Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Cape Town, South Africa: The Experience

of Black Women Academics

Jennifer Bonti-Ankomah

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Abstract

This thesis examines the lived experiences of Black women academics in South African universities, focusing on a case study from the University of Cape Town (UCT). Since the end of apartheid, scholars have questioned the disconnect between the goals and objectives of transformation strategies and the continued experiences of marginalization and oppression that Black women face. This study adds to this critical analysis by seeking to understand the main challenges that Black women experience in their careers and to assess how they view the transformation agenda, more commonly known outside of South Africa as equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives.

This thesis adopts an intersectional lens to study the experience of Black women, drawing on critical race theory and Black feminist thought. The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews with 10 Black women academics. Using the method of discourse analysis, I identify six common themes: experiences as a student, the strengths and limits of UCT's transformation agenda, stories of everyday racism experienced as a faculty member, identity as resilience, building communities of mutual support, and the effects of other forms of discrimination (e.g. age, citizenship and sexuality).

This thesis argues that while there is evidence that the transformation agenda has been somewhat successful with respect to equity and diversity, efforts remain inadequate to reorder the deeply rooted structures of oppression and the diverse challenges faced by Black women. In particular, the third element of EDI initiatives— 'inclusion'—remains a work-in-progress. Black women academics perceive that dominant institutional culture and norms prevent them from participating fully in spaces of higher education.

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Definitions:

BAC – Black Academic Caucus – a platform at the University of Cape Town that prioritizes the challenges of black academics and students and advocates for diversity and inclusivity within the university.

Black woman – a term used to describe the cultural identity and race of a woman. Used to describe a woman with African ancestral background. This study is not about non-binary individuals; all women interviewed are assumed to be cis-gendered.

Double employment – a term used by interviewees to define the experience of being not only being a lecturer/professor but also having to take on the role of being a supervisor and the unspoken responsibilities of being a mentor or parent for students and the ones to be the diversity representative

EDI – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Equity-seeking groups – those that experience marginalization and significant challenges in participating in society based on identifiers such as race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, class, etc.

Participation – the act of accessing the academic space and being actively involved, taking part in, and included in the activities and practices of that space. Different from inclusion.

Race – described as constructed ideology, beliefs and meaning attributed to the biological determinants of a person (Henry et al, 2018). Winant (1994, p.56) argues that the term is both based on "social structure and cultural representation."

Keywords: transformation, equity, diversity, inclusion, higher education, institutional culture, Black women academics

CHAPTER I: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1 Introduction

In 1997, my family and I moved to South Africa. It was only 3 years after apartheid ended and I remember thinking that the country was a vibrant, diverse place, filled with new opportunities and a sense of community. To this day, I still think that vibrant diversity is the essence of South Africa. However, I did not realize until I went back as an adult in 2015, that things are also complicated. It was disappointing at that time to realize how much inequality remains. Most people who call this country home still face deeply rooted issues of prejudice and discrimination and lack opportunities.

In 2015, I was an intern with Gender at Work, an international feminist knowledge network that works to end discrimination against women and build cultures of inclusion. During my placement in South Africa, I became inspired to explore further issues of equity and diversity, and how certain barriers keep women, particularly Black women, from participating in all spheres of everyday life.

My purpose in this study is not to speak negatively about a country where I once lived and worked. Instead, I hope to help uncover, unpack, and bring to light a topic that is indeed close to my heart and something I have been questioning for years. My personal experiences will not be included as part of this study; however, this personal perspective serves as a deeper explanation as to how unpacking this issue is significant to me as a Black woman, a person who is inspired by the people and history of the struggle in this country, as a feminist, and to other women who deserve a platform to share their experiences and have their voices heard. My hope is that my research, which aims to share the stories of Black women academics in South Africa, will be able to contribute to a larger discussion on diversity and equity in a post-apartheid era.

We Canadians may have something to learn from these experiences as well, as the advancing of equity, diversity and inclusion are not just challenges experienced in South Africa, but are challenges experienced on a global scale (Puwar, 2004; Mirza, 2006; Dua, 2009; Ahmed, 2012; Henry et al, 2017; Abawi, 2018).

In this project, I explore Black women's experiences as academics in higher education institutions in South Africa and how equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives are operationalized within South Africa education system. Specifically, I focus on Black women's experiences at the University of Cape Town, drawing on interviews with 10 women at different stages of their career and from different departments of the university.

I chose the University of Cape Town for three main reasons. First, it has high standing as a higher education institution (both nationally and internationally). Second, it was historically a Whites-only university. Third, it has made significant and highly-publicized efforts to transform the university by improving the diversity of its student body and its academic staff. One of my goals was to help measure 'success' from the perspectives of Black women professors.

1.1 Significance of this Study

This research uses a current case study and the real-world experiences of Black women academics to understand how universities approach and implement transformation strategies, and more particularly, how they address marginalization and discrimination against equity-seeking groups. The gap that this research hopes to fill is to reintroduce the importance of the voices of Black women academics, while also including their lived experiences into research and discussions centered transformation within a South African context. Besides the work of Mabokela & Mawila (2004), Mahabeer et al. (2018), and a small few, the interviews conducted

as part of this study provide a more recent understanding of the institutional culture and barriers within a university and adds a fresh intersectional perspective on the diverse challenges that academics face in being both Black, women, and having other identities affected by structures of oppression (i.e., age, level of experience, disability, citizenship, among other identities).

In a similar approach as Mahabeer et al (2018), the objective of this study is to create a space for these diverse challenges to be discussed. However, in adding to prior studies, my research looks to dissect these challenges in relation to EDI and transformation efforts in South African universities, focusing on the efforts of a university that is well known, carries high standing, and highly advertises its transformational agenda. I specifically hope, through this research, to recognize the gaps on the discussions centered on EDI and add to how universities transform so that equity-seeking groups (and particularly Black women in the context of this thesis) are able to fully participate.

1.2 Context: Apartheid in South Africa

The majority of the population of South Africa is not—and never has been—White. Nonetheless, it is still classified as a "settler state" (Glaser, 2001) due to its history of colonialism. Since the 1600s many Europeans settled in South Africa to conduct business and grow crops in the country's fertile land (Glaser, 2001). Thanks to the country's British colonial ties, there was also a large immigration of people from South Asia, resulting in the large proportion of Indian residents today (McKeever et al, 2017). Over time, European settlers began to increase in numbers, creating settlements and asserting more and more control over resources (McKeever et al, 2017).

After its victory in 1948, the Nationalist Party used their political control to codify a system of racial inequality (Hind, 1985) that came to be known as apartheid (which means 'apartness'). Within a few years, the Party set in place laws and regulations to create a specific system of racial categorization and inequality; Blacks, Whites, Coloureds, and Indians (McKeever, 2017). Of course, these apartheid laws were not the first instance of racial segregation into South African law (i.e., the 1913 *Land Act* which enforced territorial segregation by race); however, after World War II and the subsequent financial crisis, the government's fear of losing control and political power led the country to a misguided ideology of separation (History, 2020). Once the Nationalist Party was in place, the main goal was to separate the White population from non-Whites, separate the non-Whites from each other, and even separate the Black population based on tribe in order for power to remain and be solidified in the hands of the White minority (Ross, 2008).

Apartheid was a legally sanctioned order which created unequal systems of operation and divided South Africa along racial lines, politically, economically, and socially (Montle & Mogoboya, 2018). It created a strict racial hierarchy that placed the Black population, who were the majority, as the lowest group in the social hierarchy. The Black majority was systematically dispossessed from land, resources, and denied employment opportunities (Hind, 1985). The Coloured and Indian population were also denied certain opportunities and received differential rights to that of the White population (Archives Direct, 2015). They, too, were restricted from having certain jobs, unable to marry between races, and could not participate as part of the government (Archives Direct, 2015).

While the impact of apartheid on all people classified as either Black, Coloured or Asian was significant, the impacts on women were particularly significant, especially women in the

lowest ranked category, that is, Black women (Cook, 1985). Black women faced the double

oppression of being Black in a racially segregated society and being a woman in a patriarchy

(Henry & Glenn, 2009). The main employment opportunity available to Black women were to

become domestic workers, farm labourers, or to stay at home to take care of the housework, care

for sick family members, the elderly and children (Cook, 1985). Only a small number of Black

women were able to acquire other jobs such as nursing, teaching, secretariat work, and industrial

work (i.e., canning industry); and even so, were still paid significantly lower than White women

(Cook, 1985).Education was compulsory and free for White girls. However, Blacks, Coloureds

and Asians were subjected to different educational laws based on their racial classification

(Unterhalter, 1990). Specifically, education was not compulsory or free for Black girls until the

end of apartheid and only became free for some Indian and Coloured girls in the 1960s (Bonin,

1996). Those who were able to attend school were taught in poor conditions with inadequate

resources and were mostly instructed on how to do domestic service work. Mabokela & Mawila

(2004) argue that this system structured women's aspirations and relegated them to the status of

second-class citizens of their societies.

After decades of struggle, apartheid came to a formal end in 1994 but the effects of the

system are still evident (Montle & Mogoboya, 2018). Today, South Africa is one of the most

unequal countries in the world (Sehoole & Adeyemo, 2016) with a GINI coefficient[1] of 0.63

(Mckeever et al, 2017). The World Bank Report 'Overcoming Poverty and Inequality in South

Africa' (2018) outlined that the inequality in the labour market is the biggest contributor to the

country's income inequality. The White population earns substantially higher wages than the

other racial groups. Statistics South Africa observed that in 2015, Whites earn approximately

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[1] Measurement of income/wealth inequality within a given country

R24,646 ($1,836 CAD)[2] per month as compared to Blacks who earn approximately R6 899 ($514 CAD), Coloureds who earn approximately R9,339 ($696 CAD), and Indians/Asians who earn approximately R14,235 ($1,060 CAD) per month (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Further, men on average earn 30% more than women in the workforce, are more likely to have higher paying jobs/positions and are more likely to be employed compared to women (Statistics South Africa, 2020). In terms of poverty, in 2015, about 55% of the population lives in poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2017). With those living in poverty, 64% are Black, 41% are Coloured, 5.9% are Indian/Asia, and 1% is White (Statistics South Africa, 2017). These are just a few examples of the stark disparities physically present in the living conditions of South Africans.

Inequality is evident in many areas within South Africa, but one of the major challenges is the education system. South Africa's education is considered to be one of the most developed in Africa, however, there are great disparities along race, gender, and class lines (Mckeever et al, 2017; Sehoole & Adeyemo, 2016). Since the end of apartheid, the new democratic government under the guidance of the African National Congress (ANC) has made great attempts to redress past wrongs and has committed to promoting equity and diversity of both students and teachers in schools, colleges, and universities (Mahebber et al, 2018). After 1994, South Africa began to work towards implementing inclusive education to align with international trends and practices as well as the country's new values outlined in the constitution, also considered to be one of the most progressive in the world at the time (Walton, 2001).

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[2] Based on April 2020 conversion. 1 ZAR=0.074 CAD

1.3 South Africa's Transformation Agenda in Higher Education

Since the transition from apartheid to post-apartheid, "the transformation agenda" has been the privileged term in discussions about EDI interventions in the education system. As part of this agenda, many interventions and frameworks have been put in place to support academics of colour in accessing university workplaces. These interventions include efforts made by university central administrations that have, in the last few years, developed inclusivity departments and have pushed for improvements in EDI (Mahabeer et al, 2018).

Two well-known examples of national efforts and promises to advance EDI are the 2001 *National Plan for Higher Education*, focused on redressing the disparities within the higher education system left behind after apartheid for both students and academics; and the 2015 *Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework*, focused on staffing within the higher education system. Both these plans have been critical in establishing the discourse and practices on EDI interventions. The transformation agenda has enjoyed a modicum of success, which includes the increase in the diversity of the staff and student body and the development of inclusivity practices in higher education institutions (Scott & Ivala, 2019).

At the University of Cape Town (UCT), the case study chosen for this analysis, transformation is a well-advertised priority. UCT has adopted a two-fold approach: redress and healing. Redress involves understanding the unjust circumstances left by apartheid and setting right the situations that have affected certain groups of people (University of Cape Town, 2019b). Healing refers to moving forward into a better future and emphasizing forgiveness as a way forward (UCT, 2019b).

The university values its efforts on improving the percentage of women academics. As of 2018, 44% of academics are women, and their commitment is to increase this number as

strategies are put in place (UCT, 2019c). The University of Cape Town has also built a complete office for inclusivity (UCT, 2020a). Its mission is to "to provide effective support and encourage collaborative leadership at the University of Cape Town through evidence-led inclusivity programmes" and is designed to respond to "transformation, sexual and gender-based violence, disability and cultural change" (UCT, 2020a). Recently, they have also administered an inclusivity survey in order for staff to voice their concerns (UCT, 2019b). Although there are many who question the effectiveness of surveys or inclusivity offices,[3] these approaches help to shift the EDI discussion to talk not only about underrepresentation but ways to address systemic issues and institutional processes.

Despite considerable progress at UCT in promoting EDI, complete transformation is proving to be difficult to achieve. Inequalities for both students and staff continue to exist, and there is little change in terms of institutional culture and support for women (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2017). Furthermore, evidence-based data on improvements to diversity at UCT is still lacking. While there is more evidence on students, it is difficult to find data on the percentage change in the number of women academics over time. There is even more of a challenge in finding a breakdown based on other social identities.

There is widespread perception that because of the major affects of racial discrimination and exclusion under apartheid, efforts on transforming South African universities have been largely centered on improving equity in terms of race. While a very important and necessary objective, these focused efforts have left little room in exploring and addressing the experiences

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[3] There are a few strengths and weaknesses of surveys; although, a well discussed weakness is that survey conclusions are based on who responds and their understanding of the question; therefore, it sometimes may not be representative or provide fulsome evidence of the lived experiences of those involved (Wolfgang & Traugott, 2008)

of oppression and discrimination based on gender, particularly from an intersectional perspective that aims to understand the diverse experiences of Black women (Johnson et al., 2012).

1.4 Research objectives

The aim of this study is to unpack the "complexities" of EDI and to reflect on alternative ways to appropriately advance transformation within universities, not only in South Africa, but on a global scale. This research also aims to put the margin at the centre of the analysis by privileging the voices and experiences of those who are being targeted by EDI efforts. As the community organizing principle, "nothing about us, without us" dictates, I argue that the experiences of the beneficiaries of a policy ought to play a key role in deciding whether that policy has been 'successful.'

Intersectionality will also be an important lens for this study. The principle of intersectionality contends that it is impossible to separate our experiences of being treated differently. In the context of this study, participants reported that their feelings of inclusion and/or inclusion in the academe do not only come from being Black or being a woman but both. As one of the interviewees Thuthu (all names in this thesis are pseudonyms to protect identities) put it, there are many layers of struggle in any environment (personal interview, February 2020). It is not only necessary to focus on improving diversity within universities based on race alone or on gender alone but to understand that there are many intersecting identities impacted by different structures and histories of oppression, such as colonialism, heteronormative patriarchy, ableism, and ethno-nationalism. It is these systems of power that remain deeply rooted within the institutional practices of universities; and further, it is these structures that impact the lived experiences of Black women differently based on their social identities. In order to highlight

areas that need improvement, it is important to assess the different ways that individuals interact with these structures (Crenshaw, 1991).

