DECLARATION

I declare that this research is my own work and that the work has met the requisite criteria needed to comply with the rules and regulations of the University of Venda.

R.M. Morake 28/4/2015

Signature **Date**

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Living beyond the glass ceiling: Life histories of women in higher education leadership in South Africa

by

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submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

In the

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM STUDIES AND EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

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First I would like to acknowledge Professor Jonathan Jansen who, planted a seed of confidence in my ability to walk this path and continued to hold my hand and encouraged me during a very difficult period in my life. I will never forget your kindness and your leadership.

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To my departed father and loving mother, your wisdom to teach me to believe in and hold dear, the liberating power of faith, knowledge and education as bedrock upon which I will survive the pangs of an unkind life path holds true to your love for God first and for me.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my two children Ofentse and Odirile who are a breathtaking reflection of God's love for me. Without their enduring love, support, encouragement and patience this journey would have been an impossible, distant and unreachable dream.

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PROLOGUE

Before the law stands a gatekeeper. A woman comes to this gatekeeper and requests admittance into the law, but the gatekeeper says he cannot grant her admittance right now. The woman thinks this over and asks if she will therefore be allowed to enter later. "It is possible" says the gatekeeper, "but not right now". Because the gate to the law is open, as always, and the gatekeeper steps off to the side, the woman bends down so that she can see through the gate and into the interior. When the gatekeeper notices this, he laughs and says: "If it tempts you so much, try to enter even though I have forbidden it. But take note, I am powerful and I am only the lowest of the gatekeepers. From one hall to the next stand gatekeepers, each more powerful than the last. The mere sight of the third is more than even I can bear".

The woman had not expected such difficulties; after all, she thinks, the laws should be accessible to everyone at all times, but when she regards the gatekeeper more closely, and sees his fur coat, his large pointed nose and his long thin black tartar beard, she decides that it would be better to wait until she receives permission to enter. The gatekeeper gives her a footstool and lets her sit down besides the door. There she sits for days and years. She tries many times to gain permission to enter, and tires the gatekeeper with her requests. The gatekeeper often conducts short interviews, and asks him about his home and about many other things, but his questions are indifferent, such as important people ask, and in the end he always repeats that he cannot yet allow the woman to enter. The woman, who has equipped herself with many items for her journey, uses everything, no matter how valuable to bribe the gatekeeper. The gatekeeper accepts everything, but he also says "I take it only so you will not believe that you have neglected anything". Over the course of many years the woman watches the gatekeeper almost without interruption. She forgets about the other gatekeepers, and this first one seems to him to be the only obstacle to admittance into the law. She curses her **bad luck** recklessly and loudly during the first few years but then later, when she begins to grow old, she only grumbles to herself. She becomes childish and because she has studied the gatekeeper for years and has noticed even the fleas on her fur collar, she asks the fleas to join her cause and change the gatekeeper's mind. Finally her eyesight becomes weaker, and she does not know if the world around her is actually becoming darker or her eyes are deceiving her.

Adaptation from Franz Kafka's 'Before the law' (1997)

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ABSTRACT

Close to two decades, since the birth of South Africa's post-apartheid democracy, women have enjoyed unprecedented levels of participation in higher education. Yet, the distribution of women academics at senior levels remains uneven and unequal across institutions. Recent data shows that despite enabling policies and support programmes, as well as the restructuring of higher education in South Africa, the number of women in leadership has decreased from seven to five .

The goal of this study is not, however, to study pathology. Put differently, this study does not locate itself within the more familiar literatures on "barriers" to women participation in higher education leadership. Rather, the special focus of this study is on women academics that have succeeded in reaching the highest executive levels of appointment in higher education. This begs the following questions: What explains the success of these women despite the institutional barriers to female academic advancement in universities? Why did these select few women 'make it' into senior executive positions while the majority of their counterparts did not? What are the composite experiences of women academic executives in senior management? How do such women cope within male-dominated executive environments?

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to trace the pathways followed by these women executives to reach these senior positions in academia; to describe the experiences of women in higher education leadership; and to theorise the attainments of these women academic executives in the context of established explanations for gender-based achievements. The study will develop detailed life histories of each of the selected women subjects as the main design strategy.

While there is a diverse set of feminist traditions and leadership theories in social science scholarship, this study does not start with an *a priori* commitment to an established theory, but allows theory to be generated out of the documented experiences of these senior women in higher education leadership. This approach, broadly described as grounded theory, is complex but necessary, especially in the context of the proposed life history methodology, where much of the accent falls on the experiences of the informants expressed in their words. Placing a predetermined structure on the lives of the informants might distort what is expected to be a powerful, emotional narrative rather than simple quantitative data on silent objects.

The study, nevertheless, remains conscious of the shaping influences of sociological, anthropological and political science conceptual frameworks in informing the crafting and interpretation of individual life histories, as outlined in the seminal study of Vijay Reddy of the Human Sciences Research Council on black scientist achievements in South Africa (Reddy 2000).

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The intellectual advance that this study will make is to move beyond the "barriers" paradigm in social science scholarship on women's achievement, and focus on the ways in which women who have achieved success make sense of their leadership experiences on a day-to-day basis. It is of special interest to understand how women negotiate their leadership in what remain patriarchal institutions in higher education. The practical value of this inquiry is to aid institutions eager to meet employment equity targets about the institutional environments that inhibit or advance gender-affirming experiences in higher education. It is also to assist development experts, government and international aid agencies to generate more effective interventions aimed at ensuring equity in the appointment and retention of women senior academic leaders in higher education.

Key words
Administration, barriers, higher education, gender equality, gender equity, life histories, policy, leadership/management, grounded theory, women empowerment.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa, as a young democracy, has been lauded by the global world for its achievement in putting together a state of the art constitution (Government Communication Information Services 1996) that is believed to uphold all human rights for its citizenry. For the first time in the history of this young democracy, five premiers in the nine provinces of South Africa are women (Du Plessis 2009; Mbola 2009). Prior to the democratic dispensation, in South Africa, social inequalities were embedded and reflected in all spheres of social life and higher education was, and still is no exception (Badat 2010). The Bill of Rights makes provision for equality before the law for all people irrespective of colour, race or creed.

South Africa signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW or the Women's Convention 1981) in 1995 and is also a signatory to other United Nations treaties and protocols that ensure that the women's lives are bettered and are on par with those of their male counterparts in all areas of life and professional work. It is these impressive legislative provisions, together with the chapter nine institutions (Commission on Gender Equality [CGE] and Human Rights Commission [HRC]) that provide guidelines for the implementation, on the one hand, and monitoring of practices, on the other, in such a way that lived experiences of everyone are commensurate with the policies and effective development of the South African society. The South African Public Service Commission felt that there is not a strong commitment within the public service and set out recommendations to mainstream gender across all government departments as interventions to

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reshape policies and programmes thereby eliminating gender inequality PSC (2006).

In 2013, South Africa marked the "centenary of working together towards sustainable women empowerment and gender equality" as part of the annual commemoration of women's struggle against disenfranchisement and discrimination. However, government acknowledges that "we still have a lot of work to do to achieve full equality and also to improve the living conditions of women and the status of women in public and private sectors" (President Zuma's address on 9 August 2013). President Zuma asserted that it is through the struggles of women that South Africa's Constitution recognises women's rights as equal rights. It is in this kind of environment that everyone is expected to have a fair and equal chance to succeed in whatever they set out to achieve (GCIS 2013a).

However, these policy measures, together with international treaties and machineries that South Africa acceded to, have not led to an increase in the number of women in high positions of leadership (Morley et al 2006, 2012 [a] and [b], 2013 [a] and [b]; Shackleton 2006) in the public sector in general, and higher education, as a critical sector of development in particular. First world countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America affirm that 'universities are a core strategic and critical driver of economic and social mobility' (Dominici, Fried and Zeger 2009; Universities UK 2012,). In the European Union, only 13% of higher education institutions and 9% of research institutions are headed by women (Yojana 2012). The highest organ in education and culture in the world, (UNESCO), does not provide global statistics on women leaders in higher education, but only provides numbers of female staff in individual countries (UNESCO 1998, 2002, 2009; Morley 2012a).

The two follow up reports on women and management in higher education published by UNESCO (2002, 2009) continue to raise the concern that in higher

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education, women in decision-making processes need urgent attention. As UNESCO points out, this concern was listed and raised by the Beijing Platform of Action (1995) as one of the priority areas where further action was vital to ensure personal empowerment of women so that they can contribute fully to society. In a more specific area of life, in South Africa, the establishment of the Council on Higher Education in the very early years of democracy (established in May 1998) was a commitment by government to provide a legislative environment with the purpose of furthering the course of equity and equality for all within this sector (Council on Higher Education, 2007).

It should, therefore, follow that over a decade after the Higher Education Act[1] (HE Act 101 of 1997) was put in place, the plight of women in higher education leadership should have changed for the better. The promulgation of the Higher Education Act set particular transformation benchmarks for gender equity and parity. The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, giving effect to the Chapter Nine institutions, especially the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) and Human Rights Commission (HRC) set parameters within which equality should be recognised, and which could also support the provisions for women to lead and manage across both private and public sector environments (GCIS 2013b).

As far as leadership and governance at the African continental level is concerned, the imperatives on gender representation in the public and private sectors received some attention when the African Union declared 2010 – 2020 as the decade of women, thereby providing a road map for meeting the parity targets which, until now, have been dismal (African Union Gender Policy 2009). This attention comes with a historical acceptance, particularly by SADC, that while some SADC member states have made some progress towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming, disparities between women and men still

[1] The Higher Education Act was promulgated in 1996 with the main purpose of restructuring higher education and broadening access to all students and staff. Among other important issues, the Act sets meeting equity targets as key principles for transformation and effective delivery of higher education.

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exist in critical areas of power sharing and decision-making (SADC Protocol on Gender and Development 2008). Article twelve (12) of the SADC protocol states that by 2015, 50% of the decision-making positions in the public and private sectors should be held by women. It also asserts that Member States should use affirmative action measures as provided for by article five (5) of the protocol. In his report on the implementation of the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa [SDGEA] (2004), the chairperson reported that gender parity still remains an elusive reality for Member States, of which South Africa is one (AU Commission 2012).

With all the impressive legislative policies (Shackleton 2006) and protocols at national, regional and continental levels, the question remains why, how and when parity objectives will be met in order for women to have their rightful place in the decision making echelons of the public sector in the African continent, the Southern African Development Communities (SADC) and, in particular, South African higher education.

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1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the last twenty years of democracy, South Africa has witnessed profound transformation in higher education. This transformation includes putting in place mechanisms to bridge the gap of inequality between men and women. Another important factor of transformation is putting in place effective interventions aimed at training, recruiting, effectively utilising and retaining skilled public sector leaders, manager and professionals (Cohen 1993). In the mean time, women, in general, have come a long way to close the educational and professional experience in higher education. Yet, they continue to face grave challenges in terms of breaking the so called invisible glass ceiling that prevents them from accessing leadership positions in both the private and public sector organisations. In South Africa, both private and public sectors are yet to meet the

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target to institutionalise the political mandate on women's empowerment and gender equality, in order to meet equity quotas.

Despite the impressive legislative machinery that this country has put in place, in order to reduce or eradicate discrimination against women in all walks of life, the phenomenon of disempowerment still persists and women still remain underrepresented in high level positions of management and leadership (Asmal 2002; SAUVCA 2002; CHE 2007). Furthermore, despite the ills of apartheid and the inhumane way in which black people were treated, women in general and irrespective of their race and colour (Morley 2013b:21), have suffered unprecedented disenfranchisement historically, and at the hands of patriarchy (in South Africa). In 1956, there was a move to unite women towards a common goal against unjust laws as one example of this historical ilk of classification of women as of lesser value in society. The annual commemoration of the women's march, in my opinion, is still a painful reminder of how far-fetched change still is to be realised to bring women to an equitable level of recognition with men, particularly with regard to leadership positions in higher education.

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In addition, as a previous member of senate at a medical university and now a member of the senior management service in government, I have participated in a myriad of activities and awareness raising campaigns aimed at improving the status and lives of women in senior management for over twenty years. During this journey of management, I have seen policies being promulgated and implementation programmes mounted using various means. One of the means thought to be the most important and effective was the mainstreaming of gender into institutional policies and structures (Public Service Commission 2006; Moothoo-Padayachie 2011). Yet to date the efforts made seem to yield nothing every time goal posts are shifted.

The barriers to equitable treatment and empowerment in education have been researched in the study by Phendla (2004a; 2004b, 2009) and reported in

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Musadzi u pfara lufhanga nga hu fhiraho..., meaning 'women are forced to hold the knives by their sharpest edge'. These barriers are still glaringly prevalent despite legislative imperatives to bridge the gap of leadership, thereby resulting in tension between policy and practice. A subsequent article by the same author, 'Metaphors of leadership, metaphors of hope...: life stories of black women leaders in South Africa' reflects how women use different metaphors to make meaning of organisations and management as part of their own leadership trajectories and strategies (Phendla 2004a). These studies however are based on school leadership and not higher education leadership.

This study also makes use of the shaping influences of sociological, anthropological and political science conceptual frameworks to craft and interpret the individual life histories, as outlined in Reddy (2000) seminal study on black scientist achievements in South Africa. The study also draws on a related article (Phendla 2009) on higher education leadership and the underrepresentation of women leaders. Although these studies contributed immensely on the subject of historical and political impediments of social justice and achievement and how these impacted on the lives of people and women in particular, the studies do not cover the personal experiences of women in higher education leadership thus necessitating a study of the kind that is being undertaken here.

Prior to the reconfiguration of the higher education landscape, there were a total of four women Deputy Vice Chancellors (DVCs) and only one Vice Chancellor (VC) in twenty-one Universities, as well as only two Vice Chancellors in fifteen Technikons (USAID 2005). At present, there are only five women Vice Chancellors in 23 composite, newly restructured traditional and comprehensive Universities and Universities of Technology (Higher Education South Africa [HESA] 2013)[2]. Despite the establishment of the Higher Education Leadership

[2] HESA was formed in May 2005 to replace the two statutory organs for universities, the South African Universities Vice Chancellors Association (SAUVCA) and Technikons (now universities of technology), committee of Technikon Principals (CTP). HESA is said to be the voice of South Africa's University Leadership.

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and Management (HELM) in 2003 and the Women in Higher Education Executive Leadership (WHEEL) programme launched in Cape Town in 2005, the higher education leadership gender quota is still a distant, unattainable and illusive target.

The Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme is viewed by its custodian, HESA (2005), as a direct response to sectoral governance, leadership and management capacity needs as identified in various surveys and reports with the underlying aim of guiding, assisting, and supporting higher education leadership in successfully navigating the constant challenges of change and effectively interpreting the operational impact, of internal and external drivers. HESA also states that the mission of this important programme is to explore and create solutions that address organisational and individual capacity gaps in leadership and management. A point of critical importance is to note that until recently, the HESA Chief executive Officer lamented the leadership deficit during his address on 'leading and managing higher education institutions in South Africa' (HESA 2013).

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Moreover, research done by UNESCO (2002) shows that, even in countries where equity policies are well-developed, and special support programmes are in place, women are still underrepresented. The lessons learned from the report are that legislation is helpful but not sufficient to ensure that gender equity policies will meet with success (UNESCO 2002:45). This, according to UNESCO, raises questions about whether there are certain socializing traits which influence women's decisions to enter academic leadership fields (UNESCO 2002:23). The report also indicates that, within the Commonwealth Higher education Management, there is a steady decrease of women participation and, consequently, their inability to influence the policy and direction of their institution both at departmental and at institutions level. This study, therefore, focuses on those few women in the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) and Vice Chancellor (VC)

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positions, who broke through the proverbial glass ceiling and are working as leaders in the higher education context in South Africa.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Globally, an academic revolution has taken place in higher education in the past fifty years. This has been marked by transformation, which was unprecedented in scope and diversity. Yet inequality among national higher education systems, as well as within countries has increased (UNESCO 2009). The South African higher education system is no exception to the challenges facing women in leadership and management. A review report on higher education management by UNESCO (2009) indicates that, despite many policy initiatives in recent years, broader participation in higher education has not benefited all sectors of society equally, thereby leaving those social inequalities deeply rooted in history still lingering. As a Commonwealth Member State and a signatory to many UN treaties and conventions, including a state of the art constitution and its supporting commissions, South Africa has not met the required equity target on appointing women into leadership positions in higher education.

This study aims to understand and describe the experiences that enabled those few South African women academics to achieve senior leadership positions in higher education. The research is three-pronged in structure. The first and main purpose of the study is to explore the reasons why these women succeeded in achieving and maintaining higher education seniority, given the established barriers to gender-related advancement in the South African Higher Education Institutions including Universities of Technology, previously known as Technikons[3]. The purpose of this study is not, however, to study pathology or to locate it within or limit it to more familiar literatures on barriers to women

[3] The historical context of Technikons in South Africa was that they offered market or labour-oriented and technical training when compared to the curriculum offered at universities. These have since been discontinued as a result of the higher education transformation and reconfiguration and have now been converted into Universities of Technology and Comprehensive Universities.

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participation. The special focus of this research, instead, is to explore the lives of women academics who have succeeded in reaching the highest executive levels of appointment in higher education.

In order to arrive at the explorations leading to their success, the study will firstly describe the formative experiences and pathways traversed by South African women academics en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education institutions. Then, it will describe, through their stories, how these women in academic leadership negotiate the world of higher education policy and practice once they have attained such senior leadership positions.

These three research foci, together, set the basis on which to elucidate and describe enabling or disabling historical, political, socio-economic and cultural phenomena of everyday life through women leaders' stories. The study aims to gain insights into how the women leaders traversed these historical, political, socio-economic cultural and institutional practices and succeeded in developing trajectories, which enables them to hold and sustain top leadership positions in higher education environments.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main critical research question, which lays the foundation for my inquiry is:

> *How did South African women leaders succeed in navigating the Higher Education environment given the established barriers to gender-related advancement in South African Universities?*

The sub-questions that support the main research question are set as follows:

1. What were the formative experiences and pathways traversed by South African women en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education institutions?

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2. How do women in leadership negotiate the world of higher education policy and practice once such seniority has been attained?

1.5 THEORETICAL LANDSCAPE

The study does not assume any theoretical basis to explore and interpret the reasons for the appointment, maintenance and successes attained by women in academic leadership and management in higher education. The study uses storied narratives of the women's lived experiences and these are interpreted to elicit propositions that explain the women's trajectories to success in higher education leadership. The narratives illuminate the women leaders' formative experiences and show why and how they have traversed the higher education leadership ladder and succeeded in maintaining their powerful positions given the gender-based nature of the global higher education sector in general, and the South African one in particular.

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The study is, therefore, aligned to the Grounded Theory paradigm and aims to move beyond the concept of barriers to women participation in higher education but to, allowing theory to be generated out of the documented experiences of the lived experiences of women academics, who have succeeded in reaching the highest executive levels of appointment in higher education.

This is a qualitative and exploratory study that proposes the integration of Life History research and the grounded theory methodology. The rationale behind choosing this strategy is that not much empirical research has been done on the study of gender-achievement-based leadership success in South Africa. In addition, if an area of interest has been given less or superficial attention in literature (Goulding 1999), grounded theory is ideal for 'exploring integral social relationships and the behaviour of those under study, especially where there has been little exploration of the contextual factors that affect individuals' lives

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(Glaser and Strauss 1967; Crooks 2001). Grounded theory is, therefore, the most relevant research approach to adopt for this study, in order to build theory from the data and contribute to the body of knowledge on how women in leadership positions attained success in higher education institutions in South Africa.

Life history research is preferred as a design for the purposes of this study in that it places much of the accent on the experiences of the informants, expressed in their own words (Babbie and Mouton 2001:283; Creswell and Miller 2000; Creswell 2002). Placing a predetermined structure on lives might distort what could be powerful, emotional narratives rather than simple quantitative data on silent objects. Also, the explanation of the 'relatively silent and potentially silenced lives of women' (Hamrick 1998) is needed as a means of unearthing the individual conquests they have made and carried over time, place and space. The study, nevertheless, remains conscious of the shaping influences of sociological, anthropological and political science conceptual frameworks in informing the crafting and interpretation of individual life histories, as outlined in Reddy's seminal study, on black scientists'achievements in South Africa (Reddy 2001).

1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY WORDS

- Higher education

Higher education is a post school/tertiary/university system of education that prepares people for professional work. It also refers to an institutional entity where advanced or higher learning activity such as (advanced) research takes place.

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- Policy

Policy refers to a course or principle of action formulated, adopted, proposed and pursued by an organization, individual or government. It is mostly based on the principles on which social, legal, rules and laws should be recognised and applied. For the purpose of this study, 'policy' refers to legislative machineries promulgated as a response (to the perceived problem of inequality by government). It includes international laws and treaties of which South Africa is a signatory. The term is also used to refer to general agreements and propositions drawn by and for higher education institutions to guide practices/actions to ensure equal participation in the sector.

- Barriers

This refers to practices that discriminate against other groups of people and, therefore, inhibit their personal, social, economic and political mobility. The term is used to mean covert, overt, intentional and unintentional events, activities policies and practices that (prevent access and promote exclusion to equal treatment or participation in higher education leadership positions as a result of cultural, institutional and structural factors).

- Leadership/management

The term refers to a process and action of leading or managing others with a purpose of accomplishing a common goal or vision. The term is used synonymously with 'management'.

- Administration

It is the act or process of administering, especially the management of a government or large institution such as a university or a company. Often,

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administration involves the monitoring and control of organisational or institutional processes and procedures.

- Life histories

This is the explanation of the evolution of biological patterns of human beings showing their differences in the timing of their educational, social, cultural, economical and political development from childhood to adulthood. The study uses 'life history' as a specific type of qualitative research which uses stories of individuals and other personal materials to understand the individual life within its social and historical context (Breen 2009).

- Grounded theory

It may be defined as 'the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research' (Glaser and Strauss 1967:2). It is a methodological approach used to generate or discover theory. It is broadly used, for the purposes of this study as an approach to collecting and analysing data using themes so as to discover a theory.

- Women empowerment

The UN definition of the term 'women empowerment' is utilised for this study as it is relevant to the purpose of the study. In terms of the study, women empowerment refers to 'sense of self-worth, the right to have and to determine choices, the right to have access to opportunities and resources, the right to have the power to control their own lives both in the private and public spheres and the ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just, social and economic order nationally and internationally (CEDAW 1981).

- Gender equality

This is a term used to describe the legal obligation to comply with anti-discrimination legislation that protects the rights of women and men on the grounds of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief, age. It provides them with full rights to contribute to and benefit from social, cultural, political and economic development. (African Union 2009).

- Gender equity

Gender equity is about equal opportunity based on fairness of treatment between men and women, according to their respective needs based on rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. For purposes of the study the term is used to highlight the socio-historical impediments to women's development (African Union 2009).

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Research approach

This study is qualitative in nature and adopts an exploratory approach to understanding and describing the lives of women in academic leadership. The research also looks into how the women leaders managed to reach the top echelons of higher education leadership.

1.7.2 Research design and methodology

The study uses life history as a research strategy to investigate and narrate the lived experiences of women in leadership positions in higher education. According to Babbie and Mouton, life history research provides for an account of one person's life in his or her own words (2001:283). Furthermore, they elaborate

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on the explanation of the study of everyday life as a sub-world which all human beings have shared since time immemorial and that it is given to our experience and interpretation. This world, referred to as 'the world of working' stands out as paramount over and against other sub-universes of reality (Babbie and Mouton 2001:28). It is this phenomenon of everyday life, and the world of work that I seek to explore through the subjective worlds of the three women leaders. The life history method of inquiry is, therefore, well-suited for answering the critical research question and its sub-questions as stated below:

> *How did South African women leaders succeed in navigating the Higher Education environment given the established barriers to gender-related advancement in South African Universities?*

The sub questions that support the main research question are set as follows:

1. What were the formative experiences and pathways traversed by South African women en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education institutions?

2. How do women in leadership negotiate the world of higher education policy and practice once such seniority has been attained?

This mode of inquiry provides the research process with a human touch, as Plummer (1983) puts it. He connects life history methodology to what he calls the "humanistic coefficient" (Plummer 1983:66) because it presents a purely subjective account and detailed perspective on the world (Plummer 1983:14) through a subjective reality of the individual. Wilkinson and Blackmore (2008) add that subjectivity is an important form of representing lived experiences of individual women, while other forms of representing them keep reproducing narrow and highly stereotypical accounts, thus failing to provide a more nuanced and complex way of understanding how women's leadership identity is formed. I see this connection as extending the life of the individual in a manner that

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creates an environment within which one can negotiate the self in this world, and how and why both the world and the self, influence each other. Therefore, the phenomenological insights that we are constantly seeking to unravel in the higher education environment remain a puzzle that this study will explore through using the life history method.

The following principles coined by Plummer (1983: 67-82) support the use of life history research as a means of getting the ways which participants of social life construct and make sense of their particular world.

- ***The subjective reality of the individual*** – Life history research advocates for the phenomenology of lived experiences with the ways in which members interpret their own lives and the world around them

- ***Process, ambiguity and change*** – Because of the legacy of inequality and especially in areas of inquiry about which little is known (Plummer 1983:72), the life history technique can become a sensitizing tool to the kinds of issues and problems involved in the research context. It seems to me that there are very few women in higher education leadership despite good legislative measures to eradicate the problem. This could be explained by the confusion, contradictions and the complex nature in which our lives our 'crafted' to be lived in this particular environment. This method will help discover these complexities which are played out in the everyday life experiences of the women executives, especially, where the conceptualisation of these problems and issues has been ill worked out (Plummer 1983:68,72)

- ***Perspective on totality*** – As part of this research process, biographical accounts of the executive women were collected. These would help me to view the informants in the context of their whole life, from birth to the time of this current study. This will promote a fuller understanding of the critical

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processes of their development (Plummer 1983:69) especially those pertaining to how they sustain success in their top positions.

- ***A tool for history*** – Plummer says another vital use of the life history approach is that it places great emphasis upon the changing meaning of an individual's life course as he or she moves through personal crises ("careers"), side by side with a given cohort in an evolving historical culture. Higher education institutions present a perfect environment to bring these changing meanings to bear.

1.8 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

Data collection strategies are an important part of the research methodologies of qualitative paradigms in social research. The choice of the data collection method and the tool used in the study was informed by the study design, which utilized the life history approach to examine the lives of women leaders in higher education. The researcher chose the grounded theory strategy to support the life history approach. In order to use this strategy, 'the researcher is required to enter the worlds of those under study in order to observe the actor's environment and the interactions... that occur. The researcher is expected to interpret actions, transcend rich description and develop a theory...' (Goulding 1999).

