further, Black people exist as the without that holds non-Blackness together; anti-blackness gives meaning to categories of non-Blackness such as white, worker, gay, i.e., "human" (Wilderson III et al., 2017). In these categories, non-Black establish their boundaries for inclusion in the human social fabric by having a recognizable self that is established by the Blackness they are not (Wilderson III, 2020). In contrast, the role of Black people is to serve as structurally docile props for the execution of white and non-Black fantasies and pleasures (Wilderson III et al., 2017). In summation, Black suffering is the lifeline of the social order, and using an anti-Black framework is vital to studying Black women's experiences in higher education as current analyses have not grappled deeply with social death, which is the condition by which Black women are suffering from. For higher education institutions, specifically classrooms at HWI's, to function, there must be a Black other to exploit. The next section will explore how this can be seen through intersectionality and what this means for Black women moving forward.

Complicating Intersectionality

For many, intersectionality's genealogy begins with Crenshaw's (1991) Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color and serves as a valuable exploration site for analyzing Black women's intellectual contributions to the academy. Crenshaw (1991) coined intersectionality as "the study of intersections between different groups of minorities; specifically, the study of the interactions of multiple systems of oppression or discrimination" (p. 1244). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color took on the feat of critically and intentionally centering Black women's positionality through an analysis of law, society, and culture. Expanding upon this, Crenshaw divided the concept into structural, political, and representational intersectionality to emphasize not overlooking how systems interact with certain groups versus others. For this section, I will focus on political and structural intersectional. According to Crenshaw (1991), "Political intersectionality highlights that women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups, while structural intersectionality highlights the state in which institutional structures

make one visible or invisible based on structural concepts" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1250). Within political and structural intersectionality, being Black and woman often situates Black women as invisible under the formalized systems, yet politically they may be in a double disposition.

When discussing intersectionality, King's (1988) work on multiple jeopardy is often missing from the framework, when in all actuality, her multiple jeopardy theory keeps one away from the inclusionary politics that form when trying to understand intersectionality. King (1998) explains, "Multiple refers not only to several simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well. In other words, the equivalent formulation is racism multiplied by sexism multiplied by classism" (p. 297). To understand the unique positionality of Black women, the notion of additive intersectionality must be rejected. Instead, there must be a thorough examination of these identities and how they interact with systems. When the politics of inclusion come into play, which is often seen through the rhetoric of "everyone is diverse in their own way" and other colorblind rhetoric, society negates how to serve those who are being subordinated solely due to their identities. King's work is foundational in getting moving from the individual to the systemic implications of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. When coupling multiple jeopardy theory with intersectionality, it is clear that the systems are always in play; predicting who can live free or not.

In the early conceptions, applications, and reinterpretations of intersectionality, Black women were at the center of the theory and the intended users, as the term "Black women" shows up 156 times in the article Margins: Intersectionality Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality served as a vehicle to move Black women who had been deemed systemically hyper-visible or invisible, as both women and people of color situated within both groups, each of which has benefitted from challenges to sexism and racism (Crenshaw, 1991). This mobilization was done by providing an explicit term for the treatment Black women had been articulating for centuries, yet these articulations did not necessarily transfer into mainstream academic and social dialogues. Intersectionality extends a long line of Black feminist thought traditions and theories. It is of great importance to paint these Black feminists back into the discourse by exploring a few noteworthy Black feminist theorists that laid the foundation for intersectionality:

A Voice from the South (1892) by Anna Julia Cooper makes a point to locate colored women "in a unique position in this country" (Guy-Sheftall & Cooper, 1996, p. 45). Copper states this position is "transitional and unsettled-ultimately being confronted by both a woman question and a race problem and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both" (Guy-Sheftall & Cooper, 1996, p. 45). This is followed by a call to action for colored women to take advantage of the shifting times, to build economic and political power via education to escape the confines of traditional gender roles and gain agency.

Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female (1969) by Frances Beal served as a tool to examine the ways being Black and a woman carried a double burden with an emphasis on understanding how race and gender play out in a system of capitalism. Her work uses the gendered dynamics of slavery to suggest that Black Women in America can be considered the slaves slave (Beale, 1969). Due to the complete emasculation and destruction of the Black man she notes that Black women became sexually exploited and then economically exploited by the white colonizers. She points out the social and psychological degradation that went on from Black women being raped by white men while serving as maids and wet nurses for white women, all while watching their own offspring become enslaved. She then calls for reevaluating the white nuclear family roles enforced on Black women and men to perform "femininity" and "masculinity" in particular ways.

A Black Feminist Statement (1977) by Combahee River Collective emphasized "there can't be liberation for half the race (CRC, 1977). In 1977 The Combahee River Collective created one of the first Black Feminist manifestos, which expressed the simultaneous forms of oppression Black women experienced while calling for the need to examine homophobia and realizing how central queer Black women were to the black feminist movement. What is important to tease out in this Black Feminist manifesto is the call for Black Feminists to define and clarify their politics and use Black Feminism as a movement that is actively committed to the struggle against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression. This was done by realizing the ways all major systems are interlocking and due to this matrix, Black women were suffering, and only Black women would be dedicated to combating this type of oppression. This collective made a call to center this work as anti-racist and anti-sexist that was fundamentally socialist keeping in mind that "the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the

political- economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy (CRC, 1977)

Even with the hope of intersectionality's popularization making way for Black women in mainstream academia, Black women still face substantial erasure. Intersectionality has been appropriated as a metaphor that explains the many intersections of human existence, everyone is intersectional, and intersectionality is for everyone. More specifically, the theft and misuse of Black Feminist terminology is evidence of Black women's exclusion from academic and political spaces; the next example will explore the connotation of the ways that Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality has been appropriated by white feminists and across disciplines. Towards a Black Feminist Manifesto for Colorado State University (2017) states that many Black women have had classroom experiences that question our Black feminist epistemologies and minimize us as sources of knowledge about our lives and the world in which we live (Holt et al., 2017). Whenever Black women provide our perspective drawing on scholarly literature in classes, we are met with hostility and ridicule and have been called racist, emotional, angry, separatist, and misguided. Black women are met with reactions that leave us in silenced isolation and relentless rage. At the same time, people who are not Black women feel authorized to discuss and explain the lives of Black women through a lens that does not include the perspectives of Black women (Holt et al., 2017). As much as Black women would like our academic training to prepare us to work in complex, diverse, and dynamic settings and environments, its current state is useless until our lives in all their complexity are purposefully acknowledged. Black women remain unseen and unwelcomed in institutional spaces (Holt et al., 2017). The new life and reiteration of intersectionality pose the question, is intersectionality for Black women?

Contemporary Black feminist scholars such as Collins and Nash have taken on the task of contextualizing, challenging, and expanding beyond the current evolution of intersectionality. Collins (2019) frames the origin story of intersectionality as a familiar colonial narrative that positions Crenshaw as an explorer who discovered virgin territory and thus got the naming rights (Collins, 2019). This is reflected through the fact that although Crenshaw (1991) explicitly states that the use of the term intersectionality was birthed through a Black Feminist tradition, the aforementioned Black Feminist work is seldomly cited and thus leaving Crenshaw as the founding mother (Collins, 2019). When Crenshaw (1991) coined intersectionality, she underscored

the tensions between activism and academia, as she became the trusted translator between them. Yet, Collins (2019) exemplifies how this discovery narrative signals power relations of domination that start with discovery and end with ongoing pacification (Collins, 2019). To that end, Collins highlights intersectionality's specific moment of academic discovery, reflects an explorer bringing home something of interest to a colonist. Since 1991 and especially in the early 2020's we have seen intersectionality move from a tool to narrate Black women's lived experiences systemically to a profitable academic commodity in which Black women are relegated to the peripheries. It is noteworthy to mention that even Crenshaw's view of intersectionality has evolved beyond Black women. The subtle erasure can be seen in the contrast between her 2016 Ted Talk, The Urgency of Intersectionality, where she unambiguously states that intersectionality was Black women (Ted, 2016). Yet, in a more recent conference talk in 2020 at The Makers Conference, intersectionality is reduced to something everyone has that we should all respect, with no mention of Black women (Markers,2020). Intersectionality's story has reinforced a long-standing shifting relationship between activists and academic communities, with the pressures of neoliberalism at the center (Collins,2019).

While Crenshaw could not have been aware of the ways intersectionality would take off in the academy, it is crucial to engage the implications of said evolution. As iterated by Collins (2019), the coining story fits into capitalist narratives of expansion toward new markets and the extraction of natural resources and viability. Intersectionality as a tool that existed for and by Black women in Black feminist realms was not seen as valuable until it was removed from its natural marketplace, which was in Black political spaces, and incorporated into the capitalist academic canon, thus altering the boundaries of epistemic power and resistance (Collins, 2019). This insidious shift was the birthing ground for what would later be known as the "intersectionality wars" as Black women began to fight for what had always been theirs, as the academy touted intersectionality as their next best performative gesture of diversity and inclusion. Consequently, Crenshaw, through the naming of intersectionality, brought something valuable to the academy that could be used as a commodity and ultimately for capital inside and outside higher education. The utterance of intersectionality no longer signals the centering of Black women but instead a metaphor devoid of true meaning.

Intersectionality wars, as defined by Jennifer Nash (2019), describe the "discursive, political and theoretical battles staged around whether scholars are for or against intersectionality" (Nash, 2019, p.36). Nash distinguishes that these slippages between intersectionality, Black feminism, and Black women narrate the intersectionality wars, directly reflecting that discussing intersectionality's critical limits is intrinsically linked to debates over racial politics and allegiances (Nash, 2019). She notes that these limited discourses around intersectionality fail to grapple with its nuances, complexities, and possibilities and challenge its migration. Instead, the intersectionality wars boil down to who is for or against intersectionality, which has become coupled with who is for or against Black feminism and, ultimately, who is for and against Black women (Nash,2019). In the wake of intersectionality finding its way into mainstream reinterpretations in the academy, the stakes of the intersectionality wars have risen as Black feminists have stepped into the fire to defend, amend misuse, and guard against inappropriate articulations, which have disproportionately impacted Black women. (Nash, 2019).

The Sociology of Absences & Epistemic Oppression

As neoliberal globalization and its ties to knowledge production, legitimacy, and illegitimacy evolve, intersectionality has alongside it, which must be explored. As a tool for understanding epistemic resistance, Boaventura de Sousa Santos' sociology of absences offers a useful theoretical framework for understanding intersectionality today. The work of Collins on epistemic power and oppression (2019) will be instrumental in bringing Boaventura de Sousa Santos' work to life. This exploration intends to go beyond the surface understanding of systemic oppression for Black women to uncover the epistemological implications that deem some invisible intellectually and socially while cultivating and elevating others. Specifically, this section seeks to grapple with the epistemic violence involved with holding on to intersectionality for Black women.

Neoliberal globalization has forged hegemonic forms of knowledge production, distribution, and consumption of western-based modern science (Santos, 2006). At the center of this hegemony is the power to determine what constitutes credible knowledge and discredit rival knowledge by discounting its efficiency and truth (Santos, 2006). This form of hegemony necessitates policing and repression of counter-hegemonic processes and agents. This

repression is carried out by discrediting, concealing, and trivializing counter-hegemonic practices and stakeholders, with the intent of silencing that in which does not fit into the hegemony to maintain order (Santos, 2006). Upon confrontation with rival knowledge, hegemonic science either turns it into raw material for repurposing or rejects it based on falsity or inefficiency, all contingent upon modern science criteria (Santos, 2006). It is essential to note that a magnitude of non-western and non-scientific knowledge was destroyed, suppressed, or marginalized. With that, the lives of those carrying out this knowledge are in a compromising situation. Santos coined the term epistemicide to detail the destruction of knowledge production, citing that it often happens simultaneously with genocide (Santos, 2014).

The sociology of absences is the process in which what does not exist, or whose existence has been marked socially irredeemable, is conceived as an active result of a social process (Santos, 2001). The sociology of absences exposes social and political conditions, experiments, and initiatives that hegemonic forms of globalization suppressed or have prevented from existing (Santos, 2001). Ultimately, showcasing that what does not exist is produced as nonexistent, acting as a noncredible alternative to what does exist (Santos, 2001). It necessitates a confrontation of what is marginalized, suppressed, and what has not been allowed to exist in the first place (Santos, 2006). The sociology of absences aims to transform the impossible into possible objects and the absent into present objects. According to Santos (2006), nonexistence is produced whenever a particular entity is disqualified and rendered invisible, unintelligible, or irreversibly discardable (Santos,2006). What solidifies the logic behind the production of nonexistence is that they are all manifestations of the same rationale of monoculture (Santos, 2006).

The sociology of absences, paired with the aforementioned theory of social death, narrates a reality of Black people in general and Black women specifically, by mere existence being deemed as the nonexistent other in the academy. But taking this notion a step further, one can see that being subversive in thought and pushing back on the system of neoliberal globalization will lead to an ongoing process of social death which requires a better understanding of the implications of epistemic oppression. Building upon the sociology of absences, Collins' (2019) defines epistemic oppression and epistemic injustice as terms that provide a "nuanced understanding of how epistemology constitutes a structuring dimension of social justice beyond the actual ideas of racism, heteropatriarchy and colonialism as ideological

systems" (Collins, 2019, p.129). With that, epistemic oppression and epistemic injustice name the structural contours of epistemic power in organisations that are imperative to the knowledge production process. Although there is a sentiment of epistemic equality in higher education institutions, in reality, the structures rely on epistemic oppression that grants certain groups epistemic agency while actively oppressing others (Collins, 2019). Without an intentional examination of epistemic power with the uses of intersectionality, it falls victim to recreating the hierarchies it sought to mitigate and becomes a tool to harm Black women analytically and socially.

The Implications of Rejecting Intersectionality

To understand intersectionality as a theoretical framework and a methodology, Haynes et al., 2020, offer a synthesis of the literature on Black women's experiences in higher education over the last 30 years. Using Crenshaw's aforementioned work on intersectionality, they analyzed her three dimensions of intersectionality: structural, political, and representational. So far, I have examined structural and political intersectionality, but it is necessary to add representational intersectionality to further elaborate on the uses of an intersectional methodology. Representational intersectionality refers to how Black women's lives occupy public discourses, often in detrimental and stereotypical ways (Crenshaw, 1991). Representational intersectionality highlights how controlling images like Sapphire, Mammy, Jezebel, and Superwoman perpetuate racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women as loud, angry, violent, hypersexual, and superhuman (Haynes et al., 2020). These images rooted in false historical narratives of Black women have real-life implications that often materialize in inferior treatment (Haynes et al., 2020).

Haynes et al., (2020)'s literature analysis was guided by the research question: how has Crenshaw's intersectionality been applied across its three dimensions (i.e., structural, political, and representational) by scholars who published empirical studies about Black women in higher education in the past 30 years? (Haynes et al., 2020). According to Haynes et al., intersectional methodology "provides scholars with a nuanced methodological approach for taking up intersectionality in their study of Black women in education research and social science research broadly" (Haynes et al., 2020, p.752). An intersectional methodology should implore these four strategies (1) Centralize Black Women as the Subject; (2) Use of a Critical Lens to Uncover

the Micro-/Macro-Level Power Relations; (3) Address How Power Shapes the Research Process Feature; (4) Bring the Complex Identity Markers of Black Women to the Fore (Haynes et al., 2020). Their findings provide an essential window to the divergence of intersectionality in centering Black women's lived experiences. Of the 680 studies published about Black women in higher education, only 23 were published by researchers who engaged an intersectionality methodology. Furthermore, the limited research published about Black women in higher education recentered whiteness and ultimately maintains the neglect of Black women's experience in literature and the epistemic oppression of Black women in higher education and society at large (Haynes et al., 2020). This intensive study of intersectional methodology meticulously illustrates the nonexistence of Black women in the current life of intersectionality.