Overall, this thesis aims to show that although there is evidence of some success, transformation efforts designed to advance EDI for equity-seeking groups remain inadequate to transform the deeply rooted structures of oppression and the diverse challenges faced by Black women. Even though the goal of achieving equity, diversity, and inclusion in higher education has been consistently promised, betterments have only partially been realized. Until efforts repurpose guided attention on addressing and challenging institutional cultures and deeply rooted discriminatory practices, the goals of EDI initiatives will not be achieved.

The main questions that guide this research are the following:

- What are the main obstacles that Black women experience (individual, institutional, structural[4], etc.,) in the advancement of their academic careers?
- What are the perceptions of Black women university professors regarding the measures being taken to address questions of equity, diversity and inclusion in the academic labour force?
- How have the initiatives adopted by the University of Cape Town helped to achieve EDI for Black women? What are their strengths and limitations?

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[4] The way in which an institution is organized or arranged. Different to institutional as this term refers to the systemic way in which the institution functions and the deeply rooted ideologies that guide daily processes.

1.5 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Equity, diversity and inclusion have become dominant buzzwords in the last few decades in

higher education as well as in other sectors of the economy. Governments are discussing how to

advance EDI within different sectors and businesses and institutions are following suit. Many of

the discussions have been centered on diversifying the workforce and identifying appropriate

interventions to reduce challenges for equity-seeking groups (see for example, McKinsey Global

Institute Report, 'The Future of Women at Work' and the observations on the various impacts on

women's jobs as a means to advance diversity[5]).

Depending on the country and context, EDI initiatives typically aim to address forms of

discrimination such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, class, and religion

(Tamtik & Guenter, 2019).[6] While this study set out to investigate race and gender, a number of

other intersections emerged in the course of the research such as age, citizenship and disability,

which I discuss in Chapter 4. Interestingly, the research participants did not mention other

possible important grounds for discrimination, such as religion, sexuality, ethnicity and/or class.

I reflect more on these silences in the section on limitations in Chapter 3.

Equity, diversity and inclusion usually go together when implementing interventions for

change within institutions, although, these terms are not synonymous. When reviewing the

literature, I observed that these terms are often mentioned as practices to be advanced, but it is

rare to find a clear definition on what they mean. Equity often times is related to the concept of

fairness, but many scholars argue that it is more than just fairness; equity is more importantly a

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[5] McKinsey Global Institute. (2019). The future of women at work: Transitions in the age of automation. Retrieved from https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/the-future-of-women-at-work-transitions-in-the-age-of-automation

[6] Indigenous status is a related but separate issue. In Canada for example, the Canadian Association of University Teachers has an Aboriginal caucus, and two members of that caucus sit on the Equity Committee in order to share information across the caucuses on issues on which there is overlap.

mechanism for addressing systemic power and privilege in institutions (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008). Diversity stresses the uniqueness of each individual and takes into account people of differing backgrounds and cultures (Ahmed, 2012). Inclusion is more of an elusive term that has not been fully defined in literature. Based on the perspectives and responses of the participants in this study, however, inclusion involves not only including diverse individuals in a given space, but also observing how diverse people are incorporated into everyday practices and removing barriers that keep diverse individuals from participating.

Nonetheless, these terms complement and are linked to each other especially when institutions are dealing with transformation and removing barriers for equity-seeking groups. Although, it is important to note that these concepts carry different values and ways of doing that need to be observed when dealing with transformative action. When looking at the concepts, they separately deal with different aspects of transforming spaces as described above. What is observed in this study, however, is that because of the ambiguities of the definitions and meaning behind these terms, when put into practice, they often become bundled into one approach that affects one area of change (i.e., diversifying the individuals within an institution and improving opportunities for all), but not all areas (i.e., addressing practices that allow different groups to be accepted, welcomed, and able to successfully participate). For this reason, the use of the terms can pose as a barrier to complete transformation and to opportunities of successful participation by all equity-seeking groups (Ahmed, 2012).

1.6 Theoretical Lens

While the government has worked to improve the inclusion of Black and female academics in South African universities, these efforts have not fully translated into having more diverse and

inclusive environments for Black women in academic institutions. On the contrary, my research confirms the findings of other scholars (hooks, 2000; Puwar, 2004; Henderson, 2010; Johnson et al, 2012) who suggest that these institutions continue to be characterized by a systemic culture of discrimination, wherein certain groups of people, such as women and Black academics, still feel like 'outsiders' within the academy.

My research project therefore takes a feminist standpoint approach to identify the factors that help explain why South Africa's higher education system is still so inequitable, and to document the experiences of Black women academics in universities to help understand the causes and effects of these inequities from the point of view of Black women academics themselves. Harding (1991) notes that this approach allows for the marginalized and oppressed to generate knowledge that is less distorted and privileged compared to the socially privileged who currently produce knowledge.

To provide a lens into analyzing the challenges that Black women academics face in universities, this paper uses two analytical frameworks: Black feminist thought and feminist critical race theory (hooks, 1981; Collins, 1990; Delgado, 1995; Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Razack, 2002). These are both wide-ranging and over-lapping theories that address a host of issues related to oppression and the participation, empowerment, and survival of women; however, I will focus specifically on the institutional elements of these frameworks that address questions related to the struggles of Black women within predominantly white institutions, especially institutions of higher learning (Henry & Glenn, 2009).

Black feminist thought emerged in the late 1800s, through different feminist voices in the United States. It emerged as a means to question and reject oppressive characteristics of US slavery that subsequently shaped the identities, statuses, and relationships of Black women (e.g.,

see Truth, 1951[7]; Cooper, 1892[8]; Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981; Collins, 1990). This framework seeks to understand the intersecting oppression of Black women within certain social contexts and promotes justice and their overall empowerment within different spaces. As Collins (2000) states, black feminist theory is centered on the experiences of Black women and, further, not just acknowledging those experiences but finding meaning behind those experiences. She further contends that while racism is a shared experience with all Black people, the way it is experienced or responded to is different by individual as gender, class, age, sexuality, religion, etc. plays a big role (Collins, 2009). For Black women, they experience oppression and marginalization being both black and women; therefore, their unique experiences are important in understanding the needs of Black women as a group (Simien, 2006).

As other scholars build on these arguments, the framework has become shaped around interrogating the way power and identity intersect and it aims to deliberately focus on individual experiences at the standpoint of Black women themselves (Mahabeer et al, 2018). Thus, critiquing interlocking systems of oppression and valuing self-definition are inherent within black feminist thought (Walkington, et al, 2017). It is self-definition and distinct lived experiences that produce knowledge on the Black female experience (Collins, 2000). Applied to higher education, Black feminist thought recognizes the marginalization that Black women experience within institutions and uses this framework as a means to deal with oppressive spaces (Henry & Glenn, 2009).

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[7] The famous speech, "Ain't I a Woman", made by Sojourner Truth in 1851. Truth challenged discussions on women's rights and discussed systems of oppression impacting Black women during a time where Black women's voices were not being heard or included.
[8] *A voice from the South* (1998), written by Anna J Cooper is known as one of the first pieces of literature to express Black feminist perspectives

Feminist critical race theory adds to the black feminist thought critique of societal and institutional racism and focuses specifically on ensuring that both women and people of colour's gendered, classed, sexual identities, and cultural experiences and histories are included and understood (Yosso et. Al, 2004). This theory is subset of critical race theory (CRT) which emerged in the United States in 1970s as a critique of legal models and their absence of attention to race and racial discrimination (e.g., see Bell, 1980; Matsuda et al., 1993; Delgado, 1995; Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Valdes et al., 2002). CRT interrogates traditional legal models and theories and their ability to support racial and social justice. It questions "who holds the power" and argues that "the playing field is unequal and [it is important to dismantle] the inequality in processes, structures, and ideologies that uphold white privilege and advantage" (Crichlow, 2015, 189).

To add to the sometimes insufficient attention to the legal and social challenges of other marginalized groups, scholars began to fill in the gap. From this emerged the subsets and extensions of CRT that sought to amplify other marginalized voices going beyond racialized peoples (Wing, 1997). For feminist CRT, women of colour felt that CRT often placed the challenges of Black men at the forefront and feminist theories often placed white women at the forefront (Delgado, 1995). Scholars (e.g., Delgado, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995); thus, feminist CRT was introduced as a means to place women of colour at the center "rather than in the margins or footnotes of the analysis" (Wing, 1997, p. 948). Feminist CRT goes deeper to explore discrimination at multiple levels that include a more intersectional approach focused on (but is not limited to) race, gender, sexuality, and class. While these subsets present multiple different perspectives, they still continue to maintain core elements of CRT which analyzes power in institutions; advocates for social justice for people who find themselves on the margin; and seeks

to give a voice to those victimized or discriminated against by a range of social institutions (Crichlow, 2015).

In building on these theories at different levels, scholars (e.g., see hooks, 2000; Razack, 2002; Puwar, 2004; Johnson et al., 2012) have examined the importance of identities and the connection they have to institutional spaces. In recognizing the power that institutions have in reproducing certain identities of the people occupying these spaces, Razack (2002) argues that space produces identifications of both privileged and degenerate bodies and those who are perceived to be belonging to a specific site. These identification processes establish certain bodies as 'rightful' or 'natural' occupants within spaces, such as university settings; bodies who have the right to belong and bodies who are marked as trespassers and being out of place (Schick, 2000; Puwar, 2004).

For Black women in South Africa's higher education institutions, Black women are underrepresented and at times excluded from certain opportunities and positions (Naidu, 2018). Further, the exclusion that these women experience within their work environments is argued to be a demonstration of their 'outsiderness' by other occupants of those spaces, and this exclusion is reinforced by social and cultural standards that place the perspectives of Black women at the margin (hooks, 2000; Johnson et al, 2012). Therefore, these institutions and the practices within these spaces create an environment where certain occupants are deemed illegitimate occupants who can and should be excluded, practices in which an education redress on diversity and equity should aim to correct.

The importance of these theories and arguments is that they advocate the significance of the stories of those victimized and marginalized by social institutions. CRT, feminist CRT, and black feminist thought theorists argue that it is these stories and the telling of these experiences

that help us dismantle ideologies and perceptions of race and the unpacking of historical and current practices that mute the voices of marginalized groups (Henry & Glenn, 2009). Therefore, the role of these voices is central. Overall, these frameworks are vital in the analysis of this study as they support a deeper understanding and analysis in the processes by which Black women academics experience marginalization and exclusion within certain institutions (Walkington, 2017).

1.7 Outline of thesis

Chapter one provides detail on the purpose and objectives of this study and summarizes the three research questions, the case study, and the theoretical lens that guide the conclusions of this research. Additionally, context on the history of South Africa and EDI efforts that promote transformation is introduced.

There are many scholars who have examined equity, diversity, and inclusion practices within academic institutions and the impacts those strategies have on equity-seeking groups. Chapter two outlines the challenges faced by Black women academics in universities and presents the arguments discussed in literature on the barriers that keep equity-seeking groups, and particularly Black women, from participating within academic spaces. Further, this section will highlight the issues surrounding institutional cultures and norms and the effects these norms have on advancing EDI efforts.

Chapter three provides an overview on the approaches used to conduct this research and a rationale for the methodological approaches used. The results of this study are grounded on using the University of Cape Town as a case study and gaining the personal perspectives of Black women academics within this university. This section thus outlines the process used to conduct

semi-structured interviews, gather data, and analyze the data found using thematic coding. The chapter will also provide detail on the rationale of this case selection and include reasons why the experiences and voices of these women were vital to the study. Final conclusions in this section will discuss limits to the methodological approaches used and the ways, I as a researcher practiced reflexivity to navigate through the data acquired.

Chapter four provides detail on the personal perspectives of the participants interviewed. This section discusses the experiences of Black women academics being both students and academics and their thoughts on UCT's transformation agenda. It highlights in detail the experiences of everyday racism and the struggles with participating within the university as Black women professors and lecturers. Discussions on the institutional culture and the barriers it presents are highlighted, along with examples of the different ways Black women navigate these barriers in order to survive as academics within their university. Finally, this section highlights the different ways that discrimination and oppression manifest in relation to the diverse social identities of these particular academics and the diverse challenges experienced in being Black, a woman, non-South African, young, a new academic, and disabled.

Chapter five provides the results of the overall project and the conclusions to the research questions guiding this study. Conclusions highlight that although, EDI efforts have improved the experiences of Black woman academics in the last few years, there is still more work to be done. These efforts focus on improving quota and career opportunities for Black women, but still do not fully address the many challenges they as diverse women experience within the university. Further, the institutional culture continues to carry oppressive and discriminatory practices that make it difficult for EDI strategies to fully transform the university. Final conclusions outline

recommendations for strategies to appropriately advance EDI and opportunities for further

research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2 Introduction

Over the years, many feminist, Black, and/or anti-racist scholars have observed and challenged how equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) efforts are enforced in academic institutions around the world and how institutional norms and practices have affected women within academic environments (hooks, 2000; Puwar, 2004; Mirza, 2006; Ahmed, 2012; Henry et al, 2017, Mahabeer et.al, 2018). Specifically, in the South African context, the remnants of apartheid and its affects in the present context have been an important study point for scholars (Bonin, 1996; Martineau, 1997; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004) aiming to understand the concrete impacts that institutional practices and norms have on women's experiences within academic institutions. Just as the United States and Canada, South Africa has deeply rooted historical practices that act as barriers for women and people of colour. This section focuses on EDI challenges within South African higher education institutions and the challenges that Black women experience as academics within these institutions.

2.1 Higher Education in South Africa: Women of Colour

Literature on education institutions in South Africa emphasizes the continuities between the apartheid and the post-apartheid eras. During apartheid, education, particularly higher education, was not equally administered to the whole population (Bonnin, 1996). As Nkomo (1990) explains, school systems were divided by race and language, creating a very unequal system in which Whites were privileged. Even before apartheid was enforced, there were universities reserved for Whites (English and Afrikaans language schools) and universities reserved for non-

Whites; although, many universities did allow for the admission of a small number of non-White students before apartheid was fully enforced (Davis, 1996).

The National Party government introduced the Bantu Education policy in 1953, which enforced a system of separate all-White and all-Black schools from elementary schools to universities (Christie & Collins, 1882). This control had a deep effect on higher education institutions as the shift meant that previously mixed universities, such as the University of Cape Town, were restricted to students and academics of colour (UCT, n.d; Christie & Collins, 1882). The establishment of this divide exacerbated severe race and gender disparities in terms of conditions, resources and the quality of teaching (Nkomo, 1992; Christie & Collins, 1982). For example, the objective of the apartheid government was to ensure that resources were not taken from White education; therefore, per-capita spending was significantly lower on Black education compared to White education. By 1982 the government was spending approximately R1,211 (about $93 CAD) on every White child while they were only spending approximately R146 (about $11 CAD) for every Black child (Boddy-Evans, 2020). There was also a shortage in qualified Black teachers that could be purposed for Black schools (about 2.3% of Black teachers had university degrees compared to 33% of White teachers) and because of this the teacher-student ratio ranged from 40-60:1, depending on the school and level (Boddy-Evans, 2002; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d). Robertson et al (1997) state that racial and gender disparities became legalized through this policy and non-White academics with the same qualifications and experiences were earning much less then their White colleagues.