1.8.1 Data sampling

Based on the principles of the grounded theory, the study's sample was informed by the scarcity of women academic leaders in higher education. The sample was, therefore, not predetermined. The study sample came from the very few universities were women leaders could be found. This technique, called theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Goulding 1999) was a big part of the puzzle on searching information on leadership success in higher education and therefore an effective guiding factor for data collection thereof.

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The process of theoretical sampling assisted in the collection, analysis, interpretation and identification of pertinent codes, memos and themes that moved the study from what happened to 'explaining the relationship between and across incidents leading to abstraction' (Goulding 1999) and to emergent theoretical propositions.

1.8.2 Data collection

Based on the reasons enumerated earlier in the statement of the problem, the study uses a grounded theory technique called purposive sampling. Data was collected through interviews from three women who hold positions of Deputy Vice Chancellor at higher education institutions in South Africa. Only three were chosen because of the scarcity of women in these positions. The aim was to find out how they managed to attain leadership positions in higher education, given the historical legacy of barriers to empowerment and development. All the women leaders who were chosen had held their positions for a minimum of two years.

Semi-structured interviews were used to develop detailed life histories of each of woman subject to gather information on their experiences as leaders in higher education management.

Four sets of interviews were conducted with each participant. Each interview took a maximum of sixty minutes. The initial interview sought biographical information of the participants. The next two sets of interviews looked at the pathways and leadership experiences of these senior women academics. The last interview drew together fuller and complete narratives based on meanings of their successes and the future of their leadership as it relates to earlier responses.

In order to further understand the contributions that the women leaders have made in their work in terms of research, management and leadership the interviews were triangulated through field note observations and document analysis. These tools supported the storied narratives I constructed from the data

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collected through interviews. The triangulation process strengthened the study findings.

1.8.3 Data analysis

The data comprised four transcripts of sixty minutes per interview session, per respondent. The data was transcribed from a tape-recorded format. The transcribed data for each respondent was approximately four hours long, making a total of sixty hours for all four respondents' data. The first interview session focused on biographical information; the second and third covered their experiences as managers and leaders in universities; and the final session consolidated their leadership success and future goals.

Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) called Atlas.ti (Smit 2002) was used to code the data through constant comparative analysis. Applying constant comparative analysis was useful for my purpose in that it helped shape, reformulate and re-direct the emergence of subjective interpretation of the 'natural human world as a meaningful construction, which informs society and history through values, human ideas, and purposes' (Babbie and Mouton 2001:31). This process also validates and recognises the interactive, cyclical nature of qualitative data collection and analysis in the social inquiry paradigm.

The data was then coded into further categories, using open and selective coding, it was formulated thematically and reflective memos were drawn guided by the research questions. I used these themes as a basis for deeper analysis, thus leading to further formulation of theoretical propositions to explain the findings of the study. This process of data analysis led the study to the development of conceptually coherent, storied narratives that explain the trajectories these woman academic leaders traversed to bring them to the point of successful leadership.

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1.8.4 Validity

There are three methodological considerations of validity in life history studies (Babbie and Mouton 2001:285). The first is authenticity with respect to personal documentary evidence that has been collected orally or has been solicited from informants. The second is distortion and deception. This principle follows the reasons or motives used by the informant to provide the information. Consideration should also be made to check if attempts have been made deliberately to omit data or whether omissions have simply been made by the writer/researcher who assumes there is some degree of familiarity on the part of the reader. The third consideration is availability and sampling. This one is considered the most serious threat to validity. However as Babbie et al (2001), we should place more importance on the context than on the generalisation of the findings argued that when we work with qualitative data.

In order to strengthen the validity of data obtained from the respondents, the following measures were used:

- Member checks – The transcripts of each respondent were taken back to the three informants to validate accuracy and correct errors that could have possibly occurred during data collection;
- Thick description – The data collected describes, in sufficient detail and precision, the context in which the women academic leaders live and work. This, therefore, provides for general judgement and transferability; and
- In addition to the interview sessions, the researcher observed the surroundings (offices, artefacts, newspaper clippings, relations with immediate support staff such as secretaries/personal assistants) in which the women leaders worked and made personal memos. Triangulation was, therefore, used as another measure to validate the information received through interviews.

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1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Over the years, the global north and south have performed dismally on improving the status of women in academic leadership in higher education. As a result, the research that informs our understanding of the characteristics and nature of women's journeys to educational leadership has been shaped by the dearth of available participants.

There are a number of significant gaps in the area of research on leadership in higher education. First, the studies have been limited to mainly countries of the north with sparse western countries (Morley 2011). Second, the scarcity of available study participants has caused the research to slant more towards using quantitative methods to investigate the achievements or lack thereof of women leaders in higher education institutions. Third, not much is known about how higher education institutions are managed successfully and therefore, no lessons have been learned about what explains successful leadership in higher education institutions. This has left a knowledge gap on what contributes to successful leadership in higher education.

Furthermore, there is a need to investigate how and why women leaders are successful in running higher education institutions given the history and legacy of patriarchy in South Africa. Fourth, because of the scarcity of representation of women in higher education leadership, there is need to contextualize and be concerned about higher education leadership. In addition, there is currently no research reported in South Africa which combines life history methodology with grounded theory approach to investigate and contextualize the individual lives of women leaders in institutions of higher learning.

With this extremely sparse distribution of women in higher education leadership, this study is a fascinating intellectual project meant to determine the reasons for the success of these women despite the institutional barriers that female

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academics face in institutions of higher learning. Questions such as the following arise: Why did these select few women 'make it' into senior executive positions while the majority of their counterparts did not? What are the composite experiences of women academic executives in senior management and how did such women cope within the otherwise male-dominated executive environments?

The significance of this study, therefore, is (1) to trace the pathways followed by these women executives to reach these senior positions in the higher education sector; (2) to describe their experiences in higher education leadership; and to (3) explore the attainments of these women academic executives in the context of established explanations for gender-based achievement.

The intellectual advance that this study will make is to move beyond the "barriers" paradigm in social science scholarship on women's achievement, and to focus on the ways in which women leaders have achieved and made sense of their leadership experiences on a day-to-day basis. It is of special interest to understand how women negotiate their leaders in what remains as patriarchal institutions of higher education. This study drew from experiences of these women leaders to explain why and how they managed to break the traditional, cultural, economic, educational and professional barriers to achieve success in a higher education environment. The study's special interest was to find out how women define their own successes as opposed to the many and varied explanations that society has placed on the notion of success (in general) and the world of work in particular. This is done within the remit of a 'group oriented framework of leadership' (Phendla 2000).

The practical value of this inquiry is threefold. First, it will aid developments experts, international aid agencies playing an intervening and monitoring role to assist institutions eager to meet employment equity targets within the institutional environments that inhibit or advance gender-affirming experiences in higher education. Second, the findings emanating from the lived experiences of women

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leaders will form the basis upon which national and institutional policies and frameworks should reinforce equality across all areas of gender-based development and empowerment in higher education leadership thereby changing the landscape of the current dearth of equity in this sector. The policies in question are, but not limited to the Women Empowerment and gender Equality Bill; the Gender Equality Strategic Framework for the Public Sector; higher education institutional and organisational Human Resources policies and frameworks. Third, the study will aid South African chapter nine institutions in their critical role as intermediaries responsible for monitoring compliance, to enforce implementation of policies thereby bringing ensuring closer synergy between policy and practice.

1.10 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

There is sufficient research globally that covers barriers to women empowerment and development. As far as South Africa is concerned, great strides have been taken to address issues of redress and affirmative action since the dawn of democracy. This study goes beyond the inquiry on barriers to women empowerment and takes a deeper look at how women leaders in higher education have traversed social injustice and gender inequity, amid a lack of clear policy direction to attain success in higher education. The study focuses on the subjective lived experiences of women academic leaders and how they managed to become managers of higher education institutions given the established barriers to gender-related achievements in this country.

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The nature of the respondents' positions especially at Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor hampered their willingness to provide information which they thought could jeopardize their careers.

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It should be anticipated that because this study delved into the private lives of the respondents, some of them only volunteered information they felt safe with.

Some participants might shift or move from their present jobs during the study period cannot be overlooked. It is therefore of paramount importance that the movement of participants might impact their storied narratives.

It should also be acknowledged that even though narratives offer rich and multifaceted dimensions of the respondents' lives, they tend to be subjective in nature. The life histories of the chosen respondents only offered limited generalisation of how and what it takes to succeed in leadership in higher education particularly in a South African context. In addition, as the data collection and analysis were limited to a period of two years, theoretical saturation was limited in terms of time thereby impacting on the ability to generalise emergent propositions. This would not have been the case if the data had been collected over.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Critical consideration needs to be given to how the research might affect the informants' experiences, perceptions, behaviour and attitudes as an important ethical principle. Research involving people's lives needs to take on a shared responsibility. The issue of reciprocity in dealing with life history methodology helps to break the social class barrier and creates a non-hierarchical atmosphere.

Even though the interviews were dependent on the relative position of the researcher and respondent in the social formation, the fact that as women we share similar historical lived experiences in terms of being subjected to hierarchy and patriarchy, it is hoped that this experience served to facilitate the reciprocal

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sharing of knowledge and experiences. This is an important consideration in life history research as it builds trust between the informant and researcher.

1.13 PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

This study is about three women academic leaders at the level of Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor. These participants have two historically distinct biographies. Of the three, two come from a historically disadvantaged socio-economic background, while one comes from a historically and politically advantaged economic and social background. Two of the women respondents are classified as Black and the other as White. Prior to the democratic dispensation, South Africa was divided into racial groups where its populace was classified as Black, Coloured or White. This classification affected where people could live and work but of greater importance, the system determined what type of work one could do and what level.

Prior to the democratic dispensation, these participants lived in a politically polarized and unequal environments. Also, prior to the transformation of higher education in general, and later on the reconfiguration of the higher education system through mergers, the three women academic leaders held these positions in institutions that were and still are regarded as historically advantaged or Historically White Institutions (HWI). One of the institutions in which they lead has since merged with other higher education institutions while the other two have remained unscathed by the merger process. All three participants hold doctoral degrees in different disciplines. One participant obtained her doctoral degree overseas.

Since the three participants come from a legacy of historical, political and racial difference, their life stories are contextualized and told from the historical perspective of the past with aview of tracing their pathways into the future.

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1.14 STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH CHAPTERS

The first chapter introduces the research report and provides the context upon which the study is laid. The chapter also gives an overview of the international, continental and national policy context, showing the status of women in general. It discusses the higher education environment in particular, where women spend their lives.

Chapter two looks at the global literature on women in academic leadership and the issues pertaining to the higher education environment with respect to institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, the culture of the higher education systems and how it impacts the lives of women in leadership as compared to their male counterparts. It also looks at the knowledge base on how and why women seek to climb the leadership ladder. The chapter engages with what is regarded as success in higher education leadership and management, and also questions the male stereotype of leadership and management.

The third chapter is about the methodological strategy. This involves an integrated approach which includes using life history research and grounded theory methodology to sample the respondents, collect data, and analyse and interpret narratives recorded from the respondents, in order to formulate explanation of their life histories. This research approach was relevant for the study as it explained the phenomenon of success in higher education leadership through time, place and space. This chapter also discusses the rationale for using grounded theory guiding principles for data collection and analysis as they apply to the qualitative paradigm of researching life histories (Reddy 2000)

The fourth chapter describes the narrative form storied lives constructed from the semi-structured interviews of the three women academic leaders. It presents comparative portraits of six biographical moments through the women's growing up narratives. They extend from birth to formal education and finally into higher

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education. The moments cover 1) the historical, educational, professional background and family background; 2) growing up interests and influences; 3) the role of the family and school; 4) personal sacrifices; 5) turning points such as mixed blessings, patriarchal bias and disharmony; and 6) socialisation and the value of achievement during their formative experiences. These comparative portraitures are based on the sub-question: 'What are the formative experiences and pathways traversed by South African women en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education? '

Chapter five focuses on the second sub-question. It focuses on the career pathways of the women Deputy Vice Chancellors and examines how they negotiate the higher education environment where they manage and lead. The chapter draws from the research foci elicited from the interviews and observations. The chapter focuses on 1) barriers to advancement; 2) career choices; 3) reasons leading to women's leadership and management positions; and 4) how these women negotiate the higher education policy environment in their leadership responsibilities.

The sixth chapter is a synthesis of theoretical explanations of the attainment of successes the women leaders in higher education have experienced and gained especially within the gender-based barriers to women empowerment and advancement in South Africa it also looks at their future in the higher education management and leadership sector. This section elucidates on themes derived from the researched lives of women, thereby providing explanations for the success they have enjoyed and continue to enjoy in their journey in higher education leadership and management.

Using the grounded theory approach, the study suggests six pillars of propositions drawn from the subjective explanations of the women's successes. These typologies are derived from a systematic discovery of regularities using open coding and the identification of hermeneutic family themes to establish

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logical connections in building life histories of these women (Babbie et al 2001:498).

This chapter, therefore, answers the main research question and seeks to explain why these women were successful in achieving and maintaining higher education seniority given the established barriers to gender-related advancement in South African Higher Education. The chapter draws conclusions on what emerges from the typologies of success.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The current institutional landscape of the higher education system, its management and leadership can be traced to the twenty year historical challenges associated with transformation, reconstruction and development. The changing landscape and imperative for the transformation and urgent need for change in higher education systems has also meant that South Africa and other global states recognise the impending obligation to increase managerial and professional capacity for women in the public service.

2.2 INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE ON PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Women, the world over, have caught up with and, in some areas of expertise, surpassed men in university enrolments. Yet, global literature generally shows that women remain under-represented in higher education leadership (Allen 1994, Malik and Lie 1994; Hamrick 1998; Luke 1998; Tothill 1998; UNESCO 1998; Growe and Montgomery 1999; Meehan 1999; Bain and Cummins 2000; Chesterman 2000; Ramsay 2000; Husu 2001; Mottier 2001; Sagaria and Rychener 2001; Dunne and Sayed 2002; Luke 2002; Makosana 2002; Mavin and Bryans 2002; UNESCO 2002; Cubillo and Brown 2003; Kloot 2004; Mabokela and Mawila 2004; Lam 2006; MacGregor 2008; Blackmore 2009; Coleman 2009; Dougherty 2009; Dominici, Fried and Zeger 2009; UNESCO 2009; Ilo 2010; Shackleton 2010; Carrim and Wangenge-Ouma 2011; Longman and Anderson 2011; McElwain 2011; Odhiambo 2011; Sperandio 2011; Chew 2012; Khan 2012; MacGregor 2012; Morley 2012 [a] and [b]; Rice 2012; Shahtalebi and Yarmohammadian 2012; Ba Thinh 2013; Morley 2013 [a] and [b]).

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Generally, higher education systems across the world have achieved formal equality but are still grappling with pressures to eliminate social differences in terms of gender. This is because, on the one hand, gendered processes operate on many institutional levels, from open and explicit to more subtle forms (Husu 2001, Morley et al 2006, Yojana 2012) that are submerged in organisational decisions, and therefore, deny women a place in traditional forms of organisation and management (Makosana 2002; Mavin and Bryans 2002; Mabokela and Mawila 2004; Shackleton 2006). On the other hand, the impact of social differences has created barriers that prevent women academics from advancing to top management positions at institutions of higher learning. The under-representation of women in higher education is explained by biological, learned, as well as social differences between men and women (Deem 1999; Meehan 1999; Twombly 1998). The lack of women leaders in universities has become a global problem irrespective of the social, political or cultural context (Morley 2012a).

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In a study on women in academic management in the UK, Mavin and Bryans (2002:236) showed the importance of creating alternative means for women in leadership positions. They suggest building networks as 'collective strategies to move on, take action, begin to mainstream their experiences and challenge existing boundaries of management whilst gaining credibility in a changing context and driving change for themselves as plausible alternatives.

Wyn et al. (2000) provide a perspective on the experiences of the first cohort of academic women to reach management positions in any significant numbers in education. In their study, they went beyond the individual personal accounts of eight women managers in Faculties of Education in Canada and nine in Australia. The authors explored the processes and strategies they used to bring about change, by actively fortifying women's different ways of being academics, managers, and leaders and making their difference count (Wyn et al 2000:436). They focused on what the women, in their study, said about their experiences,

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goals and perceptions and, in a sense, their politics of difference. The study used qualitative and narrative techniques to focus on and document the fine details of everyday experiences in the lives of these senior women as they told their tales of inclusion and exclusion and centrality and marginalisation, and of innovation and tradition. The women in this sample held a variety of management positions, for example, deanships, associate deanships, department headships, and directorships of research centres or responsibilities for major programmes such as graduate studies or pre-service teacher education.

Another study done by Blackmore and Sachs (2000) identified five paradoxes that shape the work of women in leadership and management positions in higher education in contemporary Australian universities. These are that:

- Women do more work, but that work is less valued;
- The academic as intellectual worker versus the academic as management worker;
- New technologies of surveillance to measure quality and performance while academic work is being intensified through demands to be more productive with fewer resources;
- New notions of academic identity which are collegial while merit is rewarded on the basis of individual achievement; and
- Women are a source of leadership but being institutionally powerless

These paradoxes are relevant to the general axioms of my study in that they show the complexities and conflicts between personal ambition, professional identity and institutional authority in the world of work of the women leaders under investigation. The five paradoxes further prove the binaries of efficiency and equity that Blackmore and Sachs (2000) and Allen (1994) say affect the leadership and power opportunities for women, as well as present a fierce competition in which only one tends to win over another. Unfortunately, in this competition, 'equity becomes a luxury in new hard times' (Blackmore and Sachs 2000:11).

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In the absence of appropriate theoretical frameworks grounded in the Latin American experience, Twombly (1998) used a general socio-cultural framework within which she chose two major perspectives to explain women's success or lack thereof in North American universities. The first is the individual perspective, which attributes the lack of women in administrative positions to biological, cognitive or social difference between men and women (Meehan 1999). The second looks to structural sources to explain women's lack of success. Towmbly (1998) argues that institutional patterns effected by formal and informal structures, shape the choices individuals make and are, in turn, maintained and reinforced by those choices. He adds that the structure of opportunity within organisations, power and numbers actually shape women's aspirations and motivation to climb the organisational ladder and their lack of ability to do so. She further argues that formal and informal structures are two of the keys to understanding women's success or failure in obtaining high-level positions in higher education leadership.

There are barriers that differ among societies and obstacles that are intrinsic to particular organisational settings or professional communities (Growe and Montgomery 1999; Bain and Cummins 2000; Husu 2001; Mathipa and Tsoka 2001; White 2003; UNESCO 2011; Morley 2012a; Morley 2013b). Sagaria and Rychener (2001) call this practice, which confines the majority of women to the lower levels of managerial positions, the administrative quagmire. Morley (2013b) says these practices reflect not only inequalities between men and women, but missed opportunities for women to contribute to the future development of universities.

These are prevalent among most societies and they play themselves out within institutional traditions that negatively influence women's advancement opportunities. Morley (2013a) further talks about feminising the academy and calls for, on the one hand, 'a business case' to be made where women's skills and talent are wasted because of not being recognised and used. On the other,

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she further calls for 'a social justice case' where exclusionary structures, processes and practices persist in marginalising women in leadership and decision making positions.

Morley's argument of feminising the academy is cogent in that it confirms the plethora of global literature written and already sited in this study on the fact that higher education environments reinforce inequalities by creating social strata and relegate women to positions regarded as less important and therefore less powerful and less influential. The concept of feminising in this case, is therefore not about the numbers game but it is about a tendency by the higher education system to devalue the work and skills that women possess to occupy positions regarded as prestigious and powerful in society. Blackburn, Browne, Brooks and Jarman (2002) call this practice gender segregation.

To the extent that women's empowerment and access to top management positions is taking place at a snail's pace (Mavin and Bryans 2002; UNESCO 2002, 2009), the lived experiences of those women who have made it to the top need further investigation so that we can understand the practices within higher education that enhance or inhibit gender equality, an issue on which the principles of equity and empowerment (Dunbar and Kinnersley 2011) are based.

The following table gives a global picture of the status of women academics in Higher Education as reported by UNESCO.

Table 2.1: Status of women academics in higher education according to university associations, organisations and unions

Organisation	Members	Institutions led by women	
		Numbers	Percentage
Association of African Universities	120	6	5%
Association of Arab Universities	103	2	1-2%
Association for Commonwealth Universities	463	37	2-3%
Association of French-speaking Universities	270	5	7%
Association of European Universities	497	6	8%
Association of Universities of Asia and Pacific	140[2]		5%
Inter-American Organisation for Higher Education	350		5%
Union de Universidades de America Latina	177	47	(8%)

Source: UNESCO (1998) Higher Education and Women: Issues and Perspectives, Paris

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A subsequent report of the follow up to the World Conference on Higher Education shows the distribution of men and women administrative and academic heads of Commonwealth Universities only as follows:

Table 2.2: Distribution of men and women administrative and academic heads - Commonwealth Universities

Level	women	men	unspecified
	%	%	%
Administrative			
Vice- Chancellors/CEO	6.9	76.1	17.0
Deputy Vice-Chancellors, etc.	8.4	59.7	31.9
Pro-Vice-Chancellors	13.2	61.5	25.3
Registrars, etc.	13.9	60.1	26.0
Deans of faculties	8.5	56.8	34.7
Heads of Departments	15.2	84.8	-
Finance Directors	7.8	51.1	23.0
Chief Librarians	29.3	51.1	19.6
Academic			
Professors	9.9	90.1	-
Associate Professors/readers	19.4	80.6	-
Assistant Professors/			
Senior lecturers	25.7	74.1	-
Lecturers	33.8	66.2	-

Source: UNESCO (2002) Women and Management in Higher Education: A Good Practice Handbook, Paris

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Without taking focus away from the study, the UNESCO report continues to show that in terms of data by country, South Africa's representation of women professors was a mere 8%, while their male counterparts were 92% (2002:28). The data further shows associate professors at 13.9% for women and 86.1% for men (UNESCO 2002:29). Since the traditional career pipeline suggests that a professorial position is a stepping-stone to a top management post, the implications, hereof, are dire for women's chances to ascend to the top, further proving the proverbial leadership divides.

A third and recent set of data by UNESCO on the global landscape and status of women in higher education still shows dismal percentages of performance by regions and selected states (from 1997 to 2003).

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Table 2.3: Global landscape on the status of women in higher education

No	Region/country	1997		1998		1999		2000		2001		2002		2003	
Region		P	H	P	H	P	H	P	H	P	H	P	H	P	H
1	EU	.	.	.	.	13	.	15.2	.	.	.	16	.	15	.
2	Americas	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
3	Sub-Saharan Africa	.	.	.	.	.	.	10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4	Asia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5	Australia	4.5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
6	Commonwealth	9.9	8.3	9.9	6.9	.	.	13.1	9	.	.	.	.	.	.
Country															
1	Australia	4.4	14.8	9.4	.	15.4	.	3.1	.	3.3	.	3.5	.	3.6	.
2	Austria	.	.	.	.	.	.	6.2	.	.	.	9	.	.	.
3	Canada	11.8	15.7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4	Ghana	10	.	.	.	.	.	15	.	.	.	.	.	14	.
5	India	10.5	.	10.5	.	.	.	18	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
6	Nigeria	5	.	.	.	.	.	15	.	12	.	23	.	23	.
7	Norway	.	.	.	.	7	.	13.3	.	10	.	16	.	13	.
8	South Africa	8	.	8	8	.	.	7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
9	Sweden	.	.	.	.	.	.	13.8	.	.	.	14	.	.	.
10	Tanzania	8.6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	8	.	8	.
11	The Netherlands	.	.	.	.	5	.	6.3	.	.	.	8	.	.	.
12	Uganda	16.7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
13	UK	8.6	6.7	.	.	13	.	12.6	.	.	.	15	.	.	.
14	USA	19.8	.	.	19.3	20.8	.	.	.	22.7	21.1	.	.	23.7	.

P= Professors H=Heads of Institutions e.g. Vice Chancellors, Rectors, Presidents

Source: Morley L (2013) Women and Higher Education Leadership: Absences and Aspirations Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

The last and latest set of data shows the percentages of women professors and heads of institutions from 2004 to 2010. The data presented for South Africa confirms the point made earlier that the merger and reconfiguration of higher education had a negative impact on the participation of women in academic leadership positions.

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Table 2.4: Percentages of women professors and heads of institutions

No	Region/country	2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
Region		P	H	P	H	P	H	P	H	P	H	P	H	P	H
1	EU	15.3	.	.	.	18	.	19	.	9	.	.	.	.	.
2	Americas	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
3	Sub-Saharan Africa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4	Asia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5	Australia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
6	Commonwealth	.	.	.	.	15.3	9.8	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Country															
1	Australia	3.8	.	4.1	.	4.5	24	4.3	.	4.4	.	4.7.	.	4.9	.
2	Austria	9.4	.	.	.	.	.	14	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
3	Canada	.	.	.	.	.	15.7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4	Ghana	7	.	18	.	7	.	7	.	10	.	.	.	.	.
5	India	.	.	.	.	.	9.3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
6	Nigeria	24	.	15	.	.	.	.	.	16	.	.	.	.	.
7	Norway	15.7	.	14	.	.	.	18	.	.	.	20	.	.	.
8	South Africa	.	.	.	42.3	.	0	19	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
9	Sweden	16.1	.	.	.	.	.	18	.	.	.	.	.	.	43
10	Tanzania	7	.	9	.	8	.	10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
11	The Netherlands	9.4	.	.	.	.	.	11	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
12	Uganda	6.1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	12	.	.	.	.	.
13	UK	15.9	.	.	.	16	.	17	.	22	.	15.7	.	19.8	14
14	USA	.	.	25.1	.	24	23	26.5	36	.	.	28	.	.	.

P= Professors H=Heads of Institutions e.g. Vice Chancellors, Rectors, Presidents

Source: Morley L (2013) Women and Higher Education Leadership: Absences and Aspirations Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

2.3 APPROACHES TO GENDER EQUALITY

Inequality, as a social problem, exists in different forms and degrees. Within the educational environment, it exists and persists in the social status, occupational status and decision-making power in almost all societies around the world (Oxenham 1991; McElwain 2011). A lot of thinking has occupied the social sciences and feminist scholarship (Phendla 2004a; Odhiambo 2011) in an attempt to understand and analyse how and why oppressive gender relations are formed and why some strategies for change have not brought about appropriate relief for women. Central to these attempts and analyses, are different theories that, historically, have influenced the socialisation of teachers, the construction of

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curricula, the organisational patterns of educational environments and the way the sexes relate to each other at all levels of educational development (Davies 1986). Among many other studies on gender and power relations, Deem (1999) examined how gender power is embedded in the social relations of higher education, and explored how individual women managers used resistance to bring change in their organisations. She found that the majority of her interviewees thought that gendered subjectivities, gender relations in the workplace and prevalent ideologies about gender roles were all important either in shaping their work as managers, or in affecting how others regarded them and behaved towards them (Deem 1999:68). Their gendered subjectivities as women, in a sector of education, that is still primarily male-dominated at the policy and managerial level (Meehan 1999), were central to the way in which they approached management and the way they were treated by colleagues (Deem 1999:71; Kloot 2004).