The troubling nature of the complex evolution of intersectionality is the inability to pinpoint its divergence. In intersectionality's early articulation, it was clear that it suffered from intellectual obscurity as it was not taken seriously as a legitimate pedagogical tool and made to be devoid of true merit. Anna Julia Cooper defined intellectual obscurity as "the deliberate restriction of knowledge—opposition to disseminating knowledge, which translates into a lack of critical care in handling Black women's intellectual contributions" (Cooper, 2017, p.2). As intersectionality currently stands, there is value in its intellectual contribution to the academy if it is separated from Black women. Although it was birthed in the Black feminist thought tradition, and it can be debated that there is no way to separate Black feminism from intersectionality, it has already been done.

Through theories such as intersectionality, Black women have achieved academic "success" and continue to do so. However, they are still noncredible alternatives to what exists and are perpetually subject to epistemic violence. Afro-Pessimism would reason that even if intersectionality was created for and by Black women, in the current system where Blackness is the equivalent to slaveness, Black women do not own intersectionality. In all actuality, the theory was meant for whiteness's utility, which is why Blackness has been obliterated. This unfortunate truth should serve as a catalyst for Black women to move from defending intersectionality to an offensive mode of finding that which cannot be stolen, imagining a system that transcends the current paradigm of white supremacist capitalist oppression.

The Sociology of Emergences & Black Liberation

Moving beyond the realities of the sociology of absences and epistemic violence, Santos (2006) offers the sociology of emergences as a site for critical hope and emancipatory imagination. Cognitive justice does not call for new tools and resources to understand and advance global justice. Instead, it compels us to interrogate what is already there; it urges us to utilize the untapped potential of the existing way of knowing and seeing that has been discarded by the powers that be (Dawson, 2017). Further, cognitive justice calls for the recognition that western thought on its own is inadequate to create a more just world and often has impeded such progress (Dawson, 2017). Santos (2017) supports the quest for cognitive justice through the epistemologies of the south based on the following four assumptions:

1. The understanding of the world is much broader than the Western understanding of the world.

2. Alternatives are not lacking in the world. What is indeed missing is an alternative thinking of alternatives.

3. The epistemic diversity of the world is infinite, and no general theory can hope to understand it.

4. The alternative to a general theory is the promotion of an ecology of knowledges combined with intercultural translation.

It is critical to draw attention to the ecology of knowledge which aims to generate a new relationship between scientific knowledge and other kinds of knowledge (Santo, 2001). He suggests that "different types of knowledge are incomplete in different ways and that raising the consciousness of such reciprocal incompleteness (rather than looking for completeness) is a precondition for achieving cognitive justice" (Santos, 2014, p212). The goal is to provide "equality of opportunities" to varying types of knowledge engaged in broader epistemological discourse in hopes of enhancing their respective contributions to build "another possible world" (Santos, 2014, 212).

   The sociology of emergences functions as a space for actualizing emancipatory imagination. This sociological tool of imagination has two fundamental aims: to understand better the conditions that allow for hope as a possibility. Second, identify and define practices that promote said conditions (Santos, 2006). This imagination is stratified by what Santos (2006) introduces the Not Yet as proposed by Ernst Bloch (1997), which is how the

future is inscribed in the present, understanding that capacity and possibility have no direction, as it can end in hope or disaster.

While the sociology of emergences provides an entryway to imagining beyond, it does not necessarily give specifics for the Black community or Black women. Dumas' (2018) Beginning and Ending with Black Suffering: A Meditation on and against Racial Justice in Education will be used to specify the type of imagination for the Black community. Dumas contends with using the condition of Black suffering as an entry point to a more inclusive and accurate critique of race and racism in the United States, emphasizing the troubling ways "racial justice" is engaged (Dumas, 2018).

If intersectionality were meant to function toward a more socially just reality, Dumas would say that in its current iteration, intersectionality is insufficient, as it no longer centers anti-Blackness or the lived experiences of Black women.. He believes that what is required for Black people to be free is not racial justice projects that do not center anti-Blackness and thus Black suffering. Instead, what is required to actualize a Black emancipatory imagination is switching from racial justice to Black emancipation. Any other racial justice attempts will only impede the freedom of Black people and exacerbate Black suffering. While the true essence of Black emancipation is the abolition of systems like higher education, the interim space provides an opportunity to trouble the waters of what is impacting the lived experiences of Black people in higher education and society at large, be it negative or positive. Working toward an actualized space of Black emancipation is the space of opportunity that Black people, Black women specifically, can hold on to.

Considering the reality of Black women's relationship to intersectionality in the academy, it is evident that defending intersectionality to no end does not serve Black women's interests. From an intracommunity perspective, it has become exhaustive to exist as the ultimate symbol of diversity and inclusion and combat the type of epistemic oppression that intersectionality exacerbates. Nash offers her perspective on the importance of Black women, specifically Black feminists letting go of the cyclical intersectionality wars, stating:

> "letting go untethers Black feminism from the endless fighting over intersectionality, the elaborate choreography of rescuing the analytic from misuses, the endless corrections of the analytic's usage. Letting go allows us to put the visionary genius

of Black feminism to work otherwise. It is, thus a practice of freedom" (Nash., 2019, 138).

Taking the reins away from intersectionality is where Black women must move forward to protect themselves and their intellectual property from the current performance of social death. By doing so, Black women can make space to confront anti-Black epistemic violence and imagine an existence beyond the current state of the academy.

Conclusion

The sociology of absences serves as a framework to contextualize the intellectual restrictions of Black feminist thought construction in mainstream academic culture. With that, the sociology of emergences sets the stage for Black feminist thought to serve as a site for imagining beyond what the neoliberal hegemonic provides. Furthermore, Afro-Pessimism forces Black people to grapple with the daunting realities of anti-Blackness and Black suffering in a way that cannot be negated. Using intersectionality as a backdrop was imperative to uncover the depth of epistemic violence against Black women for a clearer vision to strategize properly.

Although this literature review served as a scan to begin understanding how epistemic violence materializes for Black women in the academy, my interest is in how this ties Black women's attrition in Ph.D. programs. After engaging with the sociology of absences and the sociology emergences, I am now interested in how this work can be an entry point for understanding the less transparent forms of epistemic socialization for Black women in graduate degree attainment. Moving forward, I will interrogate this insight as a site of possibility, providing a more niched view on the attrition of Black women while opening the door to examine Black women's experiences in Ph.D. programs at large in hopes of identifying barriers to completion.

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An Analysis of the Contributions of Black Academics to Epistemology and Decolonisation in Higher Education in South Africa, 1940s-1990s

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Abstract

This paper looked at the contributions of black academics in the humanities and social sciences and uses their autobiographies as an analytical tool to help us understand their contribution to epistemology in the African higher education space. It also looks at debates on decolonisation and how their work has shaped these debates. Autobiography is one lens of doing critical analysis and understanding the progression of a scholar. This paper analyses different scholars in different generations and hopes to contribute to the search for genealogies of intergenerational Black South African scholars whose work has been forgotten and marginalised in the academic project in the humanities and social sciences curriculum in South Africa and beyond. Using autobiography as a critical method, the paper shows how black scholars from different generations navigated institutions of higher learning to achieve excellent results and produce knowledge that challenged racialised inferiority and white supremacy. The findings suggest that there is a body of work by black scholars and shows that where support is given, black scholars can shape discourse and take leadership positions in the academy.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Autobiography, Black Academics, Apartheid, Scholarship

Introduction

Black academics who have recorded their thoughts and experiences in South Africa are very few. South Africa in general, has very few academic autobiographies (Jacobs and Bank, 2019). Academic autobiography is defined as autobiographical writings by people who have held university lectureships,

professorships and managerial/administrative roles. This paper attempts a re-appraisal of Black academics who have navigated the South African academy in various contexts pertaining to the racial, ethnic and gendered contexts of higher education under segregation and apartheid from the 1940s to the 1990s. Black Academics have contributed to the South African academy and need to be part of a decolonising curriculum in South African universities and institutions of knowledge production.

Methodology and Theoretical Lens

The methodology used in this paper focuses on academic autobiography. Five black South African academic autobiographies were chosen. The autobiographies of ZK Matthews, Bernard Magubane, Chabani Manganyi, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Mamphele Ramphele and Mabogo More. The criterion used include the fact that many of the chosen people obtained professorships, have written up their reflections and have shown commitment to decolonisation in their body of work and political activism. Data was collected through the autobiographical texts and works produced by the scholars. The research problem is about why there are fewer studies on the work, life and contribution of black academics in South Africa? Using these texts, this paper attempts to shed light on the autobiographical contributions and reflections of black academics.

This paper uses a theoretical lense of decolonisation. Decolonisation in this paper is about how the different scholars challenged the colonial system of education that was given to them and used the tools of colonial education to decolonise and create an African centered knowledge system and paradigm (Mkhize: 2021, Keto, 2001). Decolonisation is not meant to be an epistemic reverse racism but allows different voices who have historically been epistemically erased to be given platforms and recognition that they rightfully deserve. The South African academic project under apartheid was used to justify the system and played a role in the epistimicide of African knowledge in the country. Through decolonisation, we can recentre African thought and put it at the centre of the curriculum using the humanities and social sciences as a case study.

Literature

Autobiography has been a major fixture on the South African political landscape (Masemola, 2017). Due to the racist nature of apartheid, black voices did not always have an outlet to voice and publish work about themselves and their community in an academic context. A lot of the work was autobiographical and fiction based. Writers such as Soga, Plaatjie (2007), Mofolo (1981), Fuze (1979) and Molema (2009) laid the groundwork of black writing in South Africa in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Black autobiography ranges from the work of Phyllis Ntantala (1992), Ellen Khuzwayo (2018), Naboth Mokgatle (1971), Bloke Modisane (1990) and others prove autobiography has been covered by diverse people living and working in different contexts. Many of these autobiographies focus on the struggle against apartheid and how these actors participated in it. It takes us to the deep countryside where most of the authors were born, their political consciousness awakening and their baptism into the struggle against apartheid.

Many scholars in some parts of the world have analysed academics who write their autobiographies. Academic autobiography is not an easy thing to do. This scholarship sees autobiography and life in the academy coming together to help us understand the subject matter under discussion (Popkin, 2005). Autobiography is also an extension of the academic project by narrative means and self-representation. Autobiography has epistemic and literary potential of helping us understand the locus of enunciation of the scholar/writer concerned. Scholarly autobiographies allow us to understand individual and collective histories (Aurel and Davis, 2019). Personal experience is not always inseparable from intellectual activity. The work of scholars can also be a way to reconcile all parts of oneself.

Discussion and Analysis

South Africa became a democracy in 1994. This was a time of change for South African higher education. The literature on transformation and change in South African Universities is the "Makgoba Affair" at Wits and the "Mamdani Affair at UCT". The "Makgoba Affair" occurred around 1995 when Professor Malegapuru William Makgoba was appointed as a Deputy Vice Chancellor with an intention to appoint him as Wits University's first Black Vice Chancellor. The troubles start when Makgoba challenges some of the racial institutional culture at Wits which came with a backlash from white colleagues who questioned his

scholarly contributions and Curriculum Vitae (CV) (Makgoba, 1997). Mahmood Mamdani was appointed as the AC Jordan Professor of African Studies at the University of Cape Town in 1997. The "Mamdani Affair" centered on the fact that Mamdani had developed a curriculum centering African Scholars and moving away from the Eurocentric lens that had previously been used at UCT (Radebe, 2009). These two affairs show that South Africa was far from achieving the dream of transformed and African centered universities where black scholars and their scholarship would not face hostility.

Black South Africans have always played a role in the South African academic and intellectual space. Many black scholars who could have contributed were turned into native interlocutors and research assistants who were not supported to advance academically (Lekgoathi 2009). Although excluded and marginalised from the mainstream academy, black intellectuals have used their power and tenacity to write and make sure that the black experience is captured on paper in various platforms, (Biko, 1987; Andrews, 2018).

The current calls for decolonisation of education and the curriculum that was popularised by the Fees Must Fall Movement/Rhodes Must Fall Movement in 2015 is not a new phenomenon that started in 2015. It also did not start in the 1960s/70s when students in the Black Consciousness Movement agitated against apartheid. Decolonisation in South Africa has its intellectual forebears and ancestors in the late 1800s and early 1900s who laid down the intellectual framework and discourse of decolonisation when it was an unpopular time to do so (Ndletyana, 2008). During FMF/RMF students called for decolonisation. Students took ideas mainly from the Black Consciousness Movement, Frantz Fanon and the Latin American School of Decoloniality. If we ignore our own intellectual heritage, we run the risk of finding miscontextualised solutions to our colonial problems while ignoring the work that has been done by our own scholars who wrote from a marginal context but gave so much of their lives to the people and their communities (Mkhize, 2021).

Zachariah Keodirelang ZK Matthews

Freedom For My People: The Autobiography Of ZK Matthews, Southern Africa 1901 To 1968

Professor Zach Keodirelang ZK Matthews 1901-1968 was the second black professor of African Studies and Languages after Don Davison Tengo Jabavu

at Fort Hare (Matthews, 1981:115). He was part of the first generation of black academics to study for their undergraduate degrees in South Africa in the 1920s. Many black students in the 1880s and early 1900s went to Britain and the United States for their studies. Many of them were Kholwa elites (mission converted believers) who were part of the rising tide of black Christians. Spaces like Wilberforce Institute in Ohio, University of Edinburgh and Columbia University in New York educated black South Africans abroad as it was tough to get a higher education at home as no white university was willing to teach blacks (Nqulunga, 2017). Tiyo Soga studied in Scotland, Pixley Ka Isaka Seme studied at the University of Columbia, and Charlotte Maxeke studied at Wilberforce in Ohio in the early 1900s.

Matthews and others of his generation were part of what Du Bois called the talented tenth and people with a double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903). This was a select group of black elites who were supposed to assume leadership and development of the black race. Matthews received colonial missionary education at the United Mission School in Kimberley, St Matthews Anglican Church and then went on to Lovedale and Fort Hare to do his Matriculation and undergraduate degree. Fort Hare was founded in 1916 and named for John Hare. It was the first historically black university in South Africa and educated black people all over Africa (Wotshela, 2018). He was appointed as a high school headmaster at Adams Mission College. He got a scholarship to study at Yale. He also went to study social anthropology with Malinowski at the London School of Economics. Matthews was involved in politics and helped to write the freedom charter. He died in 1968 as an ambassador of newly independent Botswana in the United States.

ZK became Professor of African Studies in 1945 and head of the department. He taught Native Law and social anthropology. According to one of his students G. M. Pitje:

> Few people realize what an influence he [Z.K.] was to generations of students at Fort Hare. This naturally applied more specifically to those who actually attended lectures given by him, but many to whom he did not formally lecture admired him and came under his influence (Matthews: 1983, 116).

ZK Matthews influenced a generation of students while he was a professor of African Studies. His generation took seriously the need to document and theorise using indigenous knowledge systems in the curriculum when it was

unfashionable to do so. His generation laid the groundwork for decolonisation by carving a place in the academic sector for black academics and researchers in the 1940s and 50s. Matthew's imprint and influence was on the students he taught. ZK was part of the famed Rivonia treason trial and the drafting of the freedom charter. ZK was an academic but also involved in politics as evidenced by his appointments.

ZK was part of the last generation of mission educated men who reached greater heights. The onset of Bantu Education and the extension of University Education Act of 1959 drove him and many distinguished black and white scholars away from Fort Hare. Fort Hare was moved from a citadel of African Education in Southern Africa to an ethnic enclave for Nguni people in the Eastern Cape (Wotshela, 2018: 14). For ZK, education did not mean westernization. He felt that it should be rooted in an African past but also embrace the modern world (Matthews, 1983: 212). He rejected apartheid and worked to see it dismantled as an engaged scholar activist. ZK was a Christian humanist who believed in the power of his time. He straddled a political and academic world and kept true to his convictions.