This separate and unequal system excluded Black South Africans from various aspects of life, including job opportunities (Bonnin, 1996; Nkomo, 1990), specifically Black women who were doubly affected by apartheid and the patriarchal education system. Boddy-Evans (2020)

argues that this system kept White collar jobs in the hands of White South Africans, while Black

South Africans could only maintain manual and unskilled labour positions. While percentages of

girls and women participating in primary and secondary school slowly grew during the apartheid

era, climbing to 48% of total students by 1993, gender discrimination persisted. There were huge

gaps between male and female enrollment in different areas such as science, technology,

engineering, and mathematics, which is still evident today (Martineau, 1997). Between 1985 to

1993, Black women often times remained in the teaching and nursing disciplines (Martineau,

1997). Further, in universities, large numbers of women took correspondence courses which

involved less interaction between professors and students and less opportunities to receive the

resources they needed to achieve their academic goals (Bonnin, 1996). By 1993, women only

carried 32% of teaching and research positions and made up the majority of the positions below

the junior lecturer level (Mabokela, 2002). Mabokela & Mawila (2004) argue that this unequal

system guided how women, especially Black women, would be able to access and participate in

certain kinds of opportunities and jobs, reinforcing gender-based roles and subordinate status in

all aspects of their lives (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).

Now in a post-apartheid era, South Africa's educational policymakers struggle with one

of the most challenging developmental issues facing the government today: redressing

inequalities (Martineau, 1997). As discussed in chapter one, South African universities have

focused on a transformation agenda that combats the challenges of diversity and inclusion. Due

to the ways in which transformation is approached, definitions of equity, diversity and inclusion

is at times confusing or elusive and therefore, this makes it difficult for universities to

operationalize an appropriate strategy for all equity-seeking groups (UCT, 2019).

It is important to note that progress has been made as more women and students of colour are now participating in academic spaces. As of 2016, 58% of students in universities are female participants and about 80% of students are non-White (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Nonetheless, the gaps between men and women, and Whites and non-Whites, quickly widen as more men and White student and staff are represented at the graduate and post-graduate levels as well as senior level positions (Naidu, 2018). Additionally, Mabokela & Mlambo (2017) observe that although numbers have increased, retention for Black students and staff continues to be a concern. Naidu (2018) argues that the issue that should be questioned is that while the percentage of female and non-White students is larger, this trend has not translated into the staffing structures of universities, as there continues to be low percentages of women at senior levels. This trend is difficult to understand when the government and universities are constantly advertising plans to transform the academic workforce into a more diverse and inclusive space (Shackleton et al., 2006). There seems to be a disconnect between plans and practice that needs to be further unpacked.

2.2 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies within South African Universities

Research on South African universities demonstrates that government efforts to promote equity, diversity and inclusion have been centered on improving the underrepresentation of Black and female academics in staffing pools and recruitment processes (Shackleton et al., 2006). This is evident in the history of many of the government's nation-wide plans towards educational transformation. For example, the first nation-wide plan on education after apartheid, begun with *The Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (1997). This Paper emphasizes the Department of Education's vision to "promote equity of

access and fair chances of success to all" (Department of Education, 1997, p. 7). Access and opportunities were a big focus for the government's education transformation strategy, especially since apartheid had placed many barriers on Black and women academics to take up certain positions (Shackleton et al., 2006). *The Education White Paper 3* was the nation-wide plan to guide post-apartheid redress within higher education institutions; however, within the next three years the department recognized gaps in how educational transformation was defined and approached as it did not explicitly confront issues of equity, diversity and inclusion as a way to restructure the higher education system.

To address some of these gaps, in 2001 the government introduced the *National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE)*. The NHPE was the first major national implementation framework that openly aimed to confront issues of equity, diversity and inclusion in higher education by restructuring the sector and how it functions (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2017). Its objective was to provide clear set goals to be achieved in the 21st century with the hopes that future plans would build off and strengthen the NPHE's approaches (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2017). While smaller frameworks for higher education transformation were put forward as recommendations following the introduction of the NPHE, this plan is the main national plan (until the introduction of the *Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework* in 2015) that enforces a system where the Ministry uses both planning and funding as the primary levers for ensuring that race and gender inequities would be eradicated (NPHE, 2001, p.6). Although the NPHE outlined additional mechanisms for transformation on top of those discussed in the 1997 *Education White Paper 3* (e.g., inclusion and retention), goals to achieve EDI still centered on increasing the number of Blacks and females in universities. The plan mostly outlines under-representation and diversity among students and academics as major challenges within higher education institutions and

highlights the priority for institutions to develop equity plans with clear targets for rectifying race and gender inequities (NPHE, 2001). The plan; however, mostly outlines equity and diversity efforts among students, with less detail on addressing diversity and representation among academics and staff (NPHE, 2001).

The NPHE continues to guide higher education transformation and EDI practices for universities today; however, as a means to place greater emphasis on supporting Black and women staff within higher education institutions, in 2015, the government introduced another planned and funded framework called, Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF).This framework became another major, and more recent, government priority for higher education institutions, which still continues to follow the principles and approaches of the NPHE, but the financial support that comes out of this framework goes specifically to supporting university staff and academics. The SSAUF highlights priorities on ensuring that Black and women staff are better represented in universities; that there are less barriers for retention; and that there are more opportunities for them to be placed in higher positions (SSAUF, 2015). The framework particularly states that in order to increase transformation efforts in universities "recruitment efforts will need to prioritize the recruitment of Black and women academics" (SSAUF, 2015, p.3); and this is where efforts and funding has mostly gone towards in the last five years.

These plans have widely helped to increase the number of Black and women academics within universities and have subsequently supported Black women through different strategies such as financial and research support. Each plan discussed are examples of the government recognizing certain gaps in previous national plans and adjusting based on new understandings of EDI and requirements for transformation. While new layers of strategies to drive

transformation has been revealed and the strategies of these three major national plans have resulted in positive changes in higher education, most of the EDI practices still focus great efforts on access and diversifying student body and staff. Access is important, although most of the focus has been on 'getting the foot in the door', with much less attention on what happens once equity-seeking groups enter; that is, once the space is diverse, how do diverse people freely participate within the space and how are they included (Badat, 2010).

Badat (2010) and Mahabeer et al (2018) argue that educational redress focusing on "equity of access and fair chances of success to all" is important (Badat, 2010, p. 6), but redress should also most importantly recognize the social exclusion and marginalization that takes place within these institutions. Based on the approaches of current national equity plans, the issue is that EDI should not only be addressed in terms of opening doors to marginalized groups, but should also be focused on the complexities and diverse intersections of race and gender that make up South Africa's social contexts and realities (Shackleton et al., 2006). By observing the ANC's discourses on EDI within higher education, scholars (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004; Badat, 2010; Booi et al, 2017; Mahabeer et.al, 2018) have witnessed how transformation efforts have camouflaged and at times reinforced an institutional culture that overshadows Black female academics and, in the end, is unsuccessful in representing Black women academics in these exclusionary spaces. For higher education plans to be truly transformative, Badat (2010) argues that redress needs to go beyond issues of access and opportunity and extend to naming, challenging, and addressing the alienating and marginalizing cultures that is evident in South African higher education institutions. Therefore, it is the institutional culture that needs deeper consideration and examination. Booi et al (2017) argue the issue is that transformation efforts have done little to address the ideological processes within universities which continue to

cultivate an environment of privilege, distributions of power, and social exclusion. Hence, addressing institutional cultures and practices that are informed by racialized and gendered ideologies inherited from apartheid and patriarchy is argued as key to addressing Black women's ability to participate and succeed as academics within universities (Booi et al, 2017).

2.3 Universalizing Experiences

Transformation efforts have widely helped to increase the number of women in universities and have allowed for more Black women to take on management positions. However, statistics clearly show that Black women are still in the minority and are still mostly concentrated in certain faculties and lower level positions (Moodly, 2015). De la Rey (in the Higher Education Conference Report 2009) argues that the lack of proper implementation of gender equity in institutions is due to the lack of understanding of the complexities of gender discrimination and the biases that influence these understandings. One example includes the terms 'Blacks' and 'women'. These are the main terms that continue to fall in relation to EDI efforts, with no recognition that women in South Africa have interlocking identities and diverse experiences within higher education institutions (Walkington, 2017). Johnson et al. (2012) argue that the need to retain and support Black academics and female academics universalizes these experiences into two categories: 1) the Black experience, and in cases where gender is discussed, 2) the female experience, universalizing the diverse challenges and identities of those within these categories.

Universalizing the 'Black experience' and the 'female experience' often times places Black men's experiences and White women's experiences at the forefront, leaving Black women's needs invisible and often times out of the discussion (Johnson et al., 2012). In addition,

because Black academic staff are most recognized as being an oppressed and marginalized group within higher education plans (NPHE, 2001), this overshadows other groups, such as Black women and LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer) women, and disabled women, whose experiences and oppression is continuously overlooked within higher education spaces (Nduna et al, 2017).

Although there are a number of studies focused on the challenges in addressing diversity specific to the context of gender, sexual orientation, and disability in universities (Taulke-Johnson, 2010; O'Malley, 2013; Crowhurst & Emslie, 2014; Gillborn, 2015; Matthyse, 2017), these intersectional studies have mostly been examined within countries such as Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK; however, few have addressed these topics in the context of South Africa. What has been discussed is the lack of opportunities and rights that LGBTIQ women experience, even in a country where the rights of these women are "protected" under law (Naidu & Mutumbara, 2017). Naidu (2013) argues that this issue is a very difficult topic to challenge as most states in Africa deem homosexuality and anything outside the gender binary immoral, and in most cases, a crime. Even though South Africa has embraced the rights of LGBTIQ within legislature, this change unfortunately has not guaranteed a complete removal of discrimination and marginalization for those who identify as LGBTIQ, as other outside factors (i.e., patriarchal masculinities and structural cultural norms) all coexist (Naidu & Mutumbara, 2017). In addition, Msibi (2013) states that due to higher education EDI plans and agendas having more of a focus on race and gender (in terms of female discrimination), this has left little room to discuss other forms of discrimination, such as that experienced by LGBTIQ and those with disabilities. Thus, with these challenges in mind, Black women who identify as women, Black, LGBTIQ, disabled and many other identities have multiple intersecting identities that all come along with them

different levels of marginalization and discrimination (Nduna et al, 2017). Moreover, these diverse identities get glossed over when racial equality and the universalizing of group experiences become the main and sometimes only focus (Mirza, 2006).

While challenging and bringing to attention the correlation between marginalization and diverse intersectional identities is important, the complexity of breaking down the experiences of these diverse groups will not be discussed in full detail in this thesis. South Africa has a rich and complex history with multiple layers that makes it challenging to address within this one project. Therefore, due to the nature and context of this research, and limited resources and time, this thesis will mostly focus on addressing the challenges that Black women academics experience and will touch on the intersectional levels of marginalization and discrimination that Black women academics experience as they arise.

2.4 Diversity Challenges – Black Women Academics in South Africa

Black women often occupy unique spaces within higher education where they experience situations of 'outsider-ness' or exclusion, which are often reinforced by sociocultural standards that position them at the margin (hooks, 2000). This unique space places Black women in circumstances where their experiences and perspectives are overshadowed or made invisible. Their experiences being universalized as the "Black" or "female" experience, does little to affirm their unique challenges and perspectives (Johnson et al., 2012). All in all, these unique spaces reinforce the circumstances and perspectives of these groups while further marginalizing the circumstances and experiences of Black women.

Though there has been a slight increase in the number of Black and female academics since the end of apartheid, research shows that Black women are constantly finding themselves

negotiating their work experience and worth in their jobs (Mahabeer et.al, 2018). There have

been many cases where Black women have their qualifications questioned or have to work

harder in relation to their male colleagues to prove their capabilities in performing the

requirements of their jobs (Arya, 2012). Walkington (2017) argues that this double minority

status placed on Black women creates an environment where they are perceived as less capable

or incapable of completing the tasks of the job because of their race and gender. In these

situations, women are constantly under scrutiny to perform a certain way to justify their abilities

and their positions as academics in these spaces (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004). Many women also

feel constrained in these academic settings due to difficulties such as intimidation by colleagues

or those that are on hiring boards; harassment; and having to complete additional and sometimes

unnecessary work (John, 2014). Black women are constantly having to find ways to navigate

through institutions that do not acknowledge or understand their diverse experiences (Mahabeer

et al 2018). As universities become pro-active in their approaches to diversify students and staff,

Black women, at times, experience a lot of pressure to perform and can be pulled in multiple

different directions to fit particular expectations (Henry et al., 2017). Badat (2010) argues that a

major obstacle for Black women is that universities become places where these women are

alienated and excluded and therefore struggle to reach their full potential in their jobs.

   Morales (2014) argues that people carry different identities that intersect with each other

within different spaces and within different power structures, and it is these power structures that

create social inequalities for certain groups of people. hooks (1984) argues that for Black

women, their situation in the social hierarchy is influenced by their interlocking race and gender

identities, among multiple other identities (i.e., age, citizenship status, disability, sexual

orientation, etc.). In institutional spaces, such as universities, certain identities of the people

occupying those spaces become reproduced and identifications of those belonging to a specific

site are generated (Razack, 2002). For Black women academics, what gets placed on them is a

double minority status that generates perceptions of them as incapable (Henderson et al, 2010;

Walkington, 2017). Additionally, a triple burden gets placed on Black women when gender and

sexual identity becomes a factor (Stockfelt, 2018). As certain power structures work to

perpetuate a certain Black female identity, these intellectual spaces become a place off limits to

these individuals (hooks, 1991). The experiences of Black female academics show that social

spaces are not always spaces for just anyone to occupy. Puwar (2004) argues that certain people

can automatically come into these spaces and "belong", but others are seen and marked as

"trespassers". These trespassers are seen as out of place, not being the norm, and invaders of

space who are constantly required to justify their reasons for occupying those spaces (Puwar,

2004). Puwar (2004) uses this analysis of social spaces to illustrate how social exclusion and

marginalization is legitimized.

2.5 Gaps in research

Literature on higher education in South Africa has focused on challenging racial and gendered

issues associated with recruiting processes and the institutional culture of universities. In the

South African context, the voices of Black women academics and their lived experiences have

been mostly absent from literature [for some notable exceptions, see Mabokela & Mawila

(2004), Johnson et al. (2012), and Mahabeer et al. (2018)]. It is only recently that scholars have

provided more space for Black women academics to share their lived experiences. In addition,

there is a lack of available and detailed quantitative data on Black women academics not only in

South Africa, but in many other countries who also deal with the challenges of advancing EDI.