In her study on gender equity in the Southern African Development Community region, (SADC), Guramatunhu-Mudiwa (2010) argued that equal access to positions of power and influence is central to sustainable growth and development. She investigated 117 universities in the SADC region and her findings revealed that women led only 12 universities (10.3%). Further, of the total fifteen SADC countries, only six countries had women in higher education leadership. Her study suggests a proportional and incremental affirmative action scheme for SADC to bring about gender equity in higher education leadership by 2015 to 50-50 parity. It remains an illuminating factor that this goal pole keeps shifting further into the margins of inequality and therefore remains 'a far cry' for policy implementation.

However, women's assertion of their equality with men and their demand for access to those roles and positions of public life traditionally regarded as the province of men is gaining momentum (Delamont 2002; Makosana 2002). Thus, the thesis of this study aims at looking into the personal window of individual

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women in higher education leadership positions. This is a powerful way of understanding society which is put by the radical feminists this way: 'personal is political' (Deem 1999:63). Deem shows that how each woman lives her life becomes central to this debate of 'personal is political' because change is understood as taking place at structural level through changes in the discursive practices through which structures are created and maintained (1999:63).

Women in higher education management are inextricably a central part of this change, and, the more participation they have at higher levels of management, the more chances that the gender gap in higher education will close. The scarcity of women in higher education leadership further exacerbates the gender gap and worsens the gendered nature of university life as organisations of transformation and knowledge where the 'integral relationship between men and women is needed' (Mabokela and Mawila 2004:397). As a senior manager, I believe that the personal, individual life stories of women leaders will provide a deeper meaning of what it means to live, manage, lead, negotiate pathways of structure, culture, policy and politics of higher education environments and succeed as well.

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2.4 THE GENDER GAP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Among many models and studies done so far, researchers such as Growe and Montgomery (1999) and Chliwniak (1997) agree that the gender gap may impede potential institutional improvement. Growe and Montgomery assert that even though effective leadership is more behaviourally derived than gender-based, society has determined that only males make good leaders therefore rendering gender to be a great obstacle to women seeking leadership positions in educational administration.

Malik and Lie (1994) examined the relative position of men and women in higher education in seventeen (17) countries across the world. Their focus was on

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women, particularly their changing position in higher education, first, as students, next as faculty members, and lastly, as administrators. They argue that even though the definition of higher education varies considerably from country to country, universities have the power as selecting, licensing and gate-keeping institutions. More importantly, they argue that universities greatly influence and control definitions of knowledge and of the ideological machinery of the state and of society. In their comparative study (Lie and Malik 1994), they looked at contemporary research on gender stratification in higher education, and found that it emphasised the structural characteristics of the university system.

Malik and Lie (1994) used a multi-dimensional model to explain inequalities in higher education as represented by three systems; namely the cultural systems (nation as context) with higher education as a sub-culture, the social system and the personality system. Their model seems to be closer to the axiom on which this study is undertaken, that of tracing the relational experiences of women in a context belayed by systems which have altering powers on their lives. The participants, under study, live and lead in South African institutions where multi dimensional influences are at play in, including and not limited to, all manner of systems in both public and private spheres. This model integrates functionalist and post functionalist approaches to the phenomenon of everyday life experiences. For emphasis, the model is reproduced as follows:

Figure 2.1

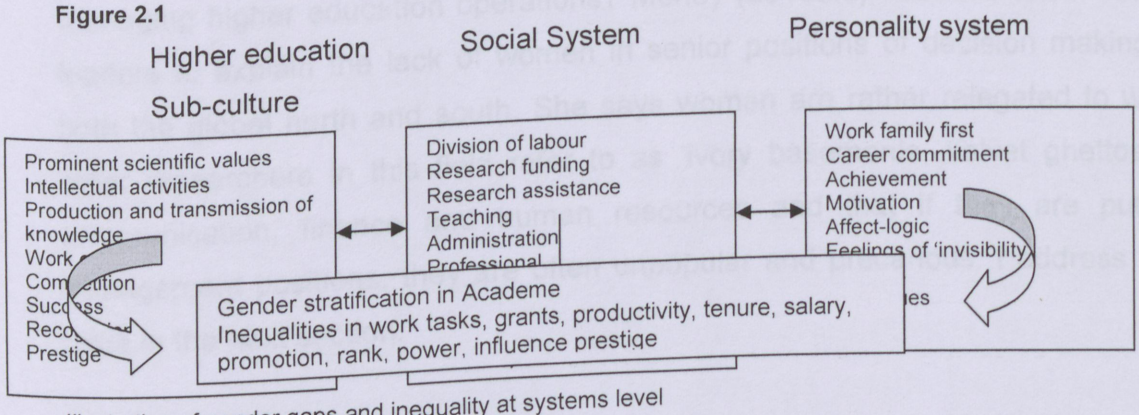


Illustration of gender gaps and inequality at systems level

Source: Malik and Lie (1994) Concepts related to gender inequality in higher education model

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While Malik and Lie (1994) question the gender stratification in higher education and the structural characteristics of the university system, Luke (1998), in her study of female deans and professional heads of departments, critically asks, "why have women's high education achievement levels not produced greater female representation in senior management levels in the university sector?" The lack of women in higher education senior management positions is a curious (Luke, 1998:33) and, I add, an enigmatic phenomenon in that even though the process seems slow, women have made and are continuing to make substantial inroads into high visibility and high status positions in the private cooperate and some public service sectors.

Equally, Dines (1993) raises the same concern, noted globally, of women's exclusion from higher education leadership despite the great strides that they have made into the higher education workforce. Dines argues that this problem is not brought about by the question of development differences among industrialised and newly industrialised countries because women's absence is as conspicuous in newly industrialised countries as it is in industrialised countries. This begs the question: Is it possible that the persistence of this phenomenon is caused by the fact that the higher education operational system has a gendered nature? That these structures of operation are tied to a possible belief that men have certain roles to play in terms of managing higher education systems and that women should be doing something different other than leading and managing higher education operations? Morley (2013a:5) uses the term 'absent leaders to explain the lack of women in senior positions of decision making in both the global north and south. She says women are rather relegated to what other researchers in this field refer to as 'ivory basements, velvet ghettos of communication, finance and human resources and that if they are put in management positions, they are often unpopular and precarious. I address this issue in the next section.

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2.5 THE GENDERED NATURE OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

Institutions of higher learning are said to have gendered cultures (Meehan 1999, Kezar 2001; Mazibuko 2006; Shackleton 2010; Longman and Anderson 2011; Onsongo 2011; Morley 2013 [a] and [b]). History has provided convergent and divergent explanations of how women leaders are supposed to lead (De La Rey 2005). Added to this problem, De La Rey says the concept of gender has since metamophorsised and moved out of the conventional social construction over time, therefore, creating further discrimination and the stereotyping of women seeking to enter leadership positions. Newman (1995) provides categories of prevalent cultures which are particularly useful when applied to higher education:

- Traditional – hierarchical and based on traditional male/female roles and divisions of labour. Men manage and women provide secretarial support;
- Competitive –what Luke (1994), Growe and Montgomery (1999) and Husu (2001) call 'meritocracy' – macho culture based on competition and results, where there is a notional equivalence male and female roles. Women, however, must compete on the same terms as men; and
- Managerialism or transformational culture – based on mission and vision, with emphasis on customer service and supposedly 'softer' values. This "new" managerialism is a feature of many universities.

In terms of the context of this study, these cultures are not devoid of the processes of change that institutions of higher learning find themselves undergoing, especially if the change is more policy-based as in the implementation of employment equity and affirmative action. The gendered division of labour places women in a quagmire of making a choice. Research on women academics caught between two greedy institutions, namely the extended family and the university has been reported extensively (Morley 2013a:7). The dilemma for women is often that time and attention paid to the one tends to impact negatively on the demands of the other. Morley also asks the question

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why women who do not have to choose between the two seemingly conflicting roles (those who are single, child or parent free) are also absent from higher education leadership. She questions why women who are not faced with the challenges of giving birth, caring for and bringing up children have not been found to be suitable for leadership in higher education. Morley's question is based on the argument that often for women, reproductive and care roles are impediments to ascending to top positions (2013a:7).

There are three levels within an organisation at which action may be needed, in order to effect change (Newman 1995):

- The symbolic level; which signals what is important and valued in the organisation;
- The layer of organisational practices within which the norms of behaviour are embedded in the systems and structures; and
- The layer of values which are represented by deeply held attitudes and beliefs prevailing in the organisation

Women in higher education leadership are faced with the reality of the choices of what and how the institutions that they represent through their leadership and work, value their existence and the effort they put into processes of 'running the mill'. The recognition of who they are, how they lead will construct these values and norms of behaviour. A study commissioned by UNESCO (2011) shows global variables of what it means to 'run the mill'; that which influences women's aspirations and access to educational leadership. The UNESCO study shows a close relationship between the four variables and places gender equality as a central factor to women's aspirations and access to educational leadership.

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Table 2.5: Global variables impacting women's access to educational leadership

International variables	National variables	Organisational variables	Personal variables
Existence of international agreements about gender equality	Governmental responses to international gender equality standards in employment and women's access to the workplace	Opportunities for women to experience responsibility and leadership	Childhood socialisation regarding gender defined roles and leadership and development of self esteem
	National, religious and philosophical doctrines	Availability of mentoring	
	Reflection of cultural understanding of gender roles and leadership in national organisations	A climate of respect and understanding for women's career aspirations	Availability of financial resources to access required education and training
Pressure from international organisations on nations to meet gender equality standards to qualify for programme assistance	Women in high profile leadership roles serving as role models and mentors	School boards accepting of women as school leaders	Understandings and preferences about marriage, childrearing and homemaking
	Government provision of equality of education and training access	Recognition and allowance for differences in career paths between men and women due to personal factors	Job and career aspiration preferences
	Employment and the economy	Alternative paths to leadership in different organisational structures in private and non-formal education	Opportunity to purchase household/child care support
	Valuing of educational leadership positions by financial reward, security or prestige and power		Family support
	Procedures for assigning qualified candidates to available vacancies		Mobility

Source: UNESCO (2011) Gender Equality in Education: Looking Beyond Parity October 2011, Paris

These global variables in higher education have the potential to create enabling environments and space for women to prosper and ascend into leadership provided great strides and care is taken by organisations and institutions to respond to the real impediments to gender inequality. These impediments have been documented both in broad and specific terms as barriers to women's empowerment and development. Some examples are but not limited to: gender discrimination, exclusion, restriction, socio-cultural caused by the triple role gender stereotypes (UNGA 1981); poor self image, lack of assertiveness, less career orientation, poor confidence, poor performance (Mathipa and Tsoka 2001).

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Equally, Lyman, Athanasoula-Reppa and Lazaridou (2007) notes that in spite of transformation challenges in leadership, gender differences in leadership remains a contested terrain filled with perceptions than empirical evidence. Notwithstanding change variables, researches on meta-analysis (Dobbins and Platz 1986; Lyman, Athanasoula-Reppa and Lazaridou 2007) present findings on gender differences in leadership in so far as they relate to style and effectiveness. Among the many contested theories of gender development, the one possibly relevant to the tenet of this research concerns the relative principles associated with the social cognitive theory of gender and development (Bussey and Bandura 1999) which explains societal gender-typing as it relates to gender development. Barring for enabling policies, institutional barriers have a way of reinforcing these stereotypes and inequalities and therefore impact transformation or change.

Accordingly, theories of change assist us in understanding, describing and developing insights about the change processes (Kezar 2001). For the benefit of this study, it is imperative to understand and explain the interrelatedness of the social, cultural, anthropological and political influences of change and how these affect the lives of the women under study thereby providing us with the outcomes of change or success. Next, I look at gaps in this area of research.

2.6 WEAKNESSES IN THE KNOWLEDGE BASE ON WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The extracted literature presents valuable evidence of women's struggles and experiences across the world. The body of knowledge developed through research has clearly demonstrated that the barriers to women's empowerment and promotion to leadership positions lies in religion, for example as in countries like Pakistan (Malik and Hussain 1994), but also in other social, traditional, economic, cultural and political areas of development (UNESCO 1998; Chesterman 2002; UNESCO 2002; Chesterman 2009; UNESCO 2009; Tessens,

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Onsongo 2011; White and Web 2011; UNESCO 2011). In addition, much has been written about the isolation of women in male-dominated disciplines, the lack of management training, dual career pressures, gender differences in management and leadership styles and lack of support for women in leadership positions (Malik and Hussain 1994; Malik and Lie 1994; Meehan 1999; Sagaria and Rychener 2001; Mavin and Bryans 2002).

The shared global insights into women's achievements seem to come from a point of view of, first and foremost, a paradigm of women as victims (Beijing Platform of Action 1995; Luke 1998; Makosana 2001). Secondly, the achievements that come to women in leadership positions are mostly through 'bits and pieces' of support and networks. This phenomenon of ad hoc success enhancing systems is peculiar to most higher education institutions across the world that use these mechanisms as a means to bridge the gender gap, thereby giving women something to fall back on, in order to sustain their capacity to lead higher education activities (Blackmore and Sachs 2000; Department of Education 2001a; Sagaria and Rychener 2001; Chesterman 2002; Blackmore 2009; De La Rey 2012).

Moving closer home, this research seeks to cross this 'travesty of justice' paradigm and look more into a celebration of the individual conquests of women who have created for themselves, pathways of success through their ***own means*** over and above support and network systems.

The complexities of the historical, political, social, and cultural factors that have shaped higher education institutions in South Africa, in this period of change, provide a challenge of understanding how these intersecting factors shape individual women's career trajectories and opportunities. In addition, the unique historical legacy of apartheid in South Africa, the continuing trend of disenfranchising women, irrespective of their colour or creed, in both their private and public spheres of life, warrant further investigation. One way of doing this is

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through ***understanding*** the leadership achievements of successful ***women in the context of senior management positions in higher education.***

Furthermore, because institutions of higher learning are said to be social environments (Newman 1995; Meehan 1999; Kezar 2001), and as much as women and people in general are social beings, we need to investigate what Luke (1998:56) calls "the politics of place" to find out how and why women as individuals have co-existed with this environment over the time of growth, and development into positions of power and decision-making. In other words, there is need to investigate how and why women have managed to cross over into the realm of ***success*** despite the prevalent barriers. The research gap that this study seeks to fill is, therefore, based on a deeper investigation of subjective lives of women already in positions of leadership and to understand how they traversed the 'ivory basements', 'velvet ghettos', 'glass ceilings', 'glass cliffs', snail pace change and all other barriers and impediments to achievement, advancement, development and empowerment.

2.7 A ROSE IS A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME: THE MEANING OF SUCCESS

The notion of success has become one of the most undeniably difficult, elusive and, yet, complicated concepts to generalise. This could be attributable to the reason that this concept carries a variety of meanings to different people at different times and places and in different contexts. Many have asked the following questions: What is the colour of success? Is it material or economic benefit? Is it intellectual prowess? Is it displaying an ability to do more with less or worse still, is it attaining political power? How far back does the notion of success go and to what extent have women leaders been sharing in its existence?

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Over the years, the higher education environment has created its own monopoly of a variety of ways of explaining what success stories in the central running of its activities should be all about. Also, this notion of success has been measured in different ways using different standards. The last ten to fifteen years has seen a new notion of success being measured in terms of quality in research output for different higher education institutions. The establishment of South Africa's democracy brought about some relief to those institutions, which were regarded as historically disadvantaged (CHE 2007). It is important to ask whether women, in particular women in management in higher education, have had a slice of that cake.

The generalisable understanding of the success of one particular institution was measured against its leadership as a collective effort. As the demand for quality research, massification of student admissions and graduate output intensified these became the criteria for measuring the success of these leaders. Soon, the circumstances began to change as the fierce competition increased and the higher education sector began to run more and more as a business oriented organisation. The shift from a concerted and collective achievement began moving towards individualistic conquests wherein faculties and then individual departments were expected to turn out profits through attracting funding to run their activities. As research competition took the front seat, heads of faculties and departments worked even harder to match their fellow counterparts across the sector.

Despite this "success struggle" and the scramble for public funding (CHE 2007), there have been attempts by government and other development organisations and agencies, to develop the disenfranchised groups such as women academics, in the society, women academics. The central objective of this study is to follow women academic leaders and to find out how they have charted their routes to success in this fierce higher education competitive environment. These women will use their own standards, meanings and explanations of what they regard as

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success in their leadership paths. Their lived experiences are, therefore, at the centre of the inquiry into their meanings of leadership and success as opposed to pre-conceived ones. The next chapter discusses the research design used to explore the leadership successes of women in leadership positions.

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CHAPTER 3

LIFE HISTORY RESEARCH: BREAKING GROUND IN EXPLANATIONS OF WOMEN IN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research uses an inductive strategy and Lichtman reminds us that the purpose of an inductive approach is to examine the whole in a natural setting, and to get the feelings of those being interviewed or observed (2013:244). The purpose of this chapter is to explicate the rationale for the choice of a qualitative approach, using the life history method integrated and supported by grounded theory methodology principles. The use of qualitative techniques to explain personal narratives is powerful in that the techniques provide insights into aspects of personal psychology, life patterns and work experience that influence or alter women's choices and aspirations towards educational leadership (Morley 2011:2).

In addition, thematic analysis was employed to support the grounded theory framework for carrying out code oriented data. An inductive approach means that the themes identified are strongly linked to the data. Thematic analysis is a process that focuses on identifiable themes and patterns derived from data on everyday life experiences and behaviour (Braun and Clarke 2006, Guest; MacQueen and Namey 2012; Lichtman 2013). It was critically important that the themes be drawn directly from the data instead of being preconceived and informed by some theoretical direction. The themes derived from the participants' narratives, therefore, sought to create new and fresh dimensions to women in leadership and how they sustain their positions at the helm of higher education.

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3.2 LIFE HISTORY RESEARCH AND GROUNDED THEORY AS GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE STUDY

Life history research is not new as believers in positivist approaches would like to think, but was lauded first in the 1830s as a perfect type of sociological method (Goodson and Sikes 2001). Since then, this method has moved from strength to strength, and has come to be known as the most effective, pragmatic, qualitative approach to investigate both individual and social phenomena. It is one of the most popular methods that can be used in various settings through examining and exploring possible influences and explanations to researching silences and significances of individual lives (Hamrick 1998). It provides an opportunity to interpret talk, storied experiences, and perceptions of social contexts that people inhabit.

This study is about the lived experiences of women academic leaders. The researcher chose to use the life history method to study the life trajectories that three women academic leaders traversed en route to Higher Education management and leadership. While there is a diverse set of feminist traditions and leadership theories in social science scholarship, this study did not start with a priory commitment to an established theory, but allowed theory to be generated out of the documented experiences of these senior women in higher education leadership. The study chose not to follow some 'lofty theoretical notion that may only obscure the importance of the insights the research may offer' (Wolcott 2001:96), but rather aimed to generate theory which is grounded in the rich data collected. Grounded Theory is a systematic research procedure that is used to 'generate theory grounded in empirical data... with the aim of ensuring that the theory fits the data and would apply in real life situations' (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The discovery theory from data would be used to explain a process, an action or an interaction in cases where extant theories are insufficient, particularly in areas of professional practices (Glaser 2005). Grounded Theory, as a supporting strategy, is best suited to illuminate the complex lives of women

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leaders, thereby enabling prediction and explanation and providing perspectives that are useful in the advancement of new typologies usable in practical contexts or environments

This approach follows the broadly described and understood 'research-before-theory' (Berg 1998:17), methodology of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Cobin 1990; Strauss and Cobin 1998; Glaser 2002; Kan and Perry 2004; Creswell 2003). Grounded theory methodology is particularly useful for the research of subjective experience and meaning, as well as for enhancing our knowledge of leadership (Kan and Perry 2004). The approach employs a strategy that places the study in a ground breaking framework for the analysis and understanding of the complex lives of women leaders in the context of the proposed life history method where much of the accent falls on their experiences expressed in their own words (Babbie and Mouton 2001). The researcher believes that placing a predetermined structure on lives might distort what one expects to be powerful, emotional narratives rather than simple quantitative data on silent objects. Also, the explanation of the 'relatively silent and potentially silenced lives of women' (Hamrick 1998) is needed as a means to unearth the individual conquests they have made and carried over time, place and space.

Research has overly focussed on testing or verifying theory and has, therefore, disadvantaged the value of theorising from empirical data, a process equally important for growing the realm of theory generation. Glaser and Strauss (1999) explain that the interrelated functions of theory in social research are to enable prediction and explanation of behaviour and to provide a perspective on behaviour, to be useful in theoretical advance in sociology and to be usable in practical application. Thus, theory in social research is a strategy for handling data and providing modes of conceptualisation for describing and for explaining (Glaser and Strauss 1999:3).

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Through the functions stated above, Glaser and Strauss (1999) make a very important point that the adequacy of a theory cannot be divorced from the process by which it is generated. One canon for judging the usefulness of a theory is how it was generated because they believe that generating theory from data means that concepts not only come from data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research, thereby asserting the notion of 'fit' and 'work' (1999:3), and relevance and modifiability (Charmaz 2006). Grounded Theory is heralded for its success in challenging the deductive and a-priory means of theorizing and proposed the importance of developing theory directly from data (Walker and Myrick 2006). Furthermore, grounded theory seeks patterns in the data and gives primacy to understanding everyday lived experiences, in order to unravel the phenomenon in question grounded in the data (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The choice of this research strategy, therefore, has provided the researcher with a way to deal and work with the realities and essence of identity, place in the world in general and in higher education in particular, and the purpose and meaning of the lives of women. It is this essence of subjective identity that places the storied experiences of these women within certain fundamental insights of social life, and provides explanations of what happened to them, why and what are the epistemological bases for their existence are.

Through the use of the life history method which uses grounded theory techniques, the participants share intricate perceptions and experiences in the place and space where their history and social life dwells. They provide evidence on how they negotiated their identity, created and made sense of the rules and roles of the higher education social world in which they live. Methodologically, the researcher is required to enter the worlds of those being studied in order to observe their environment and the interactions and interpretations that occur and later develop a theory which incorporates the concepts of "self, language, social setting and social object" (Goulding 1999). It is, therefore, important for the

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researcher to study how the lives of these women are scripted and constructed in ways that resonate with the higher education social order and to find and craft explanations that lead to the challenges, disruptions, construction, deconstruction, reconstruction or betterment of some or all of these scripted lives.

The researcher found the Life History research design also particularly relevant for the study in that it provides an opportunity for the study of lives from a historical perspective which would allow the informants to reflect on their past, look at their present lives and think about the future. The informants have the freedom to go backwards and forth, looking at how their lives have been shaped and changed by a range of circumstances, be they social, economic, political and so on and how they have dealt with these circumstances at each point in time. This way, issues of social justice, gender and development, race, identity, to mention but a few, are investigated and unearthed (Goodson and Sikes 2001). Life History research gives expression to and celebrates the hidden, silenced lives of women and men, which are lived privately and without public accomplishment. These stories need to be heard because the power of subjective experience used in telling personal stories provides empowerment only after the changes to social policy and practice. These changes are a response of those in power, to how life really is for women (Wagner 1998), the disenfranchised minority ethnic groups, and the differently abled people and so on. Within the higher education context, working with women who are arguably marginal in terms of their social power, Life History research is particularly useful and appropriate because it brings both public and private lives together (Goodson and Sikes 2001).

This method is therefore, used to move the lived experiences of the informants from a story or textual level to a historical account and context of all their inevitable private and public lives including their silences. The aim is to explore and interpret how higher education women leaders, who supposedly share

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specific contextual characteristics, personally and subjectively experience and account for their social world. The rich history coming out of the respondents' lived experiences would supply contexts in which to locate the stories and frameworks for interpreting them, thereby providing insight into what Goodson and Sikes (2001) call the 'rupture and the marriage' between individual lives and the social settings in which they are lived.

This integrated methodology is relevant in that it presents an opportunity to study individuals in the context of their professional lives and environment and through using a methodology that allows for inquiry into how institutions of higher learning have impacted their lives over a long time (Miles and Huberman 1994). It also derives a rich data of life histories in these women's voices as leaders in higher education. Grounded Theory and the use of life history methodology would, therefore, be brought together in this research as a strategy to first bring about new explanations ***specific to the South African context***, of what and how women who represent a specific level in society, through their own voices have conceived the notion of success and have lived that trajectory within the context of higher education. Building or generating theory from these constructs is an effective way to provide insights into the societal effects that regulate our psychological and socio-historical world.

The advantage of using an integrated approach is that it makes it possible for the stories of the disenfranchised and disempowered groups in society to be heard and written, thereby bringing about possible historical change in the form of new typologies. It also provides a new understanding of women's success in higher education leadership. The legacy of disenfranchisement of both Black people in general and Women in particular, over a long period, means there is lot to be discovered as part of a bigger objective of realising the goal of knowledge management in the country. In addition, knowledge production in historical terms in South Africa is still believed to belong, in the main, to the male species. The Truth and Reconciliation process only scratched the surface to bring women and

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children into the realm of knowledge production and management (Reddy 2000). As Plummer (1983:66) puts it, the stories collected have brought into the study the 'humanistic coefficient' by extending the life of the individual in a manner that creates an environment to negotiate the self within the world, and how and why both the world and the self-effect change in each other.

In conclusion, the use of life history research combined with the grounded theory strategy of data collection and analysis is, therefore, desirable in that it offers explanations for emerging new insights on 'crossing over from barriers into sustained successes of women's experiences as leaders in higher education especially in the 'present context of rapid change' (Badsha 2001) in higher education in South Africa. It is of vital importance that the empirical value of this study, through the storied lives of these women, ultimately leads to transformation and change in the world of work (Babbie et al 2001:38; Glaser 2005). It should provide a platform for social relevance, individual empowerment and ultimately historical and political emancipation (Badsha 2001:39). Therefore, the phenomenological insights that we are constantly seeking to unravel in the higher education environment is the puzzle that this study explored.

3.3 DATA SAMPLING

The sample for the study was chosen from three of the twenty-three institutions of higher learning. The higher education sector currently has a varied landscape where some universities are regarded as well established, while others continue to be branded as historically disadvantaged. Seeing that the sample from which to select was too limited in terms of numbers, and because of the choice of life history and grounded theory methodologies, theoretical sampling principles were used.

This technique of sampling participants is not pre-determined but is guided by the availability of informants (Goulding 1999). More women academic leaders were

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available from previously advantaged Higher Education institutions. The second reason for the choice of informants was that though the institutions where the study sample came from have a very rich historical tradition in terms of economic and academic verve, the participants themselves come from two historically distinct political, social and economic backgrounds. It is for this reason that the choice was considered appropriate for the purpose of the study.