Eskia (Zeke) Mphahlele 1919-2008

Afrika My Music (1984).

Brother Zeke Mpahlele as those close to him called him was the first black professor of African literature at Wits University in the 1980s. If the US had Du Bois, Kenya had Ngugi and Nigeria had Achebe then South Africa had Zeke Mphahlele. Born in 1919 in Lady Selborne, Mphahlele represents the second generation of African academics who went into exile and taught there in the 1960s and 70s.

Mphahlele was educated at St Peters seminary in Johannesburg in the 1930s. He studied with UNISA up to the Master of Arts level obtaining an MA in English Literature via correspondence. Whilst teaching high school and studying, he wrote an autobiographical novel entitled *Down Second Avenue* (Mphahlele, 1985) which came to global critical acclaim. It was banned in South Africa like many of his books. Mphahlele was a classic scholar as he combined writing fiction and non-fiction. Some of his books include *The African Image*, *The Wanderers*, *In Corner B*, *Voices in the Whirlwind*, *Chirundu* and *Eskia*.

Although Mpahlele was part of a generation of black scholars who normalised having a doctorate, they were preceded by a group of black scholars who had obtained their Phd in African languages in the 1940s. The likes of BW Vilakazi and Sophonia Machabe Mofokeng (Ntshangase, 1995; SALA, 2022). When speaking of black intellectuals who pioneered the path for us today, we often forget those who did so in African languages a major component of decolonisation that was started a long time ago (Ngugi, 1981).

Although an academic at the University of Denver in Colorado and the University of Pennsylvania, Mphahlele did not enjoy his stay in America. He yearned for home, he often spoke about the "tyranny of place and time" and wanted to reconnect with his ancestral roots (Mphahlele, 1984: 22). Mphahlele's intellectual ouvre was nourished by the South African landscape even though he was forced out by Bantu Education. Zeke Mphahlele was characterised as being part of the last generation of the New African Movement. The New African was a new kind of African who straddled tradition and modernity (Masilela, 2014: 161). They could be at home in their culture and in the world.

Mphahlele is considered the father of African Humanism. He was against apartheid and used education as tool to resist and fight the system. Here he speaks about the African University and African literature and says:

> An African university should be manned by the people best equipped, in the context of today's separateness, to perceive and promote the black man's aspirations. As soon as possible we should employ an increasing number of Africans. But Africanisation should not mean merely employing more African teachers; curricula and syllabuses should increasingly be Africa-based, instead of constantly singing the triumphs of Western civilisation (Mphahlele, 1984: 244).

Mphahle here remind us of the central place of the African university in a decolonising society. He speaks about the need for the curriculum to reflect an African centred orientation and look to local knowledges to define its character. The aspirations of a society should be supported by the epistemological orientations of its institutions.

Mphahlele started the African literature department at Wits University because the English department could not hire him (Mphahlele, 1984: 206). It was ironic because he had been part of prestigious institutions such as University of Pennsylvania and Denver at Colorado. Ngugi wa Thiongo, Henry Owuor-Anyumba and Taban Lo Liyong wrote a powerful paper that was called

"On the abolition of the English Department" (Ngugi, 1968: 435). This essay called for a literature department and not an English department. Mpahlele being on the African literature department was the only way for African literature to be taught and taken seriously at Wits University. Through African literature at Wits, Mphahlele was able to build a new generation of black writers, critics and students of African literature. Although many came to Wits University after he had long retired, he had a deep legacy that he left that inspired others.

Bernard Magubane 1930-2012

Bernard Magubane: My Life & Times (2010)

Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane was born in 1930 near Colenso in Kwa Zulu Natal. Magubane's family suffered colonial dispossession from the British in the 1800s. Magubane was conscientised by his mother from a young age who spoke to him about the break-up of the Zulu Kingdom in the 1880s, the Bambatha rebellion of 1906, the exile of King Solomon and the 1913 Land Act (Magubane: 2010). Magubane was educated at mission schools and got a teacher's certificate at Marianhill College. Many black teachers became politicised by the Bantu Education Act of 1953.

Magubane entered the University of Natal on a part time basis to do his Bachelor of Arts, BA Honours and Masters Degree from 1954 until the 1960s. Magubane was inspired by Marxist theory and analysis while the dominant paradigm in the South African academy was liberal pluralism that centred on race instead of class (Magubane, 2010: 86-87). Magubane finished his Master of Arts in 1959 then went on to UCLA to do a doctorate in the USA. A lot of Black South African academics went to study in the USA due to the institutionalised and epistemic racism of the South African academy which was been hostile to a black mind. Him going to the US shaped and influenced the rigorous scholar that he became. Magubane's doctoral dissertation focused on African American consciousness of Africa which later became the basis for the book *The Ties that Bind*.

Magubane worked as a lecturer at the University of Zambia. Magubane, unlike most South African academics had an African bearing like Mphahlele and Matthews. Magubane was involved in the ANC in exile and was very close to OR Tambo and attended the Morogoro conference in Tanzania. Magubane left

Zambia after three years and went to the US at the University of Connecticut (UConn). He stayed at Uconn for over 27 years and returned to South Africa in 1997. Magubane was involved in popularising the anti-apartheid movement in Connecticut and other parts of the US (Magubane, 2010).

Magubane's work sought to challenge the absence of the African voice in South African scholarship and historiography. Magubane was a classic inter, multi and trans disciplinary scholar. It is a crime and tragedy that he is a footnote in the South African humanities curriculum, like many of the other scholars in this paper (Nyoka, 2016). One of his most important academic paper is 'A critical look at the indices used in the study of social change in colonial Africa'. This paper looked at how African societies were studied as static, ahistorical and unchanging (Magubane: 1971). This paper was seminal and won him wide acclaim and scholarly praise for challenging colonial knowledge about African societies.

Magubane has a large oeuvre of books that he wrote. He wrote *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* that analysed the racial capitalism of South African society. Magubane wrote the *Ties that Bind: African American Consciousness of Africa. Race and the Construction of the indispensable other*. He has an edited collection of essays. One of Magubane's most important books is the 1996 book *The Making of a Racist State: British Imperialism and the Union of South Africa*. Magubane was a well-rounded scholar who moved in different disciplines and challenged the academic orthodoxies and epistemic injustices of subjects such as sociology, anthropology, political studies and history.

Magubane returned home in 1997. He worked at the Human Sciences Research Council. A lot of South African Universities did not welcome and integrate South African black academics who came back from exile. The Mafeje Affair is a case in point as he was denied a lectureship during apartheid and was still not seen as good enough for the AC Jordan Chair in African Studies at the University of Cape Town in the 1990s (Ntsebeza, 2014). Magubane's major contribution was the road to democracy series by SADET (South African Democracy Education Trust). Here, he was able to train and give exposure to young black emerging scholars. The project was criticized for being a nationalistic project, but Magubane knew that if black people did not tell the story; major works like the Cambridge History of South Africa and the Oxford History would continue to be the exclusive hegemonic story of South African history and historiography (Sithole, 2009).

N Chabani Manganyi

Apartheid and the Making of a Black Psychologist: A memoir (2016)

Noel Chabani Manganyi was born in Makhado in Venda in 1940 in Mavambe village. He was influenced by his teachers who helped to develop a love of learning in him. He attended the newly built Mphaphuli High School and Lemana Training Institute (Manganyi, 2016). Lemana was part of the Swiss mission. Lemana was an important site of knowledge discovery for Manganyi. He was part of the last generation of students who learnt under mission education.

Manganyi and others of his generation were the first to experience segregated and tribal universities due to the promulgation of the Extension of University Education Act (Act No 45 of 1959). The University of the North catered for Sotho-Tswana, Venda and Tsonga ethnic groups (White, 1997). The aim of the ethnic university was to reinforce tribalism and break the pioneering pan Africanism of Fort Hare and other mission institutions whose acceptance was based on merit and not ethnic affiliation. Black people moved from the New African Movement of the 1940s to the ethnic intellectual enclaves by the 1980s of the grand apartheid policy of Bantustans. Though some institutions did challenge this, the era of the New African at Fort Hare was severely challenged until the emergence of Black Consciousness and Peoples Education in the 1970s and 1980s (Larkin, 2021).

Manganyi made the most of his stay at the University of the North. What led to this was the fact that some of his teachers had come from overseas. They were not tainted by the Afrikaner separatist racial ideology of apartheid. Manganyi was involved in student affairs as an SRC leader and was part of the founding meeting where the idea of SASO (South African Student Congress) was mooted (Manganyi, 2016: 102). Manganyi majored in English and Psychology. UNIN was under the tutelage of UNISA, so its students wrote UNISA (University of South Africa) exams. Manganyi, like most black academics had to study and work at the same time. He completed his MA and PHD at UNISA part time and continued working. He worked at Ellerines (a furniture company) in 1969 and delivered a report as to why African supervisors were resigning at their stores and found that it was the attitudes of white store

managers that led to this predicament. He was summarily dismissed for this report.

Manganyi was admitted as a clinical psychology intern at Baragwanath so that he could be a clinical psychologist in the department of Neurosurgery and Neurology. Manganyi published his first journal article, one issue he came across is that ''African'' in his article was replaced with ''Bantu'' by the journal editors (Manganyi, 2016: 32). His article was initially entitled 'Cases of hysteria among African women' in the South African Medical Journal. This was an instance of the political ideologies that were in place at the time that censored opinions about blackness.

Manganyi's doctoral study was on body image in paraplegia. This was in the domain of neuropsychology. Manganyi was quite lucky in his studies to receive support from his white mentors and fewer instances of racism. Manganyi received his doctorate in 1971. He went to Yale University on a study tour in 1971 and returned there as a postdoctoral fellow in 1973. Manganyi, a brilliant black psychologist was rejected for an academic post at the University of the North as he was considered a political troublemaker (Manganyi, 2016: 49). The historically white universities would not hire black people unless in the "Bantu languages" departments as research assistants and junior faculty despite their qualifications. Manganyi experienced a re-education at Yale that expanded his horizon and moved him from the apartheid inspired education he had received in South Africa. He also tried to apply for university position in the United States but was rejected due to affirmative action policies in the US favouring African Americans.

Manganyi was head hunted to become the head and professor of psychology at the University of Transkei (UNITRA) (now Walter Sisulu University). Transkei was one of the satellite states of the apartheid government in creating grand ethnic separate development amongst black South Africans in the 1970s that would see Black people seek aspiration and self-actualisation in ethnic homelands that lacked resources and were entirely dependent on the Pretoria regime (Lissoni and Ally, 2019). UNITRA at first was a warm climate for Manganyi but as time went on in the 1980s political instability engulfed the Transkei and ultimately the university was affected (Manganyi: 2016). His first publication monograph was *Being Black in the World*, a text about blackness inspired by the Black Consciousness Movement. He published *Alienation and the Body in a Racist Society* and *Mashangu's Reverie*

and Dissenting essays on the Black Experience. Manganyi wrote an article on *Psychobiography and the truth of the subject in 1983*. Manganyi took a position as a visiting research professor at the Wits University African Studies Institute as positions for Black Professors were not available in white universities.

Mangayi completed two biographical monographs on Eskia Zeke Mphahlele and onother one on Gerard Sekoto. He also edited collections called *Treachery* and *Innocence*. He also published on violence and a monograph on the artist Dumile Feni. The 1980s and 1990s were a period of sustained intellectual productivity and output for Manganyi (Manganyi, 2016). Manganyi was appointed chancellor of the University of the North in 1991. He resigned in 1996 and worked in the Ministry of Education as a Director General and then returned to the University of Pretoria as scholar in the 2000s. There was quite a proliferation of many black scholars who got lost in the lucrative world of government and private sector companies who paid them huge salaries and allowed them to live a comfortable life. Many scholars who had promising scholarly careers as demonstrated by their doctoral dissertations simply abandoned any scholarly and professorial ambitions for the boardroom and state sector due to the institutionalised racism in the academic world. Onother trend is that a lot of black scholars who were brilliant in the pursuit of knowledge production were simply co-opted/catapulted into managerial positions, a phenomenon that needs to be studied for its impact/effect on their scholarship and contribution in the academy (Ramoupi: 2017, Matebeni: 2014). Manganyi is one of the success stories of the black professoriate in South Africa. From his rural and humble origins in Mavambe he went on to publish in leading journals, wrote scholarly monographs, engaged with the community, and worked in government.

Mamphela Ramphele A Passion for Freedom: My Life (2014)

Mamphela Ramphele is a black consciousness activist and academic who became the first black Vice Chancellor of UCT (Ramphele: 2014). She was born in the Northern Transvaal (Limpopo Province) at Bochum in 1947. Her parents were teachers who built her inspiration for education and knowledge. She grew up in the Soutpansberg area dominated by Afrikaners and was alerted to racism from a young age. Mamphele attended Bethesda Normal College in the Former Transvaal. The poor conditions of the school motivated her to work harder.

Mamphele studied medicine at the University of Natal Black section. This part of the university was meant to cater to the education of black students while still maintaining apartheid racial segregation (Noble, 2013). She became a founding member of the Black Consciousness student organisation SASO (South African Student Organisation). Mamphele, despite her relationship with Steve Biko, was a committed activist who cannot be reduced to being the girlfriend of Steve Biko as she played her part in the Black Consciousness Movement (Biko, 2021). Mamphele was part of the Black Community Programs. She was instrumental in setting up Zanempilo Community Health Center. The apartheid regime started cracking down on the BCM and Mamphele was one of the banished members. She was banished to Lenyenye Township outside Tzaneen.

Ramphele managed to keep busy by studying further and doing community work in Lenyenye. She was unbanned in the 1980s and left for the University of Cape Town and received a doctorate in social anthropology (Ramphele, 2014: 135). Her study was entitled the lives of South African migrant workers. In 1991, she became a Deputy Vice Chancellor at UCT. In 1996, she became the first black woman Vice Chancellor at a South African university. The first black person to head a historically white university.

Her work includes *Uprooting Poverty* with Francis Wilson. She also wrote *The Affirmative Action* book. Ramphele is an important part of this paper because women are excluded and marginalised from academic settings. Due to the patriarchal nature of the South African academy, it was not easy for black women to enter academia and thrive (Mokhele, 2013). Women who wanted to enter the academy had to sacrifice their personal lives for academic success. Ramphele dared to dream and push boundaries of race, class and gender.

Ramphele's success compels us as a country to work even harder in making sure that black women are given opportunities and supported in their academic endeavours. Once one discovers Ramphele's academic work, one realises the power of how her upbringing as her mother was a teacher and her committed involvement in the Black Consciousness Movement meant that she was motivated to transform universities. Although her tenure as VC of UCT did not change the racist structure of the university, it did lay a foundation for the likes of Njabulo Ndebele and Mamokgethi Phakeng. Although many women today hold powerful academic positions in academia, they are still undermined

and reduced to juniors and undermined by their male counterparts (Khunou et al, 2019; Magubane and Mabokela, 2004). Grace Khunou et al have shared the challenges that face black women academics in the academy just like the book by Mabokela and Zine Magubane did in the early 2000s.

Mabogo Percy More

Looking Through Philosophy in Black: Memoirs (2018)

Mabogo More was born in 1946 in Benoni. He matriculated at Tlakula High School in Springs, Kwa Thema. More read voraciously from a young age. He then went to the University of the North for his undergraduate studies. This autobiography was one of the first ever by an academic in the discipline of philosophy in South Africa (More, 2018).

Mabogo More was a student of philosophy at the University of the North (UNIN) in the 1970s. For him to get to university, he sold liquor at a municipal bottle store to save money for university. Showing us the precarious nature of the schooling system, which was often conflated with race and class. Unlike Manganyi who started in 1960, More was part of the second cohort of students who came to the University of the North in the 1970s. The University of the North was starting to get on its feet. The aim of UNIN was to enforce the separate development ideals of the apartheid system. More reflects on the crippling nature of Bantu Education, which did not give him a good/ strong philosophical foundation and prepare him for the academic world (More, 2018).