This poses a challenge in trying to understand the gaps in underrepresentation and diversity as most of the data bundles equity-seeking groups into my simplified categories (i.e., race or women), or when broken down further, does not address other areas (e.g., disability, lecturer/professor level, citizenship, etc.). Therefore, is it difficult to get a more accurate or fulsome picture of the gaps, especially seeing as a lot of analysis focuses on quantitative analysis and quota.

This thesis aims to examine the authentic struggles faced by Black women that data has not been able to show or attest to. The objective of this research is to add to the global discussion on university and government responses to equity and diversity by including a much needed and more recent South African perspective on the narratives and experiences of these efforts.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLGY

3 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed rationale for the methodological approaches used to conduct this research. To analyze Black women academics' experiences in post-apartheid South Africa, my thesis draws on pre-existing literature and semi-structured interviews. My objective was to interview Black women professors/lecturers as well as those involved in the Black Academic Caucus in a South African university, in order to explore Black women's experiences in higher education institutions in South Africa and to learn more about their perspectives and reflections on the EDI efforts taking place within their institution.

3.1 Case selection

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to address my research questions. Qualitative research is concerned with exploring and describing phenomena of interest, its samples are often small and sometimes only a few individuals or a single setting is used (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). It focuses on representing meaning to real-life events "by the people who live them, not the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers" (Yin, 2013, p. 9). Case studies are defined by Yin (2014) as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context" (p. 16). It is a form of interpretive research that is now becoming more accepted to investigate real-world phenomena (Yin, 2013). As my objective is to examine and interpret the transformation environment within South African universities and the challenges that a minority group within these institutions encounter, qualitative research was the most appropriate approach for this

study. For my case study approach, I focus on a small sample size of black women academics and center my research on one university in South Africa: The University of Cape Town (UCT).

UCT is a highly-ranked university at the national and international level and is an institution that during the apartheid years, from 1950 to 1985, barred Black students and faculty from freely attending and teaching at the university (UCT, n.d). It is one of the universities that has historically been rooted in colonial and discriminatory practices, and despite increases in Black academics at the university since the end of apartheid in 1994, White academics still make up the majority of the staff (UCT, n.d; Gibson, 2016). In recent years, however, there has been a deep focus in transformation efforts to diversify and promote equal opportunity within the school (UCT, 2020a). There has also been great public opposition from students and staff of colour against apartheid practices, both during the apartheid and post-apartheid era. Most recently in 2015, major protests (#rhodesmustfall, #feesmustfall) swept across the whole nation with students at UCT confronting challenges of institutional discrimination and racism; access to education; and the Eurocentric university culture (Gibson, 2016). All this sparked and pushed forward a deeper discussion on transformation within the university and within other South African universities as a whole.

To support my research questions in the timeframe and capacity I had, I decided to base my study on UCT only. While other universities in South Africa are rooted in colonial and discriminatory pasts and have also been vital in advancing the transformation discussion for academic institutions, UCT is an institution that has always caught my attention. In addition, due to its high standing, nationally and internationally; its importance to the nation and to the city of Cape Town; and its constant mention in the media, UCT served to be the most appropriate university that fit my research objectives. UCT has many high rankings and titles, making it a

very attractive university for people all over the world (The World University Rankings, n.d). It is also a university where transformation and equity are highly advertised at both the school and in the media. Its website alone has an abundance of information concerning its transformation efforts and its priorities on EDI; information that is not as obvious on many other school websites. The objectives outlined for EDI are very detailed and (at first glance) acknowledge the various elements that come with addressing transformation within universities; showcasing that this may be a potential example of promising practice for EDI. Finally, the university is also positioned at the center of a city that is known to be one of the most unequal in the world (Pitcher & Murray, 2012). A challenge that many of the participants of this study agreed to be an impact to EDI efforts at UCT. All of these reasons explain why this university was chosen as the main case focus of this project.

As much as I would have liked to conduct research on more than one university, the challenge in doing this stemmed from the amount of time I was able to allocate to conducting interviews. Additionally, each South African university comes with them personal and rich histories and contexts that would have been too immense to contain in a concise master's thesis if I had examined more than one university. All these universities deserve greater detail on the experiences of the staff and the contexts that shape those experiences, and this was something I believed I did not have the capacity to do under this particular study.

3.2 Research Methodology and Methods

I chose my methodology and methods based on my research objectives. Scholars argue that those practicing a feminist praxis or feminist research approach often use methods of storytelling and narratives to create a space where traditionally silenced groups are enabled to build theory and

knowledge on social structures and inequality (Pratt-Clarke, 2012). Since this study focuses on

the analysis of lived experiences of marginalized voices, my methodological approach centers on

the analysis of personal experiences and decolonizing my understanding of produced knowledge.

In understanding the importance of the methodologies and methods to use and how those choices

affect the conclusions of a research study, Smith (1999) states:

> methodologies and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions
>
> which they generate and the writing styles they employ, all become significant acts which
>
> need to be considered carefully and critically before being applied. In other words, they
>
> need to be 'decolonized (p. 34).

Decolonizing methodologies for this study meant deconstructing my understanding of how

knowledge is created and what constitutes as knowledge. In order to do this, I had to recognize

and address unbalanced power dynamics; determine a method that centered the perspectives and

voices of the women I spoke with as ways of knowing; and outline analyses and conclusions that

are not centered on my biases and beliefs as a foreigner in country that is not my own. An

emphasis on personal stories has the power to "re-theorize Eurocentric and patriarchal

frameworks" while also empowering silenced voices in historically rooted colonial and

discriminatory environments (Rodriquez, 2006, p.1071; see also Collins, 2009). Consequently,

my methodological approach deliberately centers the lived experiences of the female academics I

interviewed and focuses on those experiences as a foundation of knowledge for this study.

While my initial research focuses on gathering information for the literature review and

guiding the structure of the interview questions, the main strategy of my qualitative research

deals with conducting semi-structured interviews. In recognizing the importance of interviews,

Hesse-Biber (2011) states that interviewing focuses on understanding the lived experiences of

certain individuals and is a way for researchers to access hidden knowledge, ideas and thoughts of marginalized people in their own words. This method provides researchers with the opportunity to gain insight on the lives of people living in different social structures and societies (Hesse-Biber, 2011). This is especially important when studying women because "learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas …or having men speak for women" (Reinharz, 1992, p.19). For my study, semi-structured interviews, as described by Hesse-Biber (2011) and Reinharz (1992), is the most appropriate method in helping to address my research questions.

This method gave me the opportunity to account for the perspectives of Black women academics' experiences in a university setting and how they interpret interlocking systems of oppression within being both Black and female. Through semi-structured interviews, participants are able to give detailed explanations and have more control over the interview process, but leaves room for the interviewer to intervene, when appropriate, to cover some of the key topics relevant to my research questions (Morris, 2015). I wanted the interviews to be more conversational and the participants to feel comfortable to share their realities without feeling silenced or restricted to share what they wanted. My objective was to outline their experiences and to create a space where their joys and struggles are made visible, but also do it in a space where I was able to touch on some of my key questions concerning the university environment.

Ethics approval was granted for this study from both the University of Ottawa and from the University of Cape Town in November 2019. Each ethics approval involved explaining the data collection process; maintaining validity in acquiring data; and methods used to secure the confidentiality for participants. Approval from the University of Ottawa was acquired in September 2019 and in November 2019 from the University of Cape Town. The research data

for this study was collected for six weeks, from the middle of January to the end of February 2020 in Cape Town, South Africa. As part of my approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Black female academics and academics who specifically hold a role in the Black Academic Caucus (BAC). All the participants were Black female professors/lecturers that carried different positions (junior to senior positions) and worked in different faculties within the university. Participants who were also a part of the BAC were chosen as additional support for the study because of their work with Black staff and students and their advocacy for transformation and decolonization at UCT. The BAC works with many students and staff on their challenges within the institution, and therefore were a great resource in gaining evidence of the university's EDI efforts.

In determining participants, I did ensure some level of representation of the Black female academic experience by selecting individuals from varying faculties, levels (junior to senior), and years of experience at the university (between 1-15 years). Even with the professors that were recommended by other participants I did prior research on their positions within the university (e.g., level, faculty, etc.) before contacting them to ensure that perspectives at multiple levels were being included. To address issues of validity in relation to the interview questions, I conducted research on multiple interviews that had been conducted for similar studies and adjusted my questions to include wording and analysis that had not been addressed in the research I found. I then reviewed the questions with a few individuals (both students and professors) and adjusted questions based on suggestions of poor wording and misunderstanding. Finally, throughout the interview process, I observed reactions of confusion or misunderstanding when asking questions and adjusted my wording with subsequent interviews.

My objective was to interview a maximum of 15 academics (10 professors, 2 administrators, 3 BAC members). The reason for this number was to get a diverse range of experiences and perspectives and to ensure that these experiences are captured and well documented. I however still wanted to maintain a space where all the women I spoke to could see their voices being captured and I felt that more than 15 academics could potentially dilute the richness of each women's contribution. In selecting who to recruit, I went through different faculty websites and read the titles of all the Black female academics to ensure I picked professors of different levels. After developing a master list, I selected 15 academics at random to begin the initial recruiting process, while still ensuring that I maintained a combination of professors at different levels and within different faculties. As the identity of each academic is of course not made public, it was challenging determining and selecting which participants would be the most appropriate to interview. Thus, part of my approach meant selecting Black women academics based on my initial assumptions of their race and then contacting the selected participants to give them the opportunity to self-identify whether they fit the criteria of the study and confirm that they were willing to participate via email.

Throughout the recruitment process, a total of 30 recruitment emails were sent; however, not all professors were selected using the faculty website. A few professors were recommended by colleagues at the University of Ottawa and by other academics at UCT. Since I knew there was a potential that I missed a few Black women academics through my initial review of faculty websites and not all professors would be available or willing to participate, I relied on snowball sampling to fill in any potential gaps. Snowball sampling starts with key individuals who help to identify a list of potential participants for the study (Thompson, 2002). In the first two weeks of my arrival, I recognized that professors were still on vacation, and when they returned in the first

week of February, were too overwhelmed with academic responsibilities to participate in my study. Since I was having a hard time finding and getting responses from participants through the emails I previously sent out, snowball sampling allowed me to quickly acquire participants who were available and willing to support this study. The names of potential study participants were acquired by people trusted by participants contacted, which made it easier for recommended participants to feel more comfortable in participating in the study (Woodley & Lockard, 2016).

Overall, due to the amount of time, resources I had, and the availability of participants, I was able to conduct interviews with 8 academics and 2 BAC members (who also carried academic positions within the university). The number of participants, in the end, was a good amount for the study as I was able to get a diverse selection of participants and an understanding of the challenges within the university at different and unique levels.

All interviews were conducted in person and at a location chosen by the participant. In most cases academics picked locations on the UCT campus, but locations that were a place of comfort to them. With the consent of all participants, every interview was audio recorded with additional notes being taken to assess body language, emotions, repeated challenges, and information that may not be audible in the audio recordings (i.e., if there was background noise or the participant mistakenly moved away from the audio recorder).

Due to the interviews being semi-structured, 5 interview questions (with additional guiding questions) were drafted as a basis of discussion for each interview. These questions focused on general experiences of being an academic at the university and the challenges they and/or all Black women face within the university. For probing questions to get more detailed responses, professors/lecturers were asked about their experiences with discrimination and their thoughts on EDI efforts and support for Black academics within the university. After my second

interview, I noticed both professors had brought up a particular issue that had not been outlined in my initial research; therefore, I decided to include these shared experiences in my follow up questions for the following interviews. Most of the women I spoke to shared more than the question warranted and gave examples from other colleagues or stories they heard. Based on the comfort of participants and how much they were willing to share, each interview length lasted from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Each participant carried similar and very diverse experiences with the other participants. I was fortunate to interview academics who were both content or unhappy with the EDI efforts at UCT, giving me a range of perspectives and views.

3.3 Interview themes and coding

In analyzing interview data, I decided to use thematic coding as my main approach. This approach involves identifying and outlining pieces of text linked by a common idea or theme to create categories that aid in establishing "a framework of thematic ideas" (Gibbs, 2007, p. 38). My main form of analysis was through the use of personally transcribed text from the audio recordings of each interview. I begun my coding by listening to the audio recordings, personally transcribing every word of each interview (as to not misrepresent data) and then re-listening to each interview to mark additional observations as part of my field notes. I then focused on reviewing, at least twice, each transcribed interview to determine dominant and reoccurring themes and from that, labelled passages that were examples of the same ideas, phenomenon, or explanations. I used this process as a way to practice an inductive approach to coding the date (Saldana, 2013).

Once themes were drawn out, quotes of each interview were separated and placed under each theme. Main themes such as "sense of exclusion and loneliness", "burden", "experiences

delegitimized", and "quota vs. retention", among others, were dominant themes in my initial review. A second review of the transcriptions were conducted to determine analytical interpretations of the passages and assess less obvious themes and phenomena within them. This involved a more "careful reading of the text and deciding what [the text means]" (Gibbs, 2007, p. 41). In doing this second analysis, less apparent themes such as "gender roles", "solidarity", "indifference", "built identity", and "double employment", among others, became reoccurring themes of analysis.

Due to the limited number of interviews and my desire to go into depth rather than breadth in the research in order to appreciate the richness of each interview, I did not use any particular software to code the data. I wanted the most flexibility to be able to analyze and familiarize myself with each transcription without the confinements of coding software. Collins (2009) argues that it is important for intellectuals to push for self-definition "because speaking for oneself and crafting one's own agenda is essential to empowerment." (p.40). Therefore, emphasizing the voices and stories of marginalized groups has the power to name one's reality, empower, create new knowledge, and bring justice (Pratt-Clarke, 2012). My decision to code and theme the data on my own was my way of getting to understand each participant's experiences and take time to consider their comments within their given context. My objective was to be able to tell their stories the best way I could without placing distance between the data and me (i.e., not fully understanding the context behind each example and experiences discussed due to relying too heavily on the coding process of software), which can be a factor when using coding software (Creswell, 2013). However, while I did not necessarily require coding software for this particular study, for future studies with larger data sets, software may be useful to support my

initial efforts to code and dissect the data quicker and more concisely, as well as a first step to organizing the data more efficiently.

3.4 Trustworthiness

It is important to note that this study does not aim to be completely representative of the entire university or all South African universities, as it is impossible for a study such as this one. For example, I was able to speak to Black women from 5 of UCT's faculties (UCT has 6 in total); however, within those faculties there are many different departments and specializations of which I was only able to touch on 7: the Department of Electrical Engineering; the Department of English Language and Lit; the Graduate School of Business; the Department of Commercial Law; Department of Art, History and Visual culture; Department of Audiology; and the Department of Occupational Therapy. Since there are about 57 departments at UCT, my sample could only be based on a smaller subset of the overall number of departments. However, as discussed above, in trying to be as representative as possible, I did try to get a mix of academics from different departments.[9] I recognize that in research studies like this it is not always clear in determining what constitutes as the correct number of people to interview (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002). While my original method was to conduct 15 interviews and broaden the sample size to other categories a part from academics (i.e., administration, management, etc.), it still became evident, after 10 interviews that there was still work needed to advance EDI and transformation and that most of the participants had similar issues regarding transformation efforts at the university. Additionally, the decision to use one method, semi-structured interviews, was my

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[9] Due to the size and nature of the sample, this information is the only data that will be provided on those that were interviewed as part of this study. This is to ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of each participant is maintained.

approach in ensuring that I, as a researcher, could appropriately document the real-world experiences of Black women academics without using multiple different methods that could deviate from my goal of gaining a particular level of context in which semi-structured interviews allow. There is a great importance and validity to the specific experiences of each woman who spoke, and through an unconfined method of semi-structured interviews, I was able to create a space that included those specific experiences without unintentionally silencing those experiences with multiple other methods. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to gain both the challenges of being a Black woman academic and the context surrounding those challenges.