The nature of the sample could, however, resulted in limitations in terms of understanding aspects of management, leadership and successes of women leaders who work in environments where the historic legacy of disadvantage is the order of the day. Since this study went beyond the understanding of barriers to women empowerment and development in higher education, it was taken that these apply to the women working and leading in these types of institutions.

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3.4 DATA COLLECTION

The study used semi-structured interviews as a means to collect the stories from women academic leaders in Higher Education. This mode of inquiry provided the researcher with purely subjective accounts and detailed perspectives on the world those women academic leaders traversed through a subjective reality of the lives they lead in Higher Education environments.

Four sets of interviews were audio taped and transcribed. The first set dealt with biographical information, the second, with educational experience and professional development, the third, with management and leadership matters, and, the last one, with issues relating to how women leaders overcome the barriers to successful leadership and the future. The interview sets were based on three research questions, namely:

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1. What were the formative experiences and pathways traversed by South African women en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education institutions?

2. How do women in leadership negotiate the world of higher education policy and practice once such seniority has been attained?

3. Why were these women successful in achieving and maintaining higher education seniority, given the established barriers to gender-related advancement in South African universities and technikons?

The research questions were supported by semi-structured interview questions that helped anchor the stories told by women leaders. The questions followed a logical sequence that required the respondents to relate their lived experience in a logical story line, starting from the time they were born to their current positions.

The researcher triangulated and confirmed the data by making observations and writing a reflexive journal, thus, employing the iterative process (Lichtman 2013:242) which is vital to using grounded theory techniques. The reflections included thoughts on how interview appointments were made; how and when the Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor' offices responded; initial and follow up telephone calls and emailing; follow up questions drawn from gaps the researcher found in the interview sessions and a collection of newspaper clippings on stories covering any part of the participants personal or professional lives. The journal was also used to write observations on the immediate environment where the interviews were held. The researcher studied the surroundings, especially the women's offices, to look for particular patterns pertaining to what they like. Focus was on ordinary pictures, family pictures, paintings, artifacts, and so on. To a very limited extent, the researcher sought to establish the women leaders' relationships with their office/personal assistants.

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A pilot study was not done because the orientation of the inquiry and its methodology was intended from the start to undertake simultaneous data collection and analysis as the study progressed. Based on the guiding principles of the Grounded Theory approach to data collection, coding and analysis, Glaser's well known dictum 'all is data', means that the researcher can use a composite of various sources of data in whatever combination (Glaser 1998; 2002). Glaser further notes that what is important in Grounded Theory is not only about what is being told, how it is being told and the conditions of its being told but all the data surrounding what is being told is vital and the researcher needs to figure out exactly what the data is to be used for (1998;2002). It is for this reason that the data triangulation (observation, interviews and newspaper analysis) was used to strengthen data and give depth to the portraitures and stories under investigation.

The newspaper clippings were also used to confirm, validate, support, embellish and refute narratives collected where applicable. For example, the newspaper clippings based on the interview one participant gave reflecting her ambivalence about her father's legacy corroborates and supports the interview narrative recorded by the researcher. The second example is about her indication that she would not be interested to move upward into the position of Vice Chancellor (VC) but that she would rather take up the responsibility to write a book on the subject she is more passionate about; that of women... Another participant confirms the sacrifices that her parents made to ensure that she had an opportunity to a good education when the apartheid system failed her entire family... In the case of other newspaper content that the researcher deemed to be of relevance to the research questions, these were raised in interviews with participants and then later formed part of the transcribed data for coding and analysis.

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3.5 DATA CODING AND ANALYSIS

The core of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) is the rigor of data analysis. The rigor of analysis combines two important procedures to work with data and generate theory. Glaser and Strauss suggested that the researcher should code all data and systematically analyse the codes to verify given propositions (substantive). The second procedure is to use the codes to inspect data for properties of categories (theoretical). The study used these two approaches. Data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection and proceeded through three coding stages: the initial, intermediate and advanced stages (Charmaz 2010). In the initial stage, line-by-line coding was used to fracture the data and name the processes and actions in each line of the interview transcripts. During the intermediate stage, the data was restructured into categories identified in the data with the view to identifying the core category emerging from the data, the sub-categories and the properties of categories. In the advanced coding stage, the grounded theory emerged through theoretical integration, whereby the core category was integrated with other sub-categories and processes by establishing theoretical links between them. Memoing accompanied the entire analytical process (Charmaz 2010). This process of creating memos in the form of short detailed insights and comments on incidents and linkages allowed for the development of iterative themes directly linked to the research data that derived from research questions. In summary, to code, data were broken down, compared and then placed in categories. This approach or data analysis strategy involved an iterative, inductive yet reductive process that organized data from which the researcher then constructed themes, essences, descriptions and propositions (Walker and Myrick 2006:549).

The identification of patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest started from and during the collection of data and continued as more information came in through subsequent waves of the interviews, recording and transcribing. As the researcher was intimately involved with the process of collecting, creating and

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accumulating data, she familiarised herself with it thoroughly through listening, transcribing, reading and reviewing it. The researcher then immersed herself in the transcribed data by carefully reading and re-reading the transcripts (Braun and Clarke 2006; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). An initial list of interesting ideas, similar and different, was created and these later produced the initial codes from the data, pointing to some phenomenon (Braun and Clarke 2006). Then coding followed using coding families directly from the twelve sets of primary documents, which the researcher fed into the Atlas.ti data analysis programme.

The next step was to organise the data into an analyzable format. This process involved 'anonymising' sensitive data, where possible, before the coding began. The transcripts of interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to look for relationships between themes that have been identified to derive implications for policy or practice in higher education environment, with the aim of developing typologies to understand women leaders' successes in this context or sector.

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These themes were then subjectively interpreted (Pope and Mays 1996), using the actual words of the respondents, to compile, track and form the basis for emerging theories that explain the lived experiences and successes of women leaders in higher education. The categories were used to further explore relationships derived from coding, with the aim of refining the themes into more specific categories (memoing). Lichtman (2013:254) recommends that five to seven concepts are the maximum required for a set of data. This study developed six themes and paired them with core categories, sub-categories and related research questions.

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HU: **Rachel's Comparative Biographies**

Memos

RQ1: bio_formative years Rachel analysis	1. What were the formative experiences of South African women en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education institutions? Codes: main category biography
RQ2: career pathway Rachel analysis	2. What were the pathways traversed by South African women en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education institutions? Codes: Main/Core category – CAREER and / job other work experiences
RQ3: negotiating ways between policy and praxis Rachel analysis	3. How do women in leadership negotiate the world of higher education policy and practice once such seniority has been attained? Codes: Main/Core category - LEADERSHIP, e.g. personal success stories, leadership challenge, success factors, leadership style successful REASON: Reason for success, reason success strategies SUPPORT: allies who and what for BARRIERS: institutional barriers, overcoming barriers (possibly) GENDER: gender issues, male/female perspectives, male territory, gendered culture, women-women relation OUTLOOK: suggestions for improvement
RQ4: Barriers Rachel analysis	4. Barriers to gender-related advancement in South African universities Codes: Main/Core category - BARRIER and all sub codes
RQ5: Success factors Rachel analysis	5. Why were these women successful in achieving and maintaining higher education seniority? Codes: Main/Core category - Career attaining current position Reason for success, success luck, success strategies Leadership: successful leadership strategies / success factors / personal strength / successful leadership styles, success story Person: compromises / personality Support: general, networks, role of support systems, role of husband, allies

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Themes 1 and 2 are linked to the sub-research question, 'What were the formative experiences and pathways of South African women en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education institutions'? Themes 3, 4 and 6 are linked to the main research question, 'How did South African women leaders succeed in navigating the higher education environment given the established barriers to gender-related advancement in South African Universities'? Theme 5 is linked to the sub-research question 'how do women in leadership negotiate the world of higher education policy and practice once such seniority has been attained?

These themes are accounts or results of what has been told (Lichtman 2013:256), and these were used for the development of typologies derived from raw data and incorporated into existing knowledge bases on socially constructed or socially given paradigms. In the research report, particularly with subsequent chapters, some excerpts and quotations are used from the original data for purposes of emphasis and validation of issues discussed.

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3.6 VALIDATION OF DATA

The recorded interviews were transcribed and, thereafter, sent to informants for validation. Respondents' validation is vital in life history research in that, when it is done, it enriches and makes the quality of data or interpretation credible especially if the informants understand and agree with it (Creswell 2006; Goodson and Sikes 2001).

As life histories have a lot to do with personal and subjective information, informants, therefore, should be afforded the opportunity to validate the data collected. Member checks are vital for this reason as they provide the respondent both the right and opportunity to confirm, review or change and validate the information they initially provided to the researcher (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

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3.7 REFLECTIONS ON CONDUCT AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS (RESEARCHER VS. RESEARCHED)

The researcher had to consider how the research affected the informants as an important ethical principle. Research involving people's lives needs to take on a shared responsibility. The issue of reciprocity in dealing with life history methodology helps to break the social class barrier and creates a non-hierarchical atmosphere.

Even though the interviews were dependent on the relative position of the researcher and the respondent in the social formation, the fact that both shared the same gender facilitated the reciprocal environment. When the researcher shared her life story with one informant, it broke the barrier between them because the interview or conversation became collaborative. Although life history research comes from an interpretive standpoint, it also recognizes that 'what we capture in narratives or stories is mediation between the personal voice and wider cultural imperatives' (Goodson and Sikes 2001). This is an important consideration in life history research as it builds trust between the informant and the researcher wherein a good rapport was co-created on the iteration of information with the main responsibility falling on the researcher to be as reflective and reflexive as possible during the data collection and analysis process.

The study acknowledges the importance of the specific relationship between the researcher and the researched as outlined by Callary (2013) about interpretation of words, and acceptance of alternative epistemological contexts where narratives are collected as raw data, analysed and constructed into new meanings 2013:1 re-written or retold in the value-laden context of the researcher. Member-checking as a vital part of data negotiation played an important role to ameliorate ethical dilemmas associated with the collection of the narratives from the participants.

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An additional vital principle of ethical consideration was to ensure anonymity of the interviewee in relation to the information shared as some information might jeopardize the position of the respondent. Participants do not live in a void and because of this fact; Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) noted that their storied lives subscribe to commonplaces of narrative inquiry. They describe three commonplaces; temporality, sociality and place (2007:23) as integral parts of ethical consideration for narrative research. These commonplaces introduce the lives of the three women leaders in the context of the study through first introducing their profiles and later narrating their storied lives. Pseudonyms have been used to mask the real identity of the participants. More care has been taken in the presentation of their professional profiles yet some of the information shared in the profiles may give the identity away and result in an ethical dilemma.

3.8 PROFESSIONAL PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

3.8.1 Professional profile of Professor Bonolo

At the helm of her university's research activity she is a warm, dynamic, dedicated and driven researcher. She is a true social scientist and mother of three. She was appointed to the university's top job as DVC research after spending more than thirty years at this particular university where she also obtained her first two degrees. She then proceeded to a university overseas where she obtained her Master's and Doctoral qualifications. Prior to her first academic job, she worked as a journalist for one of the old newspapers of the old dispensation.

She was awarded top rating by the National Research Foundation (NRF). Her excellent research skills also won her top research award by the Human Sciences Research Council for doing outreach work with communities. She published three books internationally and co-edited four publications. She has published many more articles in her area of research and served as an associate

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fellow, a visiting fellow and a research fellow at three of the top league universities in the world and one prestigious one.

Professor Bonolo sat on several scientific boards in her faculty. She played an important role in fighting for research funding for her portfolio and university. She brought a lot of research efforts and ideas and renewed the way the university thinks of research and sees itself as one of the top one hundred in the world. She changed and revolutionized the way in which the university thinks about the development and support of post graduate students to ensure successful completion of innovative research. As DVC she chaired and managed various committees. She is regarded as persistent and systematic in the execution of duties and responsibilities. Among the many duties and responsibilities she had, she was also senior adviser to the Vice Chancellor.

She has since ended her tour of duty as Deputy Vice Chancellor and has ventured into unchartered territory in other areas of life and different kind of power and leadership in South African. (www.wiser.wits.ac.za accessed on 21 February 2015; www.pa.org.za accessed on 21 February 2015; www.dblive.co.za/articles/id=177027 accessed on 21 February 2015).

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3.8.2 Professional profile of Professor Didintle

Professor Didintle is Vice Chancellor and Principal of a prestigious historically white institution. Prior to ascending into this powerful position, she was Chief Executive Officer of the Council on Higher Education, a position she assumed after being Deputy Vice Chancellor. As the first Black woman, she is hailed as having made history by occupying a position previously held by a male counterpart. She is described as a trail blazer in the higher education arena.

She holds a full member of the Health Professions Council of South Africa. She is a member of the following organisations; the Academy of Science of South

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Africa, South African Association for Research and Development in Higher Education, Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa, HESA Research Strategy Committee, National Advisory Council on Innovation, CSIR Board, and National Research Foundation Executive Evaluation Committee. She obtained her Bachelors, Honours and Masters Degrees from the same university in South Africa and her Doctoral studies from a different South African university. Professor Didintle has done extensive work on gender issues, leadership and higher education policy.

Prior to her appointment as Deputy Vice Chancellor in one of the old prestigious university on South Africa, she was appointed Executive Director for the National Research Foundation (NRF), and later became its chair. She is chair of the Science, Engineering and Technology for Women. Professor Didintle has published books and several journal articles. She is a fellow of the Psychological association of South Africa and the Royal Society of South Africa and of the Academy of Science of South Africa. She sits on a number of boards and committees such as the National Human Resource Development Council, the Council of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, International Council of Science's Strategy and Planning and Talloires Network. She is also the African Co-Chairperson of the Australia-Africa Universities Network (AAUN). She serves on the Council of the Botswana University of Science and Technology. (www.mindhive.com accessed on 22 February 2015; www.aceld.org accessed on 22 February 2015; www.up.ac.za accessed on 22 February 2015).

3.8.3 Professional profile of Professor Olive

The first woman Vice Chancellor and Principal to be appointed in the history of this previously white university, Professor Olive has extensive experience in strategic leadership positions in the higher education environment. However, she is the third successive Vice Chancellor to vacate the position before the end of the contract. She assumed this top position after having served at yet another

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historically white university as a Deputy Vice Chancellor. Prior to the DVC (Academic), she occupied the positions of Dean of Research at a former higher institution of technical education, and Head of a Science Department at a historically disadvantaged university. Director of Academic Affairs at the former higher education organisation called South African Vice Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA).

She has had a double portion of opportunity serving as DVC in two universities situated in two provinces of the country. Both universities she served as DVC are historically advantaged institutions. She has taught at undergraduate and post-graduate levels and supervised post-graduate research as well. She has published in scientific accredited journals in the areas of science education, university leadership development, women in science and academic management leadership. She is a fellow of the American Council on (Higher) Education and member of several professional organisations. She serves as a chairperson and member of a number of university committees as well as external committees and councils.

Professor Olive obtained her first degree at a university in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and her Master's Degree from a well-known university in the north eastern part of the African continent. She is the first Black woman to receive Doctoral qualification in the science discipline. (www.inyathelo.org.za accessed on 22 February 2015; www.news24.com accessed on 22 February 2015 www.tut.ac.za/documents/VC%20web%latest.pdf accessed on 22 February 2015; www.mg.co.za accessed on 23 February 2015).

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CHAPTER 4

FROM THE CRADLE TO THE BOARDROOM: A COMPARATIVE LEAP OF FAITH TOWARDS LEADERSHIP

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter traces the lives of three woman professors and presents the portraitures through a chosen theme of their formative years. I chose to use pseudonyms to conceal the actual names of the participants. The pseudonyms do not have any specific value for the women's stories.

The chapter presents subjective narratives of six significant moments in their lives. The events focus on how they have traversed life from birth to the beginning of their careers in a higher education environment. Their stories are very rich and cover many moments in their lives. I, however, chose six critical and significant periods in the lives of these women, which I found to be more transversal and used these to craft a story bearing a collective understanding of their leadership formative experiences. Furthermore, these moments were chosen because they are an extrapolation of shared, common and divergent experiences that derived directly from the data collected. This study, however, concedes that life histories or biographies are unique from person to person because each individual experiences the world and life in very many different ways even if they come from similar historical, economic, cultural or socio-political backgrounds.

The chapter, therefore, answers the first research question on the formative experiences and pathways traversed by South African women academics en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education institutions. I argue that 1) historical, educational and professional background, 2) family background, formative life interests and influences, 3) the role played by the

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family and school environment, 4) personal sacrifices, 5) turning points influenced by patriarchal and matriarchal forces, and 6) socialisation and the value of achievement, are significant formative experiences. I show, through the stories of professors Bonolo, Olive and Didintle, how these moments emerge as significant. In this chapter, I note, not only the similarities of the women leaders' paths, but the differences and silences too as presented in their individual stories, I acknowledge these as significant data that impacts on the crafting of their collective story.

The narratives describe the experiences of these professors from home to school and to university. They illuminate what their formative life interests and influences are and how these shaped their life paths. The stories map out the role that their parents, husbands, siblings and school environments played in their educational, historical, economic, social and family lives thereby leading them to experience turning points in their lives. The ways in which they have experienced life in general and in particular, how they coexisted with others in different environments and how these experiences have helped or inhibited the trajectory upon which their lives would be crafted for years to come, leading to their own path of success, are central to the prologue of this collective story.

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4.2 BACKGROUND TO THE NARRATIVES AND THEIR SETTINGS

The stories are based on initial interviews recorded in the participants' offices. The stories were recorded over a period of two years at different times and in different places, but, in this study I bring them together and narrate the events as they unfold in time. As this part opens, it is a cold November morning and I am arriving at a university to do a biographical interview with DVC Olive. It continues to rain harder as we stop at the main entrance of the university gate. The taxi driver just waves at the security man and the gate opens. He does not need to explain himself as he is well known for shuttling visitors in and out of the campus. He drops me off at the university's main entrance. I stop to ask one kind young

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man where the lifts are because I already knew what floor the Deputy Vice Chancellor's (DVC) offices are. At the 11th floor, I step out of the lift and continue to read the signposts to the offices of all Deputy Vice Chancellors (DVCs). As I approach the right one, even though it is cold, I begin to sweat from anticipation and anxiety.

I begin to think back to my own situation at work; Other than meeting and talking to my own DVC (who is a man) during senate meetings, Professor Olive is the second woman DVC that I am about to speak with. When I met and interviewed the first woman professor, Bonolo, she asked me to tell her about myself before we could start the interview. At first, when Professor Bonolo asked me to tell her about myself. Although to a much lesser extent, this context raised an important dynamic between the researcher and the researched, a notion that Cunliffe (2003) refers to as 'representation of realities between people who talk about their experiences' within a radical reflexivity paradigm and thereby impacting on identities and histories of those involved in the interaction. Cunliffe (2003) believes reflexivity is important in addressing fundamental questions of reality, knowledge and our own ways of being as vital contributions to the ontology and epistemology binaries and convergences. Though it is not the main subject of this study, Professor Bonolo's request to me therefore confirms the value of radical reflexivity inquiry and importantly supports the tenet of the data collection research design chosen for my study. It had not occurred to me that someone of her stature and position would be interested in knowing about the life of an ordinary university lecturer.

I was head of an academic department then, but the institution in which I served had a very rigid culture of seniority. The majority of professionals in that institution are medical doctors. There existed a culture of awareness, and division for seniority. A high sense of importance was placed, in the main, on university management and on those professionals who are medical doctors. I was working in the academic development section and, often, we were perceived

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as not part of the mainstream medical professional training and, therefore, not regarded as important. I had, therefore learned the culture and had come to accept the fact that our place in that institution was not regarded as important.

While I was still lost in these thoughts, about the extent to which my own university community did not value me as a person in my own right, I did not know that I was about to discover that I would be in the company of warm and unassuming, powerful women who, in the subsequent interviews, would from time to time share points of humour with me off the interview record and, finally, break the status barrier or what others call the fifth floor syndrome, that I had experienced for a long time in my life in a higher education environment.

This experience of sharing light moments with the professors became a point of reference to enable me to understand the complex nature and culture of universities as both social and structure-bound environments. This raised a pertinent question in my mind about how the university environment can impact the lives of its community in general and those of women in particular. This experience has played a major role in igniting my interest to undertake this study.

In this chapter, I narrate how Professors Bonolo, Didintle and Olive, experienced life from the time they started school until they came into contact with and formed part of the culture of universities in which they lead. I also narrate/describe the career pathways of these three powerful women in the subsequent chapters and how they contributed to the dynamic culture of the institutions they lead and manage.

While Professors Bonolo and Olive got to know a bit about me and what I do during my first interview with them, Professor Didintle did not take part in the biographical interview. Instead, she opted to submit her curriculum vitae as a substitute for the biographical interview. When I went to see her for the first time, in order to do the second interview, I already knew that she would not take part in the biographical

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interview. I anticipated that she, like Professors Bonolo and Olive, would ask a little bit about me. Instead, her questions to me were based mainly on my research study research questions and how I was finding the research journey.

I respected Professor Didintle's decision. She agreed to do the rest of the interviews except the one on biographies. For this reason, I am, therefore, not able to tell the story about where she was born, how she grew up, how she experienced life as a girl, a teenager and a young woman, that is her family life, and how it shaped the woman she is today. In these comparative biographies, I do, however, draw from the very detailed CV Professor Didintle provided and explained her educational history that led to the achievements she has made today. Later on as her story continues to unfold in the subsequent interviews, she sheds light into some of her formative life trials and tribulations as they pertain to her professional development within the higher education sector.

To get back to professor Olive's narrative, her secretary welcomes me warmly and offers me a chair. She alerts DVC Olive that I have arrived and before I can stand up, she is already at her door ushering me in and showing me to a table next to her own official desk. She walks over to the desk and calls the secretary to request two cups of coffee. She turns back to me and says 'welcome Rachel, let's have a quick cup and you can tell me about yourself briefly before we start'.

Like in the previous interview which I had with professor Bonolo, I wonder which part of my life she would like to know. I quickly decide to repeat the personal life story I had told Professor Bonolo and include a brief professional background. The interview, therefore, begins with me telling my story to pave the way to hearing the story of Professor Olive. This is the same route that my interview with Professor Bonolo's followed. In narrating these stories, I begin with the historical background of these woman professors as they set the scene for their achievements.

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4.3 HISTORICAL AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Professors Bonolo, Didintle and Olive come from very distinct socio-political and socio-economic backgrounds, but the cradles they were born in, led them, in the main, by interesting leaps of faith, into similar, powerful positions of leadership in higher education. All three are Deputy Vice Chancellors at three universities in South Africa. They provide strategic leadership in the areas of academic leadership, research and development, innovation and postgraduate affairs. As with all Deputy Vice Chancellors, they also have delegated responsibilities to addresses those transformation objectives related to their portfolios and line responsibilities, thereby contributing to institutional governance. Professor Bonolo is a sociologist, Professor Didintle is a social psychologist, and Professor Olive, a scientist. They all hold PhD degrees. DVC Bonolo obtained hers in England and DVCs Olive and Didintle in South Africa.

4.3.1 Professor Didintle

To reach the pinnacle of their professional careers, Professors Olive, Bonolo and Didintle came through schooling systems in South Africa. These schooling systems were riddled with inequality. They were in this situation not out of choice but because the country's laws of separate development were in force when they were born and grew up. These laws were later relaxed at higher education level. However, there were different rules and regulations governing the administration and access to university education in the country. For instance, I asked professor Didintle whether it was easy or difficult for her to gain access to educational opportunities in general and her responses were "No, those were the 1980's so there were two obstacles, one was having a permit to study because in the Apartheid days I wasn't permitted to attend the University of Natal, so I applied for a permit to study there and it was granted…".

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South Africa has come a very long way since this period of discrimination, segregation and division. When Professor Didintle mentions the Apartheid days, she reminds me of the time during the early 90s when I took part in the training and popularisation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) after former President Nelson Mandela had ratified it into law in South Africa. I had coined an acronym 'RED' and used it during training to illustrate that before 1994, our country was riddled with **r**estriction, **e**xclusion, and **d**istinction (RED). This is because the former regime was designed to distinguish people by their colour, race and creed and the Apartheid system treated people based on these discriminatory factors.

Professor Didintle is an example of a woman, who as a young person was subjected to this kind of life where her choices were restricted and she was excluded from accessing education together with a particular group of people because she was distinctly different from them and, therefore, had to have special permission from the authorities to be admitted to this particular institution. Before meeting this challenge at university, Professor Didintle went to Parkhill Senior Secondary school in Durban and completed her matric in 1979. She completed her bachelors, honours and Masters degrees at the University of Natal, receiving her psychology major cum laude in all three degrees. In 1999, she obtained her PhD from the University of Cape Town, thirteen years after she had completed her Masters degree.

4.3.2 Professor Olive

Although growing up under different circumstances, Professor Olive had similar experiences; she faced **r**estriction, **e**xclusion, and **d**istinction in her own country. Professor Olive's schooling experience was never a walk in the park. From a tender age of three, fate dealt her a blow that led her to experience a different

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kind of discrimination. Her parents were subjected to pass laws[4] that resulted in what was to become a defining historical moment in the lives of many South Africans. She found herself attending school in a foreign country as a result of the Apartheid pass laws. Her family was forced by these discriminatory circumstances to move to Lesotho[5] in search of better educational opportunities and a better life than the one of strife, which they lived at the time.

Professor Olive relocated to Lesotho in 1962 and started school in 1963. She completed her BSc degree in 1979 and received her Masters in Chemistry from the University of Nairobi and later obtained her PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand. Her connection to Lesotho probably made it easier for her to be able to study her Masters degree outside of South Africa. In answering the same question of access to education, she had this to say: "I mean access in South Africa became very different to me because I realised even if there was money, there were people who did not have access to higher education because of their background..."She told me later in the story how these experiences helped build her resilience in dealing with adverse circumstances in her life and how they propelled her to achieve more.

4.3.3 Professor Bonolo

Professor Bonolo, unlike the other two, did not have any particular challenges in accessing formal education from primary to university level. Neither did she experience any (RED) **r**estriction, **e**xclusion, or **d**istinction. She was provided with a wide choice of where she could get educated in South Africa as well as

[4] This was an Apartheid law used by the erstwhile regime in Sharpville where the police mowed down 69 unarmed people and injured 180 others who refused to carry the hated ***dompas*** identity document that was meant only for indigenous Africans; what was to become the most famous township in South Africa before the birth of the Soweto uprisings.

[5] Lesotho is a mountainous country that is completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. It is sometimes called the Switzerland of Southern Africa because of its beautiful mountain scenery. It is a former British colony that got independence in 1966 and is currently one of the poorest countries in the SADC region.

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anywhere in the world. She went to Park Town high school for girls in Johannesburg and on completion of her matric, went to the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts and Honours in African studies degrees. She says she was so elated that she had done so well that she decided to apply to further her studies outside South Africa. In her words:

> "...all over the world to go and do a masters degree. I did get into a few universities, I got into one in Los Angeles, one in Sussex, - couple of others and I chose to go to Sussex. So I went off to Sussex, did my masters there, and then stayed on to do PhD in Sussex.