More was at UNIN at the same time as Black Consciousness started blooming on the campus. More was inspired by his Black Consciousness Movement schoolmates. He was in the same class as Onkgopotse Tiro who made a rousing speech called the Turfloop Testimony that changed Black Consciousness to take a more radical posture (Tiro, 2019). He was also inspired by black lecturers such as Gessler Muxe Nkondo and Candlish Maja who was taken to Robben Island for his political activities with the African National Congress. More also relates that some Afrikaans lecturers like Prof Herholdt struggled with the course material and taught using a system of rote learning or fundamental pedagogics (More, 2018).

In his undergraduate degree, More was expected to read white philosophers from a European perspective. More had to read the western

philosophical canon which was not always in touch with his reality as a Black South African. He says:

> I however felt disappointed that most of what I learned from that type of philosophy was made to have absolutely not much to do with my everyday experiences in my lived world of the township or the reality of my situation in an antiblack apartheid society (More, 2018: 59-60).

Thus More felt that the philosophy he was being taught was far removed from his roots and culture as a black person and could not use it to fight against the oppression he was experiencing. More was a student and teacher in the radical 1970s where a lot of Black Consciousness and black power literature started to emerge. Although a lot of the literature was banned, students managed to smuggle the works of Fanon *Black Skin White Masks*, Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, Jackson's *Soledad Brothers,* Stokely Carmichael's *Black Power*, Malcolm X's *Autobiography*, Angela's Davis's *Voices of Resistance* and Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. These works helped to politically conscientise and radicalise a new generation of black students who went on to influence the generation of 16 June 1976.

Philosophy as a subject was used to legitimate the apartheid system. As More shows, all philosophers consciously stayed out of politics. More became a lecturer in 1974 after receiving his honours degree in philosophy. More was not a political activist which allowed him access to become a lecturer. There was a perception in the 1970s and 1980s Black South African imagination that everyone who was not radical or political was a potential sell-out (More, 2018: 81). More introduces the term mastery of form or masking. Here More refers to people like himself who pretended to the system of being a compliant black but, was showing resistance in their own way.

More was admitted to Indiana University in 1980 and did his second master's degree with a view to starting a doctoral degree. Due to the uneven standards of education, a South African Master's degree was not credited and had to be redone in the American context (More, 2018: 110). Indiana opened the world of philosophy for More. More got to read African philosophy for the first time. He read the works of Mbiti, Wiredu and Paulin Hountoundji and got to understand that there was a thriving African philosophy. More was taught to read critically and write journal articles on his sojourns overseas. More returned to SA in 1981 with a MA and then went to the University

of Birmingham. He then went to the University of Illinois at Chicago on a fellowship. His travels helped him to make up for his miseducation in the South African apartheid academy.

In 1986, More was part of a group nine black lecturers who were promoted to Associate Professors at UNIN. Most of them hardly had a doctoral degree and publications. They were mostly given the titles because a lot of their white counterparts were given professorships without the proper protocols being followed (More, 2018: 115). More was pursued by the University of Cape Town as a Junior lecturer in the early 1990s as part of its effort to transform, he rejected the post in favour of working at the more progressive and activist inclined University of Durban Westville as an associate professor of philosophy.

More had a difficult time with the South African philosophy establishment. He was always marginalised and treated like an outsider yet had respect from his international counterparts. More was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Carribean Philosophical association. This award recognised his impact and stature as a philosopher (Sosibo, 2015). More has done a lot of work on the philosophy of race. Some of his important work is on Steve Biko and Black Consciousness. He has also written on Paul Sartre and Contigency. More has done a lot to push African philosophy in South Africa, challenging the Eurocentric continental and analytical philosophical traditions that do not want to transform as exemplified by the formation of the Azanian Philosophical society (Webster, 2021).

Black Academic Autobiography and Decolonization

This paper has looked at academic biographies of different black academics operating in different times and contexts in the humanities and social sciences. The one major feature in most of the narratives is the influence of mission education. A lot of the scholars went to mission run schools which were different from their public-school counterparts. Mission schools introduced a lot of black scholars to reading and some academic literature. Mission schools expected more from their students and often insisted on high standards for their students (Chisholm: 2017). A lot of black scholars and academics during the apartheid era were influenced by mission education. If we are to decolonise the academy, black academics need to link up with their counterparts in basic education and make sure that their scholarship is accessible to a wider readership beyond the academy.

Going into university was different for the early generations as compared to those who came later. Matthews and Mphahlele went into teaching after getting their matric qualifications. They studied under correspondence for their bachelor's degrees with UNISA (University of South Africa). The generations who came later do not have the same pressures and start their undergraduate education as full-time students. Ramphele as a woman and activist had a difficult journey into academia and it shows how women have the odds stacked against them (Mabokela, 2007).

A lot of the scholars had a mixed site/split site graduate education. Many studied for their honours and master's degrees at home while others went to the US to do masters and doctorate. Fellowships, scholarships and opportunities to go overseas opened doors for many of the scholars and countered the deleterious and debilitating effects of Bantu Education in the academy (Nkomo: 1990). It would be interesting to think why American education became a popular option for black South Africans whereas the white scholars in the South African academy often preferred European universities in Holland, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Many of the scholars took up positions as lecturers in South African and American universities. In South Africa, the situation was exacerbated by the apartheid policy and lack of academic freedom. Matthews left his Professorship at Fort Hare in 1959 due to the repressive nature of the apartheid system. A lot of the scholars became faculty in US universities and really helped to establish a good reputation for South African scholarship in the American academy. Some like More and Manganyi and Ramphele stayed behind and taught at South African Universities. Many black South African academics wanted to come back home since the 1960s, but incidents like the UCT Mafeje affair and tight grip of the apartheid system on academic freedom meant that a lot of them would be considered *persona non grata* by the regime. Many were away for close to thirty years, they became erased/marginalised from the intellectual memory of this country. Many of their books and scholarly contributions can be easily found overseas but one struggles to locate it in most South African academic libraries and course material. What was a disappointment is that when many scholars returned from exile in the 1990s, many of them were not offered scholarly positions by the historically white institutions whilst the black universities embraced and gave them leading positions.

The scholarship of many black academics under apartheid was distinguished considering the place of underprivilege and suffering they experienced at the hands of the regime. A lot of females did not get an opportunity to become scholars due to the oppressive system of intersectional gender oppression. Only Ramphele was able to rise to the position of Vice Chancellor. The exclusion of black females makes black scholarship under apartheid poorer as women would have brought an enriching perspective. The scholarship of black scholars should be included when constructing a decolonised curriculum. Many of the scholars mentioned here are just a tiny fraction of the many black scholars who have contributed to scholarship on a global scale. They deserve to be read in their disciplines and inter disciplinary forums and African studies as they made contributions to black studies and academia on a global scale. These scholars need to be memorialised and remembered for the work they have done. One is simply saying that for us to achieve decolonisation, we must know our own scholarly traditions and upraise them before we jump on the global bandwagon. No one is going to come and do it for us, but we must do the difficult work of citing, unearthing, analysing and putting the older generation back into the curriculum, scholarship and public discourse.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the autobiographies of black scholars under apartheid. It has looked at how these black scholars experienced life in the South African Higher education system under apartheid. Many of the black scholars suffered and had to work twice as hard to be on the same level with their privileged white counterparts who had the support of the apartheid system. These autobiographies are important in informing current generations of black scholars about those who came before and the struggles they faced in academia and how they navigated those challenges. As we think about creating a new generation of black scholars, these autobiographies of black scholars are an important part of the discourse and historical narrative about transformation and decolonisation in the South African academy. The success of policies and institutional reform can be traced against the backdrop of critical reflections by scholars on their academic journeys. This paper shown that genealogies of black scholars under apartheid is diverse and cannot be put into a box. These autobiographies can be used to teach and encourage current scholars to document their lives. As we engage with decolonisation,

may we never forget those who came before us and laid the foundation for the academic and critical scholarly work being done to decolonise and create a truly African university understanding its epistemic location.

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Wrestling to Exist

Womanist Struggles of Junior Scholars in South African Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

The waves of 2015/2016 #FeesMustFall protests saw South African students questioning every inch of the higher education structure and its exclusionary patriarchal racist roots. Few alliances between students and staff were created because of the "us vs. them" divide, despite junior scholars in particular, having a great deal in common with students and the oppression and trauma they endure. "Post-FMF" saw many institutions scramble to create "transformative policies" for students and minority staff like women, people of colour, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community and so on. Now, years later, everyone has policy fatigue. Minority staff have been pushed back to the margins and students battle the same challenges the fallists questioned. This paper will be a narrative study tracking the experiences of three junior scholars, black women at historically white universities; with the pseudonyms *Thoko, *Andile and *Thandazile. The research took a narrative approach rooted in qualitative research. It studies their insiderness/outsiderness to show just how little work institutions have done to ensure equality and inclusivity. This piece unpacks issues of belonging, and their experience as they try to navigate being postgraduate (PG) students and being staff, and being insiders and outsiders in both. This discussion is in relation to Alice Walker's womanism theorising, focused on the experiences of black women. The authors also

bring their own life experiences because the strong similarities between their own experiences and those of their participants are impossible to ignore. The authors' diverse scholarly background is used in the analysis, leaning towards Critical Race Theorists like Cornel West's discussion on black nihilism to better understand the aggression of black men towards black women in the academy. This is juxtaposed with a crisis of masculinity discussion. These experiences will also be viewed from a victimological perspective.

Key words: womanist, feminist, decolonisation, scholar, university, narrative

Introduction

After the fallist movement slowed post-2016, South African universities got into dialogue and policy drafting mode. They had heard the calls of the students and staff and were committed to having decolonised institutions, or so it seemed. Very little changed in the supposed "post-#FeesMustFall" era, and decolonial practices went from being an emerging revolution, to being out of touch, bureaucratic tick boxes. The Covid-19 pandemic and the frustrations over the lack of real change snuffed out the hopes that many had that higher education institutions were working towards being safe, truly decolonised, revolutionised spaces of learning that are welcoming to all. One of the biggest university protests "post-#FeesMustFall" spread across South African universities in early 2021 (Mlaba, 2021). The students were again faced with the same challenges that the fallists had fought in 2015/2016. This time the challenges were worsened by the global lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19. As industries closed or slowed production, parents lost jobs, families were struggling, and it made the dream of higher education even more elusive (Iwara, Musvipwa, Amaechi et al, 2020:764), Furthermore, institutions of higher learning were not coming up with strong solutions to support students. Instead, many students were being excluded because they could not pay 2020's tuition fees. Students challenged many things; including issues relating to challenges around housing, the cruel manner in which the university responds to protests with violence through the state police or private security, as well as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, a student funding model which contributed to some of the issues above because funds are typically released late by the Department of Higher Education and Training (Payi, 2021).

Much of the pain and trauma of the students has been well documented in both social and more traditional media, and the universities themselves have capitalised on it as if the institutions were not willing contributors to the violence students continue to endure. What we hear less about is the experiences of staff, especially junior staff members, and how their experiences have so much in common with the students'. The difference is that as employees they are limited in their ability to share their experience because of non-disclosures some sign when starting a lecturing role. They cannot speak because they have families and children who rely on them and to lose their roles would plunge them into poverty. They do not speak because of the victimisation and aggression from their Heads of Departments (HOD), faculty and different university structures who punish them just for existing in this space. This is one of the reasons why the participants are anonymous.

This paper documents the experiences of three black women working and studying at historically white universities. The paper will narrate the challenges they have faced in the academy, using a qualitative narrative approach to record and discuss their experiences. The authors pull from their own diverse scholarly background which includes Sociology, Gender Studies, Law, Anthropology and Criminology. Alice Walker's womanist discourse is invoked to help make sense of the challenges sometimes unique to black women. This discussion is in relation to the intersection between Critical Race Theory and the crisis of masculinity, to make sense of the oppression from black men towards black women. We adopt victimological theory to show how black women are tagged and identified as inferior to justify the violence directed towards them. The article ends with a brief look at how these women find comfort and success in an unsupportive, dehumanising space. The discussion starts with an overview of decoloniality, resistance movements and black women's positionality in higher education to help set the context in which the participants exist.

A Brief Literature Review: Decolonisation, Resistance Movements And Black Women In Higher Education

Decolonisation of knowledge, power, and being is a long-standing 'turn' from colonial discourse. Increasing calls for decolonisation of universities are informed by decoloniality, not postcolonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018:10), which means that, rather than being satisfied functioning in a context that

exists after colonialism/ postcolonialism, that claims to be free of colonial oppression, one must question everything. Decoloniality, rather than post-coloniality, encourages the questioning of Westernised education systems rooted in profit and which maintain the status quo that keeps poverty alive by continuing to exclude the "ex-colonised". One must question the commodification of knowledge and important social structures that instil a zero-sum mentality where gains are often made from the oppression and marginalisation of the colonised body (Mignolo, 2018: 40).

As a result of decolonisation, ex-colonised peoples are able to judge and expose Euro-American hypocrisy and deceit. Decoloniality encourages a retelling of the story of humanity and knowledge from the standpoint of those epistemic sites that have suffered from modernity's negative effects, emphasising appropriations, epistemicides, linguicides, and denials of humanity as part of the history of science. Finally, decolonisation accepts ontological pluralism as a reality that needs "ecologies of knowledge" to be understood (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018:11). The fallist student movement's understanding of ontological pluralism was evident in the call for curriculum change and diverse hiring practices, so that the knowledge and the scholars might start to pull from diverse local and global experiences, and so that education might become more than just a way to find employment. Instead, it becomes an important tool for addressing poverty, racial discrimination, gender inequality, public health challenges, ecological degradation and many other social ills (Mignolo, 2018:57).

This approach showed that the development of decolonial thinking always involves a double critique, since Western thought was founded on a dichotomy of exclusion, while also showing that defining decolonisation in the academy is only a small part of the global and larger process of decolonising knowledge and being (Mignolo, 2018:50). #FMF, while an important decolonial movement, also shows the danger of what happens when even revolutionary movements fail to adopt a double critique. The gender divide during #FMF shows women are othered even in spaces of liberation and revolution. It was at this moment that the gender tension seemed to prove that the "other" is not encountered but is made. The university operates as a microcosm of contemporary inequality. Mbali Mazibuko (2018, 490) illustrates that during FMF the solidarity was threatened as soon as feminists started questioning patriarchal domination which was becoming heavily visible. It was evident that women carry multiple forms of oppression in the university space. Mazibuko

(2018, 493) argues that the solidarity was threatened by the fact that men benefit from sustaining patriarchy; hence the fallist feminists became unapologetic about challenging the sustainability of patriarchy (Mazibuko, 2018:493).

Narrative Approach as A Solution To Womanist Erasure And Methodology

A narrative approach has been used to represent the participants' experiences. This approach comes from qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is unstructured, flexible and relaxed, and aims to describe and explain a situation, phenomenon, problem or event (Mason, 1994:101). It is important to consider the historical background of the research topic, people's opinions of and responses to issues and detailed descriptions of research issues (Kumar, 2005:12-13). The central research technique was in-depth interviews which were done in a virtual online focus group discussion. Open-ended questions were asked, and participants had the freedom to take the conversation in any direction through their storytelling-like responses. This is not only an important decolonial tool; it is also life-affirming. The participants spoke about not feeling seen and the hurt which ensued when those who were responsible for assisting them were not even willing to listen. Possible solutions were not supported through the institutional bureaucracy required in order to access them. Because of this, it is important to represent some of their stories as they narrated them. It is through the narrative approach that the colonised can begin to re-examine and rediscover themselves, others, and the world around them. This rediscovery helps Africans start to see themselves in empowered ways rather than as an extension of Western discourse.