Therefore, while the number of interviews conducted and the use of one method used to extract data may not fully represent the extent of the challenges within South African universities as a whole, the experiences documented through the use of semi-structured interviews still shows an in-depth analysis of the extent of the challenges taking place within the University of Cape Town and how the challenges presented may not be a singular case. It is these women's real-life experiences and challenges along with the similar patterns and themes present in their thoughts that highlight the trustworthiness of the data extracted to answer the research questions of this study. Furthermore, it is the intensity of these experiences that truly shed light on what is currently happening within the transformation environment and makes room for deeper and future analysis.

3.5 Limitations

In recognizing some of the limitations of this study, one of the main challenges was not being able to get as many participants as I originally planned. My misinterpretation of when courses resume for students and professors in South Africa resulted in my inability to get in contact with

all the professors I contacted a few months prior to going to Cape Town. The majority of the professors were either unable to make time for interviews due to busy schedules or just returning from vacation. Due to this, many of my participants were chosen from a snowball sample, and while that was very helpful in filling in gaps of finding participants to interview it was at times difficult sticking to my original plan of getting women who were each from different faculties and levels. Snowball sampling has been criticized in literature as causing "selection bias, diversity of subjects, and validity" (Woodley & Lockard, 2016, p. 323). In terms of selection bias, Dawood (2008) observes that hand chosen individuals by other participants may lead to a sample that is not representative as respondents are selected based on personal biases; respondents who all have similar perspectives and viewpoints. Scholars also observe that snowball sampling may not be as diverse in subjects as the sample may be limited to existing networks instead of a sizable number of participants (McCormack, 2014). For the final critique, Creswell & Clark (2007) define validity as "the ability of the research to draw meaningful and accurate conclusions from all of the data in the study" (p. 146). Since this study does not involve a randomized set of data this could be argued as affecting the validity of the conclusions on a broader scale and may not be representative of the entire university or South African universities as a whole (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). In recognizing these critiques and challenges, I made a point to think about these questions at the beginning of the research process, such as who I reached out to and who I selected within the snowball sample, while also considering and maintaining validity and diversity throughout the process of this study. The steps I took to address these challenges are explained above in section 3.2.

In addition, as much as this study examines other possible grounds of discrimination and marginalization, not all grounds were mentioned or discussed in detail (i.e., marginalization

based on religion, sexuality, class, etc.). In speaking with the participants, all the women had various challenges that related to their particular social identities. However, as the sample is a small size of the overall academic population in UCT, and in South Africa, these challenges are not a comprehensive account of all the diverse challenges that Black women academics experience. These social identities were not included in the analysis, not because discrimination and marginalization are not experienced on these grounds, but because it was not emphasized by those who participated in this study. I therefore recognize that because of these limits, it is difficult to provide in detail and include all forms of intersectional analysis within all South African universities in this research. However, this research does understand that even though not all challenges experienced by different social identities are expressed as part of this research, the struggles of marginalization and discrimination manifest in different ways and affect equity-seeking groups at multiple levels at UCT and other South African universities.

Although there were many more Black women academics that could have added to the study, the comments of the 10 women I spoke to quickly helped to solidify conclusions on the main challenges within the institution. It also became clear that each academic had a unique perspective on how they related to those challenges and that additional interviews could take away from the experiences of the women I had already spoken to. All in all, as a researcher I stand by my efforts in trying to diversify the data within the context I was in; however, in completing this study I recognize the limitations of my research context and I do not argue that my findings are 'representative' of the experiences of all diverse Black women academics within South Africa, but common themes did emerge.

3.6 Being Reflexive

Part of my qualitative research involves practicing reflexivity as an insider and outsider researcher with those I am observing and interviewing. This involves me continuing to question and recognize my position as a researcher in terms of building rapport with participants and aiming for what Harding (2015) states as a sense of "strong objectivity" in how I took notes and analyzed the data. This process means maintaining researcher reflexivity throughout the interview process, where I continued to question my position and how it affects my research. More specifically, using this reflexivity to judge whether the data and analysis that I was collecting was authentic to the circumstances of these women and not completely diluted by my personal assumptions and emotions towards the situation. Harding (2015) argues that researcher bias cannot be completely removed; therefore, my objective is not to be a neutral researcher, as the term objectivity can sometimes posit, but to continue questioning whether and how my bias affects the findings of this study.

In terms of building rapport, my goal was to ensure that the women I spoke to were comfortable in sharing their stories and sharing that information with complete honesty. Throughout the process, I found it easier to share my recognized identities as being a student who is Black, female, and has experienced forms of discrimination because of those identities. This approach made it more comfortable for me and the participants to have a conversation instead of the typical structured interview; although semi-structured questions were still administered. While some feminists advocate the importance of researchers sharing identities and experiences with the researched to build reciprocity, others caution getting too personal with the researched (Hesse-Biber, 2011). In advancing a familiar argument concerned with building rapport, Oakley (1981) observes that a close rapport could allow researchers to more intimately

understand the lives of their participants; nonetheless, getting too personal could also lead to the ethical dilemma of extracting knowledge for scientific ends without the conscious knowledge of the participant. Thus, participants could be sharing personal information because of the creation of a "false friendship", calling into question how far their informed consent goes on the disclosures they provide (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002). In understanding these cautions and the information that would come with it, I continued to build rapport with all the participants, but also reminded participants of my intentions at the beginning, throughout or at the end of the interview (i.e., reminding participants that all information they share may end up in my research study or reminding them of my contact information and how they can withdraw information if they so choose). These approaches supported me throughout the interview process in ensuring that participants felt my personal desire in understanding their lived experiences but were also not made vulnerable by sharing intimate details that they originally were not comfortable in sharing.

Participating in reflexivity also involves remaining conscious of privilege and power as a researcher once interviews are completed (Hesse-Biber, 2011. In discussing academic voyeurism, Gibbs (2015) argues that sometimes research could lead to a problematic situation where the researcher desires to look into the experiences of their participants for professional gain and no real desire to help those they study. As Smith (2013) argues, for me, it was not only recognizing power and privilege as a researcher, but also identifying the structures of domination that create privilege in every situation I was in. While I may be able to relate to some of my participants in being Black and female, who has previously lived in South Africa and has seen the issues that have been birthed from the execution of apartheid, my lived experiences are still

very different to those I have interviewed. Each woman presented a new layer of the overall picture; a story which was no where similar to mine.

At the end of the process I am still a researcher with a telescope into the situation and the ability to remove myself from the challenges that these women face everyday (Gibbs, 2018). The insider researcher role instilled a desire in me to help to facilitate a process of change, as I was placed in a space of sharing truths, pain, and building solidarity and empathy. Although, at the same time, as an interviewer and researcher, I had to continuously be aware of my academic motivations and question who I wanted the research to benefit; me or the women I spoke to. This involved me at times remembering throughout the interview process to practice active listening; recognize and empathize with their pain; and not grasping at their emotions as a means for academic gain (Gibbs, 2018). Being conscious of my privilege and my role as both an insider and outsider researcher was a constant battle throughout this research process to ensure the safety of my participants, the authenticity of this research, and identifying how my research could be more constructive for my participants.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

4 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of Black women's experiences within UCT. Drawing on the findings from the analysis of interview transcripts, a number of themes emerged. Each of these themes is addressed in this section (are these presented from most common themes to least common themes?) It is organized as follows. The first section provides detail on the perspectives of the Black women academics on the university environment being both a student and academic. The second section discusses interviewees' impressions of the strengths and limits of UCT's transformation agenda, along with other institutional efforts to promote EDI. The third section outlines the delegitimizing experiences as full-time, faculty members and how they deal with everyday racism. The fourth section highlights the different ways that Black women academics survive within the institution and the challenges they face as Black women academics. The fifth section showcases how Black women's identities are shaped within the university space and the strategies they use that contribute to a feeling of community and mutual support. The final section discusses the women's experiences with the different ways that discrimination and oppression is manifested and how their multiple identities impact the ways in which they participate within the university. To sustain their confidentiality, their perspectives and voices will be detailed using false names.

4.1 Challenges as a student

Before discussing transformation efforts at the Black female lecturer/professor level, it is important to unpack some of the challenges that these women, and many other Black women experience as students. These challenges that have an impact on their decisions in advancing in an academic

career. Every interviewee told me that it was not always easy being a Black female student and they discussed the challenges they faced as students, and how these challenges affected their decisions to become academics.

Thabisa is both a PhD student and a lecturer, who experienced great challenges as a student. Her interest to go into teaching was sparked by her mother, who was also a teacher. She told me that at a young age she could see "the stresses and conditions that teachers deal with." Already she knew the constant battle that Black women go through and the need to work harder to get to where she wanted to be, but she also knew that there was a great need for women of colour in schools and that the gap needed to be filled. While grappling with the burden that comes from both filling that gap and being a Black female academic, certain political and racial circumstances led her to end up taking a career as an academic in a university setting.

When meditating on her thoughts as a student in both South Africa and the US, she explained that there are certain issues within these universities that impact the retention of Black women academics and because of this lack of retention, students see the same small number of Black women professors/lecturers who then either leave or constantly go on sabbatical. Students see that the retention of Black women academics is low, which at times affects the classes they can take and their pick of supervisors:

> So, with my personal experience you see political issues, the discord and then all of sudden everyone is on sabbatical and then there are only [a small number of Black women], and they keep leaving. …Then of course, you [see a small amount of] black people total in the department. So, you see, we don't see ourselves and it makes it very hard for us to experience grad school that is supportive. And yes, there are White staff who are extremely

supportive. They are also supportive precisely because of the lack and so that needs to be recognized.

Along with Thabisa, a few of the women also expressed how the lack of Black academics makes it more challenging for Black graduate students to feel supported (e.g., lack of professors they can talk to or build community with, or lack of professors that they feel comfortable being supervised by, etc.).

The problem is not that there is a lack of support. Thabisa argues that many other academics are very supportive in helping Black students graduate, however, students do not feel represented when they look at their professors, and they feel intimidated when looking for a supervisor or looking for someone to speak to. It also becomes difficult when students see Black female professors looking overworked or constantly leaving their positions. When students visibly see the struggles that professors go through, they themselves fear taking a similar career path.

Thuthu was one of those students. She did not originally plan to be an academic, but after starting her career in health sciences and finding that her field ignored the importance of understanding the relationship between practice and the broader social issues of the country, she decided to come back to academia to do research that allowed her to develop that kind of work. In reminiscing on her 10 years at UCT and her thoughts on being a student and an academic, she states:

If you think about the example that we set for students when I was here as well, all of my teachers were overworked, miserable, had no sense of humor, no energy in their teaching, and I actually said to myself I'm not coming back. So, then my thing was like, I never want to be that person.

A few of the professors shared some examples of being treated differently because of the colour of their skin. Makena is an academic who also experienced UCT as both a student and an academic in the last 10 years. Even though she is one of the only Black women academics in her department and works in an environment where discrimination exists, she, with passion, continues to choose to keep from having a victim mentality and finds ways to exist within the system. She tries to maintain this outlook on an everyday basis, and it is this outlook that has helped to create a level of comfort for her as an academic. In discussing her experiences as a student, she however, takes a second to reminisce on times as a student where she wondered why she was being treated a certain way:

> When I came to UCT I wasn't as race conscious as a lot of other people. Yes, I understood the South African history, but it wasn't something I was particularly conscious about. It only transpired later on when you start to ask questions about why am I getting this mark yet I work with this person. So, some of these things play out as a student when you felt as a student you were being discriminated against because of your colour or they didn't expect you to be as intelligent because of your colour.

Thabisa adds to this observation using her own experience with a particular professor:

> There was this professor who called me stupid and said I had a fifth-grade education and he doesn't understand how I made it this far. Mind you I came in as a Fulbright student[10], I had worked very very hard, I had a masters, you know what I mean, and here is someone who said I have a fifth grade education and he doesn't understand how I made it this far.

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[10] The South African Fulbright Foreign Student Program provides grants for South African university graduates to pursue post-graduate studies abroad in any subject

Cornell & Kessi (2017) note that with the stereotypes against Black students and the ways in which they are sometimes perceived by professors and other students often affects their success and makes them less likely to graduate on time or continue in academia. These experiences also have the power to shape students' perceptions of themselves and take away the confidence they originally had when they were selected to study in one of the top universities. Therefore, as some of the women disclosed, if Black students experience a culture and institution that discriminates against them, they are more inclined to leave that space and not come back to take on graduate degrees or advance in academic careers. Consequently, it is important for universities to place great attention on the cultural and structural barriers that keep certain groups of people from succeeding in the space, as this culture does not only affect academics, but impacts students and their future prospects. These conclusions were argued by all the women interviewed and is also what sparked the nationwide student protests in 2015.

4.1.1 #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall

The challenges that the women talked about above are not just experienced by the participants alone, but by many of the Black students at UCT, and the seriousness of these challenges led to a country wide protest in 2015. Through specific surveys done by UCT, Black students make known that a discriminating institutional culture and an alienating environment contribute greatly to mental health issues and their participation within their university (UCT, 2019a). After years of discrimination and racism embedded into the practices and culture of UCT, students decided they could no longer be silent on their concerns. Specifically, many argued that the university was an alienating and discriminatory place for Black students and because of this culture they felt like they did not belong in their own institution (Adjiwanou, 2015). Therefore, the protests, which

included dismantling statues symbolizing white supremacy and fighting against increased fees, was a means to change that culture and spark true transformation at the university. The #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests sparked nationwide (and international wide) conversations about decolonization and free education and forced management at South African universities to pay attention to Black students and staff concerns (Black Academic Caucus, 2016). After these protests, the University of Cape Town experienced an atmosphere shift (Gibson, 2016); a shift that many of the women interviewed noticed discussed.

4.2 South Africa's Transformation agenda for EDI

As stated by Crenshaw (1994) women's perspectives are different based on the multiple dimensions of their identities and experiences. This argument holds true when discussing transformation efforts at the University of Cape Town, as the women interviewed all carried different perspectives based on their time as an academic and their experiences within their respective departments. Overall, even with diverse experiences of the universities EDI efforts, it was evident that the women either agreed that the university was doing well to transform, or the university was not doing enough to support all those marginalized. Even though the women provided different points to the transformation debate, the majority (7 out of 10 women interviewed) believed that much more needed to be done to strengthen EDI within UCT.