I ask Professor Bonolo whether she had had any challenges with regards to accessing education at any stage of her life. Her response to this question relates particularly to higher education and she said:

> I think it was relatively easy compared to what it would be today. For one thing, education in England was very, very cheap. They allowed foreign students to pay the same fees as local students, or English students, and that was almost nothing. So all I had to really fund was my living expenses. I applied to a scholarship fund and I got an award.

Thus, Professor Bonolo's formal education concluded with a doctoral degree obtained in England and, as the interviewed revealed, that is when her life began. In the next section, I describe the remarkable of Professors Bonolo and Olive.

4.4 FAMILY BACKGROUND, GROWING UP INTERESTS AND INFLUENCES

4.4.1 Professor Bonolo

Professor Bonolo's journey to leadership began in the then greater Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vereeniging[6] (PWV) region of the current Gauteng province. Professor Bonolo was born into a family of four in the northern suburbs of

[6] The name was used during the old South African system of demarcation between the provinces. PWV was part of the Transvaal province. More or less the same area is now called Gauteng province with the two specific areas stated above falling under the greater Johannesburg metro city in the new dispensation.

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Johannesburg. She was the youngest of the three sisters with one younger brother. Her father[7] was an engineer academic and her mother[8] was a house wife. Professor Bonolo says "we grew up in not extremely wealthy circumstances because academics were not paid well – they were paid much worse then in fact than they are now". Professor Bonolo was addicted to reading from the tender age of four.

We discussed what influenced her liking for books and what she regarded as the value of reading books. She thinks that she was the unusual one in the family. She grew up in a family where books were accepted but they were not top of the agenda. Her father was an engineer, and she thinks, he was, therefore, not really an avid reader but more of a practical man. Professor Bonolo says her mother probably encouraged them, to some extent to read and because of that she became very interested in reading more than her siblings.

From an early age, Professor Bonolo developed a strong sense of self in academic achievement but when she was in high school, she unfortunately, lost her confidence in her academic ability. She experienced difficulty understanding why she had lost confidence in her academic ability. In her words: "...but I think I had lost a lot of confidence in my teens... it is not a good time in anybody's life". Having gone to an all girls' school, she says she was not so different from many average girls who were growing up during her time. She feels she should not have really had a very strong sense of boys as her competitors but she thought about it a lot yet. She did not understand why she had lost confidence because she was always top of the class in primary school. When she went to high school, she slipped back, stopped working hard, and did not achieve all that well except in mathematics.

[7] Researcher does not know if the father is still alive
[8] Researcher does not know if the mother is still alive

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She could not explain the reason for slipping back, but thinks that, like all teenagers, she probably did not care any longer about her academic excellence because she was "busy being an adolescent" and she thought that being out of primary school meant that she could do anything and still manage life. However, one thing she knew was that she could do better. At this point of our interview, she chuckled with laughter and said that maybe I should solicit the services of a psychiatrist to find out why she had this episode of self doubt and uncertainty. I smiled back and continued to enjoy her story.

The slipping back in academic performance caused her mother some concern and when she was about sixteen, her mother took her for an aptitude test. During the test she said that she wanted to be a nursery school teacher. The people who assessed her said she was too clever to be a nursery school teacher and that she was underestimating her own abilities. These positive messages she got from the assessors had a great influence on her and boosted her confidence and put it back on track. It meant a lot to her, and from that point on, it taught her that she was better than she had learnt to think of herself. This strong sense of her abilities set the benchmark upon which she would work towards achieving more, later in her life.

4.4.2 Professor Olive

For Professor Olive, being born in Vereeniging into a family of eight; led to life history from an early age different to that of Professor Bonolo. She was the sixth child in the family, and when she was only five years old, the country's turmoil, caused by the Sharpville[9] massacre, forced her family to migrate to Lesotho. According to Professor Olive, apparently, a lot of families left Sharpville for

[9] Sharpeville is an innocuous but historic township situated between the industrial cities of Vanderbijlpark and Vereeniging in southern Gauteng province. The township is well known for the historical massacre that took place in 1960 when black people residing in that area revolted against pass laws.

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Lesotho as a result of the unrests. Her father[10] was a history teacher and her mother[11] was a nurse. She explains the history of her family, which led to them migrating to Lesotho.

> My father had a very turbulent time in terms of his teaching career. At the school he used to be a history teacher and, at that time, he was quite politicised and didn't quiet agree with the system. In a sense, I think it was difficult for him to teach history as it was seen by the system then...but you know that in 1960 there was Sharpville shootings and in that sense that was a turning point in the history of my family as a whole, in that those shootings happened very close to where we used to live and my mother was actually involved in nursing the people, the emergency which happened after that.

Apart from the shootings taking place very close to Professor Olive's home, the massacre also literally affected her family. Professor Olive's cousin was involved in the unrests and died from the shootings. That is how close that incident was to her family. She had this to say: "So in a sense it made a huge impact on my parents and, basically, they decided that that might be the time to leave South Africa". The situation was already made worse by the fact that, at that time her father was no longer working. He had been expelled from the school because of his political activities, thus, making her mother the breadwinner.

Apart from the political unrest, the decision to move was also influenced by the fact that Professor Olive's father had been travelling with his older son to Lesotho even before the Sharpville shootings occurred. Professor Olive's brother, who is ten years older than her, was already attending boarding school at St Agnes in a place called Tiatiana[12]. He began going to Lesotho as early as primary school. Apart from the inferior quality of education which black children received in South Africa then, during this particular period of strife and bloodshed in Sharpville and elsewhere, the schooling system also became dysfunctional and children of school going age were thrown into disarray as a result of the unrests.

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[10] Researcher does not know if the father is till alive
[11] Researcher does not know if the mother is still alive
[12] A place in Lesotho where professor Olive's brother attended boarding school

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Thus because, Professor Olive's father had occasionally crossed the border to Lesotho with his son, this gave him the idea that his family could stay there. In her words: "So my father had already discovered that the educational system there was different and since we are Sotho speakers, I think it was just natural between Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland to choose that country". After taking a decision to leave South Africa, they sought refuge and were received by her paternal grandmother's relative in Lesotho. She further explains...

> Now from my father's maternal side there was a connection to Lesotho. I think my father's mother had some relatives from her side; she was from Lesotho. And my father started looking around there where he could go, mainly for educational purposes for us to be able to get a decent education but also for him to practice his profession as it were because he was not working.

This state of affairs, introduced Professor Olive to a new concept of family in her life. The concept of family presents an interesting contrast for the three women leaders. While Professors Bonolo and Didintle lived and stayed within a nucleus family environment, in the Professor Olive's life history, the extended family became a saving grace for the predicament they faced during the period of Apartheid and its unrests.

Not only was the Apartheid system meant among other things, to discriminate people against, it was also meant, to displace and separate them. When the decision was made to move to Lesotho, Professor Olive says her father and mother agreed that as a family, they would not move all at once. She remained with her younger brother and mother in Sharpville for about two more years. The family was forced to separate so that Professor Olive's father could get his career and life back, on one hand; and on the other hand, to provide quality education for his children and also a life free from oppression. Professor Olive's mother had to remain in Sharpville and work so that the family could be provided for while her father was still scouting for a job.

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History placed the two professors in distinct, yet extremely different fateful trajectories. Their growing up interests were decided by fateful the rule of law, and the government of the day ensured that this distinction was not only known, but also lived and experienced the way it was set out to be. Their choices or interests in life and where they wanted to be at particular times of their lives were determined by circumstances shared by the rule of law in the country. Did their families and other social institutions have any impact or influence to change the fate of these growing girl children?

The next part of the narratives describe the roles played by the families of the two professors, as well as and the school environment, how they supported and influence them to reach greater achievement.

4.5 ROLE OF THE FAMILY AND SCHOOL

4.5.1 Professor Bonolo

Unlike Professor Olive who went to a co-educational[13] school, Professor Bonolo went to an all girl's school. DVC Bonolo learned from an early age to be very competitive and to achieve highly at school. Reading formed a big part of her formative years in education. Professor Bonolo took to reading like a fish to water. This interest in reading set the foundation for research and excellence in education later in her career. As stated already, she is currently Deputy Vice Chancellor for research and innovation. Her mother played an important role in making her realise the value of education in general and reading in particular.

Even though her father was not an ardent reader, she grew up in a family where books were encouraged but were not forced on them. Professor Bonolo says she was encouraged by her mother to read. It is interesting at this point to note that although her mother was a homemaker, she encouraged Professor Bonolo to

[13] A school that hosts or admits both boys and girls

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read: ironically her father, even though he was the one who is educationally enlightened in the family, did not.

This validates the point that in the family unit, women do not only play the traditional stereotypical reproductive roles, but they also take part in building the intellectual development of their children. This buttresses the notion that both pre and post-modern matriarchy are critical to the role that women play whether in the traditionally known domain called the private sphere or in the well known public or career oriented spheres.

4.5.2 Professor Olive

For Professor Olive though, her father made education top priority and an everyday duty for all his children, even before formal schooling started. He used to tutor his children every day and impressed on them the value of both reading and education. Professor Olive had a vivid recollection of three things about her growing up years and how her family contributed to it. The first thing she remembered is that even before they started formal schooling, her father used to give them tutoring sessions in the house; He used to teach them the alphabet, counting 1-100, vowels (a, e, i, o, u), to mention but a few. They all had their own kind of small books to learn to read and write and she says "it was almost second nature actually".

Secondly, she remembered that her father used to buy newspapers, magazines and anything educative he could lay his hands on. He would say to them: "if you can read, you will always expand your knowledge". The third thing she remembered is that her father used to call them around to come and listen to the news every time the news was on. Finally, she stated, "I grew up you know, with my father teaching us in the house".

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As a young man, Professor Olive's father aspired to be a medical doctor, but was unsuccessful because of financial constraints. He, therefore, placed a very high premium on the medical profession and wished that each of his children could achieve in that field. Professor Olive jovially expressed the sentiments about this profession in her family with a sense of light heartedness:

> "My father had a very strange ambition in life; his ambition was that the eight children would all be medical doctors. It was what he wanted to live for, the reason was he, himself, wanted to be a medical doctor at one stage. His older brother got married and was later unable to continue to pay fees for him so he almost had some unfinished business you know, in his life. It had to be continued through us".

Despite the strong influence from her father especially with regard to the value of education, Professor Olive said she was glad that her parents gave her the freedom to choose whatever she wanted to be. She does acknowledged that even though her father was very strict and forthright, he had a very soft side to him and could understood that his children should choose their path as long as it was along good education lines. This was an important principle she learnt from her family; she believed her family taught her to be an independent thinker and also to speak her mind without fear of prejudice. She was glad that she did not really have to continue her father's dream, but that she chose her own trajectory and stayed on course to fulfil it.

DVC Olive's mother was a nurse. Her mother was a pillar of strength. She was kind and yet very firm and forthright. During the separation of the family as a result because of the Sharpville shootings, her mother had to be strong and live and bring up two of their children without the protection of her husband. She did this in a volatile environment beset by violence and instability. Her mother's job required a high level of professionalism and empathy. Professor Olive says her mother had a way of working with people which was very empathetic and she thinks she got the empathy and firmness that she practices in her current job from her. She had this to say about what she learned from her family:

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> I did not know I got that from her ... One of the things which I think I have is firmness. I think I am extremely firm I am extremely forthright but I am willing to listen and be empathetic. I always want to solve problems and I don't think any problem is insurmountable. I don't mince my words if I have to... so I think in a sense the way I developed has something from my mother and something from my father I actually realized much later that my father was really empathetic but as a father he had to show a particular side... a tough side and I think he used to call us if you did something wrong he used to call us and say look this is not acceptable and he would use strong words and you would stop it there".

The support that DVC Olive got from her mother was of a different kind from the one she enjoyed from her father. The values, norms, and cultural principles that she was taught by her mother played a vital role in developing her sense of justice and moral fairness. Her mother's influence groomed her into an empathetic christian who takes people seriously and believes in fairness.

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Professor Olive grew up during the time when an oppressive regime was at its peak in its discriminatory laws of governance. She also grew up watching people being treated unfairly because of these laws. This experience set the basis upon which she would work; it gave her guiding principles when she entered the leadership echelons in higher education later in her life. DVC Olive still holds a vivid memory of her childhood with her father and the role he played to push her to greater heights. However at home, her mother presented her a very rich environment of living a just life. Later on in her life, she grew apart from her father and closer to her mother:

> "But I knew that as a young girl growing up, I was very close to my mother and I wouldn't say we would play a regular game, but actually I was a very introverted young girl who just worked at home, stayed with her mother, went to church".

Unlike her father, DVC Olive's mother was very religious and, therefore, offered her a sense of balance in life that her father 'probably did not have' she says. Her mother grounded her in christian values and the doctrine of the Anglican church. Because helping her mother at home with chores, Professor Olive liked going to

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church with her mother and she went through all the christian rituals like catechism and confirmation. She has a strong recollection of the things that her mother used to share with her and describes some of the situations that her mother used, to teach her the values of justice and fairness:

> "One of the things I think I got from my mother was a lot of empathy. I think it had to do with her profession. My mother used to come back home you know... She used to deliver babies and she used to say it is so painful when you deliver two babies and they are in a nursery in a hospital and all you see is a tag. Every child has a tag and you know s/he is just dressed up in hospital clothes and they are all the same, you do not see any difference but when the parents come to take them you can see their life is decided there and then. The one parent comes with particular clothes for the baby and another one... you can almost feel that's it".

This description is very powerful in that it represents the life that DVC Olive's family experienced during the Apartheid years. These experiences 'have a lot to do with those formative years when she hated injustice; However they taught Professor Olive to be aware of and be sensitive to other people's feelings. Her mother taught her beneficence, which represents the core of the nursing profession she stood and lived for. Professor Olive's mother had a strong character, but was empathetic towards others. Her mother taught her to be resilient, yet sympathetic to other people's misfortunes. She says the experiences that her family went through during Apartheid taught her to want to solve all problems she comes across, as she believes no problem is insurmountable. Mostly, she learned to be extremely firm, forthright but always willing to listen and be empathetic.

The role that the parents of the two professors played in their lives show very significant theoretical imperatives that seek to refute the research that women are innately less able. Studies on the value of gender blinding research (Barres 2006:134) show that society tends to be anecdotal about what men and women can and cannot do, especially when it comes to academic capacity and ability.

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This study shows that anecdotes have no place in proving the ability of women to guide, support and motivate their children to succeed in life.

On the one hand, the study shows two mothers, one in a traditional reproductive role as a house wife yet playing an important role in the academic life of her girl child and the other in a career-oriented role as a nurse, and playing more of a social role of building confidence and resilience in her girl child, probably as a result of the mother, herself, having experienced hardship in her lifetime during apartheid era. The two mothers inadvertently taught their girl children leadership qualities through different ways of support.

On the other hand, it is significant and interesting to note that both DVC's have academic fathers, who in their own different ways, guided and motivated the respondents to follow their chosen path. These fathers represent the progressive ideology which departs from the traditional practice of not allowing women to progress in the academy. Notwithstanding, it is still a far cry from a stronger movement around at shifting societal and organisational view to put women's development on par with that of men if not begin to prioritise it.

4.6 PERSONAL SACRIFICES

4.6.1 Professor Olive

Professor Olive's growing up path was characterised by personal sacrifices made to reach personal achievements. For her, it meant leaving the comfort of the home both her mother and father had built with difficulty, considering that teachers were not paid much in those days. It should also be noted that since Professor Olive's family lived under an oppressive regime where discrimination was the order of the day, her father was paid far less than his counterparts who were of a different colour and class. It should also be considered that her family had settled in Sharpville and had made a home; they were not anticipating

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moving from there because of the political circumstances that prevailed then. When the Sharpville shootings took place, Professor Olive's family had to contend with a sudden move to a foreign country, in order to first, save their lives, and, second, to get good, quality education. With a sombre tone she says:

> "So you know it was quite a sacrifice for us. We were in a foreign land. My mother left her house which was quite good in those days for a nurse. You know our whole family was here and we were in an alien place and the fixation was education".

Professor Olive's family attached their going to Lesotho strongly to looking for quality education as they felt terribly disenfranchised by the South African Apartheid government system. In her words: "we knew we were there for a reason and the reason was education, we couldn't' get the Apartheid education because he knew the system very well and to him it is the one thing he wanted for our lives".

DVC Olive's father did not want his family's sacrifice to go without a good reward or reason. He was adamant that his children should attend the best school. He found and chose a very elitist school for his children where only children from rich families attended. "We were not rich, in fact, we used to live in a very modest house but because my father felt that all his money had to go to education, we found ourselves with children of rich parents". So the sacrifice of leaving her home country turned out to be worthwhile as it provided her a good education.

4.6.2 Professor Bonolo

Professor Bonolo did not experience any restriction, exclusion, or distinction in her pathway from childhood to school, to university and to the world of work. Yet, along her path, she had to pay a huge price during her growing up as a young woman seeking to start and build a family. She was subjected to a different kind of separation, what one might call 'social separation'. Unlike DVC Olive, Professor Bonolo was separated from her husband shortly after marriage. Her separation from her husband was not as a result of political reasons, but it had to

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do with the choices she faced between her marriage and her career. She explains;

> "Well after I had attained my PhD, I was married during the course of my PhD to my husband who was living in England with me. We went and lived in Switzerland, and women, wives, spouses of people who had jobs in Switzerland were not allowed to work. That is a bit of sexism there. And I must say I wasn't very happy and found it very frustrating"

DVC Bonolo had just got her PhD from England when she and her husband moved to Switzerland. She was frustrated that she could not use her qualification because she was barred from working. While they were living in Switzerland, Professor Bonolo visited her home in South Africa to see her family. At the same time, she visited the Department of Sociology at Wits to talk to the officials there. She was then offered a job and she took it. "Accepting that job entailed living apart from my husband, and I was so frustrated from not having a job and for three years we lived formally in separate countries". When the separation happened, they had a child already and, therefore, this created a further strain on their family. Luckily, her husband took a research job back in England that allowed him to visit his wife and child every two or three months in South Africa.

An interesting analysis emerges here with respect to the personal sacrifices that the two women had to make despite their differences in their political and historical life experiences. Even though the country's rule of law was meant to protect some and not all of its citizens in terms of race, colour and creed, this time around, it failed to protect Professor Bonolo from the more powerful force, that of gender discrimination. The literature review used in this study attests to the fact that this global force touches women's lives no matter where they are in the world.

The collective story shows that even though the participants come from two distinct political, social, and economic backgrounds, they share similar personal experiences en route to achieving successful positions of leadership in higher

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education. Professor Olive met socio-political challenges that barred her from experiencing the love of both her mother and father, while Professor Bonolo suffered social separation challenges that had a devastating impact on her newly formed family life. These moments, however, led them to experience mixed blessings and resulted in positive turning points in their lives. Next to be discussed the positive turning points in their lives.

4.7 TURNING POINTS - MIXED BLESSINGS, PATRIARCHAL BLISS AND DISHARMONY

4.7.1 Professor Bonolo

The family separation turned out to be a blessing in that it was to be one of the important turning points in Professor Bonolo's life. It gave her an opportunity to start her first job as a sociology lecturer for three years at Wits. From the time she started working at Wits, as a junior lecturer, DVC Bonolo never looked back until she was appointed head of the sociology department en route to this powerful position she holds currently.

The first turning point for DVC Bonolo came very early on in her life and it had first to do with her addiction to reading. Her family environment, particularly her mother's encouragement to like, became a fundamental influence towards her academic excellence in later years. Not only did the family have a vital influence on building her academic capacity, but the principal who headed the school where she attended, and an Oxford graduate who DVC Bonolo affectionately called "a stockings wearing type of woman who encouraged girls to be ambitious' also contributed to her growth. She explained that her principal was a woman who had energy, passion for success and ambition and always encouraged them to work hard to achieve anything they set themselves to do.

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The second turning point for Professor Bonolo did not happen when she was that young. When she was about twenty-one, she met her current husband who she said was very "focussed, was always ambitious and he encouraged me a lot as well. He pushed and helped me focus; and for all my life in fact, also meeting him has been very important". DVC Bonolo felt that having a partner who offered her the kind of support she needed to achieve her academic dream was a very important turning point in her life.

The third important turning point in Professor Bonolo's life came when she started her career as an academic and also when she started having children. Professor Bonolo said her mother had always been a homemaker and, because of that, her mother provided her with an opportunity to carry on with her career with greater ease. Thus, she played a valuable role in influencing her success by helping her balance her career and bring up children, as well as learn to manage her own family. She explains:

> "She was absolutely fantastic in saying if you want this career, do it. I will help you. I think all those were the three big influences in pushing me or helping me push myself from this time till here".

It is both interesting and empirically significant that the role that DVC Bonolo's mother played in, firstly bringing up her girl child up and later supporting her as a young woman, falls within the globally known and accepted female responsibilities, traditionally known as reproductive roles. Her father had a minimal influence on her dreams and her ability to think of bigger achievements in the future. Yet later on in her life, she found herself having to live her academic and professional life under her father's powerful shadow.

Despite the minimal contribution from her father, Professor Bonolo, however, continues to express gratitude for the support she enjoyed and continues to have from her husband, while navigating through her management and leadership journey in higher education. DVC Bonolo thinks her husband has been very

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instrumental in creating a conducive environment where she could develop into a confident person. She says her husband has shown her and offered what she calls 'a partner idea of manhood rather than a superman image of manhood'.

In order to clarify this point, it is important to explain something about DVC Bonolo's father. He was an academic and a very powerful man. He was Vice Chancellor of a university. His position was a mixed blessing for DVC Bonolo because, on one hand, she felt that it was a wonderful thing to have a role model as strong and powerful as his father. On the other, she believed that children of very powerful and famous people often fear not living up to that reputation.

> "A double thing is you are a woman and so how do you handle that? How do you manage that? How do you keep that confidence in yourself and I have always been quite an unconfident person - how do you keep confidence in yourself, in your abilities when there is somebody there who is like superman".

From the time she started her career at Wits University where her father also worked, DVC Bonolo had to contend with the reality of living under her father's shadow. It was a difficult always and she says even today people come up to her and say "oh! You are Professor so and so's daughter! I mean it rather defines you by his fame. I do not mind anymore. I have come to terms with it but it is hard when you are younger".

Notwithstanding, she still believes that what people are in the present is always a combination of all the accumulated experiences they have had. The experiences sit there like 'sedimented rock' that builds up your persona out of a million of layers of teachings and influences. DVC Bonolo has, therefore, come to appreciate her relationship and support which her husband offers in their marriage because it does not put her in a situation where she feels she has to compete with him, but she is viewed as an equal partner.

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Her mother, on the other hand, seems to have been the enabling factor in making it possible for her to reach the goal of being her own person. As a norm, women bring children up and teach those morals, values and cultural norms upheld within the family unit as a private sphere, as well as those expected by society in the public domain. Professor Bonolo says her mother's role was always very important in that:

> "She never had a job outside the home; she was unbelievably supportive of me in wanting to have a job and children and that was very, very important in saying you can do it. I will look after the children; you should have a career; go off and do a career".

The support she enjoyed from her mother was extremely important because she was the only one of the three daughters who had a career and the support she got, helped her with decision-making on how to bring up her own children and keep a career. This support was a significant influence in her marriage and family-building trajectory.

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4.7.2 Professor Olive

Other than having a strong sense of achievement in schoolwork and having developed a passion and love for reading, Professor Olive also learned very early in school that women are powerful and can do big things. Her head mistress was also a very strong woman who achieved a lot in her job. The principal taught her that she could achieve anything she set her mind on as long as she performed extremely well academically.

Professor Olive's principal was the first woman graduate in Lesotho who founded a private school called Liketsetseng[14]. Liketsetseng was the best school in Lesotho in those days. According to Professor Olive, the head mistress was 'highly educated considering the period she worked as principals in those days'.

[14] A school where professor Olive attended in Lesotho

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DVC Olive says that her experience of just seeing this woman principal in action and the passion with which she drove them to achieve in school became the first turning point for her as it. This turning point confirmed the teaching that her home environment enforced, that of regarding education from an early age as the only vital tool for success.

The second turning point for DVC Olive was when she met and encountered one young biology woman teacher-trainee, who taught at Liketsetseng. Until she got to high school, Professor Olive says:

> "There weren't tangible things in my environment that I could ascribe to women doing themselves and I had never seen a successful woman that I could fashion this success dream after; other than my brother and my father. So in my environment, there was nobody up to the time I was in form four that I could say I think I want to live like that person".

Professor Olive remembers one morning watching this lady teacher driving up to and parking a car in the school compound. She was thinking about how impressed she was with the lady teacher's possessions and apparent happiness. For DVC Olive, she thinks that what she saw in this young lady teacher was:

> "Independence. It was success and I was trying to pin it down to how does a successful woman live? And that woman in some ways was happily married and she had a degree and so for me I started crystallizing what I thought success was… she epitomised what I wanted to be like"

This young lady teacher inspired DVC Olive and made her realise that success was about beauty, material possession, independence to do whatever a woman wishes to do without the help of a man or husband, freedom to go anywhere a woman wanted without asking a man, and most of all, academic achievement. From that point, she started developing a sense of independence. However, she accepts that what she observed and experienced from this teacher sounds materialistic. However, she says she has since changed how she views success and has moved away from this concept of success. In addition, she attested to

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receiving a lot of encouragement and support from her father to be top achiever, in order to succeed in her life.

4.8 SOCIALISATION AND VALUE OF ACHIEVEMENT

4.8.1 Professor Olive

Professor Olive's growing up experiences were not easy, but they inadvertently offered her a fertile ground to succeed later in her life. Did these difficult circumstances offer the basis of her socialisation and did they craft her path and her quest for achievement? DVC Olive says, in addition to watching the achievements of her father and brother, she also grew up knowing that her mother was successful even though "she had not reached the top of her dreams"; She, however, "aspired to do better than being a nurse". So her family provided an environment in which achievement was a valued principle. In DVC Olive's family, achievement was consistently rewarded.

> "What I can remember is excelling in most subjects and we also had a reward system. My father really did a number of things for us - he had a reward system both in this informal school we had at home and then at school also. If you got everything right and you are number 1, 2, or 3, there was some money we got. So there was quite a thing in the house about achievement. You know in a sense we were quite even one sided. Our lives were only just achievement".

Professor Olive was socialised into believing that academic success predetermines all other types of achievements. Her father dangled the value of education as a carrot to encourage and reward his children to achieve more academically. This, to DVC Olive, became a dogma upon which she would base her life. As a young adult, and when she became aware of expectations from society such as having a career, getting married and having children, she started using this dogma to decide on the path that her life should take.