Narratives can restore the African self that was once eroded by the colonisers, or in this case, uncaring universities that are built on patriarchal racism (wa Thiong'o, 1987:18). This approach does have some challenges because only certain parts of that which was narrated can be represented, and because some information can threaten anonymity. The narrative approach was also used because of its ease of accessibility; in order to avoid veiling the experiences and discussions in complex academic jargon and overly theoretical interpretations. Bell Hooks argues that theory, particularly feminist theory, should be for the everyday. When it is veiled in complex ideology, it alienates those who it should be representing and narrating. These individuals then

end up struggling to see themselves in the writing and how the work could advance them (Hooks, 2000:X).

Scholars such as anthropologist, Halleh Ghorashi (2021:53) speak of using narratives to create a ground of reflective zones to challenge normalised images. In this case these may seem to be just like any other voices on campus, but they represent critical voices of an unsettling normalisation of repression. If the oppressed remain silent, space for the reproduction of such inequalities is created, and silence ends up working as consent. Ghorashi (2021:59) further adds that it is our intellectual task to challenge exclusion and indifference through looking at discursive power and our own agency. Engaging with these three narratives and positioning ourselves as insiders is not only a revival of womanist scholars' agency, but a call to question our role as engaged scholars.

Meeting the Participants: An Overview Of Their Stories

*Thoko joined her institution in 2016 as a mother of one child, *Sibongile. She joined as a New Generation of Academic Programme (nGAP) candidate. This is a development role that gives staff time to focus on their studies by giving them minimal to no undergraduate (UG) teaching. The role also comes with mentorship support, funding for postgraduate studies, conferences, fieldwork and other related costs. Thoko's enrolment was to do her Master's and eventually her PhD. Numerous factors contributed to significant delays in completing her MA, a process which took six years. From the outset, her workspace was inadequate, in a room isolated from the rest of the department. She says the room was loud, it doubled as a storeroom, and was shared by student assistants, contract, junior staff and ad hoc staff. Many of them were not contractually bound to spend their office hours there and would often leave to quieter spaces when they had to focus, something that Thoko, as a permanently employed staff member, could not do. Staff members would come to print or collect paper, and student consultations were chaotic because of the multiple students visiting different staff. She was placed in this room even though there were a few vacant offices. The other major hindrance was that she was never allowed to fulfil her nGAP duties. She was given undergraduate (UG) classes to teach from the first year and often had the biggest teaching load in her department, with no marking assistance. She often single-handedly marked 400 scripts or more per assessment, with students typically having three or four assessments per semester, so she was

constantly marking. She was also assigned an unqualified supervisor, and when she would complain about the supervision or lack of supervision, she was ignored. Finally, the supervisor resigned. This resignation occurred in the middle of the supervisor's disciplinary hearing when other things had come to light and it was now clear the supervisor had misrepresented some of their skills and capabilities. *Thoko was close to finishing her MA at the time and had to be moved to a new supervisor. Therefore, her approach had to shift and what she had been complaining about for years was now obvious: she had basically been supervising herself.

For years she also battled with disappearing funds. She is still struggling with this matter, and no one can account for where her funds went. Lockdown affected her work just as it did other people's, but she experienced a lack of support, and for about a year she had no access to a working computer and struggled to give even her online classes. While struggling to stay afloat with the social, professional and personal challenges that came with the pandemic, the MA became less of a priority for a full year. After a long fight she finally got a laptop to help her with her MA and classes in 2021.

*Thandazile joined her institution in 2018, she had already been accepted to do her PhD for 2019 at a different institution to the one at which she was working. She struggled to get her institution to pay for her PhD studies at the other institution even though during her interview they had promised her that they would do so. She paid for her own tuition in 2019, but the lack of support she got from her department, broken promises, and heavy UG teaching load forced her to move her PhD to the university she is employed at. She thought that this would make life easier. She was in debt from paying her own tuition and had last worked on her proposal at the beginning of 2019, meaning she had wasted the whole year she had paid for. Her PhD proposal was strong because she had travelled to her study institution to present her work; a trip which she paid for herself. Her work was supported at departmental level and was ready for ethical clearance, all that was missing was an institutional letter of support from the department where she was employed. The letter had to state that the department supported her study especially because she was doing an ethnographic study which at some point would require her to spend six months or more in the field. This could be done all at once or broken up to accommodate her work commitments. Her Head of Department (HOD) called her fieldwork plan "a holiday" and refused to support it. Even though she insisted the HOD speak to her supervisor, he was uninterested. Moving

her research to the institution she was employed at was supposed to make life easier especially because she was basically ready for ethical clearance at her previous institution, and she moved her study in 2020. The change in supervisors did not cause much delay or a big shift in approach. What delayed her was the ethics process, which took over nine months, only finally being approved in 2021. Her funders took away 2020's budget. This made concluding fieldwork challenging because she was working with half the budget and had to spend a lot of her own money to do it, putting her even deeper in debt.

The pandemic also meant that she had to contribute even more towards her family as some lost jobs. She worked hard to get a promotion in 2020 but was disappointed to see it was mostly a title change because the financial increase was small, and she had received bigger general annual increases than her promotion in the past. Her HOD, whilst persuading her to join the university, had convinced her that with her hard work, she would get a big promotion that might almost double her salary in a year or two. He raised this when she was considering turning down the offer because the university was struggling to match or beat her previous salary. When challenging the small promotion, her HOD seemed aloof and pretended not to remember the discussion. She was told the policy had changed and promotions did not work as they did before and was encouraged by Human Resources (HR) that the new policy allowed for staff to apply for promotions every six months. A year later, she had published in various spaces, written technical reports for corporate and education clients, worked in policy, and had amassed international partnerships. She therefore decided to apply again. Her HOD rejected her application and suggested the promotions committee do the same. He told her she was too ambitious, told her she was not ready for another promotion despite having mentioned previously in shock, hearing her list her achievements, that she was doing work that even professors were not doing. She took the issue up with the faculty and the response was the same as the department; finally, she went to HR. She gave up and threw herself back into her PhD when a senior member of HR lied about certain things that had to do with her process. HR finally asked her to call for clarity, but during this call, they yelled at her, calling her entitled and spoiled. They refused to read her promotion application, and when she asked that the matter be escalated to top management, they refused. They subtly threatened to fire her by suggesting that her promotion from junior lecturer to lecturer at the end of 2020 meant that she was on two-year probation again and all probation

rules apply, including dismissals based solely at the employer's discretion even if there is no wrongdoing. Despite the delays and challenges, and thanks to some of the relief her funding did provide, *Thandazile is doing her fourth year of her PhD and is confident it is her final year.

*Andile joined her university in 2015 and like *Thandazile, there was no full transparency with her appointment to a division that dealt with engaged scholarship. She knew she was taking a significant pay cut from her old job to pursue her goal of being an academic, but she was shocked upon receiving her first salary to realise how big the cut was. She had been promised tuition fees for PhD studies and had also been told residence on campus was affordable, only to be placed in one of the new and most expensive PG residences on campus. Her PhD research has a strong engaged scholarship approach, the inspiration for which came from her previous Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) work and other community service work. She eventually applied for PhD funding elsewhere. She joined the fallist protests because she herself had struggled to find funding. Other staff criticised her for standing with the students and some questioned why she would do it because she had recently been awarded a very good grant to study and had a salary. By the end of 2015, her supervisor was leaving the university, but he did not tell her. He had planned to move her to a different department. She was uncomfortable with the lack of communication and refused to change departments. Her supervisor was furious and told her that he had good intentions for her but since loyalty was important to him, he had decided that he was no longer interested in her PhD study.

*Andile carved her own plan and eventually landed a contract lecturing job at the same institution in 2016. They disregarded her MA when they hired her and paid her a junior lecturer rate; she had to fight to be appointed as a lecturer. Even when HR decided to correct the contract, there was no back pay. The first few months were the hardest as she could not believe that she finally had a job she loved and dreamt of, but it came with no support. At that point she did not even have access to the locked bathroom. After futile attempts to request a bathroom key, she eventually had to threaten to stop coming to work for them to finally get her a key. When she finally settled in, she was excited to get back to her research at long last, but the teaching load was overwhelming. The senior colleague she taught with, who would later become one of her supervisors, would purposefully give her more work and more scripts to mark, with no markers. With difficulty, after a

year as a lecturer, she resigned, because she had not touched her PhD since 2015. In 2017 she threw all her efforts into her PhD, there were changes to her work because of the change of supervisors and she had already lost time looking for supervisors. She finally completed her proposal and went to the ethics committee for the first time three years into her study. She remained stuck at Ethics for 18 months, often being rejected for grammar and spelling issues, even giving new corrections with every submission. At some point they insisted she translate her interviews to an African language even though all her participants were working professionals who even preferred to be interviewed in English because some of the industry-specific words might not exist in African languages. She spent a lot of money on editors and translators, only to find out there was no one at Ethics who spoke African languages who could make sure she translated properly and was not causing harm. In 2020 the lockdown caused tremendous delays on her work, and in 2021 she had a mental breakdown and almost gave up on her study. She was told she needed to stay registered and would be provided with provisional registrations due to the breakdown. However, in 2022 she discovered she was blocked from registration due to owing the university money. She still had to fight again for registration and constantly got reminders that her registration was conditional until she had paid the outstanding balance. Andile hopes to complete her PhD in 2023. Even though there are still challenges, she is in a better place now and has decided to complete her study at a distance from her university and in a different town to where her campus is. The university continues threatening her about fees to date.

Shared Oppression: Seeing Ourselves in the Participants' Stories

All three women moved to academia from the NGO environment. They had thriving careers in the NGO space and moved to the university space because they wanted to study further and had a passion for education. They are all women of colour; another reason why we refer to their womanist experiences, rather than their feminist experiences. Womanism is a term coined by Alice Walker, a novelist, activist and poet. Womanism refers specifically to the experiences of black women or women of colour; experiences which are not adequately represented in feminism, even though their contributions have historically shaped much of feminist discourse (Walker, 1983:xi). Historical and

contemporary feminism has ignored the struggles and contributions of black women. Early feminist suffragette struggles in the 19th century disregarded the exclusion of black women in discussions on who should have the right to vote. This even prompted formerly enslaved abolitionist and women's rights activist, Sojourner Truth, to write a poem titled; *Ain't I a woman?* in 1851 (Humez, 1996:44). Second-wave liberal feminism in the 1960s was also influenced by the expressions and fights of black women within the civil rights movement. But feminism failed to support the black struggle they drew inspiration from and only elevated the contributions of white women within the feminist movement (Langston, 1998:158). It is for this reason that activists like Walker adopt the womanist theoretical discussion. Womanism is about black women's ability to self-determine and is concerned with the sexism and racism faced by black women. Western feminists' engagement with feminism is at times at the expense of black women who end up being excluded. In fact, some of the hardships some of our participants have had to endure have come from white feminists in their institutions who have masqueraded as friends and allies, only to later marginalise and withhold support as they experience various challenges. And so, just like the discussions from Walker and feminist scholar, Patricia Hill Collins (1996:10 & 11), we start to see through the participants' experiences that, white women are a part of the problem that contributes to the marginalisation of black women.

Another thing the participants have in common is that they are all young and believed that their womanist expressions would find the most acceptance in academia, because universities are supposed to be liberal and accepting places of learning and discourse. Furthermore, they are PG students and lecturers at their respective institutions. Their role of straddling two very different functions in their universities brings its own complexities. They have to constantly navigate their insider/ outsider positionality in the institutions. Being a staff member often comes with certain advantages, even if it is in just the way people treat you and show you a level of professionalism and respect. But because in some ways, they are not fully staff, or they are both staff and students, they never fully access the privileges of being staff. In some ways they are outsiders, and not really staff, because they have far more in common with students based on how they are treated and at times undermined. However, they are also not students, and it is hard for them to find comfort in student struggles because students might not see them as students and might even associate them with the whole uncaring system of which they

appear to be a part. They also have to be careful especially when there are sparks of student protests; if they are seen to be supporting the actions of protesting students, they could experience further discrimination. So, they are outsiders even as students, although materially they are also in a far better position than students and enjoy certain liberties that students do not. The fluidity of their insiderness and outsiderness can be unsettling (Naples 1996, 84). Fluidity can be important because it brings a certain level of flexibility. But when the outsiderness of junior staff is used against them, especially in relation to their staff role, it can create lack of stability and be disempowering. *Thandazile's discussion on the challenges with getting ethical clearance and their slow response which was threatening her research and funding shows the complexities of the insider/outsider challenges, of balancing being a student and a staff member. *Thandazile adds (interview with authors 2022);

> The responses to my ethical clearance submissions were taking longer than usual to come. I had already been rejected once over an IT error that made it look like I had not uploaded certain documents. The error was later discovered. I was then told to resubmit anyway because my application was strong. But when feedback took longer than usual to come after the second submission as well, I reached out to Ethics to find out what was the delay. I was told, as a staff member I should be more patient and have more understanding because I understand the extreme amount of pressure we are all under and that things get delayed sometimes. I backed off, when the feedback finally came I was rejected for things like not using Afrikaans questionnaires, small grammar errors, and other issues that had nothing to do with the ethics process. When I questioned why I had been rejected, given the IT error and the promise that had been made after my first submission, the same person who had told me to have more grace for her as a member of staff now told me that she does not answer to students, that I had no right to access her, and that if I wanted to talk to her, it should be through my supervisor.

Identity is important to people; even more so when navigating difficulties, as individuals often get support from the groups they identify with. In the workplace, identity helps people to fit into the workplace culture and find some sense of belonging within the organisation. It creates a crisis for people like *Thandazile to feel like they are finding belonging when senior staff members confide in them about their challenges, only to later on be rejected and harmed by them. It becomes difficult for the person to make sense of who they are within the institution, what value they bring and why their

role is important (Reissner, 2010:288). This can create a kind of dissonance towards the work and their role in the institution. Some become content with remaining in junior roles and give up any ambition to publish, complete their studies and make it to senior roles. This is as they realise the kind of support they need will not be provided. Departments typically see the goal to publish as a personal goal rather than an organisational one in which lecturers should be supported. Alternative individuals, especially womanists, realise they must give up a lot of the individual identity to fit into the collective identity of their department/ university, this also threatens creativity as newness and implementation of new strategies can be frowned upon (Shange, 2022; Reissner, 2010:297).

*Thandazile later mentioned that she had avoided reporting the committee for the first rejection based on the error because she understands the difficulties staff face. She did not want to get them into trouble for something that was no one's fault. She related to them as staff, only to later on feel alienation when they used her insiderness and outsiderness to not only reject her ethics, but also undermine her as a staff member. Workplace culture is also how people often access resources that are provided by their social environment (Thornton, 1988:24). One can say the resource here was the ethical clearance or at least clearer communication from the Ethics Committee on what she needed to do to get ethical approval. Culture in social spaces is not equally accessible to all and some have more power to shape the culture and determine who gets to enjoy the resources that culture provides (Thornton 1988, 25). This is especially true for universities in South Africa and arguably globally, where men and white people typically have more access and more power to wield and control the institutional culture. White people and men become wary or suspicious of the changes and diversifying happening in universities, because these might change their positionality and power roles in the institutions. So, it is not uncommon for them to use structures such as Ethics to eliminate or side-track the perceived threat coming with the new wave of calls for decolonisation. They might try to control the study by raising arbitrary restrictions and going beyond the limits of the Ethics Committee by engaging in content in which they do not have expertise (Cannella & Lincoln 2007, 315 ; Schrag 2011, 120). This is particularly worrying when the research under scrutiny is decolonial discourse. This might force some to abandon it altogether or reproduce destructive Western discourse that decolonial theories seek to address. This can also be stifling to candidates who might

end up feeling limited in their research approach, and beyond the candidate, it threatens the discourse. halting the calls for decolonised institutions (Shange 2021, 4 & 6).