One of the great responses of advancing the transformation initiative within universities is The University of Cape Town's inclusivity department, as well as the multiple developed priorities to respond to transformation and cultural change (UCT, 2020a). After the student protests in 2015, professors observed that there was less room for administration and management at the university to ignore the voices of the students and their concerns and that finally, the voices of the

marginalized was acknowledged through the enforcement of some of these efforts. The women that worked in the university for five years and longer were able to attest to the shift and the change in efforts to transform. Thandie, who has been a professor at UCT for six years and an academic in South Africa for more than 10 years states:

> It is a completely different culture here because you know Rhodes Must Fall was here, so people have been very vocal about the kinds of overt and [co]vert violences that happen in class, outside of class, within and outside the institution. Whereas I think in other places, those bases have just not been created or that even for those who are trying to create them, the pressure for them to dissipate is much higher.

Even newer academics were able to attest to a different environment. When considering on whether the university has shifted in terms of transformation, Naomi, who recently joined UCT as an academic noted, "If I speak to some academics who were here a little longer than I have been, they can attest to a different environment. Not to say that it is perfect now (laughing) but it is a lot better than what it used to be, and they really are making an effort to transform."

In analyzing this change, many of the women noticed that previously, disciplines and departments were dominated by white males and then following, white females. This led to an environment where students began to diversify in the university but were not seeing themselves represented in the academic body or in the curriculum. Some of the women noted that the lack of representation became uncomfortable as the numbers of diverse students increased, thus creating a space where students and staff could no longer be silent on their concerns. As a particular example of this concern, Malaika, who is both a PhD student and a lecturer at UCT observes transformation using both lenses. She values the importance of being represented in not only who teaches her, but also in the curriculum, the language that is being used, and in research.

There were certain things I felt was missing when I was a student in the curriculum. Like as an African child I didn't see myself within what was taught to me. It was always an afterthought.

Due to her experience of diverse representation being mostly absent, this was an important experience to discuss for transformation and a now exciting period of being a part of that change. Other academics interviewed also talked about the tolerance of culture and representation and how that tolerance is changing. Specifically, Maria, who has been at UCT for about 15 years and now carries both a professor position and a leadership role in her department spoke on the ways in which the institution unthinkingly acts, and the ways in which these acts impact those participating in the space. She notes:

There were concerns about culture. So the way people teach, the way they interact with students, of course depends on who they are and so the culture, the longstanding culture at the university, at a particular stage was no longer fitting because the majority of our students no longer belong to that culture and so there was a clash.

Many of the women spoke on the lack of tolerance of the current university culture and lack of diverse representation. It was also important for them to discuss how UCT responded to this spoken intolerance. Specifically, they noted that improving representation has mostly involved improving quota or supporting women of colour academics with funding opportunities. For example, in understanding that academics do not get paid a high salary, to make positions more attractive, the university developed a fund to supplement equity candidates' salaries. Naomi states that "this is a way to make positions more attractive to [equity seeking groups]. Some White people don't like it, but then again, they enjoyed the apartheid era".

4.2.1 Quota vs. Retention

To increase quota and ensure equitable opportunities for diverse candidates there is usually[11] an employment equity representative in each hiring selection committee. This representative is there to ensure that the requirements of employment equity based on South African law and the university is being met (UCT, 2018). Naomi reiterated that the objective is to hire an employment equity hire as long as they are employable (i.e., they carry the skills and level of experience best suited for the position). These implemented funding opportunities and hiring practices that support equity-seeking groups are a few examples of their efforts to redress past wrongs and improve diversity numbers. Although the women agreed there was significance in increasing numbers and providing financial support opportunities to new and existing Black women academics, they also unanimously agreed that transformation is not and cannot be sustained on quota alone.

Makena, who is one of the only Black female academics in her department, talked about how quota is a common goal for transformation. When reflecting on her experience at one of the meetings she attended, she emphasized her shock in how quota is still a main priority in the diversity discussions:

> We have a gender issue here and in discussing that at our meeting, people were talking numbers. I actually walked out because I couldn't believe that to them gender meant having numbers. They don't see how they treat or show up in front of other women. All they were concerned about was numbers. At this level I can't believe we are having this discussion. So that's the sad reality

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[11] Most of the participants highlighted the requirement of having an equity representative within each hiring committee. However, some that were interviewed stated that there was no equity representative as part of their committee. It is specified in UCT's hiring policy that each selection committee member is required to know employment equity regulations and take an employment equity workshop, but it is not clear whether having a specific employment hire is on each committee is mandatory.

The issue of quota versus retention and how transformation needs to be addressed in different areas was a common topic among the women interviewed. In telling their stories each woman talked about the university structure and culture and how they impact the way they function and participate within the academic space. This argument was acknowledged in the assertive responses of Thandie and Thuthu, where they both share similar thoughts on the issue. These are two women who have worked in the university longer than five years and both took on their academic careers with an interest in developing knowledge. With ups and downs throughout the years they both learned through their experiences that even with the university changing, efforts to transform are not always placed in the most appropriate areas of concern. Specifically, they, among most of the other women interviewed, addressed the structures of the institution in which they noted that there was a structural problem that doesn't only resonate within the University of Cape Town, but within the higher education system as a whole. To underline this argument, Thandie states:

> The problem is structural, I think. The very idea of a university is a very masculine one or at least as it has come to be conceived today. The way we do things, it's this whole standup be the lecturer, disseminate, disseminate. I think those are things that would probably have to change but would be harder to change them because most of the institutions run on the basis of those structures.

Thuthu adds to these thoughts by also emphasizing the problem with structures when she notes:

> I do think that the university structure has to change. The reason why I'm saying that is we can't have a hierarchical structure that is transformative, because the power still lies in a few hands, so how do we shift the system but have the same basic structure.

In these excerpts, it is evident that the role of the institutional structure is significant in the lives of these women. Most of them noted that the institution is very hierarchical and at the same time masculine. As Mirza (2006) argues, this structure creates an environment where black women are restricted in how they move within spaces and between different levels within the institution. This restriction is not just at an academic level but is manifested as Black women enter the door, whether it be as a student, a staff member, or a lecturer or professor (Divala, 2014a).

Tutu argues that no matter how diverse the university may look on the outside, the space continues to function in a way that doesn't allow certain people to exist in that space. Focusing on quotas is an example of an attempt to overtly improve diversity within the university, but as many of the women argued, it is not the end all be all. Quota becomes an overt form of transformation where the arrival of more Black women is delivered as evidence of commitment and progress (Henry et al., 2018). Increased quota is an important stride but being used as evidence for change has at times placed less emphasis on challenging the structures within and how individuals are being treated and included within the space. The women interviewed argued that understanding and challenging the institutional structure and culture is an important piece to the transformation agenda, but it is often overlooked.

In pushing this perspective Thabisa discusses her experiences as being both a student and academic to explain the importance of dealing with structural change. As an academic who has worked in the United States and South Africa, she acknowledges the exciting environment in South Africa where there are more diverse faces in leadership roles; an increasing number of academics that look like her; and shifts in curriculum. While attractive to watch and be a part of, she also notices a sinking feeling at the end of the day, where she realizes that "everyone is part of a machine that continues to reformulate and does not quite completely change". It is this machine

that disappoints and keeps everything status quo. In beautifully summarizing the thoughts of many of the women academics on the structures of the institution, she asserts:

> We need an overhaul of management, we need an ideological, structural, cultural, shift that really takes a transformative justice approach to things, which is the conditions themselves have to change. So that even if the Head of Department is a White person they have no room by which they can exercise anti-black violence because they have nothing to work with to do that, they have no tool to yield that and then whatever else they do is just them being personally vindictive and they need to deal with it themselves but the structures should not be in support. Right now, we have a structure and a system that is supportive of those kinds of violences and so we have to change the whole thing.

Therefore, a lot of the issues stem from a structure that advances the status quo and it this status quo that continues to restrict and dictate how black women participate within the university space. Of course, these structures are not easy to break down, as they act as a basis for many education institutions across the world; however, the women argued that at least to start, greater attention needs to be placed on helping black women exist and succeed within the system. Further, they argued, there needs to be a shift that changes the conditions that support violence and oppression. As Thabisa argues, violences and oppression against equity-seeking groups needs to be intolerable within university spaces.

4.3 Delegitimizing Experiences

While UCT has advertised a strong commitment in strengthening EDI and supporting staff, this commitment has not always held true once Black women academics enter the university space. In speaking with the academics, all the women made evident that even 26 years after apartheid there

are still experiences of everyday racism[12] and excluding and delegitimizing attitudes against Black women academics. One of the women, Omi, is a younger academic who started her career in her mid-twenties. She's been motivated by her desires to conduct research and investigate the "bigger picture" in her field. With her time as both a student and now a lecturer she is able to critically unpack both the hidden and apparent forms of discrimination within the university. When explaining whether she has experienced discrimination based on her race or gender, Omi, states:

> I think in terms of racism it's not overt. It is not in your face. It's harder to call out. I see it in forms of gaslighting, I see it in relationships and dynamics in the workplace when people assume that you're here because you're the affirmative action hire.

In her observations of racism and sexism she notes that they take shape in different ways and most times, people do not see or recognize racist behaviors in their words or actions. Omi notes that often times racism is manifested in encounters with others and the "behind closed doors" questioning on why black women within the university are academics. Further, it is the racialized ideas of colleagues and students that reinforce certain actions.

One main example of everyday racism involves the overt and covert questioning of competence. Colleagues' and students' doubts and negative perceptions of who Black women are as academics and why they are hired subsequently delegitimize their skills, especially when the women are viewed as the "affirmative" or "equity" hire (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004). In addition, it is these shared viewpoints that add to the challenges and burden black women experience (Mahabeer et al., 2018).

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[12] Henry & tator (2012) describe everday racism as small acts "designed to make racialized and Indigenous faculty feel unwelcome, unrepresented, or invisible" (pg. 78).

Many of the women shared examples of experiences when they have had their qualifications questioned and how this questioning forces them to perform a certain way to prove their competence. Naomi, who joined the university five years ago as a PhD student, spoke about her experiences on the particular pressure that surrounds making mistakes and the difference in pressure in being a Black academic.

> It's easier for a white academic to make mistakes, because ya people make mistakes but then for example if a Black person does it, there is a reinforcement of like ya, you see they aren't good enough, they are the equity hire that's why

Thuthu also noticed that the questions on capabilities comes from all sides and it is a constant fight just to prove to both staff and students that she belongs. In exploring her experiences and concerns on making mistakes as a Black female academic, she emphasizes:

> Black staff who do one thing out of place, out! I've got someone in my department whose been there for years. A student just wrote a letter to the department and complained against her and because now it's a White student people are quick to respond.

She continues, "Even students have told me 'we don't like black staff.' They'll be like we had a white lecturer who wasn't asking those questions." The arguments that both Naomi and Thuthu make is evidence that there is greater pressure on them as Black female academics to be recognized as equals. One mistake or one decision to alter the status quo within their classes could lead to greater consequences; something that they argued was not as much of a pressure for other academics. Their credentials become delegitimized with one complaint against their practices or their reasons for being in the university and they both notice that they are held to greater account once complaints come specifically from White students or staff.

As a strong woman in her identity, Thuthu emphasizes her right to be an academic and take space within the university. Even with the constant battle to legitimize her right in being there, she continued to assert that she, among the other black women academics belong; not because she's black, or a woman, or because she is "a diversity hire", but because she has the qualifications and the experiences to be an academic. Therefore, there should be no grounds in which her competence should be questioned by both students and staff. Although, Thuthu further notes that unfortunately, the institutional structure creates a foundation where certain people are automatically delegitimized.

A few of the women went into detail on this point as a they argue that the institution is mainly governed by White, heterosexual, male norms. As Omi states, in South Africa's history, "the knower, the knowledge, the knowing has always been associated with number one white, and number two male". It is these norms which are set in stone and automatically places Black women at a disadvantage as they walk in as new academics; they try to change the curriculum; or they try to present new ideas that go against the norm. In addressing this disadvantage Thabisa states:

> It's like, in a university that has predominately catered to white students and a curriculum that centers on white scholarship, you come in with all these black scholars? Who are you and what are you doing, we don't want you, and they are not afraid to say that. I've had students walk out of my lectures just merely for asking them to get into groups and talk to each other about [scholarship] they are not familiar or comfortable with.

Gemma furthers this evidence of disadvantage when she recalls times where she was the only Black women in certain meetings. Gemma is an academic with a lot of experience and holds leadership responsibilities at the university. She is well known in her department and loved by

many of her students and fellow colleagues. However, even with her honorable competences and profound knowledge, she recognizes that she is still not taken seriously:

> So I'm in this meeting talking about one of the programs among the six programs, and with my experience I tried to explain to the person that was chairing the meeting that the plan that she had wasn't feasible from an educational perspective for students, but she decides to skip me and talk to another colleague with a post grad degree in health sciences education, "maybe you could give us a better idea from an educational perspective", and I sat there and thought wow. And this is a fellow woman, same way I said students will test you, the colleagues will also do that and when you're in a position of power that's when people have opinions

She notes that even with her experience and knowledge in her department, her opinions and suggestions are not always valued and is at times delegitimized in comparison to a White colleague who is less qualified to speak on certain topics. The issue is that even in a place of power, it does not matter what position she has, because she perceives that her perspectives as a Black woman are automatically devalued.

Portonoi (2009) argues that the institutional culture creates an environment that privileges White and male competence, marginalizing or disadvantaging all other competences that do not fit the criteria. There is a minority status that is placed on these women, that get doubled or tripled based on their multiple identities. Due to this status, their knowledge and competence is automatically placed at a different academic standing forcing them to perform in a certain way or justify their capabilities as academics (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004; Walkington, 2017). The issue with the delegitimizing of their skills and abilities and the constant need to justify their positions is that these practices become mechanisms to reinforce exclusion; placing Black women at a

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separate level of competence not warranted by their credentials. Further, the practice of delegitimizing competence and Black women academics' experiences silences the voices of these women and negates the hurdles that they had to go through to get to the positions they are in today. Omi perfectly sums this argument up by stating:

> I don't like that kind of stereotyping because for me it minimizes the amount of work and actually the weight and implication of what does it mean or the amount of work you have to do in a South African context to be hired as a lecturer at the age of 25 when you're black and female. So for me when you just call it affirmative action hire, not only are you cancelling the amount of work I had to do as an individual based on merit but on top of the fact, you're ignoring the many gates that I had to break down that were there historically, socially, structurally and systemically and so it's a constant battle.

As Omi argues, delegitimizing the competence of an academic not because of their qualifications and knowledge, but instead because they are Black and female disregards the barriers they had to break down in order to become an academic. These barriers, the women argue are significantly great and warrant recognition.

Another major challenge is the ways in which discrimination and lack of inclusivity is addressed at the university. In discussing UCT's Inclusivity Office approaches, Maria mentions the inclusivity survey that was administered in 2019. Maria expresses that while the survey was meant to legitimize and voice academics of colour's experiences, it ended up as a mechanism that delegitimized their experiences. To further her point, Maria states:

> I always complete the surveys, I always say this is what I feel as a Black female foreigner, I feel excluded I feel whatever, but then when the institutional summaries of the survey's come out they always read something along the lines of, at large our staff are happy. What!