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> "So, for me, one of the tensions I had to resolve as a maturing young woman was to what extent will I be able to be a leader and break away as a woman and still be seen by the society as a conforming nice mother. So that was a big thing in my life and was always something threatening or holding me back and bringing in the conflict"

Even though there were societal expectations to get married, DVC Olive's father told her that she did not have to marry. She feels her father was way ahead of his times in some ways in that his teachings mostly went against the grain of societal expectations at the time. She says when her older sister got married, her father did not ask for or take lobola,[15] which was quite a huge thing those days. Professor Olive would ask her father whether academic success would affect her ability to be a good mother and wife. She would ask her father whether she would have a good family even if she excelled academically. In her words: "I couldn't imagine that I couldn't marry because in my environment that was the natural thing to happen".

DVC Olive says because they experienced oppression in their lifetime, her family socialised her to respect democratic principles. One of the things she remembers vividly is that while living in Lesotho they used to even discuss the evil system of Apartheid. The way they practised democracy in their family is that she could tell her father what she did not like, in the same way her father would 'crack the whip' if the children were out of line. Professor Olive used this valuable principle of democracy to help her take decisions regarding what was important in her life. As it turned out, her first choice was education before marriage and family life.

In the same way that DVC Olive continues to uphold fairness, justice and choice as important tenets of democracy, she was socialised not to let poverty stop her from achieving her dream. She is equally averse to the idea of people staying in a space where they see themselves as victims and do not work hard to get out of the circumstances that make them victims. She says "injustice can propel people

[15] Lobola is a symbolic token in the form of goods or money given to the family of the bride in a traditional wedding to signify the union of the two families by marriage.

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to achieve but it must be fought". Her experiences of living in a foreign country and basically living a modest life because only her father could work in Lesotho, taught her a valuable lesson to achieve more and not use the fact that they are disenfranchised as an excuse not to do well.

> "Look when I opened my eyes really in life the only thing that I ever knew in life was that education is the most important thing. I never knew that there was anything that you can do other than achieve educationally frankly... So to us and I think this is what happened, in our family. My father came from a poor family, they were twelve and he was the beacon in the family because he educated himself through UNISA".

Professor Olive's father used to sell newspapers in the corners of the streets of Johannesburg to pay his fees. He was regarded as a hero in the family because he had liberated himself instead of wallowing in self-pity and continuing to live the life of a victim of Apartheid. In other words, she had come to believe that people make the choice to stay or not to stay in that space, and she knew that her father broke the poverty and victim mentality and provided with them a good education despite their circumstances. Even if they did not have a good meal, or good clothing or whatever competitive material assets– "he had this very skewed approach towards education where he would say I can pay any amount of fees even if you go there with a very cheap plastic shoes that is fine". Later, in the subsequent interviews of this study, I asked her an important question as to whether her experiences leading in self-exile to Lesotho as a result of Apartheid could explain how she has turned out as a leader and how she deals with different situations that require her to exercise fairness, choice and justice.

4.8.2 Professor Bonolo

DVC Bonolo's socialisation provided her with tough decisions as a young woman. She grew up in a family with two generations. Two of her older sisters were typical girls of the fifties who believed in a conformist concept of

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womanhood. She explains the tensions she faced in taking decisions with respect to career and married life.

> "I don't know there is so much that happens to you as a young person. I had these two older sisters who were very into the fifties kinds of women - by that I mean slightly old fashioned girls who wanted to get married and have children - that was all they wanted to do. Then they had this third sister who would get quiet and wanted to read books all the time. I sometimes think this is a sort of a Cinderella kind of situation, with two elder sisters who were very keen on marriage, boyfriends or whatever. Was there a place for a different kind of womanhood or different kind of girl?"

DVC Bonolo had to deal with the generation gap problem between her, her younger brother and the two older sisters. From about the age of nineteen or twenty and because of this confusion of whether to conform to this old fashioned idea of womanhood, she finally succumbed and decided to get engaged and started following the path of being the girl who got married like her sisters. She and her brother belonged to the hippies' period and lived during the famous university revolts of the sixties.

When she was in university, and while she was engaged to be married, she met a lot of young people in one of her political studies class who were very intelligent. These students were highly motivated and were in the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). She decided to join the movement and soon began to appreciate a different outlook to life. Being with this group of people made her realise that she did not need to live a life of conformity and feel that she has to be like her sisters.

Professor Bonolo says being with the NUSAS group and working with them began to show her that she did not have to be the woman who got married and had children. 'I just broke off the engagement and started going along on a different path' she says smiling. This was to become a major step in her life; She started reading fervently on feminism. The late sixties student revolution and the

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rise of feminism exposed her to a whole different series of generational influences and allowed the students to see themselves in a different way. This generational influence provided DVC Bonolo with a change of life that enabled her to build an inward rebellion not to be like her sisters. She says, because womanhood was very conformist those days, she felt the need to break away from it and NUSAS and the students' revolts provided her the ledge to step into a different kind of womanhood.

Besides the generational influences and student revolts, Professor Bonolo is a sociologist and her training made her aware that people have choices in life. When she broke away from the conformist way of womanhood, she still respected the choices that her sisters made of remaining uneducated and married with children. DVC Bonolo respects 'choice' as a democratic principle and she used this same principle to break her first engagement.

I asked her if reading feminist literature socialised her into being a rebel against what society regarded as the norm and she immediately responded by saying: "I am a Sociologist, but I am sorry, I do not buy the concept of socialisation. I think it is too passive". Professor Bonolo believes socialisation as a concept assumes that people are blank slates which are socialised by things. She believes that people have inner selves and, therefore, have choices over how their lives should be shaped or turn out. DVC Bonolo holds a very strong 'theory of self' that most of us use, what she calls 'an agency' in us to decide how our lives should be shaped.

I ask her if the way she has been socialised has changed the person she has because and this is how she answered:-

> "...if you believe in structure... well just socialisation as a structure - I mean what I always think of myself as is somebody with an inner self, an agency - is able to look at what the world offers outside and take or leave what suits my agency so that you are both shaped by what is available on

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> the outside or that you also take and use it and make it into something that might suit you. That fits with my saying you've got this person who sort of knows that they have abilities; what allows them to know/learn that? That's an inner knowledge in a way and when you read feminism and also you know that you were brought up in the old fashioned idea of womanhood to some extent and that inner knowledge then is echoed by feminist literature so the feminist literature echoes with something in you it is not just that it re-socialises you. That would have been more how it seems. That is my 'theory of the self' you don't have to agree with it".

So when DVC Bonolo broke out of the conformist womanhood tradition, her interest in feminist literature had an impact on how she began to see life in general. She learnt not to be judgemental about the choices that her sisters made. She understood that they chose that path as their option and would, therefore, live it that way.

> Yes, yes this fits in again with my idea of the self that they have made their choice. I mean women who aren't feminists don't do that because they have been badly socialised but because they have chosen not to follow that path. So I always think that there is an element of choice that everyone wants to be".

Later on in her life, when she was ready, she joined her sisters by experiencing the matrimonial institution herself. At this stage of her life and when the marriage confusion finally dissipated, DVC Bonolo took some her time to finish her degree. She went abroad and met the man who was to be her husband. When they had children, her husband played an equally important role in making sure that she succeeded in her career. She says:

> "I have only really spoken about being in school being at home and being at university and I mean I have got a whole life since then – like me getting married having children, working throughout that period as an academic which I think was very important not taking a break from my job and then I had time to build up career and having this partner, my husband who was also an academic. So the two of us worked together too in a way on our careers and our family it was very much a joint project and that's an important aspect".

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DVC Bonolo introduced her husband as an equal partner in their quest to build not only a solid family, but also their future careers. Professor Olive also introduced her husband to the story later on in the subsequent narratives as having played a vital role in her future career and in strengthening their family. These roles give an interesting basis for theorising the success of these powerful women.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter responded to the research question on the formative experiences of the three women professors who participated in the study. To a lesser extent, the chapter described the biography of DVC Didintle and, to a greater extent, those of DVCs Bonolo and Olive from the time they were born, started school, went to university and started their own families. The chapter looked at their interests, influences, and the roles that their families and environments played in the years when they were growing up. Their life paths show an interesting similarity in terms of their turning points and a powerful intrinsic motivation to achieve from an early age. They have a strong sense of self and have come a long way to understand what womanhood ought to be for their own trajectories.

Later on, in the subsequent data, they ascribe a lot of their leadership styles in managing transformation and other higher education activities to the high price they put on fairness and justice. In a sense, they have essentialised justice and choice as very important values of a healthy society. While both draw their strength from a lifelong interest in books and reading, DVC Olive also holds an extremely strong spiritual and religious faith. DVC Bonolo believes there is a higher spiritual being but does not necessarily subscribe to any kind of religion.

The absence of the biographical narrative on Professor Didintle presents a powerful and yet intriguing silence that permeates this collective story of birth to university life of the three women. Next, I turn to how these biographical

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trajectories have played a role in the manner in which the women professors navigate the higher education environment, negotiate their paths through an environment full of barriers, and how they overcome the barriers and other challenges.

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CHAPTER 5

NEGOTIATING THE WORLD OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP: MEETING HEAD ON WITH THE GLASS CEILING EFFECT AND UNRAVELING THE PLOT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I examine the career pathways of the women Deputy Vice Chancellors and explain how they negotiate the higher education environment where they manage and lead. The chapter draws from the research foci elicited from the interviews and observations. The chapter looks at four themes namely; 1) career choices and pathways to leadership and management environments, 2) barriers to advancement, 3) gender-related issues to leadership and management positions and 4) how these women negotiate the higher education policy environment in their leadership responsibilities. The storied narratives in this chapter respond to two research questions; 'what were the pathways traversed by South African women en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education' and 'how do women in leadership negotiate the world of higher education policy and practice once such seniority has been attained'? The narratives explain the women's professional careers trajectories and development and also establish how these have influenced and led to their success in leadership in higher education. The chapter also looks at how these women negotiate the world of higher education policy and practice given the historically inherent barriers that impact on women in leadership and management.

5.2 CAREER PATHWAYS AND CHOICES TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We have learned from the biographies that the three women have come from different experiences of upbringing and formative pathways and that they had

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various influences that shaped their decision either to venture into university education to access it or to take up job opportunities there. Their storied narratives on this theme are varied yet rich and interesting.

One of the requirements for the position of deputy vice chancellor is an established researcher and a doctoral degree. All three women leaders hold PhD qualifications. The one leader did her doctoral studies at a foreign university overseas and the other two studied locally.

Bonolo sets the career path scene by stating that going to university those days was considered more important in their lives and that not taking that opportunity would have been frowned upon. She did BA in a South African university and went overseas for a couple of years and came back to do an Honours programme. She did very well with this first postgraduate degree and later she applied to various universities in the United States of America and England and was admitted to most of them. Finally, she chose to go to England to do her Masters' degree and then stayed on to study PhD. She says it was relatively easy for her then than it is now to get a scholarship award but that she lived a very modest life as a postgraduate student.

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Bonolo got married during the course of her PhD studies and after completing she and her husband went and lived in another foreign country. That country however did not allow spouses of people who worked there to have jobs. Therefore, she did not have a job after completing her studies. She was very unhappy and frustrated that she could not use her qualification.

On one of her visits back home to South Africa to see her family she took a decision to visit a department in one of the universities and was offered a job without having applied for it. Accepting that job entailed living apart from her husband for three years. The choice to venture into PhD was influenced by her ambition to succeed. She regards this step as a 'good disappointment' in that

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after completing it, she realized that the world did not stop to notice as she puts it 'I think a lot of people, present company included think that the moment the PhD is completed, the whole world will fall into their laps and yet nothing happens when you get your PhD" She agrees though that the PhD was the beginning of her leadership pathway.

Responding to the question 'what led to circumstances that led to her appointment' Bonolo says;

> 'Well I was invited by the vice chancellor to act as a deputy vice chancellor when he left the job – and then I acted for months or something and then the job was advertised and then I was strongly encouraged to apply by many people. And so I applied after thinking and agonizing about it... I feel that the real step was taken by the vice chancellor in inviting me I don't think I would have just applied out of the blue, never'

Bonolo has mixed feelings regarding why she would not have even tried to apply for the job. First, she thought that the process is very public and that it would be unpleasant if she did not get the job. Second, she had been a head of school for only two years and would not naturally think of leaving that job as quickly. But then she had a windfall when the vice chancellor invited her to act in the deputy vice chancellor post he had just vacated. Third, Bonolo pins the attainment of her leadership position to pure luck even though she says her vice chancellor wanted someone of her own abilities who gets things done.

> "I have no idea. I have absolutely no idea why I am here and somebody is not. I don't know there is luck...I really don't know... it is luck, the luck of the moment don't you agree? Ha-ha there is some luck – trust me".

Again this is confirmation of the lack of confidence she keeps alluding to. However she explains and asserts further that she thinks she is good enough for the position without affirmative action.

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As soon as Didintle completed her high school education, she went directly to university where she obtained her first degree and continued with postgraduate till she obtained her Masters degree when her career pathway began taking shape. At that point the department where she qualified offered her a teaching contract to continue but she declined and went to teach in a high school instead. She taught there for a year but during the course of that year she saw an advert in the paper for a lecturer position and she applied and got it. In essence her academic career began while she was still a student because as a post graduate student she was also a research assistant and a tutor. So, in a formal sense of having a full time job as an academic, that is when her career began.

Responding to the question 'what led to circumstances that led to her appointment' Didintle says;

> "Well I was asked to apply eh!... the post was advertised as well but I didn't respond to the ad somebody had sent to the selection committee my name and the chair of the selection committee approached me and invited me to apply I am assuming that they did this with others and I thought about it and put in an application"

She says she hadn't considered the deputy vice chancellor job because she had neither been a head of department nor a dean and that she thinks this has been the traditional path.

Along her way to achieving a solid future, and during her formative years, Olive watched and learned from the success of other women. She idolised a female teacher who she says seemed extremely independent, who was already a graduate, had a beautiful car and did not seem to need her husband to do things for her. This experience led her to a decision to choose teaching as a career and later led her to a career at university level. Her professional life entailed teaching as a junior lecturer and she moved through the ranks between different universities where she committed her time and life to academic development and the improvement of teaching of sciences particularly chemistry.

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Olive explains that there were huge opportunities in the industry relevant to her educational qualification especially because there were no women in that sector at the time. She says she went to school to be a chemistry lecturer and at no stage did she actually say she wants to be in a management of a university or better still run a university. At the beginning of her career the demand was not for her to become an excellent scientist who could be praised. She was more concerned about how she could contribute to the new teaching of science through academic development initiatives and programmes. Higher education became her point of focus. She wanted to influence management in the area of academic development in South African higher education until she was nominated into a national body looking at academic development. She remembers a lot of people and her peers saying how could she leave a lucrative profession in a scarce skills area and pursue chemistry education and academic development but her intent to changing the course of science education propelled her on to venture into decision making rungs at university.

After her PhD she chose to leave her employer and continued to make a contribution elsewhere at a historically disadvantaged institution. The injustice she experienced in her formative years was a force behind her decision to take the skills she acquired in a historically white institution to a university that did not have enough well trained scientists and science educators. While on this path, she decided to begin changing the mind set about how academic development was viewed as a way of stigmatising black people forever. She needed to change the views of others about academic development because she did not want her success as a scientist to be qualified but she wanted to be successful as an individual person not because she was disadvantaged. Soon she also realised that science education research was too narrow and she started looking at the purpose and role of higher education in developing society. This led her to grow in different ways and to take keen interest in research in order to get to answer a myriad of questions and problems on science education development in South Africa. Where at first she saw her role as working at a very small level as an

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individual, the position of deputy vice chancellor interested her in order to influence decision at a broader and higher level including working for the higher education vice chancellors association.

Responding to the question 'what led to circumstances that led to her appointment', Olive says:

> 'I was unhappy in the job let me put it that way... Now in terms of applying for this job actually I saw an advert and i didn't... I lived in ... and I didn't see what I was going to in ... it is not a place I would have... then my husband said if I am unhappy I must do something about it; and then I said let me be unhappy here but anyway I got a letter about a week or two later where they were asking me to apply. So I didn't want to apply they asked me to apply and it is difficult not to apply if people think you could be happy about it'

The fact that all three woman leaders did not initially set out to apply for the deputy vice chancellor positions is an intriguing factor pointing to the dominant and covert practices in higher education environments. It is a significant factor pointing to the tough environment and barriers going beyond mere legislation in higher education forcing women to lack confidence to take up higher positions. It is also a confirmation of the description of a practice that Bonolo describes when she says that there are institutional forces that work against women and these forces are informed by patriarchal practices where 'males do expect to attain positions of leadership whereas women do not expect it'. Women, Bonolo says, are constantly up against people who are expecting to become leaders while they [women] are hoping to become leaders.

This is a powerful way of contrasting the two forces at play in a higher education environment. The question to be answered here is could it be that this is one of the forces explaining the lack of women in higher education positions despite legislative quotas and imperatives? I posit that this is one of the explanations or puzzles shedding light on the concept of 'self doubt' and that society has ingrained in the minds of women to believe that they are not worthy of positions

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in the higher echelons of higher education. I argue that this behaviour confirms the prevailing practice/culture that men are entitled to power and leadership and women should hope for someone to hand the power to them therefore casting aspersions to concepts such as affirmative action and tokenism in organisational cultures and development which, when implemented are meant to close the unequal distribution of leadership positions not only in higher education environments but across the public and private sector.

5.3 BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT

The literature review has shown that the issue of gender-based barriers to development and empowerment has been researched at length and that is also a global phenomenon affecting women from different walks of life whether in their private or public sphere of life. Literature has also shown that there is a snail's pace transformation in higher education in terms of developing and empowering women to become leaders in this sector. In this theme, the woman leaders re-tell their encounter with barriers under the following sub-themes: access to educational opportunities and to higher academic levels, attitude, family and family history, institutional and racial.

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5.3.1 Access to educational opportunities and to higher academic levels

One of the hardest barriers that Bonolo experienced was that she felt trapped in a department for a very long time. She had male colleagues who were very competitive and envious of her ambition to succeed. She only managed to get out of this uncomfortable situation when she had a breakthrough, became head of school, and left that department. She says about this experience, "I moved into a different universe and got it right". The choice and use of the words 'breakthrough' and 'universe' interestingly expresses her achievement into a management position. It is interesting for me in that it seems to confirm the difficulty she has had to reach an almost unreachable target or position as a

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woman and also how she perceives the position of academic management and leadership.

On the other hand, Didintle thinks what is unique about academic positions of leadership in universities is that an academic post is not an eight to five job. She says the reality is that academics are expected to do research and publish and eight hours in a day is not enough to teach, do research and do administration duties. These responsibilities present a conflict of priorities, as they require women to work on weekends and at night therefore creating challenges for those women who are "expected or have family responsibilities that impact upon their capacity to work after hours and on weekends". She concedes that even though one of her portfolio focus has been to look at ways of bringing in more women into science and technology and engineering, access is one of the big issues for women in higher education. In her job she has focused on creating better scholarships for Masters and PhD to encourage more women and black people to come into these programmes. In her own words she says:

> "well in my job I focus on questions of access and for the people who are in the system, opportunities for development and in my case specifically research capacity development – so I have just come from a meeting where we discussing a programme that we call emerging researches that I started here... and it is to provide mentorship and to provide support and to provide specific funding for emerging researchers – majority of those are women"

Olive echoes Didintle and talks about the requisite academic skills. She says that one has to be an academic first before one becomes a manager. In the case of deputy vice chancellors, you have to have a PhD and this qualification requires very good academic and research skills. She stated categorically that she could not lead an institution like hers if she is not a researcher and she strongly believes that if her credentials did not fit the profile for the position it would be tokenism.

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"So there are just not many PhD women floating around and there are no professional women floating around. So academia is so difficult... you know we have a mentoring programme for women but in order to mentor somebody to the level of professor or senior lecturer it takes 10 years. I am saying in business if you have first degree in B Com you have abilities or the potential in three years you could be mentored into a reasonable management position"

Olive places peculiar problems to higher education leadership and management and says these are tricky because women must have credentials, which take long to acquire. Then there is the challenge that few women have opportunities to reach PhD level and publish because of reproductive responsibilities therefore making the threshold very high and unreachable.

It is an illuminating point that even though both Didintle and Olive had certain challenges to access higher education jobs especially at management levels they are using their lived experiences to commit to developing and empowering other women in order to ensure that they are able to access higher positions that require these specific skills thereby influencing change and contributing towards the slow pace transformation alluded to in the literature.

5.3.2 Attitude

Olive asserts that the barriers to education in South Africa are historical. "I don't know how many women you talked to were actually educated in South Africa throughout. I personally know a number of people in government for example who got education simply because they were outside of South Africa. So I am actually what I am because if I did not leave South Africa, I would not be what I am now". She says even though we have a new government, the education system is still an 'apartheid package' that is frustratingly slow to change.

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Apart from the educational barriers, Olive talks about her concern that the university as an institution does not regard inculcating social relevance as part of a learning organisation's fabric. For her, academic institutions should be more than just places of knowledge generation but also places where women are taught to believe in their abilities and groomed to climb to higher heights. Olive says even though people have preferences, there are people who do not like working under stressful conditions especially women who often feel that this is a man's world and that it is only men who can run from Sunday to Sunday as women have to pause, recollect and think of their families. Didintle puts it that the barrier in attaining one's goal in higher education can just be to change peoples' attitude especially because out of the many choices that people have including teaching, managing a career is always a barrier on its own.

5.3.3 Family and family history

Out of the three women academic leaders, two experienced barriers that arose from her family history. When Bonolo was growing up and searching for her own career path at university, she had difficulties in terms of keeping her own identity, strengths and character. Her father was a senior academic at one of the South African universities and she has felt that people defined her by his fame. She shared the following sentiment about this experience; 'I mean they all say you want to become vice chancellor – you know people think I have achieved this job because of him and that is not really the case – and so they put me in his shadow more than I put myself. The irony with her experience is that she saw it as a mixed blessing in that as much as she had a role model and a strong leader to look up to, she often feared how she could live up to that status or achieve it. She expressed this strong sentiment about children of very powerful and famous people, especially female children:

> 'He was very famous... and a double thing is that you are not if are a woman and so how do you handle that? How do you manage that? How do you keep that confidence in yourself and I have always been quite an unconfident

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person... how do you keep confidence in yourself – in your abilities when there is somebody there who is like you know...superman'?

This has a been a hard difficulty for her even today because people still come up to her and say oh 'you are professor so and so's daughter'. She has come to terms with it now but it was harder when she was younger. This barrier followed her from her own family history into her marriage and what she terms a 'career family' where both she and her husband were seen as a 'power block' because they worked at the same university and both wanted to achieve like everyone else. Her colleagues felt threatened by this power block and it impacted negatively on her more than it did her husband through this period but as soon as her husband left the institution, those specific barriers Bonolo experienced, dissipated.

For Olive, the negative impact of first separating her family, then uprooting her from her own country, were immeasurable. Ironically, the apartheid system that forced her family into exile was the only saving grace for her opportunity to access better or non-discriminatory education abroad. Even though her grandfather revered education, he did not believe that girl children should be educated. Her father though, believed that women can achieve. His own wife was a nurse who carried the economic responsibility for her family when Olive's father lost his job as a result of the family living in exile. When he still had a job, he took his own sister to school, a thing that was unusual in those days. So, her father's progressive outlook towards education turned into an advantage that would see her begin a path towards a future that led to her current position.

The three women leaders under study say other barriers involving family and motherhood are borne from the failure by society to recognize the challenges women face.

"...society needs to change not women – no- all of us as individuals have challenges for our own growth and development... the range of options

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> available to us are so much smaller because not having children is an exception – most women do – and as I have said to you I would imagine to do this kind of job with young children – I don't know how it would be done – you would have to employ people or have your mother or your grandmother – other women to rely on and that as a challenge very few fathers are doing the kinds of things that mothers do so we have a long way to go on those sorts of things".

These challenges speak to the inability to manage time particularly for women in senior management positions because women in our society still bear the major responsibility for the household, for families and for how they are expected to cope with these multiple roles. For Olive, one of the tensions she had to resolve as a maturing young woman was to what to deal with the expectations for the extent to which she would be able to be a leader and break away as a woman and still be seen by the society as a conforming mother.

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5.3.4 Institutional barriers

Bonolo continues the subject of lack of confidence and explains that even though there is legislation on quotas and affirmative action for women, Black people must assert themselves, as there is nothing wrong with that however, she would like to think that she is good enough for this position without affirmative action. Both she and olive re-emphasize their point:

> "So if I am only in it because of affirmative action that means there are still huge barriers to people who are good. I know I am good enough to be here without affirmative action but it is sad that I could be here because of it... I do not know if I am expressing myself clear... I don't know... there were other very good men who applied for my job and I suppose I should be pleased that I got it but you never know... because there is a feeling of you never know always... I suppose the implications of what I am saying is where they to remove the quotas would women ever get senior positions even if they were brilliant and good eh... so it means that the barriers really are still there, but the quotas don't remove them they just mask them" (Bonolo).

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'well institutionally of course you know when people feel women in this job are not what they expect and so what always I suppose starts off from a point where people may have doubts about level of competence... well it is a gender thing of course' (Didintle).

Of the three leaders, Olive is the only leader who experienced discrimination based on age and race, as a head of an institution that was regarded as historically white. On the one hand, she narrates an incident where she became quite conscious of the fact that she was a woman and in the company of majority of men who were also older and of a different race than her. Challenging her management and leadership, they would say:

> 'But we do not understand what you want – we have always published we have always done this what more do you want'?

This situation presented a very tense atmosphere but she says she could see that part of it was that these junior colleagues were probably wondering and asking themselves why this woman is telling them about visions and mission after all these many years. Olive thinks that the barrier here is just that people tend to look at others differently and based on the difference they decide how to treat and work with you. Then there was also the question of Black males who had trouble accepting the firm hand with which she drove them even if she was younger than they were, this bringing a cultural dimension of barriers to the environment in which she works and leads.

Like Didintle, Olive had initiated an academic empowerment programme designed to groom Black women scientists but met with resistance from her male colleagues who preferred to stay with bureaucracy even when it was not warranted thereby attempting to discredit her leadership and credibility as a woman manager. Olive concedes that a women academic leader can be tenacious and have passion for her work but may still not succeed and therefore may need an environment that is conducive. She says if she compares previous

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institutions there are those where she could not thrive where her potential was actually brought down because of institutional culture and environment including the personalities at the helm of leadership who chose to either give or deny her the an opportunity to be heard.

All three women leaders concur that universities can be quite tough on women and women can easily be discouraged and suppressed. In her own words Bonolo says 'a woman can easily give up in the face of an institutional force that feels bigger than you... I feel affected by the way institutions work – it is harder for women', while Didintle and Olive feel that institutional frameworks fail women in that they make it difficult for women to attain their goals so their influence is diminished.