As authors, we can relate to the participants' struggle to navigate her insiderness/outsiderness as we balance our studies with often massive UG teaching and learning responsibilities. Some of us are even hired under developmental roles like nGAP. In the long run, nGAP hopes to address the shortage of lecturers, especially senior lecturers, who can provide much-needed supervision to the growing postgraduate (PG) cohort. This programme requires the candidate to do minimal to no UG teaching and learning while they focus on their PG research, engaged scholarship or publishing in academic books and journals. And like *Thandazile, we have all faced challenges with navigating ethics, the worst of which resulted in one of us being delayed for two years

Womanists are not Welcome Here: The Victimisation of Black Women Scholars

The fact that I was a parent was frowned upon, and that I was pregnant yet again was seen as time-wasting. I was hurt by the department associating parenting with unproductivity. Falling pregnant with my second child immediately painted me as unreliable and unprofessional. When I challenged the lack of support I received, which led to my research being delayed, my having children was thrown back in my face as the reason for my challenges…A senior colleague once said in a meeting, with confidence that if the younger academics are to make it, they should let go of the ideals of having any sort of life outside of academia, that marriage and children are a far-fetched dream - this is whilst I was the only parent, and the only black woman in the room…This was not the treatment I expected from a liberal space. As a Christian woman, I thought I would even relate to the Christian religious foundation of most South African universities. My religion has taught me to love, and to be respectful and humble, but I have never received the same from the university. I eventually realised that even similarities in religious sentiments or the new decolonial agendas are not going to help me find acceptance in this space because it is me the space hates. I am a black body, a woman and child bearer. I am the thing that the university and the world targets to reject and marginalise. (*Thoko, interview with authors, 2022).

*Thoko's victimisation is important to make sense of and acknowledge. The study of victimology considers the various ways people regard themselves as victims. It acknowledges that actions, regardless of the intentions behind them, may be experienced as victimising by the next person. Victimology argues that the concept of victimhood is defined differently based on culture and society (Fohring, 2018:5). Scholars in this field are sensitised to how people can be victimised and that offending actions can only be interpreted based on how the next person experiences their treatment. One would expect that scholars would express the most empathy towards people, because of their deeper intellectual understanding of society. But they often ignore the discourse they often teach, write about and build strong careers on. When you operate from the fact that people are naïve or ignorant, you almost have an excuse for their actions. Even Jesus recognises this on the cross when He says "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (The Holy Bible, Luke 23:34). However, in academia, they do know what they are doing; in fact, they know better. And when these levels of victimisation exist in the academy, it brings the whole system into question and threatens the very existence of universities. One might rightfully question how people can trust uncaring and violent spaces like universities to lead society and come up with solutions to its problems when academics behave in violent ways themselves. They are the same perpetrators and oppressors they write and teach about, using their intellect to hide their intentions and target those they see as "weak".

In his book *Crime and Community*, labelling theorist and criminologist, Frank Tannenbaum defined "tagging" as the process whereby an individual is negatively defined by societies (Bernburg, 2009:189). He believed that once a person has been defined and tagged as 'bad', few legitimate opportunities will remain open to them. The frustration of being seen as lazy and the constant pressure black women have to prove themselves emanates from how people see them and "tag" them before knowing them. Critical Race Theorist, Cornel West has a similar discussion; he writes about black nihilism. It is a kind of angst, hopelessness and self-hate that black people feel towards themselves when whiteness has tagged blackness as inferior (West, 1994:23). It sometimes leads to violence, especially towards more marginalised groups like women or children. It also causes inward anger as the person slowly becomes the thing they are often stereotypically against.

The anger towards the oppressor and need for liberation become more challenging to express. The inward anger further promotes hate and a sense

of worthlessness, while self-hate is reinforced by the environment, broken communities, lack of resources and support structures (Warren, 2015:225). West and civil rights leaders like Dr Martin Luther King Jr suggested that black nihilism can be treated with love, restoration of the black being, politics of conversation or a new kind of politics that needs care and constant analysis (Warren, 2015:215). It is therefore important for institutions striving to decolonise to become truly inclusive and rid themselves of the stereotypes and tags they place on black women and consider love and care in policies and their operations.

Womanist Presence in Universities and the Rise of Crisis of Black Masculinity

> "During this PhD journey, an HOD looked at me with a straight face and told me that he didn't think there was racism in this department or in the university. Actually, he cannot see any of his staff capable of being racist. But we still see overt and covert racism, exclusion, and indifference everywhere in our experiences as junior staff. Most South African universities are built on racism and segregation. And here is the black senior scholar telling me he thinks there is no racism here, when I have even had to fight with a white woman for months for a basic human right, like access to the toilet" (*Andile, interview with authors, 2022).

Black men in academia often marginalise or ignore black women. Usually because black men are the dominant non-white group, the instinct as junior scholars are to go under their wing and be mentored by them. One believes the shared trauma of being black and oppressed will unite, that black men will see themselves in black women or see a struggling sister or daughter. But at times black women experience the harshest treatment from black men (Shange, 2017:60). By claiming there is no racism, not only did her HOD fail to protect *Andile when she was being victimised, he also disregarded her hurt by invalidating her concerns about racism.

Black men also typically overlook womanist challenges; they see them as women complaining, they fail to see the commonalities between their own racial oppression and those of women and different gender groups. They also often see women, especially in the workplace, as a threat to their own success and livelihood. They do not believe there is enough space on the table for black women and men, and so they find ways to exclude black women. Feminist

scholars refer to this as a crisis of masculinity, a phenomenon which was most obvious in European post-war society. Men constructed a lot of their ideas about what it means to be a man around work, the ability to provide for the family and so on (Morgan, 2006:109). When they could no longer do this upon returning from war, they started to question their manliness, thus creating this crisis of masculinity. This crisis of masculinity is often directed towards women in violent forms, especially in the home (Morgan, 2006:111). In the workplace, it looks like *Andile's pain being undermined or *Thandazile's promotion being intentionally disrupted by her black male HOD and faculty head. They allow patriarchy and whiteness to constantly reproduce themselves at the expense of junior staff.

Finding Solutions in Emerging Decolonial Scholars

Emerging decolonial scholars like Ntando Sindane (2021, 238) might argue that the reason why people still experience these kinds of challenges in higher education and society is because the focus is often on transformation rather than decolonisation. He argues that these two often get used interchangeably whilst representing different things. Sindane (2021:243) argues that "decoloniality frames the starting point of decolonisation as studying the three localities of coloniality, namely the coloniality of Being, Power, and Knowledge. To be sure, the coloniality of Being has to do with how the coloniser dismembered the 'Being' of colonised bodies."

The dismembering black colonised body still exists in higher education, where the colonised body is seen as incomplete, lacking or even as a non-being (Shange, 2021:11; Sindane, 2021:244). Transformation suggests there is some level of equality between people and can only be implemented when people are relatively equal, not when some have had their humanity stripped from them. Transformation can only take place when colonial lingering ceases to exist. These colonial lingering create power imbalances, suggesting that whiteness and manliness are superior to blackness, womanhood and other marginalised groups, and undermine any contributions to knowledge coming from women, people of colour or anyone that does not fit into the "superior white man ideal" (Shange 2017, 61 & 65).

Finding Comfort and Success in Hostile Universities

While theory is important for finding solutions, tangible ways people find comfort and strength are crucial. Here we felt it best to leave the participants' views as they are, without going too deep into a discussion or interpreting them. This is to help with maintaining the narrative tradition of allowing those who have been marginalised to control and tell their own history and experiences (wa Thiong'o 1987, 18). The one observation is that few of the participants find comfort and solutions in the university or their departments/ faculty, which reflects just how lonely a space a university can be for women and people of colour. What is also important from their responses is networks and connections; social or professional networks are important, it is not possible to go through this journey alone. It is also important to mention that all the people who supported these participants institutionally were women of colour, they showed each other love, kindness and caring. This is what the participants had to say about how they find comfort in their difficult journeys:

> For me it's just looking at the women that have made it. Guys, if you look at people like Prof Puleng *Lenka Bula*. That's why even when a friend was struggling a few weeks ago, I told her to follow the story of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson because she had a lot in common with her and were in similar professions. These women don't die when they bury them, they multiply in other ways, they multiply, in you and me, these women fight… So, it's important to really have a support structure. Even my brother will tell me to go on and bloody fight, I didn't bring you up to give up. My family and friends are really there for me…In the institution, *Kim really supported me. *Kim (one of her PG research interview participants) opened all these doors for me to be taken with on research field trips on the institution's budget. She would give me someone that would go with me to some of these places in the field I had to visit. She was already in the pits with her own PG studies and facing similar exclusion we are facing and she still helped me. I saw now she is *Dr Kim and that inspired me to push because we used to cry together, she would close the door and we would pray in her office. She and some of the staff from her office would sometimes even take me in their own cars to the field when I didn't know how I would get there (*Andile, interview with author, 2022).

> I think… I think for me, my saving grace is actually my little babies, because I cannot fail them by failing myself. If I say I'm giving up, I can't do this anymore. I'm already saying, you know, *Sibongile and *Cairo, you'll get to this point, but you won't be

able to break any more ceilings. I'm working so that their lives can be easier to a certain extent even if I'm not the richest woman in the world… Look in my family, I was the first graduate from a university, but there were a lot of difficulties and challenges… I want to be able to say to them [the children] that I did it with all these difficulties, you guys have the resources, you guys have the ability to do it… You can change the entire world… There are friendships that I lean on because they support me and we have the same shared oppression, so my problems don't feel like they are just mine, it is a general institutional disease.

I find my comfort in feminist theory, it helps me make sense of what is happening to me and why and sometimes it even offers solutions. I love to write, so that is my other comfort, and it has led to many career successes and being acknowledged outside of the academy. It feels good to see my work impact people's lives. I have also been fortunate enough to have senior womanist mentors, including my PhD supervisor, she makes me feel like I can do anything and restores me when I doubt myself. They all push me to take on new opportunities even when I am scared. I also speak to my ancestor through ukuphahla (meditating) but sometimes even this can be triggering because I run out of prayers. (*Thandazile, interview with author, 2022).

Conclusion

The poor representation of women is not an issue that is unique to higher education, it is a symptom of colonialism and apartheid that democratic society has been unwilling or unable to correct. Women are underrepresented everywhere: in politics, in policy-making, leadership, in religious structures, corporate spaces and even in the family (Alison, Sithole & Williamson, 2010:71). The reason we focused on universities is because of the participants' experiences as scholars. We wanted to narrate their experiences and show how they intersect with ours. Universities globally and especially in South Africa, have been spaces for debate; they have led or sparked social change that led to the liberation of South Africa. When they systematically oppress womanist scholars and students, they betray the liberties and ideals they once stood for. They also undermine the discourse they teach and at times promote, ideas coming from race and feminist discussions like the importance of understanding intersectional struggles in order to ensure equality.

This paper has discussed these intersectionalities by pulling from the works of Walker and her concern with how black women are not adequately represented in feminist struggles. We further show the additional conflict and displacement black women experience when they are marginalised by black men. We turn to the crisis of masculinity and black nihilism to make sense of this phenomena. Finally, we end with reflections from the participants who narrate how they cope, how they create a supportive space with and for other women. These reflections are supported by decolonial analysis on the importance of instilling the personhood that has been desecrated by colonialism in Africa. Universities must do this in every effort they adopt to try and make the space more supportive and welcoming of marginalised groups.

Universities should be a fair space, where women are not constantly having to prove themselves. They should understand that women, although in this space, still function in a society where they are primarily caregivers, not simply of their children, but their parents, other family members, neighbours and friends. By simply being a woman, more is expected of us. Therefore, an institution that does not take this into consideration is not decolonised or inclusive. Women deserve similar ease to men, especially in places of higher learning that demand high-functioning individuals to contribute to multiple spaces including teaching and learning, engaged scholarship, research and leadership. Scholars are expected to juggle all of these roles without adequate tools or support. These challenges often come from within; they come from the junior staff's own departments and faculties. These women struggle to meaningfully integrate into workplace culture as they navigate these challenges, because in some ways they are neither staff nor students. They exist in an in-between space, wrestling to exist.

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We are not fully Citizens of our Universities

African Women leaders, Non-belonging and Construction of New Cultures and Citizenships in South African Higher Education

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Abstract

The post-Apartheid and #FeesMustFall higher education landscape has created opportunities for universities in South Africa to foster in transformation as it pertains to gender, language, sexuality, disability, race and other minority markers. More so, the accessibility of the student and staff demographic has meant that in some cases, African women can emerge to various positions of power. This paper, through phenomenological reflections of five African women leaders in South African universities, considers the ways in which citizenship and belonging are navigated through the mapping of their leadership journey. Furthermore, this paper explores the possibilities within the African feminist scholarship to argue that African women leaders use their agency to determine humanizing institutional cultures.

Key words: African women, higher education, transformation, institutional cultures, leadership

Introduction

The earliest reference to a university in Africa, can be traced to three genealogies, the "intellectual tradition of the Nile Valley Egyptian–Nubian–Ethiopian civilization: the Afro-Arabic/Muslim intellectual tradition as well as the precolonial Mali–Songhai–Ghana Timbuktu intellectual tradition" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, 52). In citing Mama (2005), Tau (2022) reminds us that, following the establishment of modern universities, institutions of

higher learning were colonial colleges which were entrenched in patriarchy. As such, modern European universities, located in Africa (universities in Africa) "functioned as spaces to reproduce cultural and social norms" (Tau, 2022, 16). This extension of European universities or universities located in Africa, meant that universities would give exclusionary access to African men as a way of continuing the legacy of colonialism (see Mama, 2003).

The current Higher education landscape in South Africa is made up of public and private universities, TVET (Technical, Vocational Education, and Training) colleges, and a range of post-school private institutions (Moodley-Diar, 2021 and Tau, 2022). The mergers use institutions of higher learning as a means to address transformation but have not managed to alleviate the epistemic violence of the history of some institutions, of which the #FeesMustFall movement, amongst others, revealed. Because fundamentally the #FeesMustFall movement(s) were able to demonstrate that the failures within the post-apartheid higher education landscape indicate to a much deeper problem of exclusion for black South Africans (Nyamnjoh, 2016 and Tau, 2022). And today, as universities remain sites of contestations, many of these are in conflict with each other (Hartmann, 2019) which part of the challenge is how to achieve decolonization within an inherited westernized institution (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

The relationship between the history of the European university is essential to understanding the university in South Africa, which exists as an extension of the colonial institution, especially in the context of the transformation discourse (Tau, 2022). Because of this backdrop, the university of today needs to be understood with this contradiction, as a space that was not designed for Africans and women to be in, yet they are currently leading the institutions. And are responsible for the strategic imperatives of the spaces.

The South African higher education landscape following the end of the Apartheid regime, ushered in possibilities for how tertiary education could best reflect the demographics of the country. In pushing the boundaries and establishing transformation strategies, the government set "to plan the development of the education and training system for the benefit of the country as a whole and all its people" (DHET, 2005, 2). This is against the backdrop of the Apartheid government having excluded and constrained the black indigenous people of South Africa from the freedom to live and study where they chose, ultimately "denying them access to education and

development" (Pandor, 2018:1). This racial systemic organization of South African society created the disparities between the universities and the broader sector, affecting how they are governed and funded (Lebelo, 2021).

Universities, which are understood as locations of knowledge production, carry new meanings particularly in the second decade of democracy in South Africa. This period has complexified this meaning, as institutions of higher learning have also become sites of challenging hegemonic knowledge systems, institutional cultures and policies (Cini, 2019; Lebelo, 2021; Tau, 2022).

The various student movements over fees in tertiary institutions and more recently, the #Must Fall student movements (2015-2017) have demonstrated that the texture and being of these institutions continues to be rooted in the "imperial/colonial/apartheid tradition" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, 55), leaving many students and staff feeling disconnected from the very same institutions. Proving the fact, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2017) reminds us that South Africa was imaged to be a 'little Europe' and such the university in Africa, in its culture and operational structure of bureaucracy is transplanted from Europe.