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What! So I don't know maybe with the staff compliment of 4,0000-5,000 which is what I'm told we're at, maybe there are very few voices like mine, so when the summary comes out and says generally people are happy maybe it's true but it always feels just a bit…it feels that it is negating my experiences

Two of the women spoke on these thoughts, arguing that the university collecting evidence to respond to the concerns of academics of colour became a tool that collected evidence that negated their struggles.

Most academics, being White and male, do not struggle with discrimination, questioning, and marginalization as do Black academics; therefore, as a minority group, the voices of the Black academics were hidden in survey responses that generalized the experiences of all academics to be a positive one. This generalization made a few of the women feel like their experiences were negated or ignored and all the work they put in to voice their concerns gets negated by a practice that was supposed to be designed to address discrimination and legitimize the concerns of equity-seeking academics. Subsequently, with practices such as these Black women are finding themselves constantly having to navigate a space that does not fully acknowledge or hear their unique experiences, and this becomes a daily battle that is not always easy to contest.

4.4 Surviving within the System

The actions of students and colleagues, as well as those of the university as discussed above has affected the women in different ways. Further, these actions and university practices have either imposed a specific identity on them or tested the identities they had coming in. One of the main issues discussed is the double employment that comes from being a Black women professor/lecturer. The women described this double employment as not only being employed as

an academic, but also being an exemplary teacher, a researcher, a caretaker or "mother" for Black students, the token representative of diversity, and the person who has to keep everything together to showcase Black excellence.[13] Both Maria and Makena argue that part of surviving within a university as a Black woman comes from the labour attached to exemplifying competence. Maria states:

> You need to prove that you're competent. There are demands, or maybe I can call them services and mentorship roles, and then there is the administrative role, and then of course there is the research aspect that needs to come out so you can prove black excellence. (A6)

Makena further states:

> I know I can't compete with [White colleagues] because I have to work extra hard on things. So in that knowledge what happens is that I have to make sure that I become a master in certain things before actually going into the publication arena for example or trying to prove myself in other areas, so there are things I have to try to make sure that I'm extremely comfortable and competent in doing before starting to do other things. I think that is the reality to be honest.

Part of Black women's employment includes exemplifying their competence to all those within the university space and sometimes even themselves. There are many levels and "hoops" that they have to go through just to be employed at the university. As Makena states "the milestones are significantly higher, even starting out as a student"; as compared to White academics. They are required to work harder and prove themselves in addition to teaching and conducting research; all

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[13] The term has many different meanings but is mostly described as qualities, achievements, and successes that contribute to the advancements of a Black person and the Black community as a whole

of which adds to the labour of being an academic (something which some of the women describe as double employment).

In adding to the role of showcasing excellence, Black women also find themselves performing the role of both the "mommy" and the diversity representative (Henry et al., 2018). The women shared many examples of times where they had to support students in different areas of their lives or were placed in the role of being the diversity representative. In discussing the "mommy" role Gemma, who is well-loved by many students and fellow colleagues, talks about the many times in which she needed to play a supportive role for her students:

> I have a particular relationship with many of my [Black] students. I cared a lot about their wellbeing. I knew they were struggling and made them talk. We had tutorials where we cry for a whole hour before the real work started, but just so that they can let it out… I mean the things I heard people going through blew my mind. Difficult stuff that they were dealing with that nobody else in their class was dealing with, but they had to carry the same load and nobody ever asked… I had to [support them] because there was no other way.

She continues by recognizing that this role is not a responsibility she could give up easily. When a lecturer is seen by many students as a mentor or parent figure, it is difficult to turn students away. Further she notes, "if she does not help, who will." Thabisa also emphasizes this unspoken responsibility, when she adds:

> You're the most understanding of everyone. Students see you as the person who gets it. So they come to you to be their lecturer, to be their mom, to be their best friend, to be their councilor, to be there. Because the student wellness center is overwhelmed and they feel management is not listening to them so you become this person and it's hard because it's

such a fine line and you're overwhelmed with your teaching load, you have to do research, you have to hold students.

These women illustrated that cases of carrying the mommy role usually manifest in times where students have no support system at home or no one they could talk to about the challenges they are facing. When they see a professor who they can trust or who can relate to their struggles, they automatically look to that professor for support. Additionally, that academic feels the need to provide that support, so the student is not struggling on their own. This becomes an unspoken responsibility that they feel obliged to maintain not because they were asked to take on this role, but because of what they as Black women signify to some of their students. As Conway-Jones (2006) observes, Black women academics represent the person that understands the struggles of being Black in any social structure and is easily approached because they represent a beacon of hope and change; the one person who will finally listen to their struggles .

On top of the supportive role, they also are expected to be the tokens of transformation. Due to the lack of representation of Black women, they all discussed having to be the voice of diversity within their department and school committees. Omi states:

It's stuff like this, you know in a meeting talking about transformation, everybody looks at you to give input. How am I supposed to know about transformation policies? That is not my expertise here. I'm a researcher and a teacher here, why are you asking me about transformation?

When thinking on which bodies are responsible to represent diversity, Thuthu adds to this by saying:

So it's hard, you'll see we've always got one or two Black female professors who feel that they are carrying the nation. Because everyone sees them and they're like yes finally, but for [Black women] as well it becomes too much. So the burden, that's the best word I can use, is that as a Black academic, particularly as a Black female academic, you can't just do the work as it is, we have to go above and beyond.

As research indicates, there are many times where academics of colour are seen as the "go to person" for diversity knowledge or for students of colour (see Stewart 2009; Ahmed, 2012; Henry et al., 2017 (163). Mahabeer et al., (2018) argue that Black women's racial and gendered bodies are automatically seen as the symbol of diversity and transformation within their universities. This role becomes the most appreciated role on all sides as they represent the numbers in diversifying the space; the body that will be the face of transformation and the main person to be on equity committees; and the voice to speak against the existing system; among all their other responsibilities as a teacher and researcher (Mahabeer et al., 2018).

4.5 Building Identity and Solidarity as Resistance

Divala (2014b) argues that experiences of life contribute to the development of an individual's identity, and what adds to this formation over time is the individual's interactions with others and within a given environment. For academics, their professional identities are shaped by how they see themselves and how they interact with the social space they are in (Lasky, 2005). In addressing the development of an academic identity some of the women discussed how experiences such as discrimination, double employment, isolation and being seen as the diversity hire has power to define their professional identities and shape their own perspectives of who they are at the university. The majority of the women further discussed that in order to take away the power

behind university practices or colleagues and students shaping them, self-definition and reminding themselves "their right to take space as an academic within the university" is important (Makena, personal interview, February 2020). Without this self-definition it was easy to see themselves as tokens that do not belong. In recognizing the power she has in defining her identity as an academic and choosing to recognize her worth as a lecturer, Makena states:

> It's an environment where you know that certain people feel a certain way about you, but I don't care, I don't let it get to me. I still function within that environment because I have a right to be here just as much as [White academics] do, so that is how I see the world. I don't know if that makes sense…Because yes there are biases regardless, whether it is gender, whether it is races. And even within races there are biases. So, these biases will exist and it's really just about knowing I have a right to be here. Therefore, I own it; I own what I do, who I am, and I don't let what people think or say affect me

In agreeing with Makena's thoughts and taking back her power as an academic, Thuthu powerfully states:

> I'm a warrior. I may not have the physique, the hairstyle, the clothes to support that, but I know that is what I am so that is the identity I feed and I develop. I don't develop myself as a black person, I don't develop myself as a woman, as a person under 35, heterosexual, or whatever the labels are. That to me is someone saying these are the ways of being and that is what you have to mold into. So, if I identify myself as a warrior there are no intersections, there is just me interacting with my context and I deal with my context in situations as a warrior.

Thus, confidence in knowing oneself and defining their own identity is a reminder that they have a right to teach, to be treated fairly, to receive a grant, and a right to a promotion. All the women

recognized the strength they carry and how their experiences brought them to where they are as academics. Although, they also recognized that if they forget the barriers they overcame and the skills and knowledge they built over time to be in the positions they are in currently, they lose the power in building who they are as individuals and as academics, and further, lose the strength they have fighting for opportunities that belong to them as academics. Without confidence and self-definition, it becomes easier for the university, colleagues, and students to recreate who they are and how they see themselves, which they all agreed was a negative and draining space to be in.

4.5.1 Support and Solidarity

Overtime, the University of Cape Town has developed different ways of supporting Black women academics. Some of the examples that the women brought up include mentorship opportunities, orientation programs for new academics, promotion and research workshops, funding and scholarships specific to Black South Africans, and research scholarships for women. Thandie states that one big change in the last few years is that the university now has more "explicit and more directed programs for supporting black women academics", showing improvements in the way the university provides support to equity-seeking groups. The women expressed that one challenge for new academics is that they automatically got thrown into the job as soon as they start, and this can sometimes be overwhelming in a new environment. As Zala states, "there is no one who shows you how to be a UCT academic", therefore, receiving the support from these programs is helpful.

While UCT's guided programs and opportunities were argued to be beneficial to the women's support system as an academic, the main form of support that the women emphasized was the importance of having a supportive colleague/mentor and building allyship. Zala, a new

academic at the university, talked about the support she has from her colleagues and those in her department. While she was not qualified to have a mentor (due to being in a contract position), she expresses her luck in being a part of a department that has a larger number of Black academics and students and also having colleagues who she can go to for support:

> When one is appointed on a permanent basis a mentor has to be appointed to that incoming lecturer, but because I'm on contract I don't have that kind of support. But for me it's not such a big deal because I know people that I can go to if I need help with something. I did have a PhD supervisor and all those things. Everyone I work with they're collegial, they're kind, so it's not hard to go to them for that support.

In discussing support from having an "unofficial" mentor, Malaika states:

> I guess sometimes there is not enough support from the people you feel should be supporting you, but I've been lucky in that besides the fact that there are other people who aren't very supportive, I have a mentor. It's not an official thing but she's been very great, so I've learned quite a lot. If she wasn't here, I probably would still be stuck and I wouldn't have realized a lot of things. So, it balances out. I guess over the years you learn who your friends are; who your support is.

More than half of the women talked about the support they had from colleagues and mentors, who have helped, or continue to help them get through difficult days on the job. Moreover, some of the women also agreed that having a supportive colleague or mentor who either knew them as a student prior or took on the mentor roles in their lives throughout their academic careers made transitioning into being a confident academic easier, while also creating a space of inclusion for them. For the few women that spoke on not having that particular support, their responses to surviving within

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the university were centered on keeping to themselves and getting through the day the best way they could. Their responses showcased the need to learn how to keep to themselves and deal with the daily challenges of being an academic on their own, as support and allyship is not always easily accessible in their departments[14].

Other mechanisms of support were facilitating by the practice of "cluster hiring," the process of hiring a group of employees, mostly as a means to boost diversity, and the support of the Black Academic Caucus (BAC). Cluster hiring is one method that UCT uses to improve the numbers of Black women academics and boost diversity within different departments. Thabisa is one example of this process in which she was hired along with a few other Black women academics. She expressed that these women have been vital to her survival as a Black woman in the university and without them, would feel excluded in the space.

> [Cluster hiring is] important, because they hired us as a cohort, rather than the random one person that the department may have in over 20 years. And they keep leaving because they are the only ones around the table, and we know how uncomfortable that can be. It honestly feels like violence, it is violence, and I think [the university] finally realized that the best way to change a space and to really be serious about transformation is to actually hire more than one black person at a time.

The BAC was also seen as a mechanism for support and solidarity and viewed as a space where Black academics could go to when dealing with oppression or discrimination. The objective of the BAC is to prioritize Black academics and be a platform that advocates EDI (BAC, 2018). A few

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[14] In some cases, the lack of finding places of allyship or solidarity stemmed from being one of the only Black women in the department or not having the opportunity to connect with many solidarity groups (like the BAC).

of the women highlighted the importance of their work with or their experience with the BAC. In discussing what the group means to her, Thandie states:

> when I came here and I started realizing oh my God I'm getting a lot of teaching and I don't understand how they are allocating students to me, the only place that was a God sent was the opportunity to join the BAC and talk to other Black academics who have been in it much longer and had a lot of advice to give and a lot of insight in terms of how the system works."

Thabisa also talks about the importance of this group as she states "[the BAC] has been an important supportive space, it really has been. It is a space we've created for ourselves". It is these examples of support that has fostered a space of solidarity, and through this solidarity, the means to feel empowered and build their own space of inclusion.

Having that support system, the women argued, made it easier for them to deal with the many challenges of being a Black woman academic and they felt empowered to tackle their daily battles with this support system. Through these means they are able to create a space of inclusion by building their own academic community where shared experiences of having the outsider-within status allows them to redefine the terms of belonging (Harley, 2008). As recognized by Johnson & Thomas (2012), this academic community fosters relationships with other allied academics and has the potential to create opportunities of empowerment such as gaining insightful tools and information on how to advance their careers. Through allyship and solidarity, they are able to create their own ways of inclusion and take back the power they lost in being excluded by some of the university's practices or by some of their colleagues.

4.6 Intersectional struggle beyond race and gender

South Africa has placed laws and frameworks that aim to promote diversity and fair treatment for everyone in the workplace, and part of these laws include actions to address the disadvantages of all equity seeking groups (Walton, 2001). However, as argued in Chapter 2, race often times is placed at the forefront of these EDI discussions and consequently, other equity-seeking groups fall off the agenda (Msibi, 2013; Johnson et al., 2012). A few of the women spoke on this issue and noted that many of the discussions have focused on race, followed by gender, then maybe, if necessary other equity-seeking groups will be addressed. However, even though other equity-seeking groups are not always explicitly discussed when it comes to EDI efforts, discrimination does not only manifest in terms of race or gender but also through multiple identities that impact the way academics participate within the university (Crenshaw, 2003). Particularly for Black women, a lot of the challenges that the women mentioned stemmed from the additional struggle of not only being a woman who is Black, but also being a woman who is an immigrant, young, disabled, and/or part of the LGBTQI community.

4.6.1 Age and Level of Experience

One of the most talked about points of struggle at different levels was the challenge of dealing with being a Black woman who is either a new academic at UCT or a young academic. A few of the women who participated in this study were either young academics or had just begun their current positions at UCT. However, those who did not fall into these two categories were also able to attest to similar struggles. When discussing the different ways that the university functions, Omi, argues that there are different levels of respect and honour that gets placed on an academic

and the respect of an academic depends on not only skin colour, or gender, but also on age and years of experience.

> There are definitely ageist tendencies, ageist atmosphere. People seem to believe that you need a fifteen-year experience to have the weight or to have the right to even make comment or give something that is valuable. I mean right down to the way people get promoted, how people get into leadership, how people are actually placed into positions to be able to contribute to real tangible change.