Responding to the question on what are explanations for barriers to management in higher education, Bonolo immediately picks the word patriarchy but says she thinks the concept does not explain anything except just re-defining the problem. She thinks the toughness of institutional social life means that people who have grown up believing that they have to be sensitive find it very difficult to find their way through. One of the factors is self-image and how women define themselves:

> "...people talk about the glass ceiling as being self imposed – that women are afraid of leadership they don't want to actually take that extra step...lack of confidence and of course all the institutional forces that work against them".

This patriarchal practice Bonolo thinks is problematic in the sense that she believes men do expect to attain positions of leadership whereas women do not expect it. So, women are constantly up against people who are expecting to become leaders whereas they are hoping to become leaders. This practice puts in her mind two juxtaposed forces, one very high, strong and powerful and the other extremely weak. Didintle on the other hand interestingly confirms this

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patriarchal practice by saying 'there are arrangements in society that makes it easier for men; women are expected to do the household responsibilities and so we carry that out and I think it makes it much more difficult'. On the same question Olive says she does not have a normal life that a woman would lead and therefore feels that this job alienates her as a woman from the way other women are seen in society.

5.4 GENDER-RELATED ISSUES TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

The review of literature done for this study has shed light on the issue of inequality, as a social problem that exists in different forms and degrees. Within the educational environment, inequality exists and persists in the social status, occupational status and decision-making power in almost all societies around the world (Oxenham 1991). Malik and Lie (1994) show inequalities in higher education with three dimensions; cultural (nation as context) with higher education as a sub-culture, social and personality. These three dimensional factors are said to contribute towards widening the gender gap in higher education institutions.

Various researches (Luke 1994, Newman 1995, Meehan 1999, Husu 2001, Kezar 2001, De La Rey 2005 and Morley 2013 [a] and [a]) have provided empirical evidence on the gendered nature of higher education environments and emphasized that these cultures are not devoid of the processes of change that institutions of higher learning find themselves. In South African higher education context the gender policies are yet to yield transformation and close the gap between men and women in terms of leadership. This theme looks at gender issues with reference to equality and inequality. It describes the gender relations between men and women in a higher education context and in the lives of the women leaders. Another sub-theme looks at relations between women leaders and their female colleagues. It also elucidates the lives of women academic

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leaders and how culture has influenced the paths they traversed in attaining and maintaining leadership positions in institutions of higher education.

5.4.1 Gender equality and inequality

In terms of institutions of higher learning in South Africa, the changing of the racial profile has not meant the changing of gender profile hence the there is still a glass ceiling effect at the level of vice chancellor. Bonolo says the implementation of the transformation agenda is slow but the gender policies in higher education institutions enhance the ideology of change as a way of allowing space for women to become part of the change agenda. She thinks equity targets are one way to enforce the transformation agenda and its implementation. For Didintle the challenges facing institutions of higher learning are to try and develop gender sensitive and gender appropriate policies that most institutions are struggling to have improved and have in place. The main intention of these policies is meant to re-dress not just address discrimination. The only challenge is implementation in order to make a difference in women's lives. In many ways Didintle thinks that the policies have brought little relief but that things could still improve a lot. A few women leaders have now been appointed but parity has not been reached yet she asserts.

"Well they are very few. Until recently there have been no women in the senior executive team except myself but two women have now been appointed as deans and they are both real great so I am hoping that they will provide me with some female support. There are couple of very great women in senior administrative positions as well who support me so I have women support there hasn't always been in the very highest level but I am hoping that will now develop".

Olive concurs with Didintle that higher education policies do support gender equity but there is a big problem with the strategies to meet the policy goals and

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the implementation. Second, the policies are not in sync with the reality and therefore leave a big gap between the policy intentions and what pertains on the ground. For Olive, implementing these policies is sometimes like an illusion and they sometimes are not flexible enough to consider circumstances and exhaust them from every angle and every different level of the situation. She points at the issue of funding tenured or permanent academics who need post doctoral qualifications in order to improve their profiles and their ability to perform their duties at the optimum level. At this point she indicates that she was given an incentive in the form of a position where she was paid as a student. Without recognizing this flexibility as an alternative to developing women, the policies we have will not yield much success.

Bonolo gives an example that in the past when blacks started to become visible in more senior positions in the business sector they have always been in human resources administration while other races have always been put in positions that were regarded as prestigious such as research, management and leadership. The institution that Bonolo works for has a very strong women's group and she believes there must be other institutions where transformation is totally about race as well as gender. So where transformation in and of itself would necessarily enhance gender equality of a certain kind where women are able to take up opportunities such as the changing of the funding formula. However, she says she is not certain what the effect of the student subsidy system is as it tends to favour traditionally male fields such as science and engineering and technology where more female students are encouraged to move to but it doesn't seem to yield a positive effect.

Then she alludes to the experience during her career path when she faced tough competition for the position of head of department and in responding to the question do you think it would have been different if the contender was male she says;

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"I have always wondered about that... there must be some gender related politics to it... perhaps male-male envy and competitiveness and jealousy is one thing and male-female is another. There was something...some gender politics in there. But I haven't spent a long time trying to analyse it... I think it is a very common feature of academic departments. I mean it is a common thing in the departments that you have a high flying male and then you have the woman come and actually run the department who does all the work usually behind the scenes. I am not saying I was that kind of woman, I did not play the kind of doormat who did all the work while everyone was getting all the credit but it is sort of a gender pattern"

Bonolo has already lamented the idea that women feel threatened amidst situations and environments traditionally regarded as male territories and that this often causes them to lack confidence. It is interesting that in this specific experience she stood her ground and forged ahead to claim a senior position as head of department in her faculty. Perhaps this strength/bravery can be traced back to her formative years that taught her to break away from conformist traditions of life as compared to her two older sisters. She refers to her sisters as children of the fifties and very old fashioned who lived a very conformist kind of life while her brother and she lived a life style characterised by student revolts. Her brother and she were exposed to a whole different series of generational influences which allowed them to see themselves in a different way during the late sixties. Therefore in a way, she asserts that even though she felt outnumbered and overwhelmed by the gender imbalance in her department, she forged ahead with the ambition to succeed and aimed at breaking the glass ceiling effect imposed on her.

When she was asked to explain how and why she managed to break the glass ceiling Didintle says there is no doubt about it that the main reason for women not to enter the top positions is related to gender inequality. She indicates that

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professional development programmes and the networks in Higher Education Research Support (HERS) are so important that they are absolutely necessary.

> "There are reasons of gender inequality that operate in our system and that contributes to there being fewer women at higher level so the pool of women available is small a consequence"

Olive however pins the difficulty of gender inequality on the reproductive rights of women. She says the fact that women who choose to be working mothers do not have facilities in their organizations to make it possible for them to bring their children to work.

The total number of women coming into higher education has increased but we now are at a stage where we need to drill down to see where exactly it has increased and where it has not increased because if you look at the global figures it does not look good but if we look at certain disciplines the picture changes so with every achievement comes a new challenge as well.

5.4.2 Gender relations (female and male territories)

Among many other interesting analyses drawn from the narratives was on the question whether these women leaders would lobby mostly male or female colleagues in their work and as university leaders. They present very telling responses. Didintle explains that at the beginning there were mostly male colleagues and therefore she had no choice but to engage them and negotiate her way through.

"That is how it was but now the majority of the deans I work with are women and they have different views about an issue. You know it is not the case that all women share the same view. So I don't think there is a fixed pattern".

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For Olive, though she had only two women allies, she also longed to have an ally that she could share both gender and race issues with but the institutional dynamics and profile was different and therefore did not provide her with the space, context or opportunity. Having said this, Olive has never intellectualized the male-female divide because of her formative upbringing. She went to an co-ed school where the ratio of men to women was ten-to-one so she really does not see male and female as a point of departure for whatever she sets out to do but she is aware and disappointed that sometimes when she talks to her male colleagues they always regard her as a female instead of a colleague and counterpart. She concludes this answer by indicating that she has had supportive men in her career even though when it comes to a vote they would not vote for her.

Didintle attributes her managerial experience at the National Research Foundation (NRF) for two years as one of the positive contributing factors that prepared her work with and lobby her male counterparts and to enter the male territory while her fellow women could not. It was a tremendous experience because she gained knowledge of research management despite the fact that she had not been a head of department. She found the NRF to be a great learning organisation. Olive on the other hand had a tough and negative experience working with male colleagues. She alludes to the fact that the faculty of sciences is still the most male dominated in most institutions and certainly in her institution and it is also white and averse to change. She picks one incident where she had the most difficult meetings with this group of males and she says;

> "as I sat there I was for the first time very conscious that I am a woman and I am black and for the first time I was actually more or less intimidated by people who are really junior. They are not deans they are below dean level and all of them I had met in a different environment. But to see them together there and I was going to confront them because the vice chancellor had actually said these people don't want to change. So I had to have all the resources of change management to deal with the situation".

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This was the most difficult situation she has had to confront and Olive says she thinks it had a lot to do with the fact that she is a woman and that it would have helped if some of those colleagues were women. She thinks the men would not have been as vicious but that her patience with them paid off in the end when they started admitting that in fact they were in denial of the realities facing the transformation imperatives of institutions including the management of change across the various areas of organisational performance.

5.4.3 Women to women relations

There are various perceptions, proven or unproven about how women relate with one another especially in senior positions of management and leadership. This study shows that the three women academic leaders do support the cause of women development and empowerment and also they are advocates for the improvement of gender inhibiting policies and cessation of gender based discrimination. One may still argue that this is a distant way of supporting the cause as it is really about ensuring that university policies are implemented with fairness and inclusion but what do the storied lives of the three women leaders show in terms of managing personal relations? I begin with Bonolo's experience of working with and relating to other women.

"I think I support women quite a lot and I think I work well with women. You often read in popular magazines about how some women don't like working for women I have never had that – never heard people say they don't like working for me because I am a woman but of course you never know what people say when you are not listening... sometimes it is women who apparently feel that way but sometimes it is men who feel that way but I have never felt that about people so I hope that means I am managing it"

Then follows Olive's experience;

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> "First of all, the person you report to but all the people you work with around you and I can tell you some of the people who sabotage me or who could sabotage me in this job would be women... Now the biggest barrier I have had to overcome with a woman was the acceptance of the black woman being the manager, and I think this particular woman had a dilemma in the sense that she had always supported equity in the institution – she was a champion of equity but I think she had never imagined that somebody who is black could be the boss if you wish. So she had a serious problem accepting my authority".

The two women academic leaders have had two distinctively interesting experiences of working with other women. The two excerpts confirm their varied experiences where Bonolo said she had support from her deans who are female while Olive depended on the support of her male counterparts because the only female executive she had on the team had difficulty in accepting her authority but instead wanted to relate informally with her instead of join her to present a strong front on dealing with substantive issues when they are deliberating on formal and official duties. I also find it interesting that Olive believes that 'in the workplace itself, as a DVC I cannot befriend women who are in management because they report to me'. She says she feels that sometimes the women she encountered in the workplace and especially in senior management confuse the roles and cannot delineate formal official duty from personal life outlook. This situation with Olive begs the question whether this experience could be a manifestation of the fragile nature of women's survival exacerbated by the historical legacy of first, the disenfranchisement of women irrespective of race and second, the impact of gender relations and gender inequity at the helm of leadership in higher education. The silence with regard to the way Didintle relates to her female counterparts is an important factor that needs to be mentioned and I state my claim that it could be a telling tale about the environment in which she worked as a woman manager and leader.

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5.4.4 Gendered culture

The influence of culture in perpetuating gender stereotypes in higher education environments cannot be over emphasised (Meehan 1999, Kezar 2001, Mabokela and Mawila 2004; Morley 2013 [a] and [b]). Behavioural, social psychologist and personality theorists, who will not be discussed in this study, indicated the importance of nature and nurture in shaping young people or children for adult behaviour. This sub-theme looks at the influence of culture from the formative years of the three woman leaders through their growing up period into the education and management trajectories towards leadership success.

When asked how she was socialised, Bonolo says there is so much that happened to her as a young person. Her family was divided into two distinct generations. She had two older sisters whom she describes as the fifties kind of women who were brought up to conform to tradition. She likens this period of her life to the Cinderella story when she says all what her sisters wanted was to get married while she was the quiet one who liked to read books all the time and kept to herself. From the age of nineteen or twenty she fell prey to the same conformist type of womanhood and actually got engaged and started growing along the path of a girl who got married. During her first degree she did political studies and there she met young people who were intelligent and motivated and they encouraged her to join the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and she began to appreciate the experience which helped validate that she did not need to be just the girl who got married. As a result, she broke off the engagement and started on a different path. This path began inculcating an interest in feminism which she says echoed something in her and assisted to re-orient her thinking about her life and how she should regard herself and others. She has always continued to be feminist in her beliefs and her ways of behaving because;

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> "...I can out of that revere the old fashioned women. I suppose I had an understanding and sympathy for people who aren't feminist. I sort of felt I'll never be one of those feminists who is prescriptive and judgemental on other people who had not adopted the sort of feminist way of talking... because I am talking about my own sisters who I love and I am thinking not to be judgemental about it"

When she reflects on this turning point and outlook to life she thinks it is one of the things that create pressures on women to be certain kinds of leaders and play certain kinds of female roles in order to manage gender roles and stereotypes imposed by societies. She alludes to the fact that these pressures are huge in African societies when compared to European communities but laments that the role expectations are still there and they are strong irrespective of colour, race or creed. Then she gives an example of her institution that is still has a gendered culture but women are beginning to make inroads into higher structures and although they might be treated differently, the inequality might still be felt a lot more at lower levels than at hers because she is the only woman on the executive team while the masses of women lie at the lower rungs of the pyramid structure. Didintle adds her piece that;

> "Oh yes they do – every institution does. First of all institutions (of higher learning) don't exist outside of society. Whatever is in society is in the institution. We are part of a society so we are most definitely gendered there is no doubt about it"

The gender dilemma has Olive caught in a gendered culture quagmire too. She attributes this dilemma to tradition by using an example of behaviour displayed by her husband's friends who cannot conceptualise the fact that her husband can allow her to have a better and higher position because it means she can be independent. But she has women in her own circle of friends who think she is strange for marrying a man who in their minds will be supported financially by her. These perceptions are social constrains and impede social transformation where women desperately need to change the plight of disempowerment and disenfranchisement.

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These cultural practices and perceptions are what explain the challenges women face in attaining positions of power and leadership in higher education and in society. Bonolo thinks the challenges are far too many and they are compounded. She says she meets these challenges as a loner in the top executive and sometimes she meets challenges which compel her to express her views very strongly in order to assert herself in a field that she knows and she has complete leadership authority like research but when it comes to macro system level as in the entire higher education system of Higher Education South Africa (HESA) level, she really is a very mild voice among all other voices that outnumber women.

5.5 NEGOTIATING WAYS BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

5.5.1 Introduction

There exists a great disjuncture between policy and implementation on transformation imperatives across the South African public sector in general and in higher education leadership in particular. The development of women into top management positions in institutions of higher learning has been kept on the margins for a long time since the advent of democracy in South Africa therefore widening the gap between policy and practice even further. Research done by UNESCO (2002) shows that even in countries where equity policies are well developed and special support programmes are in place, women are still underrepresented. The lessons learned from the report are that legislation is helpful but not sufficient to ensure that gender equity policies will meet with success (UNESCO 2002:45). This, the organisation says raises questions whether there are certain socializing traits which influence the choice of women to enter academic leadership fields (UNESCO 2002:23). For South African women academic leaders this disjuncture leaves them with tough options to negotiate the path to top positions. This theme looks at eight sub-themes as

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follow; developing women leaders, personal mentors, role models and providing advice, the role played by family in enhancing successful pathway to leadership, goals and suggestions for improvement, support systems through allies and networks and the role of husband in supporting women leaders.

5.5.2 Developing women leaders

All three women leaders are in a position where they influence decisions and they all agree that they support the development of young women researchers and academics.

> " I am very supportive of research schemes that fund women and I am absolutely delighted that women apply for money and get money and use it effectively so I think I support women quite a lot and I think I work well with them" (Bonolo)

"I think the fact that I am a woman has given me an awareness of some of the issues and for that reason I am trying to focus on creating opportunities to support and develop women in the university. I think I do have awareness and how it has affected my beliefs. I think one of the big issues is access for women and part of my focus has been to look at ways of bringing in more women into science and technology spheres and in my job for example we are focusing on creating better scholarships for masters and PhD to encourage more women and black people to come in" (Didintle)

"We are proud as academics of some highly talented women here. We are making efforts. We have all sorts of programmes in our equity forum but the minute you develop and mentor them with the view to being in management what you actually do is take them out to go and study and relinquish them of their teaching. I mean that is how I was developed... within institutions that is what I want to do and I have to come together with three academic senior women in

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management of institutions and we are working out a programme on how we could mentor our younger women" (Olive)

As people in the top decision making levels, the women leaders are in agreement that influencing policy that supports the development of women to leadership is vital and they have committed to ensuring that this agenda is advanced. Olive says it is sad and ironical that she finds that the most competent and highly capable persons, especially women, are very reluctant to get into management without lots of affirmation. We have seen earlier on in the development of the storied lives of two of the three women under study that they were also reluctant to apply for the deputy vice chancellor positions until someone encouraged and nudged them along to 'try their luck'. Olive laments and re-confirms Bonolo's sentiment that had it been men the opposite would happen as they would not hesitate to go take up the opportunity whether or not they had the job fit to be in management.

In order to diffuse reluctance and self doubt, Didintle uses a strategy such as national woman's day to raise awareness, inculcate, built, encourage and celebrate women's excellence and achievements in science as a means to bridge the gender divide while Bonolo says she mentors the women, encourages them to develop their careers and educates them about the system so that they can find their way through it instead of substituting emotion for rationality. She wants women to see the system as simply a bureaucracy and not something that is set to personally attack them. Olive on the other hand says she spent some days mentoring a peer in a new position of deputy vice chancellor but quickens to say the one thing that gives her real satisfaction is when a younger women looks up to her and thinks she is approachable and they can learn from her.

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5.5.3 Role of personal mentors

During their high school education both Olive and Bonolo were influenced by their lady female professional educators; Bonolo was encouraged to be ambitious by the head mistress who seemed to be a very powerful and smart school leader. She also had people who supported her during her postgraduate studies and at critical moments in deciding how to develop her career helped her make a decision and encouraged her along when she was feeling unconfident.

"My husband has always been my significant mentor advising me, inspiring me and giving me career suggestions. My parents were very good mentors. I would not say I had an academic mentor, a serious academic mentor who actively guided me. I do know that that is one of the things that are missing in women's careers. They do not have female mentors. I relied on family".

Her mother was always very important in her life in that she was unbelievable supportive of her wanting to have a job and children. Bonolo's mother encouraged her to take up a career as she believed she could do it. She undertook to take care of her children because her mother was a house wife despite the fact that she was married to the most powerful academic in those days. Looking back, she says she would have liked to have an academic mentor because she felt there was a gap in her academic life that needed one.

Olive watched and learned from a life style, the energy, the commitment and professionalism with which her young science teacher lived her life. Also, while she was growing up and at lower levels of education, her brother was already in university. He inspired her to look forward to joining the higher education community and to excel. Then there was her PhD supervisor who she says was a nice person but they did not have a close relationship of student/mentor. In addition, she attributes what influenced the person she is now to a book by a woman who discovered chemistry. She read a lot about her and among one of

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the things she read was about the way she got her PhD before her husband and the way they lived well even though she was more successful than the husband in those days. Olive emphatically endorses the fact that she had no mentor and that she is self made;

> "... to be honest with you, it might sound arrogant or whatever, but I made myself. I am my own mentor. But I would have loved to have a mentor. The main support that I can think of in my life is my husband – whether he could be called a mentor is another thing".

She indicates that she would have loved to learn from somebody else's mistakes and she uses a very powerful analogy according to me when she says 'it is almost like having your mother tell you about what to expect in a marriage or what to expect from a pregnancy but they are not going to do it for you. But you know it helps to say when that first day comes these are the sorts of things or feelings you should expect".

As a junior student at university Didintle had a number of lectures who gave her positive feedback and at postgraduate level, she had a very good supervisor for her master's thesis but she says she does not have someone she calls a mentor during her schooling or higher education years. Other than these, her family played an important role in encouraging her to go into higher education or further studies. The fact that she stayed home gave her financial support until she finished her masters' degree. This was six years after she completed her matric. So having parents who allowed her to continue to honours and masters' degrees made a difference. She concludes by saying that in the entirety, her husband was very supportive.

It is an interesting and illumination phenomenon that academic excellence is one of the important prerequisites for gaining leadership positions in higher education institution yet the three women leaders did not have academic mentors en route their leadership pathway. Lack of institutionalised academic mentorship

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programmes in higher learning education could be said to explain the existence of this gap in women's leadership development and in specific strategies aimed at moving women's empowerment beyond mere legislation, quotas and policy intensions.

5.5.4 Women leaders as role models offering advice

Responding to the question 'based on your experience what would you advise young women academics who wish to become leaders in higher education', Bonolo says she would advise them to become good academics first. She does not think one should aspire to become a leader of academics unless you have proved yourself as an academic and understood what it really means to be an academic, which is a complex and difficult job. She emphasises that based on having achieved that standing then one should be bold to claim and offer oneself into the leadership and be prepared to fail. Young women should not expect to apply for a leadership job and just get it, she says. 'You have to be robust about it, you have to be tough about it you can't go off and cry in a corner because if you don't try you won't win'.

Her life experience has taught her that often academics tend to sit in very small departments and units and they remain there all the time. This results in a lack of a broader vision of the intellectual community in which their departments are located. To some extent that is what happened to her although she did keep international contacts going during her junior academic career. She therefore admits that she should have broadened her horizons within the institution because then she would have understood more about what institutional life is about in a much broader setting.

The response on the same question from Didintle is equally pungent. She advises that if a woman wishes to become a leader she has got to avail herself to lead. It is important that women should signal their interest by applying for that

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position even if they are not going to succeed the first time. Like Olive, Didintle thinks a lot of women are reluctant to do that. She repeats Bonolo's point that women have to overcome the fear of failure because they are going to fail from time to time.

The advice Olive would give to young upcoming leaders is that first of all they must recognise that it is hard and that they need to ask themselves questions why they want to be leaders. 'you can find as many excuses as you want which will stop you from becoming an academic first of all and then an academic leader... but you have to be authentic, be yourself, work hard and love management and love people'. She advises that a leader must drive change and be always a step ahead of people she leads and not be complacent with the status quo.

Both Bonolo and Olive espouse satisfaction and delight firstly at the fact that they worked hard and want to be role models to their own children in a manner that essentialises motherhood. It is their wish that their own children look up to them and draw lessons on strength and ability to do what you set out irrespective of gender. Bonolo is proud that being a leader gives an example to her sons that women in their lives can be strong and still be loving and caring. Bonolo believes that her success in higher education is that she is a strong role model for young women too while for Olive the success for women in higher education is having people you can aspire to be like and in a sense benchmark yourself against them and work hard towards that.

5.5.5 Support systems, allies and networks

Having studied overseas gave Bonolo an opportunity to have support systems, networks of colleagues and a broader understanding of how the world works. She advises that students should spend some time out of the country to get this valuable exposure. She has a huge network of colleagues and collaborators all

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over the world. She also has a substantial professional network and she makes certain that she builds her systems of networks around the issue of being a deputy vice chancellor. She concedes that she belongs to very few formal professional bodies but is not keen on them as she is on using networks of colleagues. She does not find professional bodies as fundamentally beneficial to her growth and development but explains that her international network of colleagues has been a good sounding board and a way of interpreting her career pathway and providing a sense of balance, proportion of what is important and how to take things forward. She indicates that the support she enjoys from her network colleagues is mutual as she also avails herself and finds there is a corporative atmosphere and collaboration.

In terms of allies Bonolo has a very strong ally in the institution's vice chancellor. In addition the new deputy vice chancellor and deans, some of whom are women, have been supportive as well. Within the institution's senior administration, there are a few women who have since become her supportive allies.

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Olive belongs to a professional body that provides the support she needs as a scientist; the South African Association of Researchers in Maths and Science as a chairperson and member. If need be she would call a friend or someone she has made contact with during their engagements. She explains that as far as she knows there is no existing formal structure that one could use but she could call one of the deputy vice chancellors she met in one of the workshops but they are mostly male and white.

Allies are an important part of lobbying and achieving one's goals. Olive believes that in order to achieve anything one must be able to have a feel within the institution of who are the people who can buy an idea and can assist you to market it. Olive indicates that she really needed allies who understood what she was talking about in the course of transformation in a fairly conservative

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institution. She has two senior women she trusts the most in the institution that she can talk t about collegial matters and a friend who is also an academic that she considers an ally. These allies, she believes are the kinds of people who will not hide the truth from her even if they disagreed with her opinion they would let her know. She has used some of these allies during the transformation engagements in senate

Being a woman leader can create challenges for growth and development. Leadership can also trap women in a choice quagmire. Didintle feels that the range of options available to women are very small and that very often women have to source allies in domestic help provided by other women; which is a double edged sword in that not having children is an exception as most women do and those women might have had to leave their own children to go and assist another woman thereby making their choices very hard. Didintle belongs to many professional bodies and has served terms at different times mostly in decision making levels of these organisations. Unlike Bonolo and Olive, she does not belong to any network that helps support her locally, nationally and internationally and her reason is that she does not have enough time to engage these networks. Didintle does however get support from and works with colleagues who are informed but if she does need a sounding board on anything she has found that they are very willing to offer opinions and ideas.

As far as allies are concerned, she indicates that she works and gets support from all structures across the university from woman deans, academic departments' staff, students, the Student Representative Council (SRC), deputy vice chancellor and the vice chancellor.

5.5.6 Role of husband

The storied narratives of the three women leaders show that they were surrounded by inspiration, motivation, encouragement and support from an early

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age. This support stayed with them through growing up right up to university education and through their careers as well. In terms of the academic women leaders' lived experiences on gaining and maintaining executive leadership positions, their husbands seem to have been and still are the power behind their successful pathways. The following excerpts in their own words are testimony to this stated claim:

Bonolo

Excerpt 1

"when I was about twenty-one I met my current husband and he is very focussed, was always ambitious and he encouraged me a lot as well – he pushed – encouraged and helped me focus and meeting him was also important having a partner you know for all my life in fact has been very important"

Excerpt 2

"... and finding this partner, my husband who was also an academic – so the two of us worked together in a way on our careers and our family. It was very much a joint project and that's an important aspect"

Excerpt 3

"... my husband has been again a fantastic person because he has always offered a sort of partner idea of manhood rather than a superman image of manhood"

Excerpt 4

"My husband has always been my significant mentor advising me, inspiring me and giving me career advice"

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Excerpt 5

"During the course of my PhD my husband was living in ... with me and we went and lived in ..., and women wives, spouses of people who had jobs in that country where not allowed to work..."