Hlatshwayo, Mashaba, Mathuloe and Yende (2022) postulate that there has been a rise in women in positional power, as the South African higher education landscape "has undergone a gender stereotype reversal, largely due to an increase in women in leadership positions such as vice-chancellors, rectors, deans, and department heads" (p.8). According to Naidu (2021), institutions are still grappling with meeting their transformation imperatives, whilst having to ensure that they have a gender transformation agenda and strategy "with succession plans cognizant of gender imperatives in place" (2021,1). Fundamentally, the advancement of women in leadership is necessary to "transform exclusionary structures, cultures, and practices that ensure the marginalization of women in universities" (Idahosa, 2019, p. 4). Kele and Peterson (2015) postulates that the mergers were intended to consider the ways in which policies would establish conditions to promote women to leadership positions. That is because institutions of higher learning sit with the responsibility of not only transforming their institutions but to challenge the gendered power relations within society as well. In so doing, institutions need to "address institutional cultures which are awash with gender–based power constructs that contribute towards keeping women out of higher education leadership" (CHE, 2008: 1). Additional to these are work

and family responsibilities such as care work, lack of networks and mentoring and traditional sociocultural realities (Moodly,2022).

Locating Gender in the South African Higher Education Landscape

South Africa has 26 institutions of higher education, of which only six are led by female Vice Chancellors, these being: Nelson Mandela University; Central University of Technology; University of Mpumalanga; University of Zululand; Walter Sisulu University and the University of South Africa. According to Amina Mama (2009), public universities, in striving to produce "generations of well-educated citizens, seem to have remained largely oblivious to the challenges of gender inequality" (2009, 7). This is because the colonial project was elitist and gendered. Which "ensured that only a select few would have access to the political, economic and university structures, and this was through the design of upper and lower classes within society. Secondly, on the gendered front, this upper mobility within the ranks of society or its structure was only limited to men, thus limiting the capacities of women to that of the household in the roles of mother and wife" (Tau, 2022, 16). In essence, the adoption of the university on the continent was always textured by gender and race (Mama and Barnes, 2007).

More so, various strides have been made in the sector to address gender inequality which include, the White Paper on Education (DHET, 1997); the National Plan for Higher Education (DHET, 2001); the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (Republic of South Africa, 2013). In addition to these legislations has been the Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) Programme, established in 2022 as part of the Department of Higher Education and Training's University Capacity Development Programme. HELM addresses leadership development and capacity for managers and senior leaders in higher education institutions. HELM hosts a Women in Leadership (WiL) program which considers transformative leadership processes to inform and equip women to lead in the changing and dynamic higher education context. Another structure being the Higher Education Resource Services South Africa (HERS-SA) was established in 2003 and is a self-sustaining Non-Profit Organization that focuses on addressing the low numbers of women occupying senior positions in the higher education sector. Moodly and Toni (2017) remind us that despite the establishment of transformative policies,

women are still limited by the 'glass ceiling' which challenges their access to leadership positions.

Leadership has been historically preserved and stereotypically characterized as male (Moodley-Diar, 2021 and Karelaia and Guillen, 2014) globally. This perception, however, is being challenged by with the growth in female leaders (Kapasi, Sang, and Sitko, 2016). In the African American context, women have been integral in the civil rights movements, and "were susceptible to interlocking systems of sexism and racism that permeated public and higher education" (Jean-Marie, 2008). The South African higher education landscape, in carrying a particular legacy, is also interwoven with the perspectives of society, it is "as much a creature of its past as it is a creature of sustained effort, through policy, legislation and institutional restructuring, to redirect and transform it" (CHE, 2016, 5). However, the Higher Education and Skills in South Africa by Maluleke (2019) shows that there are changes in how we are noticing more females at both masters (41.8% to 44.6%) and doctoral levels (increase from 38.1% to 58.2%) of which this is instrumental for women to be eligible for leadership positions (Moodley-Diar, 2021 and Maluleke, 2019).

The highest percentage of graduates were females and their percentage was steadily rising since 2000.

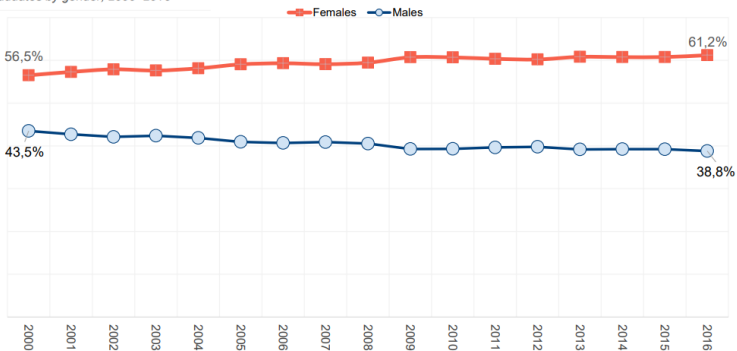Percentage of public higher education graduates by gender, 2000–2016

Source: DHET (HEMIS)

THE SOUTH AFRICA I KNOW, THE HOME I UNDERSTAND

Figure 1:   Percentage of graduates per gender 2000-2016 [extracted from: http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12049]

The data from this report shows that female participation in the higher education landscape, was 58% for public universities and 57% for TVET colleges (Maluleke, 2019). According to Toni & Moodly, (2019), breaking the glass ceiling continues to be a challenge as most women are in middle management and there is still a lack of representation in the higher ranks of management. This challenge persists because of the existence of perceptions about women leadership which include "gendered power dynamics, misconceptions about women's leadership abilities, male patterns of networking, work-home life balance, prioritising family, and lower self-confidence than male counterparts" (Moodley-Diar, 2021, 8). Because institutions of higher learning are more than merely institutions, the structure and culture of the institutions should be understood more complexly as they inform and establish narratives about identities and groups of people (African women). That is because institutions establish which histories and intellectual legacies are considered to be valuable and deserving to be critically engaged (Gebrial, 2018).

More so, the 2018, Council on Higher Education (CHE) report on students and staff demographics in higher education (2011-2016) demonstrates this growth in the number of women in senior positions (see Figure 2 below). Seale, et.al., (2021: 136) further suggests that,

> "For women to take up senior leadership roles more potently, it is essential that women not only cope with and compete in patriarchal systems but more so, that women leaders are equipped to change patriarchal hegemony and shift management discourse and culture to a pluralistic leadership culture where transformational leadership becomes the norm while delivering on the set agenda and goals".
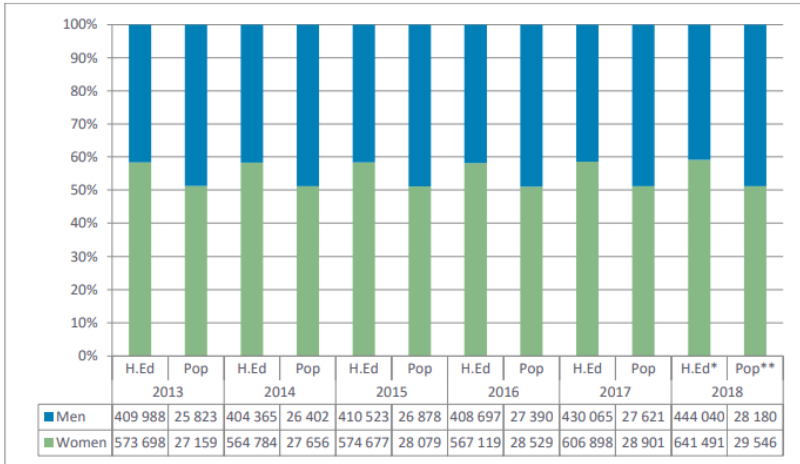
* Higher education.
** Population numbers are in thousands.

Figure 2: Headcount senior management staff members by gender from 2011 to 2016 [extracted from CHE, 2018]

Representation of women in academia is about more than just meeting the transformation markers such as numbers, because the "presence or absence of female academic leaders can have far-reaching influences not only on the institutions themselves, but on the scope of research and knowledge that affects us all" (The White House Project, 2009,16). In supporting this positions, Madsen (2012) postulates that the inclusion of women in academic spaces also allows for research to be conducted differently, thus widening the knowledge and the perspectives from the findings are nuanced. Heleta (2016) postulates that although policies have been put in place to address transformation, universities have not fully opened themselves to the diversity of knowledge and knowledge making bodies. This culture is seen predominantly within the curriculum of universities however it is rooted in broader exclusionary ideologies and practices based on gender and race amongst other identity markers.

    The Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics published in 2019 (see Figure 3 below) suggests that African females remain underrepresented in terms

of instructional and research staff at South African universities. Generally, the challenges hindering the success of women in the higher education landscape are the institutional cultures of university, of which African women inherit when they enter positional power. Furthermore, societal narratives founded on patriarchal interests also discourage women from leadership, and with the recent rise in student protests which are often masculinist and violent in nature (see Booysen, 2016; Jansen, 2017). Thus, the factors to break the glass ceiling are a culmination of intersecting demands that have come to characterise the nature of the higher education sector (Moodly, 2022). By at least 16.1%, represented in the academy, meanwhile the general African female population is at 40.4%. Zulu (2016) argues that unchanged and untransformed institutional cultures and "socio-cultural beliefs that discriminate against women [are what] obstruct women's paths to promotion" (Zulu, 2016: 7). Hlatshwayo et.al. (2022) and Mhlanga (2013) remind us that because the academic hierarchy and senior positions in disciplines are held by men, this male domination and gender inequality persists because of the legacies of prejudice (Belluigi and Thondhlana, 2019).

FIGURE 8: The demographic distribution of permanent instructional/research staff at universities (HEMIS) compared to the demographic distribution of the 25–64 cohort in the general South African population (Statistics South Africa 2018 mid-year population estimates)
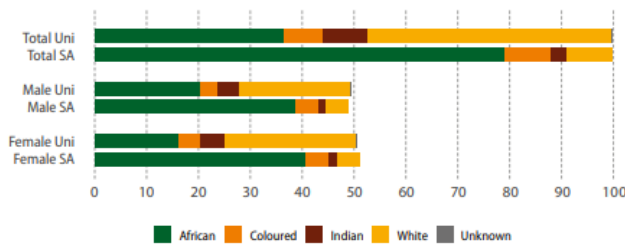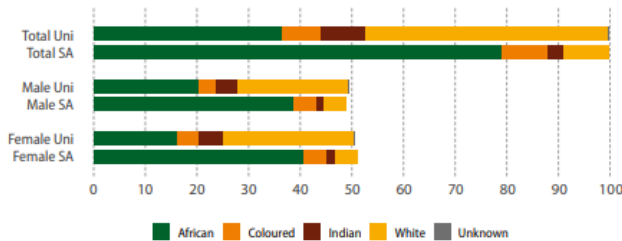
24　Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics

Figure 3: Distribution of permanent instructional/research staff at universities [extracted from the Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics. Published by the Department of Higher Education and Training November 2019. www.dst.gov.za]

On the other hand, Figure 4 (below) the Ministerial Task Team reported that male staff "are dominant in senior posts and female staff are dominant in

junior posts. Academic leadership at universities is still dominated by white and male academics" (2019: 29). Because patriarchy is directly linked to how gender roles are perceived, these statistics also reveal that leadership is still read or understood as male and heteropatriarchal, "where authority and power have been and/or is reserved for men" (Nzimande, 2019: 10).

FIGURE 8: The demographic distribution of permanent instructional/research staff at universities (HEMIS) compared to the demographic distribution of the 25–64 cohort in the general South African population (Statistics South Africa 2018 mid-year population estimates)

24   Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics

Figure 4: Distribution of permanent instructional/research staff at universities [extracted from the Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics. Published by the Department of Higher Education and Training, November 2019. See, www.dst.gov.za]

The Report by the Task Team further reveals that the dominance of male African leaders, is not the only barrier to the progression of African women's emergence into leadership, as the most dominant are male and white academics. This again exposes the tensions faced by African women in the academy. They struggle to build networks or communities of fellowship (which I explore later on) either based on race or gender, of which they cannot always make a separation between the two identity markers.

Another study by Moodly (2021) shows that there has been an increase of women Vice Chancellors. For instance, in 2020, 2019 and 2016, "the percentage was 15.38 per cent (4 of 26)…women in the position of DVC Research had increased from five (5) in 2013/14 (in twenty-three public universities) to ten (10) in 2019 (in twenty-six public HEIs), and for DVC Academic, it had increased from six (6) in 2013/14 (in twenty-three public HEIs) to eleven (11) (in twenty-

six public HEIs), in 2019" (Moodly, 2021: 185-186). Fundamentally, since the democratic dispensation, the higher education sector has not reached the 50 percent mark in senior positions.
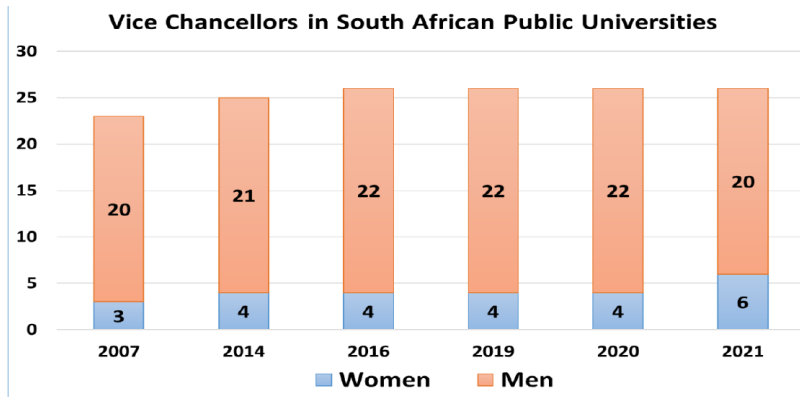
Vice Chancellors in South African Public Universities

Figure 5: Number of men and women as Vice-Chancellors in South African public universities (extracted from Moodly, 2021: 185). These figures come as no surprise considering that universities were established for men and by men (Mama, 2003; Gallagher and Morison, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). Because of societal responsibilities, care work at home and at work, women have very different leadership journeys compared to men (Moodly, 2022; Magoqwana et.al, 2019).

Theoretical framework

African feminist theory emerged out of a rejection of the mainstream and western understanding of feminism, that located itself within gender politics whilst ignoring issues of race, class and geographical contextualisation's and inform the ways in which African women construct their agency. Of which Sylvia Tamale (2020) reminds us that a productive reading of African (and women) lives should be within the understanding that the African identity is one that has been historically politicized. Similarly, Appiah (1992) argues that African or Africanness as an identity is rooted in a colonial conceptualisation and gaze.

According to Goredema (2010: 34), "African Feminism is a feminist epistemology and a form of rhetoric that has provided arguments, which validate the experience of women of Africa and African origin against a mainstream feminist discourse. It is a justice… and a social movement that aims to raise a global consciousness which sympathises with African women's histories, present realities and future expectations". This paper locates itself within an African feminist framework, to address the ways in which the academy and other colonial institutions have made use of exclusion as a practice of which African women have managed to organise and mobilize themselves, regardless of (April 2012). In the exclusion of African women and women's lives, this meant that when women entered these spaces, the "terms and conditions of how they functioned and existed were predetermined" (Tau, 2022: 48). According to Lewis (1993) mainstream feminist discourse did not see African women African women as part of their culture, because "when white middle-class feminists talk about 'women,' they mean white women, in the same way, that discussions of racism are usually predicated based on the experience of black men" (540). And as such, this study positions African women at the centre of expressing and articulating their experiences.