As a young academic Omi recounts the many times where she felt her age and years of experience affected how others within the university saw her. It was not just her gender or race that forced her to justify her competence, but in many cases, she was also found in situations where her innovative ideas or knowledge was not taken seriously because of her age. She described instances of being seen as "naïve" when sharing her perspectives in meetings or professors struggling to have their research recognized because they do not fit the criteria of having a specific number of years of teaching experience. Thus, she is required to do double the work to prove herself as not only a Black woman who is capable and skilled, but a new academic who also has valuable perspectives.

Age and years of experience also, as Malaika observes, sometimes dictate the amount of work or admin activities an academic does. For example, she noticed over the years she had to learn how to say no to certain tasks as sometimes colleagues or management can take advantage of academics being young and new to the university. As some of the participants suggested, at times when an academic is new, administrative tasks or different responsibilities are passed down as a way for the new academic to learn and build knowledge. Therefore, additional workload is not always given because an academic is Black and female (as some of literature

suggests), but sometimes greater workloads are experienced because an academic is new and may not know the full processes of the university. The three women who spoke on those issues recognized that discrimination and oppression is attached to their different identities and it's not always easy to pinpoint why they are being discriminated against. However, they made evident through their stories that it is not only being Black and woman that impact how the women participate within UCT, but also their identity as a young or new academic. As Sang (2018) argues, these multiple identities the women have as a person continues to intersect with each other and dictates how they are treated and viewed by others at the university.

4.6.2 Citizenship

Two other challenges that the women discussed was being a non-South African academic. South Africa has been a favorable destination for many immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015). Many have come to seek new job opportunities, while others have come to seek refuge or asylum. A few of the participants were not from South Africa, however, they came to the country for education and then stayed to maintain job opportunities. Naomi and Maria are two of the participants who immigrated to South Africa. Naomi completed both her undergraduate and graduate degrees at UCT then made the decision after her PhD to stay as an academic in the university. One of her observations about being a Black woman academic was that she found at times that she was also affected by her non-South African status.

> I struggled a little bit getting research funding but that was only because I was not a Black
> South African. So a lot of the funding that comes from the National Research Foundation

looks for Black South African academics to support. So according to them I'm on the same

level as a white male. Because I'm an international academic".

Maria, who is also non-South African adds to this point by stating:

So my experience is twofold: I'm a foreigner in another country, so as much as South

African women are being promoted and things are being done to push them forward I don't

benefit from that because I am a foreigner.

Two other women spoke on these challenges and outlined that not having South African

citizenship at times added to their daily challenges of being a Black woman academic. Due to

South Africa focusing on advancing EDI for all South Africans, those benefits do not always

transfer to immigrants living in the country. Being non-South African keeps people without a

South African citizenship from accessing and participating in certain opportunities and this

practice also extends to the borders of universities. The women stated that there were certain

things they could not participate in because they were not citizens and therefore could not reap

some of the benefits that come from equity and diversity practices at the university. The main

example that was discussed was scholarships and research funding that was only available to

those with South African status and therefore, they could not gain certain support that would be

useful as an academic.

4.6.3 Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities also face great challenges in universities, especially in environments

where disability is not discussed or addressed. South Africa's *Employment Equity Act* promotes

the equal opportunity and fair treatment of all in the workplace and redressing historical

disadvantages experienced by equity-seeking groups, of which include women and those with a

disability (Republic of South Africa Employment Equity Act, 1998). These laws also extend to all aspects of the country and not just the workplace; however, while equity laws and practices are meant to advocate for all equity-seeking groups, individuals living with disabilities do not always get that support. In discussing examples of how those with disabilities struggle at the university, Thuthu states:

> Everything has been spaced and put together to produce a certain kind of person so if you're not that kind of person you struggle. I've had Black, disabled students who are women. One got accepted to Harvard but couldn't stay here at UCT because she had no disability support. And as a Black woman in engineering it felt like the university saying "mm you're not supposed to be here anyways so maybe your disability is a favor to you", you know. And she was majorly depressed."

Malaka, an academic whose field works with people with disabilities, recognizes the tendencies transformative processes have in placing racial and gendered issues first.

> If you think about it people with disabilities have always been put on the back burner. I think people tend to not think about them because, we tend to be quite selfish. If it doesn't affect us, then we probably don't think about it. But then it's quite weird that we want people of other races, let's say White people, to think about Black people in a lot of discussions but we don't do the same thing to those with disabilities.

These two perspectives show that disability is not often discussed, and this adds to the challenges that those with disabilities face. Due to lack of discussion and recognition of the challenges of those disabled, the university space is not always easy for them to move around, and this makes it difficult for both disabled students and academics to participate in the same way as abled individuals within the university (Lourens, 2020). Since race and gender is put at the forefront of

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the transformation agenda, some of the women argued that methods and practices are not appropriately enforced to ensure that the disabled are able to learn and teach, and this at times leads to many losing opportunities and in worse cases, leaving the university.

While the interviewees shared examples of similar challenges they experience as Black women academics, they made evident that the different identities that make Black women who they are intersect with each other, which further create diverse experiences and challenges. As Gemma argues, the strategy has been to bundle race with all other categories, but struggles arise at multiple angles. Therefore, Black women, particularly, become vulnerable to environments that may find ways to support one aspect of their identity, but completely ignore or oppress the other identities that make them who they are (Ramohai, 2019). The argument here is not to pinpoint the multiple identities of an individual but to recognize that these diverse identities signify different needs. It is thus important for transformation efforts to focus on dissecting how practices and culture impact diverse individuals at different levels, in which this recognition would set a path in addressing more appropriate strategies to support all equity-seeking groups within the university (Ramohai, 2019).

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

5 Addressing the Research Question

This study sought to explore the lived experiences of Black women academics and the level of impact that transformation strategies within universities have on improving equity, diversity and inclusion. This research focused on the three following questions:

- What are the main obstacles that black women experience (individual, institutional, structural, etc.) in the advancement of their academic careers?

- What are the perceptions of Black women university professors on the measures being taken to address EDI in the academic labour force?

- Are the initiatives adopted by the University of Cape Town adequate for achieving EDI for Black women? If not, why?

My study indicates that the Black women who were interviewed for this study perceived that the transformation efforts within the University of Cape Town have improved the experiences of Black women students and academics in the last few years. These efforts have created more room for Black women to challenge the current culture and be successful in their careers. The creation of the inclusivity office within UCT and the work of the Black Academic Caucus have created space for EDI to be discussed and further implemented. Other examples of advancements include an increase in the number of Black women in senior professor and management positions. UCT's current vice chancellor position is a Black woman. However, this study also highlights that while opportunities of access and opportunities to share concerns are improving, EDI and the broader transformation strategies still do not address the challenging circumstances of all equity-seeking groups. There is still more work to be done.

The women who participated in this study made evident that they find it challenging as Black women to participate fully within the university space. The institutional culture and practices continue to oppress and discriminate against certain groups of people. Black women face these barriers at different moments along their career. As students, Black women face challenges that are not experienced by non-Black students and are forced to bear additional emotional and physical labor because of how their gender and race (among other identities) are regarded. Once hired as a an academic, interviewees described their situation as feeling like they are "double employed" (e.g., not only being a lecturer/professor but also being a supervisor, a mentor or parent for students, the ones to be the diversity hire, etc.), and that it is not always easy to navigate the pressures that come with the job. However, within this environment, the women I spoke with found alternative ways to find power through building community and fostering allyships with other colleagues. They also had to actively find resources and support to be able to participate successfully within the academic space (e.g., solidarity groups with other Black women, the BAC, mentors, etc.).

Using UCT as a case study, I found that while great efforts have been paid to the first two elements of EDI, 'equity' and 'diversity,' strategies to promote inclusion are still lacking. Part of the challenge relates to the fact that the first two elements are easier to measure. UCT's transformation strategies, quite rightly, have prioritized equity and diversity by placing quotas for hiring and creating programs such as monetary supports that target Black academics and women to create opportunities; however, the concept of inclusion is more elusive.

Therefore, as equity and diversity is being addressed through specific means (i.e., improving numbers and career opportunities for Black women academics), more attention needs to be paid to inclusion. Based on the definitions offered by the participants on this study, I define

'inclusion' as the way that Black women (and other equity-seeking groups) are treated, regarded, and incorporated in the everyday practices and processes of the university and how the university challenges the barriers that affect how Black women function within the space. There are deeply rooted practices of colonization, everyday racism, and institutional and structural barriers that are not being prioritized as steps to addressing inclusion within the university. As Hemson & Singh (2010) argue, sixteen years after the end of formal apartheid, there seems to be "a failure of discourse in addressing the same issues of social relationships and institutional culture that have carried over from apartheid" (pg. 949). Inclusion needs to be redefined as a separate strategy, not to be mixed in and confused with equity in opportunities and diversifying staff. Discourses, definitions, and strategies on inclusion goes far beyond including individuals into a particular space and extends to understanding what institutional practices are for and who they serve (Hemson & Singh, 2010). Finally, inclusion practices also need to go beyond race and gender and include disability, class, age, sexual orientation, family status and even citizenship. Of course, these are advertised by both the university and the government as goals to the transformation agenda; however, as discussed in section six, the needs and challenges of these diverse groups are not always met.

Unfortunately, with this current study, it is difficult to outline a step by step approach on how to dismantle oppressive institutional cultures and structures as these practices remain deeply rooted since the inception of the university institution. As Mamdani (2018) states, the African university "began as part of the European colonial mission": a colonial project thriving on the concepts of universalism, which still end up excluding the majority of those who were colonized (para. 1). Thus, greater focus needs to move beyond inclusion and equity and move towards decolonizing institutional structures and the mindsets of individuals within the university . There

needs to be systemic change and liberation from the confinements of current structural ideology and practices (Scott & Ivala, 2019). Part of this change and liberation should involve institutions, management, and diversity and inclusivity offices creating a space where racism and discrimination is indeed intolerable, and not just advertised as intolerable. EDI strategies, when operationalized, must challenge and disrupt the structures that have historically excluded equity-seeking groups, instead of pushing forward strategies of equity, diversity and inclusion that end up reinforcing conventional structures of power (Henry et al., 2018). As Thuthu states, "we are still dealing with decolonizing. You transform, you patch up, you decolonize, you ask what are we trying to teach here, whose interests does it serve, how does it maintain the status quo"; therefore, important questions that need to be asked by management and by government leaders is what strategies are they 'managing' and what strategies are they implementing. What discourse is being used and what are their limitations? Is it impactful to focus on equity and inclusion or do we need to address more powerful discourse such as structural change and liberation? Who are the schools' practices serving; who has the power, who is it affecting, and why after all this time and effort is this not changing? These are all important questions that need to be discussed and addressed in order to advance transformation. Once these discourses and practices are disrupted and redefined, only then can we start seeing a level of transformation truly designed to support those it is intended.

5.1 Further Research

Future research that could advance this field of study and provide ways to dismantle discriminatory institutional cultures would be to conduct additional analysis on other universities. Each university has its own histories, vision, mission, practices, and strategies to achieve EDI (some strategies more detailed than others). Therefore, future research could focus on examining the experiences

of Black women academics within other universities to assess whether different histories and EDI strategies cultivate a different environment. While scholars have outlined similar challenges faced by Black women in other university contexts (i.e., Mabokela & Mawila, 2004; Shackleton, 2006; Johnson et al., 2012; and Mahabeer et al, 2018), further information can be drawn to better understand the structural and transformational changes needed. doing a comparison between, for example, a previously Black university and a previously White university, could add to the body of research that seeks to understand institutional histories and cultures and the impacts it has on Black women's abilities to participate as academics.

Additionally, as apartheid affected women of colour more broadly (not just Black women), future research would also benefit from assessing the diverse experiences of Indian and Coloured women, and even get a sense of the intersectional challenges that White women experience as academics. Women are considered an equity-seeking group as part of South Africa's transformation efforts; therefore, it would be interesting to broaden the research on the experiences of women academics in universities and the diverse challenges they experience. Finally, because institutional cultures can be maintained through attitudes and behaviours of those running and working within an institution (Kizito, 2019), further research will benefit from getting an understanding of the perspectives and reasons behind certain prejudice and oppressive behaviours to further expose power dynamics and know how structural inequality is maintained. This additional research will give rise to new topics of focus and provide a more fulsome understanding on how to redefine EDI discourses that more appropriately address challenges experienced within the university institution.

APPENDICES

Interview Questions

Preliminary questions:

- What is your occupation? Position?
- How long have you been working in this university? As an academic?
- Where and when did you receive your PhD, and in what discipline? (you may be able to find this information on the person's website)
- What motivated you to pursue an academic career?

Questions on experience (professors):

- Tell me about your experience as an academic. What has your experiences been like so far?
  - Have you felt discrimination in your position? By your peers?
  - Have you felt a sense of exclusion? Experiences of racism? Sexism? How so? Any examples you are willing to share?
- What do you consider to be some of the major challenges that women face (particularly in grad school) that limit their opportunities for pursuing academic careers? Do you have examples you can share?
- Talking about the position that you are currently in, what was the hiring process like?
- Are there challenges in academic work that you consider to be disproportionately faced by Black women?
  - What are they? (if necessary, as a prompt)
  - What are the biggest barriers you experience? (if necessary, as a prompt)
- Do you think there are particular demands placed on black women academic staff that are greater than other staff?
  - Specifically, by students and your peers (colleagues)?
- What do you think are some of the major challenges that need to be addressed in order for there to be more equitable opportunities for Black women academics?

Extra questions[15]:

- Are there mentoring or supportive arrangements, if any, that are available to Black women academic staff to help them deal with challenges they may encounter? What else do you think is needed to ensure women get the support/mentorship, etc. they need?
- What do you see as some of the opportunities that have opened up for Black women in recent years in terms of making academic work more accessible?
  - (if yes, ask what difference it has made for you and other Black women)
- What specific barriers do Black women face in seeking tenure and promotion?
  - What do you think is being valued more in the tenure and promotion process (e.g. teaching, service or research, that is, publications)?

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[15] Questions were only asked when time permitted. Usually the participants had already answered these questions as part of their responses to the other questions asked.

- What are the opportunities and challenges facing Black women academics in the realm of research (e.g. accessing research money) and publication?

Questions for black academic caucus:

- Tell me about your experience as an academic. What has your experiences been like so far?
  - Have you felt discrimination in your position? By your peers?
  - Have you felt a sense of exclusion? Experiences of racism? Sexism? How so? Any examples you are willing to share?
- What do you consider to be some of the major challenges that women face (particularly in grad school) that limit their opportunities for pursuing academic careers? Do you have examples you can share?
- Talking about the position that you are currently in, what was the hiring process like?
- Are there challenges in academic work that you consider to be disproportionately faced by Black women?
  - What are they? (if necessary, as a prompt)
  - What are the biggest barriers you experience? (if necessary, as a prompt)
- Do you think there are particular demands placed on black women academic staff that are greater than other staff?
  - Specifically, by students and your peers (colleagues)?

Extra questions:

- Are there specific concerns or issues, that you are aware of, that arise in the hiring process that you consider discriminatory against black women?
- Do you think narratives and discourses placed on women outside the academic institution make it difficult for black women academics to enter or stay in academia?

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