Excerpt 6

"Accepting that job entailed living apart from my husband and I was so frustrated from not having a job and I took that and we lived apart for three years"

Excerpt 7

"One of the things that me and my husband always talked about in making a career has always been to build a career your career slowly out of very solid ingredients rather than going for quick fixes and fleshy kinds of things and maybe that has helped"

Excerpt 8

"Ok. I think barrier was the true career family – husband and wife both in the university both ambitious and that's not very helpful I suppose for your colleagues who begin to see that the husband and wife team was a bit of a power block. They don't want to believe the husband and wife can both achieve – they felt him becoming a powerful and successful husband but he has left so as soon as he left those barriers went away, quite interesting"

Excerpt 9

"It is partly the kind of networks, family, husband, feminism, having and international training and hard work. I would say hard work twice; twice... it is a long struggle"

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Excerpt 10

"He has always been more worthy and wiser than me. So he has been always able to say to me watch out for this, be careful of that, he was sort of voice of wisdom. I hope I have done the same for him"

Excerpt 11

"I mean I have always said to you I have had a lot of support from my husband"

Didintle

Except 1

"... and in the entirety my husband was very supportive"

Excerpt 2

"I think having a supportive husband is important"

Excerpt 3

"I think the support of my husband has been important and being fundamental"

Olive

Excerpt 1

"... lived in ... I didn't see what I was going to do in ... – it is not a place I would have... then my husband said if I am unhappy I must do something about it, and then I said let me be unhappy here but anyway then I got a letter about a week or two later where they were asking me to apply so i didn't want to apply they asked me to apply and it is difficult not to apply if people think you could be happy about it"

Excerpt 2

"I don't know it might be very funny to you and even your research would be out of sync here but the main support that I can think of in my life is my husband –

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whether he could be called a mentor is another thing but to be honest with you – it might sound arrogant or whatever, I made myself"

Excerpt 3

"When I realised I you can be a successful woman and still have a family but there was one thing I was very clear about in my life – the kind of husband I would marry and I was clear I would not marry a man who is going to be threatened by my career. That was the bottom line whatever years I didn't care but if he is going to be a threat in my career that is it and I have been fortunate in the sense that I got somebody who was not threatened by my career and was very supportive and that is why I am seating here in a sense - my husband is very interesting because he comes from ... and he didn't realise how far the place was so when we were busy discussing about it he said you can go to ... and I was thinking what is wrong with this man? Does he know? I think it was when I got the job he said I didn't realise that this place was so far – and I said but what were you thinking? I was wondering why you are chucking me so far off but anyway to be honest the only mentor if there is any"

Excerpt 4

"So to be honest in South Africa as a black woman in this position I mentored myself. Self made all the way with the support of my husband"

Excerpt 5

"So that makes me think whether you know should we start thinking of anything that has to do with a woman and is so overwhelmingly successful whether it has something to do with luck or what because in very many cases you will find that or maybe in much less cases you have this fortune that is like opening that support from your husband"

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Excerpt 6

"I have friends of my husband's for example who cannot believe that my husband can allow me to have a better position than him for example because that means I earn more than him, that means I can be independent. And they cannot conceptualize in their minds first of all how he can do that but I have women also who think that you are very strange. Yes you have to be looking for a husband who earns even more than you do so I am just saying that some of these constrains are very socially based if as a woman I earn a lot and many marriages are going wrongly because of that. If I earn much more than my husband does many women would not be in my position. Why should you support a man? That's the way it happens and many men would not accept it so I think at a social level there are those impediments so that it can bring tension in your family and so on.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has shed light on the various ways in which women academic leaders negotiate their way through their careers and their development. The chapter explicates the challenges and barriers they met along the way to leadership positions and how these challenges impacted their lives. It is an illuminating phenomenon that all three women leaders did not have academic mentors prior to acquiring the senior leadership positions. It is equally interesting that although the three women leaders had a solid and strong academic grounding, along their career pathway and particularly with regard to taking the opportunity for the position of deputy vice chancellor, they had to be nudged along to apply for the position. It is also an illuminating fact that two of them seem to attribute their appointment into the position of leadership to luck.

The excerpts elucidating the role of the husband in the life of each women leader are self explanatory and extremely significant for this study. The storied lives of these women leaders show that the men in their lives have been the real power

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behind their motivation and steadfast commitment to remain focussed on succeeding with their careers and development. It is furthermore interesting and significant that this finding point to the fact that the support they enjoy from their husbands in the private sphere (family context) has not in the main translated to support from their male counterparts in the workplace. This finding could extend to further research on what explains this phenomenon. Chapter six will look at among others, the implications and propositions for this seemingly power behind the success of the women leaders.

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CHAPTER 6

EMERGENT THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined ways in which the three women leaders negotiate the world of higher education leadership and how they encounter the proverbial glass ceiling challenges. The chapter looked at four themes; career pathways and choices to leadership and management opportunities, barriers to advancement, gender-related issues to leadership and management positions, negotiating ways between higher education policy and practice.
The themes provided an understanding from the respondents' perspective and answered the following research questions:

> What were the formative experiences and pathways traversed by South African women en route to achieving senior leadership status in higher education institutions?
>
> How do women in leadership negotiate the world of higher education policy and practice once such seniority has been attained?

This chapter sets out to draw concepts and illuminate emergent propositions emanating and grounded in the data on the lived experiences of women academic leaders. The following research question is central in highlighting the compelling individual stories including silences:

> How did South African women leaders succeed in navigating the Higher Education environment given the established barriers to gender-related advancement in South African Universities?

First, the strategies for overcoming the barriers are discussed and I arrive at an analytic concept explaining measures enhancing or inhibiting transformation in institutions of higher learning in the context of appointment and maintenance of

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women leaders into executive positions. Second, is the concept of leadership by chance? Third, I describe the leadership styles of the three deputy vice chancellors and draw analytic propositions on what are the principles informing their success in leading and managing others. Fourth, I look at the subjective meaning of success as another emerging typology from the data on the women's stories. Fifth, describe the compromises that deputy vice chancellors made to reach their personal and specific goals of leadership. Sixth, I look at the transformational power of higher education environments and how it impacts women trajectories to leadership. The leadership pipeline is the seventh emerging typology for describing trajectories to leadership. Data providing insights into the phenomenon of overt matriarchal and covert patriarchal power wherein the women experience various influences and support from home to leadership roles in universities is the last concept I reflect on.

6.2 EMERGENT PROPOSITIONS

6.2.1 Overcoming barriers

Concept: Policies and legislative imperatives do not remove barriers, they just mask them. If quotas were not in place will women still be able to access positions of leadership?

Women navigate across barriers in different ways and at different times of their lives including higher education pathways.

"I think that the barriers are still there in senior positions like the DVC but there is now affirmative action for women and quotas for women so I think as women Black people must assert and affirm themselves I would think that I am good enough for this position without Affirmative Action (AA). So if I am only in it because of AA that means there are still huge barriers to people who are good. I know I am good enough to be here without AA but it is sad that I could only be

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here because of it. **I suppose the implication of what I am saying is where they to remove the quotas would women ever get senior positions even if they were brilliant and good"?**

With regard to overcoming these barriers, the one woman leader continues to say *I am just trying my best to be strong and rise above them and carry on working, carry on producing, carry on writing books irrespective of what happened. I think women have to be fighters to fight their way through them.* Another woman leader says *th*e first thing to do is to get the PhD done and I am sure as you are aware it is not an easy task and that requires having at least support because you have to focus and in order to focus you are making choices, you could be doing something else rather than sitting at your computer. The third woman leader confirms that having the appropriate credentials was one way she overcame the access to leadership barrier.

The body of knowledge consulted in the review showed that even though women have managed to access and obtain higher degrees as a prerequisite for leadership, they still do not penetrate this executive level of appointment. This practice points to the fact that policies, especially funding mechanisms are responsive to creating access for women to gain education but the various skills and qualifications obtained are not used to access higher positions of leadership. With quotas in place as a mechanism for compliance, it is an interesting phenomenon to observe that where a woman deputy vice chancellor vacates the position, it is not replaced by another woman leader hence supporting the backlash theory on the declining number of women leaders in higher education not only in South Africa but in general across the world. Safe to state that since the collection of data, two of the women deputy vice chancellors have now been promoted to vice chancellor positions in universities other than the ones they were senior members of the executive at. Their positions have been replaced by male leaders. It could be concluded that their promotion is a sign of ability to lead successfully and yet this ability is not entrusted with other women leaders who

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are coming up the ranks and are proving themselves in the higher education sector.

6.2.2 Leadership by chance?

Concept: For senior academic women, access to leadership is a matter of luck

In and within the higher education sector there is no specific intentional plan or strategy committed to ensuring that women leaders are appointed. Despite legislation there is no enforcement of the quota system when it comes to higher education environments. Instead the higher education environment is a jungle wherein access to top leadership positions is left to pure luck or chance as is shown in the next excerpts. The data from which this concept derives is telling and compelling and for emphasis, I repeat the quotations.

Bonolo says 'I don't know there is **luck**, I think I get things done so therefore somebody like our VC who wants somebody who gets things done wants somebody of my abilities... I really don't know... it is **luck**, the **luck** of the moment don't you agree? There is some **luck** – trust me... **Luck** I would say is the key element...'.

Olive says 'so that makes me think whether we should start thinking of anything that has to do with a woman and it is so overwhelmingly successful, whether it has something to do with **luck** or what because in very many cases you will find that or maybe in much less cases you have this **fortune** that is like opening that support from your husband... there is a bit of **luck** involved in it'.

The concept of access to leadership as chance or luck is extremely illuminating. We have seen the three women come through a solid educational grounding. Even though they come from different socio-economic and cultural

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backgrounds, their outlook to their own potential and capabilities seem to be somehow inhibited leading them to think that the fact that they were appointed had to do with someone else behind the scenes. It is interesting to me that the women did not see themselves as worthy of the position outright hence they did not apply outright for it but had to be encouraged and influenced by others to take the leap. What could this behaviour be attributed to? Why do the women seem to have built a sense of self doubt for their abilities when they have also indicated that self determination was the most important ingredient that led to access and maintenance of their success? This could be an area of further research to look at psycho-social reasons (Mathipa and Tsoka 2001) answering the questions raised on the seemingly contradictory outlooks to the women's ability to lead and the concept of self image and self doubt reflected through the data and pertaining to this specific puzzling emergent concept.

6.2.3 Leadership styles

Concept: Inclusive leadership is successful leadership

Leadership as an essential ingredient in successful organisation is defined by Morley (2013a) as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. The three women attribute their success to having built solid careers and to having navigated across barriers in different ways and at different times. There are contradictions and consistencies across their individual accounts on what they regard as successful ways of leading. The women use notions or constructs such as 'lead by example; cooperative; collaborative; objective; lead by listening; bottom-up leadership; consensus building; consultative; participatory; extremely firm; extremely forthright; empathetic; provide the right conditions; harness what is good; accommodating; win-win situation; mentoring; goal oriented; task oriented; to describe their styles of leadership. The women also concede that they even though they are

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consultative and consensus oriented especially when they deal with experts in research; they do not shy away from taking a firm decision where it is warranted.

These notions inspire their leadership and success and propel them to forge ahead in the midst of organisational environments riddled with various influences and cultures (Mazibuko 2006). Their leadership enterprise could be associated with concepts explaining some organisational theories on management and leadership. In their own words, the excerpts found to be illuminating are chosen: The one woman says 'I try to lead by example - Working hard myself being co-operative being collaborative being as objective as I can not allowing emotion to come in the way of decision-making or discussions - I lead by listening - I am a very typical woman (laughs) very much a listening approach to members of groups and committees what are their problems what are their issues but I do not entirely lead by consensus. I do sometimes take the lead - take decisions assert myself and say no I think this is the way we should go after listening to everybody. So I do form my own opinions. However, I believe very strongly in bottom-up leadership especially in the area of research. I mean if I am trying to lead researchers these are leaders in their fields themselves I can't tell them what to do and I don't think that is good idea'.

The second woman leader says 'I am consultative, participatory but I don't shy away from taking a decision when needed but as I said I would always consult and listen and think of the policy context and then think about the issues and formulate a perspective on things - try to listen to everybody's views on the matter and in the end try to fathom out what's the best way forward and most of the times there is consensus after a discussion on what the best way forward is so we try to arrive at a consensus position and then move from there'.

The third woman says 'I would describe myself as first leading by example. I think I am very accommodating, but firm that is how I describe a framework within which they can be creative - I don't like structure in any case - you can't do

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that in an academic environment. I have seen many women, their leadership style is very goal oriented. Women want to see outcomes. Anyway, this is a generalisation but quite a number of women get very frustrated with talk and very little action. They really want to do the task, they are very task-oriented and they want to get outputs and sometimes I think they put too much of their own stamp on the task and I think management is not about how hard you can drive people. I believe firmly that the management style of women is very different that much I am sure of but I don't think that women are all the same. I mean there are women who are very good managers here who I think are very different from me. So there is some distinctive approach of women but you have got to know what you are about'.

6.2.4 The subjective meaning of success

Concept: Despite the scarcity of women in top management in higher education environments, success depends on individual choice.

It is an interesting finding that there is a deafening silence regarding any mention by any of the three women leaders that they depend on each other for motivation, as sounding boards as support structure yet they made mention of their immediate principal who is male and who they indicated they got support from. I state my claim therefore that leadership is a painfully lonely journey for women in epistemic institutions of higher learning. My claim confirms the fact that their stories indicate that they were encouraged mainly by male leaders to apply for the positions instead of taking a bold step on their own. These three women did not at any point depend on some blue print on higher education leadership success but each one of them found ways to navigate the epistemic environment and used values of coexistence with their peers and subordinates to realise goals they set for themselves be it in an academic or administration area of work.

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All three women emphasized over and over again, the valuable principles of listening, taking the lead by example and hard work as the bedrock for their leadership success. They carefully and subjectively choose words such as 'getting satisfaction out of what I do; have specific set of objectives I want to achieve to keep me motivated; be ahead of the people you lead with ideas and lead by example; accept that even as a leader sometimes you will lose or have to rule against your own beliefs; be prepared to agree to disagree; accept criticism and not be afraid to ask for advice; learn not only from your immediate peers but from everyone but be aware of personal agendas; ability to handle pressure from all sides; getting somebody who believes in you but you must also believe in yourself; trust your instinct; make it your business to know who is really on

your side and who is not; who is your ally and how do you deal with your 'quote/unquote' 'enemies'; leading with integrity and authenticity; get an insight into the environment in which you work and ensure you understand that environment; have both strategy and character and if you have to be without one it should never be character.

The notion of having passion for the job they do despite all its challenges runs across the three women's personal values to success. The one illuminating conviction that stands out expressed by the one woman is about learning to unlearn the things that inhibit success. Avoiding the one-size-fits-all approach is one of the practices she warns against and she has learned to tune into the person and not the task because she has learned that what is minimum performance could be excellent performance for other people and this has taught her to appreciate people who are different from her. But she has singled out intellectual respect as the most important factor of success that allows her to stand up in meetings and in conferences and present an alternative view which other people have not thought about or challenge the status quo whenever the opportunity warrants it. This she strongly believes buys you a lot of mileage on the path to successful leadership.

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As an ardent reader, the other woman leader ascribes another reason for her success to reading a few motivational self help books and she says these have helped her a lot with her biggest problem around self confidence. These books have helped her believe that she is not a victim of circumstance and that she can do whatever she sets her mind on. Added to the help from books she repeats that building up a strong and credible research career has earned her the medal of the confidence she has always lacked and needed during critical times of her growth into leadership.

6.2.5 Personal compromises

Concept: Compromise is a personal choice or is it?

Each woman has compromised things that they have always wanted to do in their lives for the sake of continuing to excel in their work and to meet the requisite performance as leaders of their institutions. Each one of them had to prioritise their decisions to forgo certain priorities they feel passionate about in their lives because these subjected them to choice quagmire. The one woman had to live apart from her husband for three years because she chose to start a career after completing her PhD studies. The second thing she took a conscious decision to compromise is time with friends for time with family. This meant that her social life and being an active member of the community was put on hold. The second woman has not been able to do her NGO work unless it is related to her current job. She has also made a conscious choice to discontinue supervising PhD students and put the completion of her book on hold as well. The third woman experienced tension between having a good married life and being successful which she felt always threatened and held her back therefore creating a conflict within her. She feels that sometimes being a leader takes over her life and choice she alienates her from the way women are seen in a society such as playing a role as a spouse and being a traditional wife. The second hard

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choice she had to make doing research in her area of expertise because she believes doing research and being a leader are two big conflicting priorities.

Instead of celebrating their successes, women tend to play down their achievements and concentrate rather on what needs to be done to improve situations and others. The women however, have accepted the choices they made and continue to ensure that other women have opportunities in higher education that will make their choices to access leadership better than their own paths traversed through making compromises along the way.

6.2.6 Transformation powers

Concept: Higher Education is both player and referee with no sanction on lack of transformation targets.

The government is failing to improve parity with respect to appointment of women in leadership positions despite available legislation to comply. The transition to democracy continues to produce semantic changes that are sometimes fraught with contradictions. Ideal transformation should allow women space to become part of the change agenda. The three women leaders lament the fact that transformation is extremely slow and that in general the higher education system is still far from breaking the apartheid inequalities in all fronts. The one woman says 'we have exactly the type of education we have always had unfortunately – I mean it is an apartheid package and I think there are changes taking place slowly and this is the frustrating thing. I sometimes say the South African education system never produced some of the people who are in the system serving it. Therefore until that happens and critical masses of women are present because the system then we can say there will be more women in management and leadership'.

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Literature has shown that instead of the situation of scarcity of women leaders improving, the numbers are dwindling even further. Currently the higher education sector has not put in place monitoring mechanisms that ensure that when women leaders vacate the positions they are filled by other women. As the study stated in the beginning, two of the three women leaders got promoted to the level of vice chancellor as this study is concluding and only one woman was replaced by a female DVC and upon recent retirement of the third woman leader, her portfolio was filled by a male DVC. It is interesting to observe that the executive body of higher education (HESA) has not lamented this practice and also has not made contributions to have this practice changed for the development of women.

Transformation instruments that seem to be in place such as the HELM and WHEEL tend to be white elephants as they are not implemented effectively because there is no blue print for how quota targets should be met using these mechanisms and what ramifications are available for institutions that do not comply or apply these measures. None of the three women make mention of the role or importance or contribution of these two instruments of development and leadership in improving their leadership skills in their jobs as deputy vice chancellors. On the contrary, the women raise the concern about the environment that is not conducive to development and empowerment, institutional opportunities and whether these are provided to women, opportunities for improving their skills, whether women ideas are taken seriously, whether their potential is recognized, whether women have opportunities to put their ideas to the test as leaders. The epiphany of this concept therefore is that transformation in terms of leadership access for women is in total disarray in South African higher education and that the legislative framework in place is yet to see its day in the sun if it is to bring fundamental relief to the plight of women seeking to enter leadership positions.

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6.2.7 The leadership pipeline- is mentorship a necessary devil for empowerment and development?

Concept: Leadership development happens on a post facto basis instead of pro-active/de facto basis.

As stated above, there is no monitoring and review mechanism to follow and trace why women enter or exit higher education leadership. Other than the use of the funding formula as a macro policy measure, none of the women leaders has used or indicated the value of a national policy and its implementation as means to offer relief for specific gender-based leadership and development. The higher education system therefore does not have a leadership pipeline policy to prepare women especially for leadership given the scarcity in levels of women leadership. Existing leadership development programmes are not institutionalized and no monitoring is currently taking place at institutions where there are attempts to comply with legislation to meet equity targets and quotas. The lived experiences of the three women deputy vice chancellors indicate that they do not have mentors to guide them through the path of leadership and to help them navigate the challenges they meet during their tour of duty. Other than supervising limited research which in the main they had to discontinue as a result of other leadership responsibilities, these woman leaders do not indicate that they are actively mentoring other women hoping to become leaders either. This is a significant and compelling phenomenon for this study in that the women indicated and bewailed the fact that not having had mentors created a gap in their leadership path.

There are three things the Deputy Vice Chancellors wish they knew prior to becoming leaders. The first one is understanding what management is about. The second is understanding the imperatives of leadership and the third is knowing the intensity of the job requirements and the intensity of public relations that goes with the responsibilities of always being in the public eye. In terms of

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the job outlook, it is interesting that the one woman does not want to move from this position; 'I don't really want to go anywhere from here. I think I want to stay in this job, I enjoy it. I don't want to move further up or anything. I love what I am doing... if this job comes to an end or my contract comes to an end, I am only too delighted to go back to my faculty and write a book because I miss my research'. The second deputy vice chancellor says 'I don't know actually to be honest. But yes I am happy where I am and I intend to remain here at least for the short term but the long term picture I have not resolved, no'. The third deputy vice chancellor says 'my current boss thinks I should be a vice chancellor. I was hesitant before. When he says it, I always look at him and say what is it? I don't want this thing not because I am... it is just that higher education is in such disarray. But you know it is a position that would make you not to have a life and I don't have a life already. So my hesitation is not so much about my capability to do the job but about the intractable problems that we have... I think the road of higher education is full of so many obstacles for those in management that for me is a problem. But I don't know. The other thing is that I don't know where I am going'. As it turns out, two of the three women leaders are promoted to the position of vice chancellor during the period of the study.

Again, these excerpts are compelling and telling of the state of confusion and uncertainty that manifests in the women leaders not knowing how to project into their own futures probably because they are not already prepared by the system to take vice chancellor positions when the opportunities arise. If they had mentors and proper guidance and executive development as part of their career pipeline, the uncertainty would diminish. The uncertainties that manifests in the women's storied lives show contradictions and inconsistencies in the way institutions of higher learning respond to the needs of women's development and empowerment as prescribed by legislative imperatives. The women instead seem to stumble across means to sustain their leadership successes and other than their own strengths the women leaders seem to pick up skills necessary to

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run institutions of higher learning post facto because none of them was prepared, guided or trained particularly to enter the job of gender-based leadership.

6.2.8 Overt matriarchal sacrifices and covert patriarchal powers

Concept: Higher education is an epistemic hegemony of patriarchal power

Their immediate family influenced the life and career trajectory of the three women DVCs from childhood. The one woman's mother was exiled to begin a new life for her family where she had to work and keep the household because her husband could not work. The second woman stopped her life and took care of the children of her daughter while she struggled to balance building a career and being a mother and wife. The third woman leader was grateful that her parents allowed her to stay home with them until she finished her Master's degree. The three woman leaders categorically confirmed that the construct that mothering is a barrier to career advancement stays true for all women who choose to procreate. Women are therefore openly faced with this challenge and it takes women to support other women in their quest for career advancement. Two of the three woman leaders however, stated that their mothers were a great source of support and encouragement.

Then there is a twist to the timeline of career growth for these particular women when they reach higher education top positions of leadership. Other than the one offered by their mothers, the overt and known support that is expected to continue from other woman leaders and academics is said to have seized to exist or diminished and it is replaced by men folk. On the contrary, the one woman lamented her continued struggle to break away from living in the shadow of her father's power in the institution where they both worked and instead sought to fill her own shoes. For this woman leader, success was enhanced only where her husband offered her a 'partner idea of manhood' instead of her father's superman image of manhood which she felt suffocated her and increased her

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already existing lack of confidence and self image. Equally the three woman leaders are unanimous on the significant role their husbands play on a continuous basis that ensures their continued success in the jobs and responsibilities they carry as heads of institutional management. The research has also revealed that in fact it was because of male senior leaders that the women were encouraged and motivated to apply for these positions of leadership. Their stories have shown that even though the women qualified they initially did not think they should take advantage of the opportunities of top leadership until they were advised to do so.

Though not generalisable, these are significant manifestations of the complexity of the lives that the three women leaders lead in these three epistemic environments fraught with cultures that determined their successes or lack thereof in leading institutions of higher learning. Could these environments that women live and lead in be a re-creation of the hegemony of patriarchal power? Are higher education institutional cultures re-inventing the wheel and relegating women into disempowerment or are they merely putting women's futures into the hands of their male counterparts to release opportunities if and as they deem necessary? Is this ideology of male power behind the women's positions more appealing to the epistemic environment of higher education? Could this practice be the alternative to affording women possible access to leadership as compared to failing policies that have not changed the disenfranchising nature of the higher education leadership profile? I posit that patriarchal nature of higher education power serve as the gatekeeper for access or lack thereof of women in and into leadership positions. The jury is still out on when and how women will get access into the law in order to decide when it is time to become leaders in higher education.

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6.3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has provided an illumination of multiple life trajectories of three senior women leaders in higher education. It described/explained themes showing the individual life pathways from birth, through schooling, university education to positions of powerful leadership academic careers. The body of knowledge reviewed espouses various ways in which higher education systems across the world lack responsive means and mechanisms to overcome the scarcity of women in leadership. The review also showed that transformation is at a snails' pace to bring relief for women's leadership development and to bring about equity measures and implement prescribed legislation. For South African institutions of higher learning, the study, through the storied lived experiences of the three women confirm that despite impressive transformation-oriented legislation and policy directives, gender-based discrimination in the higher education environment has not been eliminated and that instead the number of the select few women who managed to gain access into top positions is decreasing. Eight concepts derived from the inductive themes show a combination of the challenges/difficulties that the women face in the context of an epistemic environment fraught with fluidity and lack of direction in implementing transformational imperatives to developing and empowering women per se. The method of generating, analyzing and theorizing on these eight concepts was not done a priory but derived from a theory-after-data inquiry that subscribes to the Glasean Grounded Theory paradigm.

It is hoped that these inductive propositions/statements will assist higher education decision makers to look at specific leadership pipeline strategies directed/focused at overcoming the decline of women leaders in universities. These concepts can be located/aligned/placed/situated within the phenomenological tradition/inquiry, which takes interest in participants' perceptions, feelings and lived experiences (Guest MacQueen and Namey 2012:13, Lichtman 2013) and on current bodies of literature on gender-based

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leadership and development. Researchers interested in continuing along this line of inquiry of gender-based higher education leadership might want to explore further the philosophical underpinnings of the concepts this study has raised.

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Epilogue

But now in the darkness she clearly recognizes an inextinguishable radiance that breaks from the door of the law. She does not have much longer to live. Before she dies all the experiences from her time there are unified in her mind to form a single question that she has not yet asked the gatekeeper. She gestures to him, since she can no longer raise her stiffening body. The difference in their heights has changed much to the woman's disadvantage, and the gatekeeper has to bend down low. "What do you want to know now?" asks the gatekeeper, "you are insatiable." "Everyone strives for the law," says the woman, "why is it that all these years no one but me has requested admittance?" The gatekeeper recognizes that the woman's life is over, and to reach her fading hearing, he bellows at her: "No one else could have gained admittance here, since this entrance was meant for you alone. Now I am going to shut it"

An adaptation from Franz Kafka's prose 'Before the law' (1997)

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