Methodology

The study used a qualitative design and specifically, existential phenomenology to explore the experiences of African women leaders in universities, to ascertain what informs their leadership practices. This study used phenomenology to focus on the ways in which the experiences of being in institutions of higher learning as African women has influenced the performance of their leadership styles and strategies. As a philosophy, phenomenology "rejects the idea that meaning and identity take place from a position of disembodied consciousness; instead, phenomenology argues that there is a relationship between human consciousness, thought and knowledge of the world" (Tau, 2022, 9). Merleau-Ponty's (1962) position on (existential) phenomenology, argues that human knowledge is best understood and found through the structures of human action (living) in the world. Motsemme postulates that existential phenomenology "offers a productive lens of inserting the body back into social theory without getting caught in the dichotomy of embodied-ness and body-lessness, nor to notions of embodiment that are reducible" (2011, 98). Which is against the tradition of thinking about the body as

passive, text and without agency that "brings the world into being" (Bakare-Yusuf, 2001, 53).

This paper examines the ways embodied experiences of African women leaders can advance meaning making because their gendered and racialised bodies "attract, and are the targets of, classism, racism and patriarchy" (Khunou, Canham, Khoza-Shangase, and Phaswana, 2019: 4). Because "existential phenomenological ideas of the body choose to forefront the body as a place of fundamental ontology" (Motsemme, 2011: 98). Existential phenomenology as emphasized by Ponty and later by Bakare-Yusuf (2001) and Motsemme (2011) in context to African women's bodies and meaning making, they are that our mere existence is grounded in what our bodies are or must be in the world and what that experience is. Because the socio-political contexts that African women's bodies find themselves in, influence their personhood and thus the process of them being in the world. So, the body is part of our "meaning-making strategies in our social worlds" (Motsemme, 2011, 98).

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants because the research was specific to these participants. Later, snowballing was employed, as the participants were middle to high-ranking leadership. Five participants were selected from various universities in South Africa, their positions ranged from Directors, Deans to Vice Chancellors. All the participants were women, and the criteria was exclusively women belonging to African descent: Black, Khoi-Khoi, San, so called Coloured and Indians identities coming from a heritage of colonial oppression "as they are subjects which have been historically excluded from the academy as well as leadership within the university" (Tau, 2022: 11). Noting that women of European decent also enter the university space after men, they were excluded from this study because they exist within a "dominant power-epistemic privilege" (Motsemme, 2003:71) giving them the advantage of accessing the university and leadership structures over African women.

Engaging the Data

The question guiding this study was to explore the ways in which African female leaders in universities relate to feminism or African feminisms and whether *"Feminism or African feminism inform the experiences of women who are leaders at universities in South Africa?"*. The two secondary questions of the research that became pertinent as participants reflected on their experiences were:

1. In what ways do gender and race shape their experiences of leadership and the university?
2. In what ways do the cultures of universities affect their leadership?

The Participants are labeled from A-E, with the p capitalized as symbolism of their names and titles which remain confidential. I have also assigned a different leadership position per participant; however, all participants fall within the bracket of middle to high level of leadership.

Participant	Identity marker (based on how participants referred to themselves)	Position (changed by researcher)
Participant A	African	Director of institute
Participant B	African	Director of School
Participant C	Black and African	Vice Chancellor
Participant D	African	Deputy Vice Chancellor
Participant E	Black	Executive Dean

The secondary questions emerged as a result of the conversation between the participants and researcher? Participant A shared:

> "The university is supposed to be for the public good, and if a university is for the public good, then it needs to be good to all its publics and women is part of those publics, and we are not visible in this…". Responding to another question on the citizenship of women in the universities, Participant A noted,

> "You know, we are citizens, but I think we are not fully, we are not those fully academic citizens that we should be. There are a lot of strong women emerging, lots of strong young women leaders emerging; maybe things will change. I don't know, but it's still very much a masculine space. We know that. Some people say, "Do we just like, you know, do we just need to demolish the whole university and start from scratch?" because, you know, it is so… it carries this legacy…".

Citizenship as McEwan (2005) argues, comes into play differently depending on one's socio-political contexts. Within the South African context, the end of apartheid for black women signaled the recognition for them to be full citizens, however there is still a tension as "inequality still looms as women's

lived experiences continue to be minimally recognised" (Segalo, 2015: 79). In explaining this tension, Yuval-Davis (1991) reminds us that citizenship requires a form of membership into a community and an experience of the rights and responsibilities within that community. Participant A raises two points in this quest for citizenship within the university space. The first is that the university is a changing structure of which we can see this through the inclusion of women and the continuous strides in retaining younger and emerging women into the academy. This is positive in the transformation trajectory of the university as the dynamic of who are in the the process of knowledge making and production are fundamental to changing the outlook of the university and what it will become for future generations. The second thing raised in this reflection is the question of legacy, and Participant A wonders if the university should be dismantled as it stands. Because the space itself is not framed to be an inclusive community, thus African women continue to face these tensions within the space and the questioning of their level of citizenship within the space, if any citizenship is ever recognized.

The literature on gender and citizenship, also shows that the debate around citizenship shifts when one group needs to give another citizenship, because a kind of citizenship that is given, can simply be taken away. This raises the question on whether universities really want to change their legacies of exclusion of marginalized groups and persons. And if the "awarding" of citizenship is something to be celebrated as that power can be taken away, as opposed to the establishing of different and new institutions where citizenship and community is framed in inclusive ways. Elsewhere, McEwan (2010: 739) reminds us that the end of apartheid was an attempt to "establish historical truth and collective memory for black women, who have often been most marginalised by colonialism and apartheid and excluded from dominant accounts of history". Here, Participant A reflects that this ideal has not been achieved yet and I argue that the ways in which African women leaders are thinking of the university is to build a new kind of legacy of what universities could represent. Their leadership particularly pushes back against this legacy of exclusion, and even amidst transformation trajectories, they can identify that there is something missing from how we measure progress. And for as long as the quality of the livelihoods of African women does not change within these spaces, then we cannot claim full citizenship in the university community.

The other Participants in addressing the question of citizenship by Participant A, believe strongly that their leadership is particularly meant to

establish these communities which ultimately can lead to establishing new institutional cultures or universities as mentioned above. Participant E shares that leadership is about making the linkages between the personal individual and the institution:

> "[I want to establish a] leadership that sought to explain to everybody that they are fine to be who they [are], is fine to come on into these institutions and retain their identity. So, for me, it's important that when we talk about leadership, when I talk about leadership [and] when I talk about myself as a leader, I don't see my leadership only being in instances where I was labelled as such by the institution…"

Participant E's vision as a leader, seeks to address the ways in which institutions tend to make one feel as if they do not belong within the spaces, however in addition to that it wants to ensure that those that fully belong should assimilate and change who they are to fit in. Yuval-Davis (2006) postulates that belonging is associated with feelings of being home and safe which becomes complex when threatened as this tends to politicize belonging. The challenge of African women leaders as we see here is that they take up the responsibility of having to address how the apartheid categories of socialization, of race, gender and class (Tau, 2022) have a deep-rooted legacy even in a post-apartheid context of maintaining "mechanisms that determine who belongs and who does not" (Murunga, 2005: 397).

 Of course, part of how one addresses this is to engage with the regime and cultures that have produced these legacies (Gqola, 2006), because now the work of African women leaders is also to mediate how to make the invisible, visible in complex and productive ways when colonialism and apartheid have particularly "used these women's hypervisibility as a way to violate them" (Gqola, 2006, 84). Gabeba Baderoon's (2011) work, specifically challenges us to consider the ways in which we look at bodies, where the ways in which those bodies are understood and viewed is a consequence of history. Participant E's leadership focuses on this, that African and black women who find themselves in the academy need not content with their identities and should be comfortable not only in their identities however in associating themselves as part of the identity of the space, the university. For Baderoon (2011) in referring to Zanele Muholi's work, African women in the academy when they are "given a space to write themselves, [ought to know that] they have ownership over their own voices" (2011, 398).

Participant B explains that part of building a community and framing a sense of belonging for African women in the academy is to be cognizant of the ways in which narratives and stereotypes creep in to keep them of the university community. Participant B, recalling a moment when they had hired a woman candidate for a leadership position, posits, "she was the best candidate…I think we must do that for quite some time because it takes a long time for people to unlearn their stereotypes. So, we must keep on emphasising that. So that they understand that women are put in these positions because they are the best in relation to whoever they competed against". These types of stereotypes are part of the ways in which institutions maintain their old order of doing things, these boys clubs or as Zulu (2003: 99) refers to them, the "'old boy network' ensures that women are left out of these critical information networks where important decisions are sometimes made, often in places frequented mostly by men."

Puwar (2004) further reminds us that this type of citizenship is a big negotiation which leaves women often at the receiving end. Although women can and do enter the university space, "it is certain types of bodies that are tacitly designated as being the 'natural' occupants of specific positions. Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong. In contrast, others are marked out as trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually), circumscribed as being 'out of place" (Puwar, 2004: 8). Kiguwa postulates that because universities are already constructed to host a specific kind of character and culture, that establish these pre-existing tropes, so when African women leaders entering this space means that their "bodies take up meaning in these spaces and [have to] navigate [their] presence in relation to these narrative tropes" (Kiguwa, 2019: 13). Participant B, who spoke to the committee that she was in, noted that indeed this woman candidate was qualified. This speaks to the ways in which women have to remind these spaces that they are citizens of the university too.

Similarly, Lihle Ngcobozi in *Mothers of the Nation: Manyanno women in South Africa* (2020), argues that the role of black women in community leadership is fundamental to the operations of communities, more so what Participant B demonstrates is that the leadership roles of African women in the university is linked to these "independent dimensions of black women's activism" (Ngcobozi, 2020, 59) which build networks and communities. This, I argue, is part of the ways in which African women leaders construct

communities within the university space that can make it possible for us to articulate the citizenship of African women in these spaces.

Participant C points to mentorship as a way in which these networks and communities can advance in the academy:

> "I think it's difficult to change anything as an individual, and we need to build, you know, networks and communities that create space for us and create space for others and particularly the people who are going to come after us. We need to create those spaces. But I do some very individual things like I mentor young African women, especially at PhD level or just post their PhD."

This further demonstrates what Moodly and Toni (2017) have argued, that the despite the strides made in the transformation trajectories of institutions, women still grapple with breaking the glass ceiling. This is particularly important considering that a study by Breetzke et al. (2020) found that although the intake of black African students is higher than that of whites (in the @2016 report by Statistics South Africa, 66 percent were black African, 19 percent were white, 8 percent were Indian/Asian, and 7 percent Coloured). When juxtaposed with the staff intake, the racial inequalities are exacerbated… black Africans are under-represented at every academic rank at the country's HEIs with the inequalities most pronounced at the professorial rank where 62 percent of professors are white compared with 27 percent for Black African" (Breetzke et al., 2020, 3).

African women who have been narrated and written about as disadvantaged and needing of being saved from whiteness, have demonstrated in various ways that this is not their story, as we see from the literature and the data of this study. Fundamentally, Participant C's mentorship offers a response to this very same narrative. Because through this those who are emerging in the space do not have to be read from being "uniformly disadvantaged, and [can] be able to appreciate their complex ways of being, and their own understandings and definitions of belonging" (Jimlongo, 2021: 33). This is essential in a context where so many narratives exist to which question the readiness of African and black women to occupy the space (Canham 2015).

Participant C suggests another way of thinking about how we build community, because through this access those who will enter the space can know that to inhabit a space like the university, should make one feel that "this is my home. I am not a foreigner. I belong here. This is not hospitality. It

is not charity" (Mbembe, 2016, 30). Ultimately Participant C along with many other African women leaders such as Phakeng (2015) also champion for, is the retainment of emerging and African women academics as this could lead to "the possible lowering of the glass ceiling for even younger potential black African women scholars" (Phakeng, 2015, 2). In building these networks, African women leaders make use of their experiences and their positions to advance and develop social functions and capital (Jean-Marie, 2008) for African women in the academy.

In *Museums and the reshaping of memory*, Davison (1998), argues that museums offer us an institutionalized form of memory which become public memory, this of course includes an act of inclusion and belonging, of whose history counts and whose doesn't. What Davison further makes us aware of, is how personal memory based on individual experience are not given this sense of authority to be part of official public memory. This making of memory and how we remember is what African women leaders aspire to have their experiences be a part of Participant D in reflecting of the ways in which they wish for their leadership to be tracked, expresses:

> "I would like to have women see me as a role model. To see that, you know, so and so from the Eastern Cape from this type of, you know, [place]. Having done all these things that people see themselves in you, they believe that they can also do it. It's not like you were, you grew up overseas so people should think that, you know, you went to the same places like them... You've been to the same places with them."

Central to the idea of citizenship and belonging is the ability to see yourself or your identity, your values reflected in the ethos of the space or community you are supposed citizenship of. Part of the layers of the #FeesMustFall and decolonization student movement of 2015-2017, included this. How we address belonging in a space, being reflected in its knowledge system and identifying yourself in the culture of the space. What Participant D raises here is how the politics of recognition (Mabokela & Magubane 2005) can play a fundamental role in the lives of emerging African women in the academy, especially because still, the "presence of black women in the academy brings discomfort to those who have crafted them out of the biopolitics of knowledge" (Khunou, et al. 2019, 2). The challenge with adopting an institution with a particular ideology, such as the European university, is that you adopt a way of thinking that "disregards other epistemic traditions" (Mbembe, 2016,

32). This is relevant in how such institutions would frame concepts like race and gender.

African gender scholar Oyewumi Oyeronke (1997) in their seminal work *The Invention of Women: Making an African sense of Western gender discourse*, contesting gender as a measurement of power in Africa, argues that Western knowledge relies on the binary-logic and understanding of the body to frame gender. That is to say that because the logic of maleness and femaleness in western logic has understood maleness as powerful and femaleness as not, lesser than, that tradition of thinking has been transported to the African continent. That is not to say that gender does not exist on the African continent, however Oyeronke explains that pre-colonial Africa through a reading of the Yoruba language uses other lenses to establish power relations, such as seniority and lineage and not necessary, if ever, gender.

This framing of gender, as a power metric, has led to the exclusion of women in the academy and more importantly the value of African women and their knowledge sets in building the various cannons of knowledge. And what this western patriarchy has done is to effectively, place African women outside the margins of the politics of memory, as well as historical knowledge and consciousness thus making sites such as the university, spaces that belong and should be owned by a particular group (McFadden, 2007).

As argued by Lister (1997) similarly, Participant D is also attempting to shift the very definition of citizenship, because it's not fixed. Participant D challenges us here to use agency in ways that can offer us different kinds of thinking of citizenship, that of thinking of their experience as part of the collective memory of women in the academy. Thus, finding citizenship and community is also about our role in making the university a possible museum for African women in the academy, as "collections are complex…as well as [reveal] fragments of former social milieux" (Davison, 1998, 146). However, these museums will carry these collections as complex as they are and will offer emerging African women scholars a home and sense of belonging, knowing that as Participant D says, *You've been to the same places with them*.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to highlights the lived experiences of African women in navigating the higher education landscape, with its history and particularly as they form part of its future. Through the cases of five

African women leaders in South African universities, the article reflects on how citizenship and belonging are navigated through the mapping of their leadership endeavours. A careful examination of the African women leaders in this study reveals that despite the factors that influence their lived experience and their current institutional locations, the value of belonging is central to how individuals build the collectives, community and citizenships. The post-apartheid and transformation discourses are grappling with the questions of which history ought to be reflected and how, these African women leaders are working, explicitly to make history. This making of history includes the complicated and often not considered to be knowledge, that of centering their experiences. However, through the reliance of the true embodiment of who they are and what colonialism and apartheid has suggested they are or not (in the university space). Because as Slattery (2000:212) reminds us, "to abandon the body is to abandon one's history and one's biography". This article fundamentally exposes the complication inherent in how the history of being as African, black and women in a university whose culture inherently rejects their existence. More so, it shows the ways in which African women are determined to change these institutional cultures for the future of the academic community.

Acknowledgements

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